

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE
HARLEM RENAISSANCE

VOLUME 1
A-J

CARY D. WINTZ
PAUL FINKELMAN
EDITORS

ROUTLEDGE
NEW YORK • LONDON

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HARLEM RENAISSANCE

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DEDICATION

We dedicate this work to John Wright, agent par excellence. He was a part of this endeavor from the beginning and guided the project through difficult times.

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PREFACE

The Harlem Renaissance today is a topic of great interest, celebrated as the most creative period in African American cultural life. Yet even now, some seventy-five years later, there still is little agreement about the extent of the renaissance, either in time or in content, and there is still debate about the quality of the creative work it spawned, its impact on African American and American history, and how it affected race relations. Part of the problem is that even the African American intellectuals who created and tried to define the movement, and who provided its critical framework, disagreed among themselves and with the African American writers and artists who provided its creative force. During the Harlem Renaissance, as well as today, participants and scholars alike disagreed about when it began; when it ended; what its artistic, political, and aesthetic focus should be; whether it was a success or a failure; whether it was a positive or a negative development in African American culture; and, ultimately, whether it served the interests of blacks, the interests of whites, or both.

Although the *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance* will not resolve these debates, it is based on the belief that the Harlem Renaissance was one of the most significant developments in African American history in the twentieth century. It also takes a very broad view of the renaissance and the connection of this movement to the major social, political, and intellectual developments in early twentieth-century African American history. Consequently, the encyclopedia not only addresses the artistic and cultural events directly related to the Harlem Renaissance but also examines the political, economic, and social environment in which the movement took place. Placing the Harlem Renaissance within this broader context is necessary in order to fully understand the movement and its achievements, and to understand the work of individual artists, writers, and performers. With this in mind, we structured the encyclopedia to provide deep coverage of the literary and artistic aspects of the movement as well as broad coverage of the political, social, economic, and legal issues that confronted African Americans during the early twentieth century.

Our coverage of the artistic elements of the Harlem Renaissance includes essays on the literature, art, and music of the movement. There are extensive essays on major writers, artists, and performers, as well as pieces on most of the lesser-known figures. In addition, there are discussions of the major creative works, especially those that had an impact on the development of the Harlem Renaissance. Along with the so-called higher arts (poetry, literature, painting, sculpture, theater, classical music, and

dance), expressions of popular culture are covered, especially musical theater, musical reviews, and motion pictures. In other areas, the line between popular culture and art is not entirely clear. Jazz, blues, and spirituals are treated as art forms, although they were also an expression of folk or popular culture. Although not everyone who wrote a poem, sang a song, or performed onstage is covered in this encyclopedia, we have attempted to include everyone who played a significant role in the renaissance, and those whose activities reflected or influenced some aspect of African American culture in the early twentieth century.

The Harlem Renaissance was, of course, situated in time and place. We see the movement as a phenomenon of the 1920s and the 1930s, beginning at about the end of World War I and fading out in the late 1930s. Its temporal boundaries are not exact, however; they vary somewhat from one artistic category to another, and there are powerful antecedents existing as early as the turn of the century. For example, we include entries on individuals such as Paul Laurence Dunbar and Henry Ossawa Tanner, whose major work predates World War I but who had a significant influence on later writers and artists. Furthermore, the social, political, and economic developments intertwined with the movement are much less easy to contain; accordingly, various entries can range back into the late nineteenth century and extend into the 1940s. The focus, though, is on the two decades following World War I.

The geographic boundaries of the Harlem Renaissance are also complicated. Clearly Harlem was central to the movement, and a large number of entries examine multiple aspects of Harlem's life and history. The Harlem Renaissance was not confined to one location, however. For example, blues and jazz, two developments in music that helped define the renaissance, had their origins in a number of locations—New Orleans, Memphis, St. Louis, the Mississippi delta—and were transported north by people who migrated to Chicago, New York, and other cities. Likewise, most of the writers, poets, actors, and artists moved to Harlem from other parts of the country; many emerged from artistic and cultural movements in places like Los Angeles, Houston, Dallas, New Orleans, and Atlanta. Also, African American communities in other Northern cities like Washington, Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago had their own cultural movements, which contributed to the Negro Renaissance. Furthermore, neither the movement nor its influence was confined to the United States. Caribbean writers and artists immigrated to the United States and participated in the movement; others from this region influenced the political and cultural life of Harlem. African American writers, artists, and performers traveled to the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe, where they interacted with the artistic and political life of Europeans and immigrants from the European African and Caribbean empires. A number of entries examine the connection of the Harlem Renaissance to this broader world.

Finally, race in all its complexity is fundamental to the Harlem Renaissance. Each African American writer or artist confronted in his or her own way the racism and colonialism of the United States and the Western world; at the same time, each was connected to the emergence of the struggle for civil rights and the anticolonial movements. These issues had an impact on the Harlem Renaissance and on the lives and work of those who participated in it. This encyclopedia contains numerous entries that examine race and racism, both within the United States and abroad, especially in terms of how these issues defined the African American experience in the early twentieth century and how they affected the life and work of the participants in the Harlem Renaissance.

One aspect of the racial experience that is the subject of several entries is the role of whites in the Harlem Renaissance: White authors writing about African Americans; white patrons and supporters of the Harlem Renaissance; white publishers,

producers, and booking agents; white critics and promoters—they all influenced African American culture for better or worse. A closely related subject is the interaction between blacks and whites: most often black artists reacting with white publishers, promoters, and critics, but also the more complex interaction between the black intelligentsia and black writers and white publishers and intellectuals. Both W. E. B. Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson were black civil rights leaders, novelists, and poets in their own right, and both published, promoted, and critiqued the work of black artists and writers. Carl Van Vechten, a white novelist, wrote a major Harlem novel of the period and also served as a patron and promoter of black literature, art, and music, and as a documenter of the Harlem Renaissance.

The *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance*, then, examines all phases and all aspects of the Harlem Renaissance, as well as the broader cultural, political, social, and economic environment in which the renaissance, and indeed African Americans, functioned in the first half of the twentieth century. Entries address individual participants and major works and a wide range of related issues that fall into several large categories. Entries on individuals include participants in all aspects of the creative arts as well as journalists, political and cultural figures, and others who were simply personalities in Harlem and contributed to the ambience of the era. Entries on creative works cover all artistic fields but focus on books, anthologies, plays, motion pictures, and musical shows or revues. The encyclopedia also includes entries on significant newspapers, literary magazines, and periodicals that either were directly connected to the Harlem Renaissance or helped define the political and social milieu. Likewise, we provide entries on artistic and cultural organizations along with political and civil rights groups. Harlem itself is covered in essays on its history and social and economic issues, as well as its nightlife and specific institutions and places in the neighborhood. Finally, a number of thematic and interpretive essays provide a general overview of specific aspects of the renaissance such as music, literature, and the visual arts, and several somewhat shorter essays address specific concepts, events, and movements.

Through its breadth and diversity, this encyclopedia attempts to meet a common demand. Students, scholars, and the public at large are looking for information on the rich and complex culture of the Harlem Renaissance. Whether readers seek the broad outlines or the fine details of the era, they will find here, in one work, an unparalleled resource—contributed by those dedicated to studying its achievements.

Organization

The *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance* is divided into two volumes. The entries are organized alphabetically. Volume 1 contains entries from A to J, and Volume 2 contains K to Z and the index. To assist the user in finding material, each entry has cross-references (“See also”) to related entries, and, as necessary, blind entries (“See”) direct the reader to the proper essay. An extensive index also assists the reader in finding specific information that may not have its own entry or may be found in several entries. Each entry also includes a relatively short bibliography directing the reader to further information. The illustrations provide visual material for specific entries and for the Harlem Renaissance in general.

Contributing Authors

The encyclopedia includes some 640 entries, representing the work of about 260 contributors. The contributors represent academic faculty members and independent scholars, writers, and artists. They include specialists in history, art, music, theater, dance, politics and political theory, economics, sociology, and African American

studies; and they come from across the United States as well as from abroad. Their work reflects the latest scholarship in their respective fields.

Language

This encyclopedia, in general, uses the terms “African American” and “black” interchangeably. It also uses “Negro,” “Afro-American,” “African American,” and similar terms of the early twentieth century in direct quotations and when these terms are appropriate to reflect the usages of the time and place. “Negro” is always capitalized, unless it was lowercased in a source that is quoted directly. The use of the term “nigger” and its derivations is more complicated. This term has not been used here to denote a pejorative attitude toward African Americans. As necessary and appropriate, however, it has been used in direct quotations to capture accurately the language of poetry or literature, or to reflect and understand racist language. Phrases like the book title *Nigger Heaven*, and terms like “niggerati” and “negritude” that refer to specific concepts, have been used as they were during the Harlem Renaissance. Our approach to the use of words is to be true to the language of the period, maintain a language appropriate for scholarly discourse, and address racial issues accurately and honestly while avoiding needlessly offensive phrases.

Acknowledgments

A number of people have contributed to this project. First, our associate editors provided the broad knowledge of the period necessary to review the entries. They, along with our advisory board, also reviewed the list of entries and helped identify contributors. Vincent Virga provided us guidance and significant insight during a conversation at the Library of Congress. Rita Langford at the University of Tulsa performed some of the initial work in organizing the entry list. We want to add a special word of thanks to Arnold Rampersad, who served as an associate editor during the early phases of the project but had to withdraw as the demands of his administrative duties at his university increased. We also received a great deal of assistance from the publishers. First, at Fitzroy Dearborn, where the project began, Paul Schellinger embraced our vision of this encyclopedia, and Robin Rhone and Audrey L. Berns guided the project during its initial phase. When Routledge took over from Fitzroy Dearborn, it committed the resources to help us complete the project quickly. Sylvia Miller, Mark Georgiev, and Kate Aker provided overall leadership, while Susan Gamer worked directly with us on an almost daily basis. We especially appreciate Susan’s energy and hard work that kept the project moving and brought it to its completion. Finally, we wish to thank all our contributing authors for the expertise they brought to their essays; for completing their work in a timely manner; for completing revisions or taking on new assignments, often on a short schedule; and for maintaining their belief in the project as we moved toward its completion.

CARY D. WINTZ
PAUL FINKELMAN

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- Abbott, Robert Sengstacke
Abyssinian Baptist Church
African Blood Brotherhood
Afro-American Realty Company
Algonquin Roundtable
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 Yerby, Frank

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Actors

Anderson, Edmund Lincoln
Brooks, Clarence
Bubbles, John
Bush, Anita
Campbell, Dick
Dudley, Sherman H.
Dunn, Blanche
Fetchit, Stepin
Gilpin, Charles
Harrington, James Carl "Hamtree"
Harrison, Richard
Hunter, Eddie
Kirkpatrick, Sidney
Lee, Canada
Mabley, Jackie "Moms"
Madame Sul-Te-Wan
McClendon, Rose
McKinney, Nina Mae
Moore, Tim
Morrison, Frederick Ernest
Preer, Evelyn
Robeson, Paul
Sissle, Noble
Thomas, Edna Lewis
Washington, Fredi
Williams, Egbert Austin "Bert"
Wilson, Arthur "Dooley"
Wilson, Frank

Artists

Alston, Charles
Barthé, Richmond
Bearden, Romare
Covarrubias, Miguel
Delaney, Beauford
Douglas, Aaron
Farrow, William McKnight
Fuller, Meta Warrick
Harleston, Edwin A.
Hayden, Palmer C.
Jackson, May Howard
Johnson, Malvin Gray
Johnson, Sargent Claude
Johnson, William H.
Jones, Lois Mailou
Lawrence, Jacob
Motley, Archibald J. Jr.
Porter, James Amos
Prophet, Nancy Elizabeth
Reiss, Winold
Savage, Augusta
Scott, William Edouard
Tanner, Henry Ossawa
Van Der Zee, James
Waring, Laura Wheeler
Woodruff, Hale

Dancers

Dafora, Asadata
Forsythe, Ida

Thematic List of Entries

Robinson, Bill "Bojangles"
Tucker, Earl "Snakehips"

Filmmakers and Celebrities

Beavers, Louise
Chenault, Lawrence
Ellis, Evelyn
Johnson, Noble
Lowe, James
Micheaux, Oscar
Moreland, Mantan
Muse, Clarence

Personalities

Dean, Lillian Harris
Harmon, Pappy
Holt, Nora
Jackman, Harold
Madden, Owen Vincent "Owney"
Peterson, Dorothy Randolph
Walker, A'Lelia

Journalists

Abbott, Robert Sengstacke
Baker, Ray Stannard
Barnett, Ida B. Wells
Bruce, John Edward
Ferris, William H.
Fortune, Timothy Thomas
Matthews, Ralph
Murphy, Carl J.
Vann, Robert Lee
Walton, Lester

Musicians

Armstrong, Louis
Bechet, Sidney
Blake, Eubie
Bradford, Perry
Calloway, Cabell "Cab"
Cole, Bob
Cook, Will Marion
Cuney-Hare, Maud
Dett, Robert Nathaniel
Ellington, Duke
Europe, James Reese
Fields, Dorothy
Forsythe, Harold Bruce
Gershwin, George
Gruenberg, Louis

Handy, W. C.
Henderson, Fletcher
Jessye, Eva
Johnson, Hall
Johnson, James P.
Johnson, John Rosamond
Joplin, Scott
Jordan, Joe
Mack, Cecil
Morton, Jelly Roll
Oliver, Joseph "King"
Ory, Edward "Kid"
Razaf, Andy
Smith, Willie "the Lion"
Still, William Grant
Waller, Thomas "Fats"
White, Clarence Cameron
Williams, Clarence

Playwrights

Anderson, Garland
Anderson, Regina M.
Edmonds, Randolph
Green, Paul
Heyward, DuBose
Lyles, Aubrey
Miller, Flournoy
Miller, Irvin
Miller, Quintard
O'Neill, Eugene
Richardson, Willis

Politics and Culture

Ali, Duse Mohamed
Anderson, Charles W.
Becton, George Wilson
Bethune, Mary McLeod
Boas, Franz
Briggs, Cyril
Brown, Hallie Quinn
Cullen, Frederick Asbury
Daddy Grace
De Priest, Oscar
Domingo, Wilfrid Adolphus
Du Bois, W. E. B.
Father Divine
Fauset, Arthur Huff
Ford, Arnold Josiah
Ford, James William
Frazier, E. Franklin
Garvey, Marcus

Greene, Lorenzo
 Hamid, Sufi Abdul
 Harrison, Hubert
 Haynes, George Edmund
 Herskovits, Melville
 Johnson, Charles Spurgeon
 Johnson, James Weldon
 Johnson, John Arthur
 Jones, Eugene Knickle
 McGuire, George Alexander
 Mencken, H. L.
 Miller, Kelly
 Moore, Frederick Randolph
 Moore, Richard B.
 Morton, Ferdinand Q.
 Moton, Robert Russa
 Nail, John E.
 Ovington, Mary White
 Owen, Chandler
 Padmore, George
 Patterson, Louise Thompson
 Payton, Philip A.
 Powell, Adam Clayton, Sr.
 Randolph, A. Philip
 Rogers, Joel Augustus
 Schomburg, Arthur A.
 Scott, Emmett Jay
 Spingarn, Arthur
 Talbert, Mary Burnett
 Trotter, William Monroe
 Villard, Oswald Garrison
 Walker, Madame C. J.
 Washington, Booker T.
 Wise, Stephen Samuel
 Woodson, Carter G.
 Work, Monroe Nathan
 Wright, Louis T.

Promoters and Patrons

Barnes, Albert C.
 Braithwaite, William Stanley
 Brawley, Benjamin
 Campell, Elmer Simms
 Cunard, Nancy
 Draper, Muriel
 Holstein, Casper
 Locke, Alain
 Loggins, Vernon
 Mason, Charlotte Osgood
 Meyer, Annie Nathan

Nance, Ethel Ray
 Redding, J. Saunders
 Van Vechten, Carl

Publishers

Buttitta, Anthony J.
 Calverton, V. F.
 Eastman, Crystal
 Eastman, Max
 Isaacs, Edith
 Kellogg, Paul U.
 Knopf, Alfred A.
 Knopf, Blanche
 Liveright, Horace
 Pace, Harry H.
 Spingarn, Joel
 Van Doren, Carl

Singers

Anderson, Marian
 Baker, Josephine
 Bentley, Gladys
 Bledsoe, Jules
 Brooks, Shelton
 Brown, Ada
 Burleigh, Harry Thacker
 Clough, Inez
 Cox, Ida Prather
 Hall, Adelaide
 Hayes, Roland
 Hegamin, Lucille
 Holiday, Billie
 Hunter, Alberta
 Lovinggood, Penman
 Mills, Florence
 Mitchell, Abbie
 Rainey, Gertrude "Ma"
 Smith, Ada
 Smith, Bessie
 Smith, Clara
 Smith, Mamie
 Smith, Trixie
 Snow, Valaida
 Spivey, Victoria
 Ward, Aida
 Washington, Isabel
 Waters, Ethel
 Wilson, Edith

Thematic List of Entries

Theater Owners

King, Billy
Leslie, Lew
Lewis, Theophilus
McClendon, Rose
Shipp, Jesse A.

Writers

Anderson, Sherwood
Attaway, William
Bennett, Gwendolyn
Bonner, Marieta
Bontemps, Arna
Brooks, Gwendolyn
Brown, Sterling
Césaire, Aimé
Chesnutt, Charles Waddell
Cohen, Octavus Roy
Corrothers, James D.
Cotter, Joseph Seamon Jr.
Cowdery, Mae Virginia
Cullen, Countee
Cuney, Waring
Damas, Léon
Delany, Clarissa Scott
Dreiser, Theodore
Dunbar, Paul Laurence
Ellison, Ralph
Fauset, Jessie Redmon
Fisher, Rudolph
Frank, Waldo
Griggs, Sutton E.
Grimké, Angelina Weld
Hayden, Robert
Horne, Frank
Howells, William Dean
Hughes, Langston
Hurst, Fannie
Hurston, Zora Neale
Johnson, Fenton
Johnson, Georgia Douglas
Johnson, Helene
Kerlin, Robert
Larsen, Nella
Lee, George
Lewis, Sinclair
Lindsay, Vachel
Maran, René
Matheus, John Frederick
McKay, Claude

Morand, Paul
Nelson, Alice Dunbar
Nugent, Richard Bruce
Peterkin, Julia Mood
Pickens, William
Schuyler, George S.
Senghor, Léopold
Spencer, Anne
Stribling, Thomas Sigismund
Tannenbaum, Frank
Thurman, Wallace
Tolson, Melvin B.
Toomer, Jean
Walker, Margaret
Walrond, Eric
West, Dorothy
White, Walter
Williams, Edward Christopher
Wright, Richard
Yerby, Frank

WORKS

Plays, Films, Theater Productions

Amos 'n' Andy
Appearances
Birth of a Nation, The
Birth of a Race, The
Black and White
Blackbirds
Chocolate Dandies, The
Come Along Mandy
Emperor Jones, The
Fool's Errand
Four Saints in Three Acts
Green Pastures, The
Hallelujah
Harlem: Play
Hearts in Dixie
Hot Chocolates
Liza
Lulu Belle
Madame X
Mulatto
On Trial
Pa Williams' Gal
Porgy and Bess
Porgy: Play
Rachel
Revue Nègre, La

Runnin' Wild
 Saint Louis Blues
 Servant in the House, The
 Show Boat
 Shuffle Along
 Stevedore
 Taboo
 They Shall Not Die
 Three Plays for a Negro Theater
 Within Our Gates

Books

Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man, The
 Batouala
 Birthright
 Black Manhattan
 Blues: An Anthology
 Cane
 Color
 Conjure Man Dies, The
 Copper Sun
 Dark Laughter
 Dark Princess
 Ebony and Topaz
 Fine Clothes to the Jew
 Fire in the Flint, The
 God's Trombones
 Harlem: Negro Metropolis
 Harlem Shadows
 Home to Harlem
 Infants of the Spring
 Negro: An Anthology
 New Negro, The
 Nigger
 Nigger Heaven
 Not Without Laughter
 Passing: Novel
 Porgy: Novel
 Quicksand
 Their Eyes Were Watching God
 There Is Confusion
 Tropic Death
 Walls of Jericho, The
 Weary Blues, The

TOPICS

Topics, Concepts, Ideologies, Events, Themes

Algonquin Roundtable
 Amenia Conference, 1916

Amenia Conference, 1933
 Anglophone Africa and the Harlem Renaissance
 Anglophone Caribbean and the Harlem Renaissance
 Antilynching Crusade
 Art Criticism and the Harlem Renaissance
 Artists
 Atlanta University Studies
 Authors: 1—Overview
 Authors: 2—Fiction
 Authors: 3—Nonfiction
 Authors: 4— Playwrights
 Authors: 5—Poets
 Black Bohemia
 Black History and Historiography
 Black Press
 Black Zionism
 Blackface Performance
 Blacks in Theater
 Blues
 Blues: Women Performers
 Civic Club Dinner, 1924
 Civil Rights and Law
 Community Theater
 Crisis, The: Literary Prizes
 Crisis: The Negro in Art—How Shall He Be
 Portrayed? A Symposium
 Cullen–Du Bois Wedding
 Cultural Organizations
 Dance
 Dark Tower
 Europe and the Harlem Renaissance: 1—Overview
 Europe and the Harlem Renaissance: 2—Berlin
 Europe and the Harlem Renaissance: 3—London
 Europe and the Harlem Renaissance: 4—Paris
 Europe and the Harlem Renaissance: 5—Soviet Union
 Federal Programs
 Federal Writers' Project
 Film
 Film: Actors
 Film: Black Filmmakers
 Film: Blacks as Portrayed by White Filmmakers
 Francophone Africa and the Harlem Renaissance
 Francophone Caribbean and the Harlem Renaissance
 Garveyism
 Great Migration
 Great Migration and the Harlem Renaissance
 Gumby Book Studio
 Harlem: 1—Overview and History
 Harlem: 2—Economics
 Harlem: 3—Entertainment
 Harlem: 4—Housing

Thematic List of Entries

Harlem: 5—Neighborhoods
Harlem: 6—Public Health
Harlem Renaissance: 1—Black Critics of
Harlem Renaissance: 2—Black Promoters of
Harlem Renaissance: 3—Legacy of
Harlem Renaissance in the
 United States: 1—Boston
Harlem Renaissance in the
 United States: 2—California and the
 West Coast
Harlem Renaissance in the
 United States: 3—Chicago and the Midwest
Harlem Renaissance in the
 United States: 4—Cleveland
Harlem Renaissance in the
 United States: 5—Kansas and the
 Plains States
Harlem Renaissance in the
 United States: 6—Philadelphia
Harlem Renaissance in the
 United States: 7—The South
Harlem Renaissance in the
 United States: 8—Texas and the Southwest
Harlem Renaissance in the
 United States: 9—Washington, D.C.
Higher Education
Homosexuality
House-Rent Parties
Jazz
Jim Crow
Journalists
Labor
Literary and Artistic Prizes
Literary Criticism and the Harlem Renaissance
Literature: 1—Overview
Literature: 2—Children's
Literature: 3—Drama
Literature: 4—Fiction
Literature: 5—Humor and Satire
Literature: 6—Nonfiction
Literature: 7—Poetry
Little Theater Tournament
Lynching
Lynching: Silent Protest Parade
Lyrical Left
Magazines and Journals
Minstrelsy
Modernism
Music
Music: Bands and Orchestras
Musical Theater
Musicians
Negritude
Negrotarians
New Negro
New Negro Movement
Niagara Movement
Niggerati
Nightclubs
Nightlife
Numbers Racket
Opportunity Awards Dinner
Opportunity Literary Contests
Organized Crime
Pan-African Congresses
Pan-Africanism
Passing
Philanthropy and Philanthropic
 Organizations
Poetry: Dialect
Politics and Politicians
Primitivism
Professional Sports and
 Black Athletes
Publishers and Publishing Houses
Race Films
Race Men
Racial Iconography
Racial Stereotyping
Racial Violence: Riots and Lynching
Racism
Religion
Religious Organizations
Riots: 1—Overview, 1917–1921
Riots: 2—Red Summer of 1919
Riots: 3—Tulsa, 1921
Riots: 4—Harlem Riot, 1935
Salons
Scottsboro
Second Harlem Renaissance
Singers
Social-Fraternal Organizations
Spirituals
Talented Tenth
Theater
Tuskegee Experiment
Vaudeville
Visual Arts
White Novelists and the Harlem
 Renaissance
White Patronage
World War I

Higher Education

Historically Black Colleges
and Universities
Howard University

Nightlife

Clef Club
Cotton Club
Small's Paradise

Philanthropy

Boni and Liveright Prize
Garland Fund
Guggenheim Fellowships
Harmon Foundation
Rosenwald Fellowships
Spingarn Medal
Wanamaker Award

Places

Abyssinian Baptist Church
Alhambra Theater
Apollo Theater
Black and Tan Clubs
Crescent Theater
Dunbar Apartments
580 Saint Nicholas Avenue
Greenwich Village
Harlem General Hospital
Hobby Horse
Jungle Alley
Lafayette Theater
Lincoln Theater
Manhattan Casino
135th Street Library
Renaissance Casino
Roseland Ballroom
Saint Mark's Methodist
Episcopal Church
Saint Philip's Protestant
Episcopal Church
San Juan Hill
Savoy Ballroom
Strivers' Row
Sugar Hill
Tenderloin
Tree of Hope
267 House

Politics

Communist Party
New Deal
Party Politics

ORGANIZATIONS

Businesses

Afro-American Realty Company
Black Star Line
Black Swan Phonograph Company
Colored Players Film Corporation
Columbia Phonograph Company
Lincoln Motion Picture Company
Pace Phonographic Corporation

General

African Blood Brotherhood
American Negro Labor Congress
Association for the Study of Negro Life and History
and Journal of Negro History
Booklovers Club
Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters
Eclectic Club
Fifteenth Infantry
Harlem Globetrotters
Harmon Traveling Exhibition
National Association for the Advancement of
Colored People
National Association of Negro Musicians
National Negro Business League
National Urban League
Negro Art Institute
Theater Owners' Booking Association
United Colored Democracy
Universal Negro Improvement Association
Vanguard
Works Progress Administration

Publishers

Boni and Liveright
Brimmer, B. J., Publishing House
Cornhill
Harcourt Brace
Harper Brothers
Knopf, Alfred A., Inc.
Lippincott, J. B., Publisher
Macaulay

Thematic List of Entries

Viking Press
Witmark, M., and Sons

Theater Companies

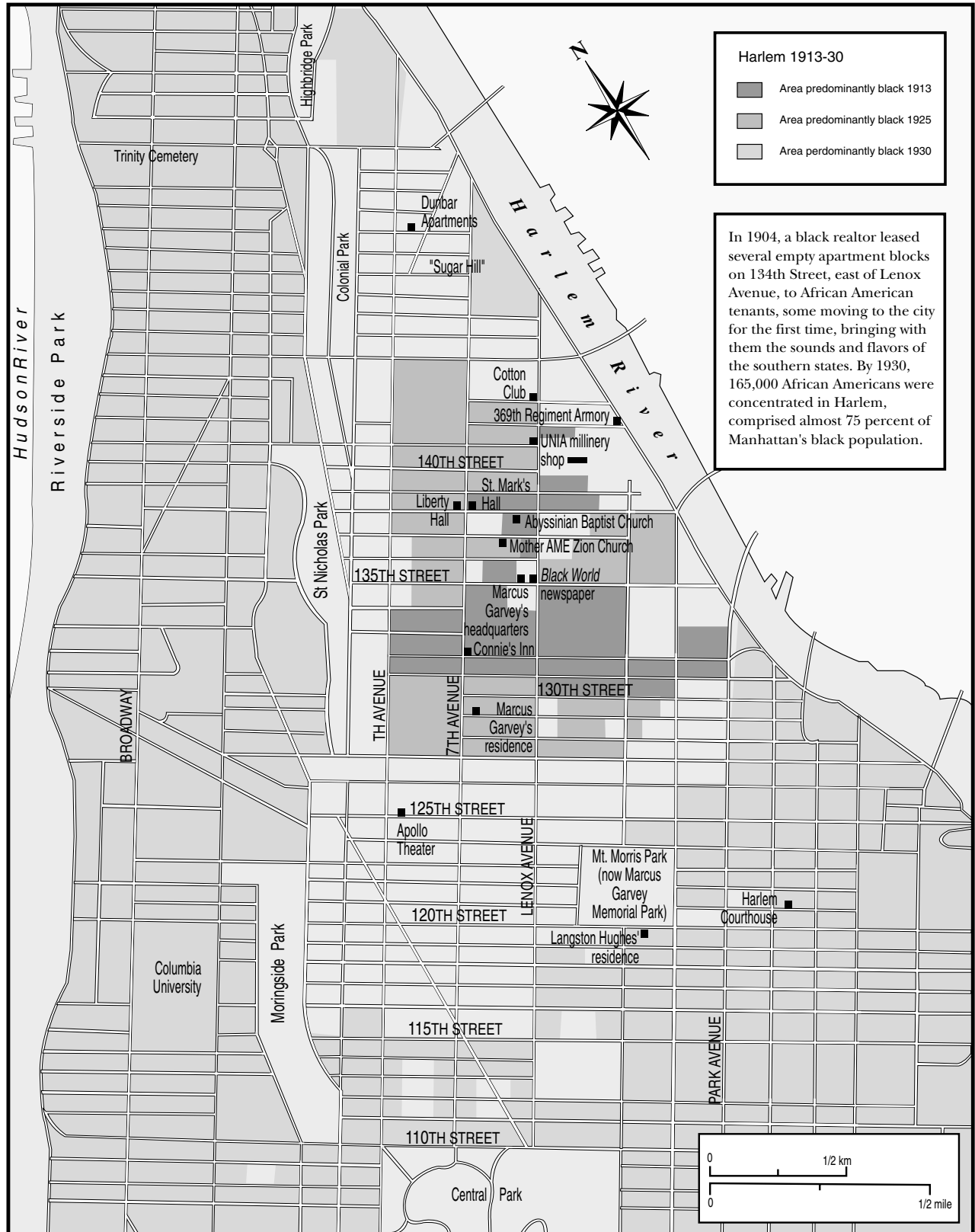
Anita Bush Theater Company
Ethiopian Art Players
Harlem Community Players
Karamu House
Krigwa Players
Lafayette Players
National Colored Players
National Ethiopian Art Theater
Negro Art Theater
Negro Experimental Theater
New Negro Art Theater
Provincetown Players
Tri-Arts Club
Utopia Players

PERIODICALS

American Mercury
Amsterdam News
Associated Negro Press
Baltimore Afro-American
Black Opals
Booklovers Magazine
Broom

Brownies' Book, The
Carolina Magazine
Challenge
Chicago Defender
Contempo
Crisis, The
Emancipator
Fire!!
Guardian, The
Gumby Book Studio Quarterly
Harlem: A Forum of Negro Life
Inter-State Tattler
Liberator
Messenger, The
Modern Quarterly
Nation, The
Negro World
New Challenge
New Masses
New York Age
Opportunity
Palms
Pittsburgh Courier
Saturday Evening Quill
Seven Arts
Survey Graphic
Stylus
Vanity Fair
Workers' Dreadnought

MAP



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Abbott, Robert Sengstacke

Robert Sengstacke Abbott was born in Fredericka, Saint Simon's Island, Georgia. His parents—Thomas, his father; and Flora, his mother—were both former slaves who worked in agriculture. As a youngster, Abbott became interested in the situation of African Americans when his stepfather, John Hermann Henry Sengstacke, encouraged him to consider the plight of former slaves. Abbott had to struggle to get an education. During his time in law school, he reinvented himself by taking Sengstacke's surname as his own middle name and concentrating on the practice of law.

In 1905, Abbott used twenty-five dollars to start the *Chicago Defender* in his home on State Street, proudly announcing the newspaper as the "World's Greatest Weekly." His entrance into journalism was evidently a result of disappointment with law. Several stories explain his sudden change of career. According to one story, he had been told that he was too dark to succeed in Chicago's courts; according to a second, he could not pass the Illinois bar; according to a third, he never really made much money in law and needed to earn his living some other way.

At first, the *Chicago Defender* was a one-man operation. When the earliest versions appeared, Abbott was serving as editor, business manager, and staff and tried to sell the paper to homes along Twenty-ninth and Twenty-fifth streets in Chicago. These original versions consisted of only four pages, printed in his kitchen. The first few years of operation saw modest growth. Abbott encouraged friends to write columns, and he increased the paper's circulation by selling it in local barbershops, churches, and pool halls—places that he

also used, brilliantly, as sources of news. Through these venues the *Defender* was able to gain a reputation as the voice of Chicago's African American community.

Abbott used the *Defender* to fight against discrimination, segregation, and disenfranchisement. It became a protest newspaper, highly respected among African Americans in and around Chicago. The *Defender* reported abuses against African Americans and focused on unfair treatment of minorities. It developed a controversial reputation because Abbott published articles on police brutality, racial violence, and bigotry against African Americans. Also, Abbott had copied the masthead of William Randolph Hearst's *Chicago Evening American*; this often confused readers, and he was eventually forced to change the masthead to avoid a lawsuit.

The most important factor in the growth and expansion of the *Chicago Defender* was the mass migration of African Americans from the South after 1915. These emigrants bought the *Defender* and sent it South to relatives, transforming it into a national paper. The *Defender* encouraged African Americans to fight back against racism and injustice. It responded to lynching by adopting the slogan "An eye for an eye" in 1916. By 1917, the paper was encouraging African Americans to leave the South and settle in what Abbott called the "promised land," the North.

Abbott used his success as a newspaperman to become part of Chicago's African American elite. In 1917, he joined other leading African Americans—although unsuccessfully—in trying to make real estate agreements that would be acceptable to whites. The *Defender* supported African American strikebreakers against the American Federation of Labor because the union

discriminated against African Americans. The paper accused the police and local leaders of failing to enforce the law and failing to investigate crimes against African Americans, particularly a rash of bombings: During the migration period of 1917–1921, there were fifty-eight unsolved bombings of African Americans' dwellings.

By 1918, the huge migration had increased the *Defender's* circulation dramatically, to well more than 230,000. At one time the *Defender* opposed the migration because Abbott feared the effect of the emigrants on the morals and social standing of Chicago's black community. However, he later switched sides and began to write columns of advice—do's and don'ts—aimed at emigrants. Abbott used his paper to criticize the Jamaican leader Marcus Garvey and Garvey's movement; he also joined a group of prominent African Americans in encouraging the attorney general to investigate that movement.

During the Red Summer of 1919, the *Defender* played an invaluable role by presenting the African American side of the story. Abbott was rewarded for his actions during the riot by being named to the Chicago Commission on Race Relations, which issued a report, *The Negro in Chicago*, in 1922. Abbott supported this report, even though it criticized the African American press for overreacting to the riot.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Abbott lent his name and prestige to several causes, including most of the major efforts to improve the condition of African Americans in and around Chicago. He was a board member of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), National Urban League, Hampton Alumni Association, Masons, and Lincoln Memorial Congregational Church. For most of his life, he was politically aligned with the Republican Party. He publicly supported Oscar DePriest, the first African American elected to Congress from the North.

After Abbott's death, the *Defender* was run by his nephew John Sengstacke.

Biography

Robert Sengstacke Abbott was born on 28 November 1868. He attended Beach Institute in Savannah; Claflin University in Orangeburg, South Carolina; and, from 1892 to 1896, Hampton Institute, where he learned the printer's trade. After completing his studies at Hampton, he earned an LL.B. at Kent College of Law in Chicago. He practiced law in Gary, Indiana, and Topeka, Kansas,

before retuning to Chicago in 1903. He started the *Chicago Defender* in 1905. Abbott was married twice, each time to a widow. His first marriage, on 18 September 1918, was to Helen Thornton Morrison; they were divorced in June 1933. In August 1934 he married Edna Rose Brown Denison, who had five grown children. Abbott died in Chicago on 29 February 1940, of Bright's disease; he was eulogized by all the major papers of Chicago and the *New York Times*.

ABEL A. BARTLEY

See also Black Press; DePriest, Oscar; Garvey, Marcus; Garveyism; Journalists; Riots: 2—Red Summer of 1919

Further Reading

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Abyssinian Baptist Church

The Abyssinian Baptist Church is internationally recognized as a symbol of black spiritual and political power. During the Harlem Renaissance, Abyssinian relocated uptown, after having made several expansive moves from lower Manhattan.

The church was founded in 1808, when a group of African Americans at the Gold Street Baptist Church decided that they would no longer accept segregated pews. After their initial application for autonomy was rejected as too threatening, a core group of four men and twelve women invited Thomas Paul, who had founded the Joy Street Baptist Church in Boston a few years earlier, to petition church officials. Paul, an African American preacher of great renown, prevailed, and the necessary papers were granted. Some Ethiopian merchants in the founding group suggested the name Abyssinian. In its early years, the church moved often. It remained for several years on Anthony Street (now Worth Street), then moved to the Broadway Tabernacle, and later moved to Thompson and Spring streets, all the while following the progression of the African American population northward through the city.

During the 1840s, the church took a strong—and, at the time, radical—stand against slavery. At the turn of the century, Abyssinian owned church property on Waverly Place in Greenwich Village. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the church moved again and acquired additional property on Fortieth Street in the Tenderloin section.

In 1908, when the church could look back on its first hundred years, Adam Clayton Powell Sr. assumed leadership. For roughly the next three decades, he would guide Abyssinian through its most expansive period. He was at the helm when the congregation erected a church on 138th Street in Harlem in the early 1920s, then discharged its indebtedness to the bank about a decade earlier than required. The Gothic and Tudor structure with its imported stained-glass windows, fully paid for through tithing contributions from parishioners, represented the solidity and fidelity of the church membership, which had more than doubled, expanding from 3,000 to 7,000 during the 1920s through 1937, when Powell retired.

Then Powell's only son, Adam Clayton Powell Jr., stepped into the pulpit. He drew new attention to the church and inspired new energy. From the foundation his father had built, the son was able to extend the Abyssinian ministry further into the realm of politics. The younger Powell led a highly publicized labor protest to pressure white owners of stores on 125th Street to employ African Americans. A few years after becoming pastor at Abyssinian, Powell was elected to the City Council. His next step was Congress, where he served fourteen terms in the House of Representatives, championing the legal and social rights of African Americans.



Funeral at the Abyssinian Baptist Church, 1920s. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

Like the founders of Abyssinian, he never shrank from protesting against injustice or from the light of publicity.

Following the younger Powell's tenure and that of Pastor Samuel Proctor, Rev. Calvin Butts maintained the church's respected status into the twenty-first century.

BARBARA BREWSTER LEWIS

See also Powell, Adam Clayton Sr.

Further Reading

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African Blood Brotherhood

The Blood Brotherhood was created by Cyril Valentine Briggs, a Jamaican African nationalist and socialist. Briggs was born on 28 May 1888 in Chester Park, Nevis, British West Indies. He had a very light complexion and was called the "angry blond Negro" in some newspapers. He worked in the printing trade in Saint Kitts and was inspired by the works of the social critic Robert Green Ingersoll (1833–1899), the "great agnostic," who attacked not only religion but also much else that was dear to Americans.

Briggs immigrated to the United States in July 1905. In 1912 he was hired as a writer by the *New Amsterdam News*. In 1915 he served one term as editor of the *Colored American Review*, the mouthpiece of Harlem's black business community. Briggs's writings emphasized racial pride and economic cooperation. Briggs was impressed by the Easter Rebellion of 1916 in Ireland and began to discuss plans for the decolonization of

Africa. During World War I, as a reporter for the *New Amsterdam News*, he was an outspoken critic of what he considered to be the United States' hypocritical aims. Because of his denunciations of American policies regarding African American soldiers and citizens, the paper was officially censored by the federal government. The issue of 12 March 1919 was detained by the U.S. Post Office because of an editorial written by Briggs in which he denounced the League of Nations as a "league of thieves." In May 1919, Briggs severed his ties with the *New Amsterdam News*.

A few months earlier, in December 1918, Briggs had begun publishing the *Crusader*. This newspaper emphasized self-government for African Americans, and Africa for the Africans. It focused on and expressed the ideas of the radical element in the New Negro movement.

After the events of the Red Summer of 1919, Briggs and others came to believe that protecting African American rights required armed resistance. His ideas fit the postwar New Negro movement. The racial violence that followed the war shocked African Americans and made them more aware of their vulnerability. Briggs's response was the African Blood Brotherhood for African Liberation and Redemption (ABB), created in October 1919 after an article was published in the *Crusader*. ABB was made up principally of native Caribbeans, young intellectuals, workers, veterans, and marginal businessmen, and it preached radical revolution; thus it was never able to gain a mass following. Briggs envisioned ABB as an alternative for those who were sophisticated enough to resist the hollow charm of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).

At its peak, ABB claimed to have 3,500 members and more than 100 branches. However, membership was by enlistment only, and it is virtually impossible to determine the number of members accurately. After 1920, when the leadership of ABB came under communist influence, the *Crusader*—the organization's official mouthpiece—became increasingly anticapitalist, focusing less on African issues and more on the benefits of bolshevism.

Briggs was recruited into the Communist Party with the help of another West Indian, Claude McKay. McKay introduced Briggs to Robert Minor, a famous cartoonist from Texas; and Rose Pastor Stokes, a leading Jewish activist. They were committed to the struggle for black liberation, and they convinced Briggs of the concept of parallel communism: that is, two communist parties—one legal and aboveground, the other secret

and underground. As a result, during the 1920s, Briggs increasingly moved his movement toward communism and began to give his rhetoric communist overtones.

Originally, ABB was a semisecret organization with a highly centralized governing structure. Although its name was derived from the blood brotherhood ceremonies of African peoples, ABB was actually modeled after the Irish Republican Brotherhood, which dated from 1858 and led to the Fenian movement. Briggs was also impressed by the Hamitic League, with its system of passwords, secrecy, and oaths. The Hamitic League was founded by George Wells Parker of Omaha, Nebraska; and the *Crusader*, in its first few issues, proclaimed itself the publicity organ of the league.

Briggs served as the executive head of ABB, sharing power with the supreme executive council, which included Ben Burrell (director of historical research), Richard Moore (educational director), Theo Burrell (secretary), Otto Huiswoud (national organizer), W. A. Domingo (director of publicity and propaganda), Grace P. Campbell (director of consumers cooperatives), and William H. Jones (physical director).

ABB was the first black organization in the twentieth century to advocate armed self-defense. It came to national prominence in June 1921, when about 500 of its members—armed with shotguns—surrounded a jail in Tulsa, Oklahoma, to protect Dick Rowland, an African American shoeshine boy who had been accused of assaulting a white woman. In response, white mobs raided gun stores, randomly attacked African Americans, and eventually burned and looted the black section of Tulsa. ABB was widely blamed for this racial violence, but Briggs defended his organization's actions in Tulsa as community self-defense.

In 1921–1924 the leaders of ABB concentrated on criticizing Marcus Garvey and his UNIA. In 1921, at the national convention of UNIA, members of ABB had lobbied outside Liberty Hall, seeking an official link to Garvey's organization, but the UNIA delegates had ignored them. In 1922, Briggs stopped publishing the *Crusader*, creating the Crusader News Agency in its wake. In 1924, ABB was an official participant in a movement called Negro Sanhedrin, which met in Chicago under the leadership of Kelly Miller. Miller wanted to create a federation of black organizations that could coordinate protest activities and develop a unified agenda.

In 1925, ABB was disbanded on orders of the Communist Party of the United States. It was replaced by the American Negro Labor Congress and the League of Struggle for Negro Rights. Symbolically, ABB had

been a very important organization. Its insistence on African American rights and protection had placed it in the forefront of the New Negro and black liberation movements. Although its tangible accomplishments were negligible, its psychological effects continue today.

ABEL BARTLEY

See also Briggs, Cyril; Domingo, Wilfred Adolphus; Garvey, Marcus; Jones, William H.; McKay, Claude; Miller, Kelly; Moore, Richard B.; New Negro Movement; Riots: 2—Red Summer of 1919

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Afro-American Realty Company

In the early twentieth century, Harlem became the spiritual center of a new black cultural identity and a famous center of black expression. During the 1920s and 1930s, its writers and artists gave it a worldwide reputation, and the critic Alain Locke described Harlem as an ideal locale for black self-determination. But before all of this talent could descend on Harlem, a series of changes in infrastructure and great foresight were required, beginning in the late nineteenth century. The Afro-American Realty Company, in 1904–1908, illustrates how black businesspeople provided opportunities in Harlem, leading to patterns of migration that permanently altered the community and established an era of expression.

Afro-American Realty was founded in 1904 by Phillip A. Payton, who capitalized on factors that included an economic downturn and the availability of real estate in Harlem. Vast speculative development had penetrated Harlem after the Civil War, when many single-family row houses, tenements, and luxury apartment houses were built. Businesses and religious, educational, and cultural institutions followed. Growth continued in 1873, when Harlem was annexed by

New York City and planning for elevated rail service was announced. Proposed subway routes to west Harlem set off another wave of real estate speculation and further inflated market values. By the end of the nineteenth century, virtually all of Harlem was covered by commercial and residential buildings.

The effects of years of overbuilding were exacerbated by a local real estate recession at the beginning of the twentieth century. Loans were withheld, mortgages were foreclosed, rents fell, and residences sat vacant as building owners scrambled to recover their investments. Eventually, landlords sought the services of Payton, who offered to provide regular tenants for buildings on the east side of the district if the landlords would accept black applicants. The landlords agreed, and one of New York's great internal migrations began. Thousands of families began pouring into houses and apartments between Fifth and Seventh avenues, despite opposition from the white Property Owners Protective Association of Harlem. Previously, black newcomers to Harlem had been abetted by real estate speculators seeking to extract high mortgages or rents in a discriminatory process; now, however, nonresident owners gradually realized that Payton's clients were good tenants who were willing to pay higher rents. Afro-American Realty acquired five-year leases on properties owned by whites and rented these properties at 10 percent above deflated market prices. Pent-up demand for new housing and newly created jobs in industry in New York drew thousands to Harlem.

As more black residents moved into Harlem, Afro-American Realty received considerable attention in the national press and considerable support from black leaders, such as Booker T. Washington, who was an associate and business partner of Payton's. The company also lured customers with an innovative advertising program aimed at riders on subways and elevated trains across New York City. Soon, successful black business owners and families who could pay higher rents for a higher standard of living were establishing residences and commercial spaces in Harlem. The migration continued as Afro-American Realty bought more sections of Harlem, whites fled, and a wave of immigrants from the southern United States and the Caribbean arrived, tripling New York's black population. Harlem—no longer a distant community in Manhattan—bustled with activity and a new cosmopolitan culture.

Perhaps Payton's greatest feat was his accumulation of investment capital for his operation. When the

Pennsylvania Railroad bought the property of an African American undertaker, James C. Thomas, at 493 Seventh Avenue for \$103,000, Payton induced Thomas to invest much of his profit in Harlem real estate. Over time, Thomas accrued a vast fortune. Payton recruited other investors as well, people who were excited about the rapid growth of Harlem. Afro-American Realty was also boosted by the New York press corps and by the dislocation of residents in other parts of the city. For example, during the construction of Pennsylvania Station in 1906–1910, families and individuals were displaced from the Tenderloin district of Manhattan—historically one of New York’s overcrowded nonwhite ghettos—and many of them made their way to Harlem. From 1900 to 1910, T. Thomas Fortune’s newspaper, *New York Age*, began to depict Harlem as a vibrant, progressive neighborhood.

Payton had trouble managing his own riches, and he dissolved Afro-American Realty in 1908, but opportunities for black migrants to Harlem continued after his company ceased operations. A new firm, Nail and Parker, began to buy rows of five-story apartments, which it sold to eager newcomers. John Nail and Henry Parker had both been salesmen for Afro-American Realty, and they understood the market. They brokered the move of the black Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and Equitable Life Assurance Properties, which included the sophisticated town houses of Striver’s Row. Along with the Harlem Property Owners’ Improvement Association (founded by John G. Taylor in 1913), these real estate experts continued Payton’s legacy of local ownership. The efforts of businesses were matched by those of residents who focused on sustaining their community. To pay landlords, many black tenants took in boarders or gave rent parties on Saturday nights. Many homes were partitioned to create rooming houses; some lodgers even slept in bathtubs. As housing costs stabilized, this dense neighborhood contained the majority of African Americans in New York; in fact, Harlem had the highest concentration of black people anywhere on earth at the time.

The Afro-American Realty Company has not been forgotten by residents or historians of black Harlem. The firm ushered in a new era of direct investment among local renters and buyers and initiated black cultural assimilation in Harlem. Payton firmly believed that the best way for blacks to succeed in New York, and in America, was by establishing economic independence. According to Cruse (1967), Harlem was founded on the basis of “black economic nationalism

by the Afro-American Realty Company.” This economic gain created a climate for black expression and black cultural life.

R. JAKE SUDDERTH

See also Harlem: 4—Housing; House-Rent Parties; Locke, Alain; Nail, John E.; *New York Age*; Payton, Philip A.

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Algonquin Roundtable

The Algonquin Roundtable, an institution of the literary scene in the 1920s, was a group of writers and artists who met for lunch at the Algonquin Hotel in New York. When they first gathered in 1919, all but a few of the critics and columnists who were members of this unofficial club were struggling to establish themselves. Years later, nearly all of them had achieved fame,

although amid accusations of back-scratching and logrolling. Scholars often contrast the Algonquin group with other American writers of the period, such as Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and John Dos Passos, who constituted and gained stature as an expatriate “lost generation.” The Algonquin Roundtable can also be contrasted with contemporaries who were not expatriates, and particularly—for our purposes—with the writers who personified the Harlem Renaissance. Although some of the individual humorists and essayists in the Roundtable did produce significant work, their famous lunches were characterized by biting, elitist wit, whereas the Harlem Renaissance produced more meaningful and relevant work.

How the Roundtable began is not entirely clear, but according to most accounts, its inception was at a lunch meeting at the Algonquin between John Peter Toohey, a theatrical press agent, and Alexander Woollcott, an influential theater critic and columnist for the *New York Times*. Murdock Pemberton, the press agent who had arranged this meeting, later decided to have a second gathering at the same place. He invited a large group of theater professionals and writers to a party, purportedly in honor of Woollcott’s return from World War I, but actually mocking Woollcott’s self-indulgent personality. (Pemberton printed a program of speeches related to wartime exploits—all of them to be presented by Woollcott.) Among others, Pemberton invited Franklin P. Adams, a columnist for the *New York Tribune*; Robert Benchley, then an editor at *Vanity Fair*; Heywood Broun, drama critic at the *New York Tribune*; and George S. Kaufman, at the time a drama editor for the *New York Times* and an aspiring playwright.

When Woollcott refused to let Pemberton’s joke embarrass him but instead enjoyed the meal and the company, the tradition of dining at the Algonquin began. Later, the group included other writers who were still on their way up, such as Harold Ross, a magazine editor who later founded the *New Yorker*; Dorothy Parker and Robert E. Sherwood, who were beginning their careers as writers for *Vanity Fair*; Maxwell Anderson, a playwright who would later write an antiwar classic, *What Price Glory?*; Ring Lardner, a successful syndicated columnist; and Marc Connelly, a playwright who was Kaufman’s collaborator and who struggled as a newspaper writer before achieving success on Broadway.

As Woollcott and his friends began meeting regularly, the group gained considerable fame around New York. Columnists, many of whom were Roundtable

regulars, recounted anecdotes and quips from the lunches, boosting the careers of all involved. The owner of the Algonquin Hotel, Frank Case, did not fail to appreciate this free publicity. The group members had at first called themselves “the Board”; they acquired their permanent name when Case replaced the original rectangular dining table with a large round one. Soon afterward, a cartoonist for the *Brooklyn Eagle* drew a caricature of the gathering with the caption “Algonquin Round Table.”

Droll wit and sarcasm were criteria for success at the Roundtable; as a result, some visitors attended it only once. Clare Booth Luce found the environment “too competitive,” claiming that “you couldn’t say ‘Pass the salt,’ without somebody trying to turn it into a pun or trying to top it.” Some other writers of the period saw the Roundtable as elitist and self-enchanted. According to the screenwriter Anita Loos, the members were “self-styled intellectuals . . . concerned with nothing more weighty than the personal items about themselves that were dished up in the gossip columns.”

Those outside the circle also said that the members of the Roundtable promoted each other’s work, excluding new thinkers and writers. The only figure of the Harlem Renaissance known to have joined the Roundtable was Paul Robeson, and even he was not a regular. For all their presumed conceit and cronyism, however, the members of the Roundtable did sometimes write critically about each other’s work. Once, after Adams gave a novel by Broun a negative review, Woollcott supposedly remarked that one could “see Frank’s scratches on Heywood’s back yet.”

Whether or not the Algonquin regulars convened for their own professional advantage, they did like one another’s company. On Saturdays, the men—calling themselves the Thanatopsis Literary and Inside Straight Club—would extend the meetings beyond lunch, moving upstairs to a suite to play poker, often until the early hours of Sunday morning. The group members also spent time together in their own homes, at restaurants and speakeasies, and on vacations. In 1922, the Algonquin writers collaborated on a musical revue, *No Sirree!* (mocking a popular Russian revue called *Chauve Souris*), which played for one night to an audience of theater insiders. *No Sirree!* featured Broun as master of ceremonies, Sherwood as a song-and-dance man, and Benchley in a solo sketch that eventually led to a career as a comedian in Hollywood. The following day’s newspapers completed the role reversal, allowing the performers to roast their critics in printed reviews.

The Roundtable lunches ended some time in the early 1930s, although few sources mention an exact date or give any particular reason for the demise of the circle. In the years that followed, the group became legendary—so much so that many of the writers who had lunched at the Roundtable tried to play down its cultural impact in an effort to move on with their careers. Eventually, over time, the works of the “lost generation” and the Harlem Renaissance overshadowed even the best literature of the Algonquin group. The myth that persisted, therefore, arguably inflated both the significance of the Roundtable and the legacy of the writers who dined there.

JOSHUA A. KOBRIN

See also Robeson, Paul

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Alhambra Theater

The Alhambra Theater building was constructed in 1905 and (as of this writing) still stands at the intersection of 126th Street and Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard (Seventh Avenue) in Harlem. At first it was a vaudeville house; it became part of the Keith vaudeville circuit, featuring such leading performers as Julian Eltinge and the young Groucho Marx. The managers of the Alhambra clung to segregationist policies as long as they could, confining black audience members to the balcony and failing to book African American acts, long after the two other major theaters, the Lincoln

and the Lafayette, had adapted their policies to accommodate the changing community. On 4 September 1920, *New York Age* reported that the treasurer of the Alhambra had been arrested for refusing to sell orchestra tickets to two black men. By the mid-1920s, however, the Alhambra was catering to African American audiences. A highlight during this period was the Harlem premiere of *Blackbirds of 1926*, a musical revue produced by Lew Leslie to showcase the prodigious talents of Florence Mills. After a six-week engagement at the Alhambra, *Blackbirds* went on to a highly successful six-month European tour. The show that followed it at the Alhambra starred Bill “Bojangles” Robinson. Also in 1926, a ballroom for dances and cabaret performances was added to the theater building, at a reported cost of \$100,000; white and black audiences attended on alternate nights. In May 1927, the theater introduced a stock troupe, the Alhambra Players, briefly billed as the All Star Colored Civic Repertory Company. Its inaugural production was *Goat Alley*, by the white playwright E. H. Culbertson; this full-length drama of life in a black slum had opened on Broadway in 1921 and was well received. However, the Alhambra Players were more likely to perform nonracial plays, such as *The Cat and the Canary* or *Rain*.

Despite good reviews and good houses, the Alhambra closed briefly beginning in June 1927 because of a lack of capital. When it reopened in late August of that year under the management of Milton Gusdorf, the theater featured musical reviews and motion pictures until legitimate drama was again incorporated into its programs, in the form of short plays complementing the reviews and films, in 1928. Actors who had appeared with the Lafayette Players, including Evelyn Preer, Charles H. Moore, Edward Thompson, J. Lawrence Criner, Susie Sutton, and Alice Gorgas, appeared as Alhambra Players. The company presented a new thirty-minute production, usually described as light drama based on contemporary themes, each week through 1929 and remained active through 1931, when the Alhambra became exclusively a movie theater.

A casualty of the Depression era, the Alhambra closed in 1932, and its ballroom and theater were never again to be used for those purposes. After standing empty for decades, it was converted into an office building. However, it was used once more for a performance on 22 May 2000, when Ingo Maurer, a German lighting designer, presented a happening and light show for an audience of 600 called *Harlem Lights: A Night at the Alhambra*.

FREDA SCOTT GILES

See also Blackbirds; Lafayette Players; Mills, Florence; New York Age; Preer, Evelyn; Robinson, Bill "Bojangles"

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Ali, Duse Mohamed

Duse Mohamed Ali was born in Alexandria, Egypt, to an Egyptian father, Abdul Salem Ali, an army officer who was later killed during an abortive nationalist uprising in 1881–1882; and a Sudanese mother. When he was nine years old, his father sent him to study in England, and eventually he lost his knowledge of Arabic and lost contact with his family. From then on he would live away from his country of birth, traveling widely throughout the African diaspora and residing variously in England, the United States, and Nigeria.

In 1885, at age nineteen, he started a career as a stage actor that would last for twenty-four years. He began in Wilson Barrett's theatrical company, adopting the non-Arabic name Duse; the following year, he left England for tours and performances in the United States and Canada. He quit the company in the United States and worked as a clerk for several years before returning to Britain in 1898 to resume acting.

In 1909 he began a new career in journalism, publishing articles on Egyptian nationalism and the oppression of Africa in *New Age*, an influential socialist weekly literary journal. In 1911 he published a short history of Egypt, *In the Land of the Pharaohs*, reputedly the first history of that country written by an Egyptian. The book received critical acclaim, catapulting him into international prominence.

In July 1912, in London, he founded *African Times and Orient Review*, a political, cultural, and commercial journal that advocated pan-African-Asian nationalism and was a forum for African intellectuals and activists from around the world. The journal covered issues in the United States, the Caribbean, West Africa, South Africa, Egypt, and Asia, including India, China, and Japan. Marcus Garvey, who was then living in London, briefly worked for Duse Mohamed Ali and contributed an article to the journal's issue of October 1913. *African Times and Orient Review* ceased publication in October 1918 and was succeeded by *African and Orient Review*, which operated through most of 1920.

In 1921, Duse Mohamed Ali traveled again to the United States, and thereafter he never returned to Britain. In the United States, he worked briefly in Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association movement, contributing articles on African issues to *Negro World* and heading a department on African affairs.

Having come to the United States to promote his vision of economic pan-Africanism, he sought to set up a commercial link between West Africans and African Americans. In the 1920s he repeatedly but unsuccessfully tried to obtain financing to enable West African produce farmers to secure markets and exports to the United States so as to wrest control from major British firms, such as Lever Brothers. In the 1930s he failed to gain European-American capital for the same purpose.

In 1931 he left the United States for West Africa, settling in Lagos. He founded and was the editor of *The Comet*, which in 1933 became Nigeria's largest weekly. In 1934 he serialized his novel *Ere Roosevelt Came*, which touched on his experiences in the United States. From June 1937 to March 1938 he also serialized his autobiography, *Leaves from an Active Life*. He retired from the newspaper's managing directorship in 1943 and died in Lagos two years later.

Biography

Duse Mohamed Ali was born in Alexandria, Egypt, on 21 November 1866. He was sent to England for schooling in 1875 or 1876. His father was killed during a nationalist uprising in 1882. Duse Mohamed Ali pursued an acting career in England (1885–1909) and traveled to and lived in the United States (1886–1898, and later in 1921–1931). He began a

career in journalism in London and wrote for *New Age* (1909). He published *In the Land of the Pharaohs* (1911). He founded and edited *African Times and Orient Review* (1912–1918) and *African and Orient Review* (1920), both in London. He worked for Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in the early 1920s. He settled in Lagos, Nigeria (1931–1945); there, he founded, edited, and managed *The Comet* (1933–1943). In *Comet*, he serialized a novel, *Ere Roosevelt Came* (1934); and an autobiography, *Leaves from an Active Life* (1937–1938). He died in Lagos, on 26 February 1945.

AHATI N. N. TOURE

See also Garvey, Marcus; Negro World; Pan-Africanism; Universal Negro Improvement Association

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Alston, Charles

Charles H. “Spinky” Alston (1907–1977) was a major figure in the art scene in New York City for fifty years—a trailblazer as a painter, muralist, sculptor, illustrator, and art educator. He had come to Harlem in 1915 when his stepfather, Harry Bearden (Romare Bearden's uncle), moved the family there. In Harlem, Alston's artistic interests were nurtured and blossomed into a professional career that would significantly influence African American art.

After graduating from Columbia University, Alston became the director of the boys' program at Utopia House, which cared for the children of working mothers; one of his students was Jacob Lawrence, who became an important African American artist. Alston was employed next at the Harlem Arts Workshop, run by the African American sculptor Augusta Savage at the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library; this workshop was later incorporated into the Works Progress Administration (WPA). He was introduced to African art by the philosopher and cultural critic Alain Locke, whom he helped install an exhibition of African sculpture at the Schomburg Collection at the 135th Street Library.

As classes at the workshop in the library became too crowded, because of increasing demands for cultural education in Harlem, Alston found new space for the school and himself in an old stable at 306 141st Street. During the next four years, “306” became an interdisciplinary artistic salon as well as a school for the visual arts. In 1935, Alston, Savage, Elba Lightfoot, and others came together to form the Harlem Artists Guild. Also in 1935, Alston became the first black WPA supervisor. He was assigned to the WPA's Federal Arts Project Commission and was in charge of the murals to be painted at Harlem Hospital. These murals became a source of controversy in 1936, when the white

director of the hospital and the city's commissioner of hospitals sought unsuccessfully to block their display. In 1938, Alston obtained a Rosenwald fellowship and began a tour of the South that became the basis of his *Family* series, renderings of the life of southern blacks.

During World War II, Alston worked for the Office of War Information, creating posters and cartoons to mobilize support among blacks for the war effort. In 1950, his career in the fine arts was revitalized when the Metropolitan Museum mounted an exhibition of contemporary art, and his submission, *Painting*, was one of the few works purchased by the museum. Alston soon became an instructor at the Art Students League. His social and racial consciousness led him to join other black artists, such as Hale Woodruff, Norman Lewis, Romare Bearden, and Emma Amos, to form Spiral, an organization concerned about the relationship of black artists to the civil rights movement. Charles Alston died in 1977, leaving behind a legacy as a pioneering artist and educator whose work was quite varied in style, but always expressive and interesting.

Biography

Charles H. Alston was born on 28 November 1907 into a prominent black family in Charlotte, North Carolina. His mother was Anna Elizabeth Miller Alston; his father was Rev. Primus P. Alston, an Episcopalian minister. Primus Alston died of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1910. Three years later, Anna Alston married Harry Pierce Bearden (the uncle of the artist Romare Bearden), who moved the family to New York. In New York, Alston attended DeWitt Clinton High School and Saturday classes at the National Academy of Art. In 1925, he received a scholarship to the Yale University School of Fine Arts but decided to attend Columbia University; there, he was introduced to modern art, including the work of Modigliani. Alston graduated from Columbia in 1929 and received his M.A. from the university's Teachers College in 1931. He worked with Utopia House, the Harlem Arts Project, and the WPA during the 1930s; with the Office of War Information during World War II; and with the Art Students League in the postwar years. He was the recipient of a Julius Rosenwald fellowship and one of the founders of Spiral. Mayor John V. Lindsay appointed him to the New York City Art Commission in 1969. Alston died in 1977.

LARRY A. GREENE

See also Artists; Bearden, Romare; Harlem Hospital; Lawrence, Jacob; Locke, Alain; 135th Street Library; Rosenwald Fellowships; Savage, Augusta; Woodruff, Hale; Works Progress Administration

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Amenia Conference, 1916

Arriving at Troutbeck, the setting for the three-day Amenia Conference of August 1916, W. E. B. Du Bois "knew it was mine. It was just a southern extension of my own Berkshire Hills." Troutbeck, in Amenia, New York, was the home of Joel Spingarn, chairman of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); it was just thirty miles South of Du Bois's hometown, Great Barrington, Massachusetts. Not only were the sylvan surroundings familiar to Du Bois, but he also sensed that this rural estate would inspire the conference, marking the end of one era and the beginning of another.

Although the Amenia Conference was described as an "independent" retreat for the national civil rights leadership held "under the auspices" of the NAACP, the association had a clear investment in sponsoring the meeting. In just its sixth year, the NAACP—and in particular its officers Du Bois and Spingarn—perceived an opportunity to unify civil rights leaders and to fortify its own role in the struggle for freedom for African Americans. Before 1916, unity had been all but unachievable. For more

than a decade, meaningful cooperation had been prevented by deep fissures and contention between African American leaders who sympathized with Booker T. Washington's program of accommodation and those who were committed to confronting Jim Crow squarely. Even within the NAACP, unity had involved a struggle. Since its founding in 1909, the association had grown in strength and numbers, yet it continued to experience internal conflict and uncertainty. Although communities from Los Angeles to Boston had responded to the appeal of the NAACP's strategy of protest and had founded local branches, Du Bois acknowledged in 1916 that the association was "a precarious thing without money, with some influential members" yet "never quite sure whether their influence would stay with us if we 'fought' for Negro rights." But when Washington died in late 1915, Du Bois and Spingarn believed the moment had arrived to ensure the NAACP's survival within a more unified civil rights movement.

Spingarn offered to hold the conference at his estate and mailed 200 invitations—an ambitious number—to a wide spectrum of activists, philanthropists, and politicians ranging from the radical Bostonian William Monroe Trotter to Robert Russa Moton, the conservative bearer of Washington's legacy. President Woodrow Wilson and former presidents William Howard Taft and Theodore Roosevelt were among those who replied with regrets, but more than fifty of the invitees arrived in Ameniam on 24 August, an unusually cool and misty morning. They included the novelist Charles Chesnutt; Mary White Ovington of the NAACP; John Hope, the president of Atlanta University; Emmett Scott, who had been an associate of Washington's; Kelly Miller, a sociologist at Howard University; and Mary Burnett Talbert, president of the National Association of Colored Women. In a short while, in Du Bois's words, the conferees were having a "rollicking good time." It had taken considerable delicacy to persuade leaders of "all shades" of opinion to convene at all, let alone in this unique setting. The NAACP had arranged for Spingarn's guests to camp among several canvas army tents pitched on the lawn at Troutbeck. If this rusticity had at first raised eyebrows, the congenial atmosphere—hikes through the woods, turns on the tennis court, and comedy on the croquet pitch—eventually charmed the delegates and created a cooperative spirit. "Now and again, of course," Du Bois observed, "there was just a little

sense of stiffness and care in conversation when people met who for ten years had been saying hard things about each other; but not a false word was spoken."

What *was* said, however, was meant to remain private—conducted not to secrecy but rather to candid discussion. Over three days, the participants in the Ameniam Conference discovered, with little surprise, their common conviction about the principal goals of their work. Although—again, to no one's surprise—disagreement arose over how to reach these goals, no conflict prevented a united statement of purpose. The group expressed a collective belief, summarized in the resolutions of the conference, in the need to support education for African Americans, "every form" of which "should be encouraged and advanced." They also considered it essential to achieve "complete political freedom" and to abandon factionalism.

Looking back on the Ameniam Conference a decade later, Du Bois asserted that "on account of our meeting, the Negro race was more united and more ready to meet the problems of the world." His words may suggest hyperbole, but the NAACP had emerged from the meeting of 1916 with renewed vitality. Following the Ameniam Conference, the association founded local branches in the South, backed litigation that protected citizenship rights for blacks, and lobbied for federal antilynching legislation. By the mid-1920s the NAACP had become the nation's foremost civil rights organization.

EBEN MILLER

See also Ameniam Conference, 1933; Chesnutt, Charles Waddell; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Miller, Kelly; Moton, Robert Russa; Ovington, Mary White; Scott, Emmett Jay; Spingarn, Joel; Talbert, Mary Burnett; Trotter, William Monroe

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Amenia Conference, 1933

On Friday, 18 August 1933, Abram Harris, an economist at Howard University, arrived at Troutbeck, Joel Spingarn's estate in Amenia, New York, for the second Amenia Conference, along with W. E. B. Du Bois; Virginia Alexander, a physician in Philadelphia; and Pauline Young of Wilmington, Delaware, who was a librarian and an activist in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). These four had traveled together in Du Bois's automobile. They were soon joined by more than two dozen fellow delegates and observers of the three-day conference to discuss the past, present, and future of the NAACP within the struggle for civil rights.

The idea of reprising the Amenia Conference had come to Du Bois and Spingarn, who were officers of the NAACP, in 1931. Fifteen years earlier, they had also arranged for a conference of civil rights leaders at Troutbeck, in the southern Berkshires. That meeting had resulted in a newfound unity of purpose, which helped the NAACP to become a powerful nationwide organization. By the early 1930s, however, the association's future appeared uncertain. For several years membership had been dwindling, leaving formerly dynamic branches from Boston to Baltimore nearly moribund. One board member of the NAACP argued in the spring of 1932 that even the appeal of the association as a civil rights organization had diminished significantly. The association was "losing ground with the average man on the street" and was just as clearly failing to "attract and hold the minds of the young people." In the context of the Depression, the NAACP's historic commitment to the legal and political rights of African Americans seemed to fall short—especially in contrast to the radical left, particularly affiliates of the Communist Party such as International Labor Defense and the League of Struggle for Negro Rights, which articulated the need for social progress through economic transformation. The leaders of the NAACP had long debated developing an economic program, and in 1933 the association accepted Spingarn's offer to host a second Amenia Conference devoted to this concern, among others.

Unlike the conference of 1916, the retreat of 1933 was limited by the NAACP to a small group representing the up-and-coming generation of African American leaders. Of the twenty-seven conferees who met in Amenia in August 1933, the youngest (Juanita Jackson, an activist from Baltimore) was twenty, and the oldest (the sociologist E. Franklin Frazier of Fisk University) was thirty-eight. Five of the conferees, including Harris, Emmett Dorsey, the lawyer Charles Houston, the political scientist Ralph Bunche, and the "New Negro" poet Sterling Brown, taught at Howard University. Frances Williams, Marion Cuthbert, Wenonah Bond, and Anna Arnold represented the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). Most of the group—like the attorney Louis Redding of Delaware, a graduate of both Brown University and Harvard University's law school—held degrees from prestigious northern universities and conformed to Du Bois's vision of a well-educated and socially responsible elite upper stratum of racial leadership.

Among the remaining delegates, Abram Harris had perhaps looked forward most keenly to the second Amenia Conference. Harris had spent the past decade arguing that the struggle for civil rights would succeed only by fostering a cooperative movement for economic justice between black and white workers. Until the publication of *The Black Worker* in 1931, Harris's analytical work had never earned him the stature of his celebrated contemporaries, who were poets of the Harlem Renaissance. At Amenia in 1933, however, Harris was among the most recognized intellectuals of his generation; during the election of conference officers, he was given the responsibility of formulating the group's Findings Report.

As in 1916, the deliberations of the conference were kept private to allow frank conversation. During morning, afternoon, and evening sessions held among the tents at Troutbeck, the delegates, as well as several older observers from the NAACP, such as Du Bois and Spingarn, vigorously debated the future shape of the struggle for civil rights. Whereas Harris and Emmett Dorsey (his colleague at Howard University) enunciated the power of interracial working-class unity, E. Franklin Frazier stressed the need to take black nationalism seriously. Armed with charts, graphs, and visual aids, Du Bois similarly argued for the necessity of separatism as a means to end segregation. Although the final consensus leaned toward accepting Harris's point of view, it was only after a conversation ranging from New Deal politics to the delegates' personal experiences.

The NAACP leaders had hoped that the conferees at Ameniam would offer specific guidance for shaping the association's program, but the problems discussed that weekend proved too vast to address in such terms. Rather, once Abram Harris began to develop the Findings Report, he was purposefully broad—and he unabashedly drew on arguments he had already made in *The Black Worker*. Considered in the black press as the statement of a new generation, the idea that civil rights leaders needed to cooperate with the labor movement went back to the 1920s and even earlier, but it had taken on new significance during the Depression. Harris, in particular, would continue to work with the NAACP to implement an economic program, but the challenge of uniting black and white workers in a broad effort for social change remained unfulfilled over the next generation.

EBEN MILLER

See also Ameniam Conference, 1916; Brown, Sterling; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Frazier, E. Franklin; Spingarn, Joel

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American Mercury

The magazine *American Mercury* (1924–1980) began monthly publication in January 1924 under the editorship of Henry Louis (H. L.) Mencken (1880–1956) and George Jean Nathan (1882–1958). At its peak in 1927, more than 77,000 copies were sold each month. The editorial team and the content went through several major changes, especially after 1933, when Mencken's resignation led to a drastic drop in readership; but

the magazine continued to come out each month, in green-covered 128-page issues, until November 1950. In 1952 it was reorganized as a right-wing journal with no resemblance to its founders' original vision; publication stopped in 1980.

American Mercury was founded, as announced in a press release before the appearance of the first issue, to "offer a comprehensive picture, critically presented, of the entire American scene." That scene included a nonconformist spectrum of ideas in diverse fields, including literature, science, politics, economics, and "industrial and social relations." The magazine devoted itself to debunking platitudes, challenging assumptions about authority and propriety, and providing an educated and discerning readership with the best available writing in a variety of genres and on a wide range of topics.

Mencken approached many of the best writers of the day to ask for contributions to the magazine: among the first were Theodore Dreiser, Upton Sinclair, and James Weldon Johnson. Realist writers, whether or not they had achieved popular or critical success, were prominently featured throughout Mencken's editorship. Volume 1, number 1 of the *Mercury* presented four poems by Theodore Dreiser; number 2 included *All God's Chillun Got Wings (A Play)* by Eugene O'Neill and "Caught (A Story)" by Sherwood Anderson. Later issues would include work by Ambrose Bierce, Sinclair Lewis, Carl Sandburg, William Faulkner, and others.

The *Mercury* widely publicized its interest in discovering new writers; it encouraged and accepted submissions by housewives, convicts, panhandlers, and many others whose stories were otherwise unlikely to be told. The magazine was also well known as a showcase for writings about racial tension and featured many contributions by African Americans, including W. E. B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson, Countee Cullen, George S. Schuyler, and Kelly Miller.

In addition to short stories, poems, plays, and essays, the *Mercury* was read for its regular features. Editorial essays and monthly columns on "The Theatre" and "The Library" provided strongly opinionated recommendations. The popular and much copied column "Americana" featured brief sketches of scenes from city or country life, as well as samples of entertaining sayings heard on the street or reprinted from American newspapers.

American Mercury, especially in its first decade (1924–1933), is credited with challenging and changing expectations of what a magazine could be. By actively

seeking contributions from a wide variety of writers, and by providing a hearing for unpopular viewpoints, the *Mercury* served as a forum in which members of the “civilized minority,” as Mencken described his varied readership, could explore and debate the social constraints under which they lived.

ROSEMARIE COSTE

See also Anderson, Sherwood; Cullen, Countee; Dreiser, Theodore; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, James Weldon; Lewis, Sinclair; Mencken, H. L.; Miller, Kelly; Schuyler, George S.

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American Negro Labor Congress

African Americans in the Workers (Communist) Party of America organized the American Negro Labor Congress (ANLC) in Chicago on 25–31 October 1925. Increasing conservatism in the United States after 1920 had brought the collapse of all-black organizations such as the African Blood Brotherhood, and ANLC was intended to fill the gap. Its principal founder was Lovett Fort-Whiteman, an African American Marxist who had studied at Tuskegee and who also initially edited ANLC’s journal, *The Negro Champion*. ANLC eschewed black nationalism and separatism; it sought to achieve black liberation by concentrating on the working class and on economic issues. However, this communist emphasis often conflicted with African American sensibilities; for example, ANLC believed that lynching was caused by capitalist exploitation and control and could best be countered in the economic arena.

ANLC wanted to eliminate discrimination in employment, to open segregated unions to black members, and to create all-black unions when necessary; it repeatedly cited the failure of the American Federation

of Labor (AFL) to organize black workers. ANLC demonstrated its goals in 1926 through its support for striking black theater projectionists at the white-owned Lafayette Theater in Harlem. Unfortunately, ANLC’s agenda, which was extremely unfocused, also included the global elimination of discrimination against all black peoples and the liberation of victims of American and European imperialism overseas. Such sweeping objectives held little appeal to workers, who were more immediately concerned with earning a living; as a result, the membership of ANLC was never very large. William Green, the president of AFL, made ANLC’s objectives even harder to attain: He considered ANLC so radical that he threatened member unions with expulsion if they participated in it. Labor activists in Harlem such as A. Philip Randolph, who was launching the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters at the time ANLC met in Chicago, also gave the congress a wide berth.

ANLC made an effort to incorporate black nationalism and racial issues with its communist focus on the class struggle but failed miserably. At the founding convention in Chicago, the emphasis on communism (and Russia) overshadowed African American concerns. For instance, the thirty-two black delegates and one Mexican-American delegate met before a primarily white audience and were entertained by Russian ballet and theater groups, but no black artists. Lovett Fort-Whiteman attended the congress dressed in a *rabochka* (a Russian peasant blouse) and announced that a group of black young people had been selected for revolutionary training in Moscow and would study Marxism and Leninism at the University of the Toilers of the East. Also, in the United States ANLC focused on large eastern cities and industrial centers, failing to represent the masses of southern black workers.

Within one year, in an attempt to focus on issues more important to average African Americans, Richard Moore replaced Fort-Whiteman as the leader of ANLC and as editor of *The Negro Champion*. ANLC moved its headquarters from Chicago to New York in 1928. Although ANLC was nearly moribund after its move to Harlem, the desire for a black labor organization resulted in intermittent calls for its resurrection. In late 1930, ANLC dissolved and was replaced by the League of Struggle for Negro Rights (LSNR). Lovett Fort-Whiteman emigrated to Russia in 1930; he was arrested in 1937, during the Stalinist purges of the Bolshevik leadership, and he died in 1939 in a Soviet gulag, at age forty-four.

JOHN CASHMAN

See also African Blood Brotherhood; Communist Party; Lafayette Theater; Moore, Richard B.; Randolph, A. Philip

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Amos 'n' Andy

The face of entertainment was changed forever by the comedy series *Amos 'n' Andy*, originally called the *Sam 'n' Henry Show*, which was broadcast on radio from 1928 to 1960 and on television from 1951 to 1953. On radio, the white actors Charles Correll (1890–1972) and Freeman Gosden (1899–1982), who wrote and performed the shows, won audiences over with slapstick comedy and buffoonery as two southern black men hoping for success and prosperity in the city of Chicago. Correll and Gosden had begun as "harmony boys" at WGN, the radio station in Chicago where they developed what became *Amos 'n' Andy*. They made their program popular among black and white audiences alike with a combination of music, minstrel comedy, and dramatic dialogue.

Although *Amos 'n' Andy* emerged during the later part of the Harlem Renaissance, this form of entertainment worked against what many artists and scholars were attempting to achieve for blacks. As the radio program continued, black audiences became more perplexed by offensive connotations that mocked the

progress of black Americans. Correll and Gosden skillfully imitated black vernacular English to give the characters authenticity and alert audiences to each character's social status—"dialect" indicated a black person, "nondialect" a white person. Also, there were mixed responses to their use of racial stereotypes as central characters. The episodes centered on Amos, who was presented as shiftless and inept; and Andy, who was lazy and pompous. Both characters reflected stereotypical minstrel caricatures that had been popularized during the nineteenth century. Still, the series continued to remain a favorite in American households.

In 1927, Correll and Gosden entered a critical period that led them to examine the future of their radio program. Their popularity had been growing not only because of the program but also because of promotional offerings such as recordings, books, and toys. Correll and Gosden decided that they wanted to distribute the program to other radio stations in order to expand their audience; however, WGN rejected this proposal.

WGN's refusal aroused the interest of WMAQ, the radio station of the *Chicago Daily News*. WMAQ offered Correll and Gosden a contract with distribution rights, which they accepted. They changed the name of the program to *Amos 'n' Andy* when WGN refused to release the original name, *Sam 'n' Henry*. On 19 March 1928, *Amos 'n' Andy* made its debut at WMAQ.

Amos 'n' Andy was similar to *Sam 'n' Henry* in centering on the adventures of two southern black men who come to the North seeking success and fortune. But now the two black men were from Atlanta, were blundering businessmen, and were members of a fraternal order, Mystic Knights of the Sea. Although the new radio series received some harsh criticism for its portrayal of blacks, it continued to be very popular on the east and west coasts, running six days a week, sometimes twice a day to accommodate time differences.

As *Amos 'n' Andy* reached the peak of its fame during the 1930s, the controversy surrounding it intensified. Correll and Gosden's uncensored use and imitation of facets of black culture disturbed black audiences and black comedians, and protesters argued that the program was baneful and demeaning to blacks. In 1931, reportedly, some 750,000 signatures were gathered by the *Pittsburgh Courier* in an effort to have the radio show canceled; this petition alleged that the program inflated misconceptions about black

culture and defamed black women. Nevertheless, the program continued to be broadcast and was converted from a daily serial into a weekly half-hour presentation.

The growing popularity of the radio program led to the development of a television series, which began in the summer of 1951 on CBS. The television program was produced by Correll and Gosden, but they did not act in it: There had been an intense search, lasting more than a year, for the most appropriate black actors for the television version. The television program also differed from the radio program in that many of its episodes focused on George "Kingfish" Stevens (played by Tim Moore), the head of the Mystic Knights of the Sea lodge; Stevens typically placed Amos Jones (played by Alvin Childress) and Andy Hogg Brown (played by Spencer Williams) in situations where they—or at least Andy—might be revealed as hapless and artless. The characters in the television version also included Kingfish's wife, Sapphire (played by Ernestine Wade), and his overbearing mother-in-law, "Mama" (played by Amanda Randolph). This pro-



Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll as Amos and Andy.
(Photofest.)

gram was television's first all-black comedy, and the story lines involved the lives of two types of characters: stereotypical and true-to-life. Some of the characters, as on the radio program, were reincarnations of figures in nineteenth-century minstrel shows—the coon, the Uncle Tom, the mammy. Such types, of course, precluded authentic representations of black life and reaffirmed notions of segregation and inequality.

The CBS network received criticism from various civil rights groups, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which believed that the show promoted racial stereotypes and negative images of blacks. Walter White of the NAACP led a significant protest and filed a lawsuit against the CBS network. This protest, however, deterred sponsors from supporting not only television comedies that exploited blacks but also comedies that featured blacks; thus the efforts of the civil rights group may have been a factor in the failure of CBS to cast any blacks as main characters in dramatic series. (After the cancellation of *Amos 'n' Andy*, no television network cast a black person in a dramatic series until 1965, when Bill Cosby starred in *I Spy*.)

The television series *Amos 'n' Andy* was canceled at the end of its second season in 1953. But during the following decade, *Amos 'n' Andy* appeared occasionally in at least 218 markets across the world, including Australia, Bermuda, Kenya, and western Nigeria; and it continued to thrive afterward through syndication. There is still debate about whether the show was actually racist, because while it did incorporate common stereotypes, it also portrayed blacks in positive, professional roles—for example, as attorneys and entrepreneurs. Eventually, though, as a result of widespread civil rights demonstrations and continued protest against local broadcasts of *Amos 'n' Andy*, CBS removed the show from the television circuit permanently in 1966. Correll and Gosden had meanwhile continued the radio series, with new material, until the program went off the air in 1960.

GENYNE HENRY BOSTON

See also National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; White, Walter

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Amsterdam News

Amsterdam News, the leading African American weekly in New York City since the Harlem Renaissance, was established in 1909 at a site close to Amsterdam Avenue—hence its name. With an expense account of \$10, James H. Anderson assembled the paper in his apartment on 65th Street in San Juan Hill, where many African Americans lived before relocating to Harlem. One year later, the paper joined the exodus to Harlem. Between 1910 and 1920, Harlem was evolving into a hub of black America, and the *Amsterdam News* chronicled the change.

That a newspaper begun with such minimal resources managed to survive and thrive suggests the demand in the community for its image in print. The limited funds also indicate the strong odds against the black press. This was a difficult, although heady, time. World War I helped create a distinction between “old” and “new” Negroes, but the soldiers of color who participated in the Allies’ victory were rarely allowed to benefit from their efforts. Some soldiers were lynched, and bloody riots erupted in several cities, with hundreds of casualties among African Americans. Decent jobs were scarce. But African Americans transformed themselves in the urban market, and they were ambitious to learn and improve, with the black newspaper as their secular bible. They read it religiously to find out where they were and what they were doing within and outside their own communities, and a single copy often passed from hand to hand.

Much of the newfound excitement of African Americans as they remade themselves in their new environment was expressed artistically. This expression culminated in the Harlem Renaissance, which was largely the work of their hands and pens. In the 1910s and 1920s, T. Thomas Fortune, then a dean of journalists,

wrote regularly for the *Amsterdam News*. In later years, so did John Henrik Clarke, W. E. B. Du Bois, Roy Wilkins, and Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Two women who were pioneers in arts journalism—Nora Holt and Marvel Cooke—contributed to the paper during and after the Harlem Renaissance, as did the novelist Ann Petry.

Sara Warren, whose husband had worked with its founder, bought the *Amsterdam News* in 1926. A decade later, it was in receivership and was sold for several thousand dollars to two physicians. Under the Powell-Savory partnership, younger writers were hired, and coverage became national as well as local. The paper also became one of the first in the country to unionize. In the 1950s and 1960s, the *Amsterdam News* was in the vanguard of civil rights journalism and was quick to recognize Malcolm X, with a column called “God’s Angry Man.” In 1971, a consortium of businesspeople and politicians, including Clarence Jones, John Procope, and Percy Sutton, bought the paper for \$2.3 million. Twelve years later, it was sold to another group of businesspeople, headed by Wilbert Tatum, who practiced hands-on control. In 1997, Tatum retired and turned the reins over to his daughter Eleanor, who then served as publisher and editor-in-chief.

BARBARA BREWSTER LEWIS

See also Black Press; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Fortune, Timothy Thomas; Holt, Nora

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Anderson, Charles W.

Charles W. Anderson was born in Oxford, Ohio; he was educated in public schools, and after brief training at business and language schools, he arrived in New York in the late 1890s. There, he quickly rose to prominence as the recognized leader of state Republican politics; by the time of his death, he was one of the most famous black politicians in the country.

Anderson held a variety of minor posts in New York early in his career—at the customs house, as private secretary to the state treasurer (and later chief clerk of the treasury), and with the state racing commission—all the while building a network of political contacts within Manhattan, mainly through his presidency of the Colored Republican Club. He was thus positioned to receive political appointments near the top of the civil service hierarchy.

The Colored Republican Club had been formed in the early 1900s, primarily to get out the black vote for Theodore Roosevelt, which it succeeded in doing; and when Roosevelt became president in 1905, Anderson was appointed collector of internal revenue for New York's second district (which included Wall Street). He was also a member of the New York State Republican Committee (for a long while, the only African American) for ten terms and a delegate-at-large to three Republican conventions. His influence on the political empowerment of African Americans was so pervasive that at his death in 1938, *New York Age* commented, "You just can't think of Republicanism in New York without remembering Charlie Anderson."

Anderson's forceful rise in Republican politics was largely a result of his friendship with Booker T. Washington, with whom he had aligned himself in the late 1890s. Anderson, like Washington, believed that solutions to the emerging "Negro problem" could be found by doing what could be done, within existing limitations, as soon as possible. This set him at odds with W. E. B. Du Bois and the Negro Democrats, a group that Anderson characterized as people "to whom nothing is desirable but the impossible." Anderson was so faithful to Washington's beliefs that he even planted spies in rival black organizations that he thought might threaten Washington's goals and carefully reported on their activities to his ally.

In character and temperament Anderson was distinctive. Savvy and freewheeling, he had a reputation as a classy dresser and as a master of the endgame in political deal-making. Versatile and apparently of inexhaustible energy, he seemed never to stop working. According to his friend and admirer James Weldon Johnson, Anderson's solution to fatigue was to stop in the nearest hotel bar for a pint of champagne, and then press on. As an astute politician, Anderson was also well read and fond of discussing contemporary culture, drawing widely on his self-taught knowledge of the English poets, the Irish patriots, and the contemporary leaders of the British parliament.

Ill health forced Anderson to retire in 1934, but there can be little doubt that he was one of the most important African American politicians of either party in the nineteenth century and the early twentieth.

Biography

Charles W. Anderson was born on 28 April 1866 in Oxford, Ohio, to Charles W. and Serena Anderson. After attending public school, he received further training at Spencerian Business College, Cleveland; and Berlitz School of Languages, Worcester, Massachusetts. He was private secretary to the state treasurer of New York in 1893–1895; he was appointed collector of internal revenue for the Second District in New York City in 1905 and for the Third District in New York City in 1922. He died in 1938.

JAMES M. HUTCHISSON

See also Du Bois, W. E. B.; Johnson, James Weldon; *New York Age*; *Politics and Politicians*

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Anderson, Edmund Lincoln

Edmund Lincoln (Eddie) Anderson's career as a comedian and actor stretched from stage roles during the

latter days of the Harlem Renaissance to stardom on radio, in films, and on television during the 1950s and 1960s. Anderson was always called Eddie in private, but in public he was often referred to as “Rochester,” the name of the character he made famous in radio and television programs and in films with the white comedian and actor Jack Benny.

Anderson’s mother, Ella Mae, was a circus tightrope artist; his father, Ed, was a minstrel performer. Although Anderson would later be most famous for his role as Rochester, he had gotten his start on the stage. One of his earliest stage appearances was in the chorus of *Struttin’ Along*, an all-black revue, in 1919. He traveled the vaudeville circuit, singing and dancing with his brother Cornelius and another performer as the Three Black Aces in the show *Steppin’ High*; their bookings included the Roxy on Broadway and the Apollo and the Cotton Club in Harlem. After *Steppin’ High*, Anderson struck out on his own, touring as a solo song-and-dance act and eventually incorporating comedy into his routine.

His big break came when he auditioned for and won the role of a porter in a train sketch for Jack Benny’s radio program. The character of the porter and Anderson’s performance in the role were hugely popular with the audience, and in 1937 Anderson became a regular on Benny’s radio show. His character was now Jack Benny’s valet, Rochester, and in this role he stole the show on Benny’s radio and television programs as well as in Benny’s films. Audiences loved the fun-loving, quick-witted servant who often had the last laugh with regard to Benny’s miserly character. One factor contributing to Anderson’s success was the comic effect of his raspy voice, a result of damaging his vocal cords while hawking newspapers as a boy. The character of Rochester might seem stereotypical by today’s standards, but at the time it was considered a step up from the antics of black characters on the vaudeville and Broadway stage in the 1920s and 1930s. Anderson became so identified with this role on Benny’s program that he was sometimes credited only as “Rochester” in his subsequent films and public appearances, and he achieved such success as Rochester that for several years during the 1940s he was the highest-paid black actor in Hollywood.

In addition to radio and television, Anderson appeared in more than fifty films. His first film was *What Price Hollywood?* (1932); he also played Noah in *The Green Pastures* (1936). His biggest starring role was Little Joe Jackson in the critically acclaimed *Cabin in the Sky* (1943), a film that also featured other veterans



Eddie “Rochester” Anderson in a photo from Paramount Pictures, 1940. (Photofest.)

of vaudeville and Broadway, including Ethel Waters and Lena Horne. Anderson continued to appear with Jack Benny on radio and television and in films until 1965.

Biography

Edmund Lincoln Anderson was born in Oakland, California, on 18 September 1905. He studied at public schools in Oakland, San Francisco, and San Mateo, California. His work as an actor included Jack Benny’s radio and television series, 1937–1965; *The Green Pastures*, 1936; *Jezebel*, 1938; *You Can’t Take It with You*, 1938; *Gone with the Wind*, 1939; *Cabin in the Sky*, 1943; *Brewster’s Millions*, 1945; and *It’s a Mad Mad Mad Mad World*, 1963. He was a member of the Screen Actors’ Guild, Actors Guild of Variety Artists, and Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences. Anderson was married first to Mamie Sophie Wiggins, who died in 1954, and then, in 1956, to Eva Simon, with whom he had three children. His second marriage ended in divorce. Anderson died of a heart ailment at the Motion

Picture Country House and Hospital in Los Angeles, California, on 28 February 1977.

HEATHER MARTIN

See also Film; Film: Actors; Waters, Ethel

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Anderson, Garland

The playwright Garland Anderson (1886–1939) was a former shoe shiner, singer, dancer, and bellhop (he was called the “San Francisco bellhop playwright”), a philosopher advocating constructive thinking, and a minister and lecturer. He was the first African American to have a serious full-length play produced on Broadway, *Appearances* (1924), which opened doors for other African American dramatists. This work is an autobiographical “courtroom melodrama in which a morally upright bellhop”—Anderson himself—“is tried and exonerated of the charge of raping a white woman” (Peterson 1990, 1997).

Anderson achieved success against considerable odds. At a young age, he ran away from home after his mother died. He set up a shoeshine stand and sang and danced for money. The hoboes he met taught him how to cadge meals, find a place to sleep, and “steam a ride on a moving train.” Passengers on trains hid him beneath their seats; black hotel workers gave him food, money, and a bed. He educated himself by reading the Bible and studying books on Christian

Science, psychology, metaphysics, practical psychology, and constructive thinking.

Anderson’s philosophy of constructive thinking was criticized as reflecting an “Uncle Tom” mentality. *Appearances* drew the same criticism; Anderson was accused of selling out in order to appeal to white audiences. As a bellhop at the Braetum Hotel in San Francisco, he had impressed the guests with his optimism: He believed that all things were possible through faith and that he was called to serve mankind. After seeing Channing Pollock’s moralistic drama *The Fool*, Anderson decided to write a play to convey his own philosophy, although he had no training in playwriting or stage technique. He completed it in only three weeks but then spent seven months finding a producer; during this time, Al Jolson paid Anderson’s expenses in New York and helped him seek financing for the play. Anderson gave public readings of his play (inviting the governor of New York to one of them); he also went to Washington, D.C., to get support from President Calvin Coolidge.

Appearances opened at the Frolic Theater on Broadway on 13 October 1925. In 1925, the policy on Broadway was to avoid mixed casts by having white actors play “colored” roles in blackface. (In 1924, the press had demanded that an off-Broadway production, *All God’s Chillun Got Wings*, be banned because Paul Robeson kissed the hand of the white actress.) However, *Appearances* succeeded with a cast of fourteen white and three “colored” performers and a Negro as the principal character. In 1927–1929, the play toured Los Angeles, Seattle, Chicago, and San Francisco. On 1 April 1929, it opened again in New York City, at the Hudson Theater. In March 1930, it opened at the Royalty Theater in London, where Anderson would become a celebrity.

Anderson also became famous as a minister of constructive thinking and a lecturer to white audiences in the tradition of Booker T. Washington. His message that hard work could overcome social obstacles was well received in America and elsewhere. He and his wife, Doris, a white Englishwoman, had met when she went to a lecture of his at the International New Thought Alliance on Oxford Street in London, where he spoke twice a week. At one of Anderson’s Mayfair Tea Talks, “Dick” Sheppard (then the canon of Saint Paul’s and royal chaplain) was the guest of honor. In London, Anderson lived in Lowndes Square, an exclusive neighborhood; became a member of the Poets’ Club; and had his portrait painted by A. Christie. He left London for America in 1935 and published a

book on his philosophy, *Uncommon Sense*, in 1937. An excerpt from it suggests why African Americans rejected his teachings:

The white race is the superior race of this age. In making this statement I do not feel that it is a reflection on my own race. The white race has centuries of civilization behind it, while the Negro race has less than a hundred years since its slavery in America in which it can lay claim to any civilized status.

Another passage, however, suggests Anderson's sense of serving humanity:

Service to me is the rent I pay for the space I occupy on earth. . . . I realized that if I succeeded, in spite of apparently unsurmountable obstacles, in writing a play. . . . the production of that play would prove to my audience, that they would be able to do the thing they wanted to do.

Biography

Garland Anderson was born c. 1886 in Wichita, Kansas. He completed only four years of schooling there before his family moved to Sacramento, California; he was mainly self-educated. He worked as a bellhop in the Braeburn Hotel in 1907–1924 and began writing *Appearances* in 1924. He also wrote three other plays; the only one whose title is still known is *Extortion* (it was not produced). He was ordained by Rev. Netta Holmes of the Church of Constructive Thinking in Seattle, becoming the first African American ordained in a white church to minister to a white congregation. He served as a minister at the Truth Center in 1929–1939. He visited Honolulu, speaking to Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Hawaiian Christian churches. Anderson opened a “colored” café in San Francisco and eventually bought the Braeburn Hotel, although he later sold it back to his boss. Anderson died in New York Hospital of heart disease in 1939.

FELECIA PIGGOTT McMILLAN

See also Appearances

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Anderson, Marian

The career of the contralto Marian Anderson concided during its early years with the period of the Harlem Renaissance and continued long afterward, until 1965,

when she retired from the concert stage with a final performance at Carnegie Hall.

In 1923, Anderson won a competition for soloists held by the Philadelphia Philharmonic Society. In 1925, as a result of winning a competition at Aeolian Hall in New York City, she appeared at Lewisohn Stadium with the New York Philharmonic. In 1930 and 1933, she received fellowships from the Julius Rosenwald Fund. In 1933–1935, she undertook a concert tour of Europe that established her career. After her performance at the Salzburg Festival in June 1935, the conductor Arturo Toscanini told her, “Yours is a voice such as one hears once in a hundred years.” Anderson had already been well received by African Americans, but her successes abroad gave her an entrée into mainstream American concert halls, theaters, and university auditoriums.

Anderson grew up in an environment filled with music—at home, at church, at school, and in the community. She was born into a happy, close-knit “black bourgeois” family in Philadelphia and showed a natural talent for singing at a tender age, although her parents—who had little money—did not seek professional instruction for her. When she was eight years old, her father, John Anderson, bought a piano. She at first took little interest in it, but one day, as she strolled along a street, she heard a piano being played eloquently by a “dark woman” and became inspired to study the instrument. There was no money for lessons, so she used a note chart propped above the keys. She also bought a violin in a pawnshop for \$3.98 and struggled with it, helped by musical acquaintances who tuned it for her until the strings wore out. Anderson, who was in some ways self-taught, played the piano and the violin by ear and matched her voice to the tones. At about this time, an aunt who was arranging a concert to raise funds for a ministry included Anderson on the program. Anderson knew nothing of the plan until she found a flier on the street with her photograph and name: “Come and hear the baby contralto, ten years old.” Actually, she was still only eight, but she was tall and looked older (later, she would join her church’s adult choir at age thirteen, while still keeping her membership in the junior choir, which she had joined at age six). When Anderson was ten, her father died, and she and her mother and sisters went to live with his parents, who owned an organ that she played while singing spirituals.

John Anderson had been a supervisor of ushers at Union Baptist Church, and the child Marian was introduced to choir music there. She gave her first

public performances in church at about age eight: a duet with her neighbor Viola Johnson, who sang the upper part while Anderson sang the lower part, the range that would become her comfort zone; and a duet with her father’s sister as the soprano and herself as the alto. Anderson soon joined a girls’ church quartet. These early performances led to solo pieces, as Anderson filled in for absent soloists in the senior choir. Soon she was representing Union Baptist Church at various events as a soloist or in ensembles. One such event was at the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. When Anderson was a teenager, the tenor Roland Hayes gave a fund-raising concert for Union Baptist, and she was permitted to appear on the program. Hearing Hayes sing French songs, German lieder, and Italian airs inspired her to take up classical song. (Anderson later said that Hayes was one of three musicians who most decisively influenced her style; the others were Sigrid Onegin and Ernestine Schumann-Heink.) Hayes recommended his own vocal instructor, Arthur J. Hubbard, in Boston, but Anderson’s grandmother would not allow her to travel there, so Anderson approached a music school in Philadelphia, where she was snubbed.

At William Penn High School, where she studied typing and shorthand in preparation for the civil service, Anderson sang in the school choir, often performing brief solos. After she sang at a school assembly, the principal was persuaded to transfer her to South Philadelphia High School, which had a college preparatory track that might lead to a music scholarship.

Anderson belonged to the Camp Fire Girls and performed in their chorus. She gave amateur performances—sometimes for a stipend of a dollar or two—at Baptist, Episcopal, and Methodist churches; the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA); and the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA). When she realized that people would pay to hear her sing, she began to charge at least five dollars a performance. Anderson also joined the Philadelphia Choral Society, a professional group. Her name became known in and around Philadelphia, and she began to give frequent concerts in nearby towns. Roland Hayes helped by recommending her to churches and colleges.

Anderson’s studies with her first vocal teacher, Mary Saunders Patterson (who charged no fee), culminated in a performance in an operetta that Patterson presented for promising students. Anderson next studied with the contralto Agnes Reifsnnyder; then, the musician Lisa Roma—who had heard Anderson sing

at William Penn and had recommended her transfer to South Philadelphia High—arranged an audition with the tenor Giuseppe Boghetti. When Anderson became Boghetti's student, Roland Hayes performed in a concert that raised \$600 to pay the fees. She then studied with Frank La Forge, on a scholarship, for more than a year.

After graduating from high school, Anderson decided to make a career of singing. William ("Billy") King became her accompanist and later her manager. On tour, she met R. Nathaniel Dett, choir director at the Hampton Institute, who took an interest in her career. After a performance at Howard University, Anderson felt confident enough to have a promoter book her at New York City's Town Hall, but her appearance at Town Hall was poorly attended and received unfavorable reviews, and she went home to ponder her next step. Encouraged by her family, she signed on with Arthur Judson's prestigious management firm. Her fees rose, and she appeared at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia and at Carnegie Hall as a soloist with the Hall Johnson Choir; but her career remained stagnant, and she felt that she could establish herself only in Europe.

Anderson's first trip abroad was in 1930: She went to England for about a year. There, she stayed in the homes of the expatriate African American actor John Payne and the painter Vicky Newburg; met, among others, Amanda Ira Aldrich (the daughter of the actor Ira Aldrich); studied German at the Hugh Institute; and performed at Wigmore Hall and the Promenade Concerts directed by Sir Henry Wood. However, her performances were more as a student than as an accomplished artist, and she did not achieve greater recognition from booking agencies in the United States after her return.

In 1933, Anderson returned to Europe for two years. She went first to Germany to perfect her performance of lieder, and after studying with Michael Raucheisen and Sverre Jordan, she financed her own appearance at the Bachsaal in Berlin. She received mostly favorable reviews, but this was the beginning of the Nazi era, and she would not perform again in Germany until 1950. During this trip she also sang in many other cities: Salzburg, Vienna, Brussels, Copenhagen, London, Helsinki, Paris, Tiflis, Leningrad (Saint Petersburg), Moscow, Kharkov, Kiev, and Odessa.

When Anderson returned to the United States, her new manager was the famous Sol Hurok, who wanted to broaden her audiences beyond African Americans. His ambition led to a legendary episode. In 1939,

Hurok tried to arrange for a concert in Washington, D.C., at Constitution Hall, which was controlled by the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). The DAR said that it had "no available dates" and, furthermore, that its policy was "concerts by white artists only." This rejection aroused widespread anger from many individuals and organizations that were working to end racism, and the injustice to Anderson became a cause célèbre even in the White House—the first lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, resigned from the DAR in protest. Harold Ickes, secretary of the interior, then invited Anderson to sing to the people of America in a public concert at the Lincoln Memorial on Easter Sunday, 9 April 1939. On the platform with Anderson were senators, representatives, cabinet members, a Supreme Court justice, Walter White of the NAACP, and representatives from Howard University and African American churches; the diverse audience numbered 75,000, and the concert was broadcast on radio to millions more. (Eventually, the DAR amended its policy, and Anderson appeared at Constitution Hall in 1943.)

Anderson's star rose after the Easter Sunday concert. The general manager of the Metropolitan Opera, Rudolf Bing, approached her about performing in an opera. She accepted, although with some trepidation, and studied with Max Rudolf, the artistic administrator, who prepared her to audition with Dimitri Mitropoulos, the conductor of the opera orchestra. Anderson's opera debut on 7 January 1955, at age fifty-seven, was a milestone: She was the first African American opera singer to appear onstage at the Metropolitan.

In addition to her contributions to classical music (in which she was especially renowned for her interpretations of Bach, Brahms, Handel, Schubert, Schumann, Strauss, Rachmaninoff, and Wolf), Anderson presented classical renditions of African American spirituals—the socioreligious folk songs of an enslaved people, which W. E. B. Du Bois called "sorrow songs." She brought this art form, cherished by African Americans, to international audiences in places where spirituals might otherwise not have been heard. Her performances of "Crucifixion," "Deep River," "Go Down, Moses," "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands," "My Lord, What a Morning," "Oh, What a Beautiful City," and "Were You There?"—mostly in arrangements by Harry Thacker Burleigh—are memorable for her interpretation of dialect and her embellishment, phrasing, rhythm, and tempo, which remained true to the nature of the spiritual. Anderson, who



Marian Anderson, 1940. (Library of Congress.)

always sang with her eyes closed, opened the eyes of the international community to the value of this music.

Biography

Marian Anderson was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on 17 February 1897. She studied voice with Mary Saunders Patterson, Agnes Reifsnnyder, Giuseppe Boghetti, Frank La Forge, Raimund von zur Mühlen, Mark Raphael, Amanda Ira Aldrich, Michael Raucheisen, Sverre Jordan, Madame Charles Cahier, and Steffi Rupp. Her many awards included the Spingarn Medal from the NAACP in 1930. She sang the national anthem at the inauguration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1953; made her debut at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City in 1955, as Ulrica in Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera*; was the United States' goodwill ambassador to Asia in 1957; was appointed by President Eisenhower as an alternate delegate to the American delegation to the United Nations in June 1958; sang at another presidential inauguration—John F. Kennedy's—in 1961; and sang at the Lincoln Memorial as part of the March on Washington in 1963. She received honorary degrees from

Temple University and several colleges. Anderson was married in 1943 to the artist and architect Orpheus H. "King" Fisher. She died in Portland, Oregon, on 8 April 1993.

GERRI BATES

See also Burleigh, Harry Thacker; Dett, Robert Nathaniel; Hayes, Roland; Johnson, Hall; King, Billy; Music; Rosenwald Fellowships; White, Walter

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Anderson, Regina M.

Regina M. Anderson Andrews was instrumental in the development of the Harlem Renaissance because of her vision of community cultural awareness and her ability to inconspicuously implement the ideas of others.

Anderson shared an apartment with Ethel Ray Nance and Louella Tucker in Sugar Hill, at 580 Saint Nicholas Avenue, which became known as the Harlem West Side Literary Salon or simply "580." Andrews began promoting the arts by opening the apartment to community gatherings and cultural activities. She helped organize the famous Civic Club dinner of 1924, which evolved from an event at "580" and was attended by 110 guests, including W. E. B. Du Bois and Langston Hughes. Readings at the dinner inspired Alain Locke, who edited the anthology *The New Negro* in 1925; this collection of rising African American writers is sometimes considered to mark the birth date of the Harlem Renaissance and to be its definitive work. Gatherings and events at "580"—and a similar salon in Harlem's East End, that of Dorothy Peterson and her brother Jerome Bowers Peterson—were reflected in Carl Van Vechten's fifth novel, *Nigger Heaven* (1926).

Anderson, a librarian, worked at several branches of the New York Public Library, notably as an assistant to Ernestine Rose at the 135th Street branch (renamed the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture). She felt that her career as a librarian was an opportunity to educate the community about its artists and the scope of its arts, and in that capacity she instituted a series of cultural events within the library system. These included Family Night, which was a setting for activities such as art exhibits and lectures (one of the guest speakers was Marcus Garvey). The cultural initiative also provided homes in the basement of the 135th Street Library for the Crigwa Theater (which moved to the parish house of Saint Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church in 1931), the Harlem Suitcase Theater, and the Harlem Experimental Theater.

Anderson was a significant figure in theater in several ways. She helped Du Bois with the work of the Crigwa Theater (founded 1924–1925), later known as the Krigwa Theater or Krigwa Players. (Its original name was an acronym for Crisis Guild of Writers and Artists, after the official publication of the NAACP, *Crisis Magazine*.) When the Krigwa Players disbanded, Anderson and Dorothy Peterson founded the Negro Experimental Theater in 1929, on the same principle—as theater by, for, about, and near blacks. Their first production, in June 1929, was Georgia Douglas Johnson's *Plumes*. This group was later called the Harlem Experimental Theater, and Anderson served as its second executive director. She was also a playwright: The Harlem Experimental Theater produced her one-act dramas *Climbing Jacob's Ladder* (written under the pseudonym Ursula Treling) and *Underground* (also pseudonymous) in 1931 and 1932, respectively. *Climbing Jacob's Ladder* was about a lynching coinciding with a church service and was profoundly influenced by the activist Ida B. Wells. The Harlem Experimental Theater was a factor in the decision of the Federal Theater to come to New York.

Biography

Regina M. Anderson Andrews was born on 21 May 1901, in Chicago, Illinois. Her parents were William Grant Anderson (an attorney in New York) and Margaret Simons Anderson. She was educated at Normal Training School, Hyde Park High School, Wilberforce University in Ohio, the University of Chicago, and City College of New York; she received a master of library science (M.L.S.) degree from Columbia University Library

School. She married William T. Andrews (an attorney and assemblyman) in 1926; they had a daughter, also named Regina. In 1936, Anderson was the first African American to be appointed acting supervising librarian, at the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library. She was recognized for her contributions at the World's Fair of 1939 in New York. In 1947, she became the supervising librarian at the Washington Heights branch of the New York Public Library. She retired from the New York Public Library system in 1967. Anderson wrote a two-volume work (unpublished) about black New Yorkers, originally intended for "Harlem on My Mind," an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1968; and coedited *Chronology of African Americans in New York, 1621–1966* with Ethel Ray Nance. Anderson served as the second vice president of the National Council of Women, represented the National Urban League with the United States Commission for UNESCO, and worked with the State Commission for Human Rights. She was a recipient of the Musical Arts Group award, Community Heroine award, and Asia Foundation award. At the time of this writing, she was apparently still living, in upstate New York.

JULYA MIRRO

See also Barnett, Ida B. Wells; Civic Club Dinner, 1924; 580 Saint Nicholas Avenue; Johnson, Georgia Douglas; Krigwa Players; Nance, Ethel Ray; Negro Experimental Theater; Nigger Heaven; 135th Street Library; Peterson, Dorothy Randolph; Saint Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church; Salons; Van Vechten, Carl

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Anderson, Sherwood

Sherwood Anderson had an important role in the development of modern writing in the United States. His immense influence was based largely on a myth that developed around his life, on his extraordinary fourth book, *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), and on several enduring short stories. At a time when the short story was a generally moribund form, Anderson revolutionized it by rejecting what he called the "poisoned plot"—the artificially pat narrative used by O. Henry—and turning it into a vehicle for a serious examination of American realities. Anderson was a tutor and mentor to Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner, and he influenced the vision and style of such diverse writers as Jean Toomer, Thomas Wolfe, John Steinbeck, William Saroyan, and Henry Miller.

Two towns where Anderson's family lived—Camden and Clyde, Ohio—figured large in Anderson's imagination, providing him with themes and characters for his many novels and poems. Camden gave him images (largely invented) of preindustrial America: attractively human in its relations and proportions, a utopia that would be ravaged by capitalism. Clyde gave him a wealth of complex American characters who balanced repression and meanness with generosity and untrammelled imagination. Almost all of Anderson's writing was woven from this material.

Anderson, who became the president of a manufacturing company, was never happy with the moral and ethical compromises he had to make as a businessman; and on 28 November 28, 1912, the pressures of his life intensified. He walked out of his office in the middle of the morning and did not turn up until four days later, when he wandered into a drugstore in Cleveland, not knowing where he was. This episode became a legend in American literary history, a moment when an important writer turned his back on American materialism and worldly success and took up a quest for creative accomplishment.

Anderson eventually left his first wife and their children and started a new life in Chicago as a writer. What became known as the Chicago renaissance was

then in full swing, and Anderson found himself in the company of important writers and publishers, who welcomed and encouraged him. Anderson immersed himself in the tumult of ideas circulating in bohemian Chicago, including current notions of socialism and psychoanalysis, as well as the writings of Gertrude Stein, who became a close friend, and James Joyce.

Anderson had already written three novels when his first story, "The Rabbit-Pen," was accepted for publication by *Harper's* in 1913. He published *Windy MacPherson's Son* in 1916 and *Marching Men* in 1917. He was forty-three years old in 1919 when his masterpiece, *Winesburg, Ohio*, was published by B. W. Huebsch and became an immediate critical success. In this work, Anderson pioneered a new form, the unified short-story collection, that later in the century represented a significant alternative to the traditional novel. The language of *Winesburg, Ohio*—inspired, according to Anderson, by Stein's *Tender Buttons*—is spare and direct; and the narrative is honest, provocative, and indefinite: Anderson represents with stark simplicity and power the alienation that pervaded life in small-town America when industrialization began. This work strongly influenced a generation of younger writers that included Hemingway (whom Anderson introduced to Stein and Faulkner, and whose first novel Anderson got published) and Toomer, among many others.

Over the next several years, Anderson, at the height of his powers and his reputation, published in quick succession *Poor White* (1920), the story collections *The Triumph of the Egg* (1921) and *Horses and Men* (1923), *Many Marriages* (1923), the autobiographical *A Story Teller's Story* (1924), and *Dark Laughter* (1925).

With *Dark Laughter*, Anderson joined a few writers who were trying to cross the deeply entrenched color line in American culture, by drawing on and recounting the experience of African Americans. Given the political climate of the United States in the 1920s, his attempt was definitely progressive. However, it was hobbled because his treatment of African Americans never went beyond the symbolic. African Americans came to stand for all the vital impulses of the body that Anderson felt were stifled and repressed by American Protestantism. (In this regard his work was not unlike Ishmael Reed's representation of Jes' Grew and The Wallflower Order some fifty years later in *Mumbo Jumbo*, but without Reed's humor.) Ernest Hemingway parodied *Dark Laughter* in his own *Torrents of Spring* (1926), and Toni Morrison subjected both books to critical scrutiny in her essay "Whiteness and the Literary Imagination."



Sherwood Anderson, photographed by Carl Van Vechten in 1933.
(Library of Congress.)

During his remaining years Anderson published some twenty books, but none of them matched the creative accomplishment of his earlier works.

Biography

Sherwood Anderson was born in Camden, Ohio, on 3 September 1876. His family moved to Clyde, Ohio, in 1883 after living briefly in Mansfield and Caledonia. Anderson's father, a harness maker, was never very well off. When his mother died in 1893, Anderson moved to Chicago and worked as an unskilled laborer. After serving in the Spanish-American War, he went back to school for a year, then got a job writing advertising copy in Chicago. In 1904 he married Cornelia Lane, the daughter of a successful businessman. After working his way up in several manufacturing companies, in 1906 he took over and became president of Anderson Manufacturing, later renamed American Merchants Company, in Elyria, Ohio. In 1916 he and his first wife (with whom he had three children) were divorced. He then married Tennessee Mitchell; in 1924

that marriage also ended in divorce—as did his third marriage, to Elizabeth Pral, in 1932. Anderson then traveled from Chicago to New York to Reno to New Orleans and eventually settled in Virginia. In 1933, he married Eleanor Copenhaver. In 1941, on a trip with his wife to South America, he died of peritonitis in Panama.

MICHAEL BOUGHN

See also *Dark Laughter*; Toomer, Jean

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Anglophone Africa and the Harlem Renaissance

Anglophone Africa—which consisted of British colonies in western, eastern, and southern Africa; and the independent country of Liberia, founded by freed American slaves in 1847—occupied a central place in the discourse of the Harlem Renaissance. Like its counterpart, francophone Africa, anglophone Africa provided an imaginative resource that contributed to the cultural

and aesthetic base of the Harlem Renaissance. Also, one focus (if not a preoccupation) of the renaissance movement was racial origin and pride, and in this regard the idea of Africa represented many possibilities, of which anglophone Africa provided one. The Harlem Renaissance, for its part, provided anglophone Africa with avenues of self-expression to oppose British colonial rule, develop an agenda for self-rule, and intervene in discourses about a pan-African and pan-Negro philosophy and movement that promoted a unifying agenda for racial self-determination and political freedom. The themes of self-determination, self-assertion, and black pride that defined the Harlem Renaissance resonated favorably in anglophone Africa as it struggled against British colonization. The exchange of ideas about politics, culture, racial roots, and heritage defined the relationship between anglophone Africa and the Harlem Renaissance and their opposition to colonial and racial suppression and domination. The English language, which provided a readily available means for intercultural and transatlantic communication, facilitated this connection between anglophone Africa and the Harlem movement.

In the consciousness of the Harlem Renaissance, anglophone Africa was a rallying point for envisioning racial equality and self-determination. In "The Negro Mind Reaches Out" in Alain Locke's *The New Negro* (1925), W. E. B. Du Bois drew attention to racial and political imbalances in anglophone Africa, with an emphasis on British colonial rule in west Africa (Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and the Gold Coast, later Ghana), British East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, and Sudan), and South Africa. He implied that there was a contradiction in Harlem's appropriation of the idea of Africa as a route to envisioning the New Negro while the African continent was subjected to colonial exploitation and domination. He highlighted Britain's brutal colonial policies, which he characterized as the "shadow of England"—policies that, for example, displaced Africans from their lands in Kenya and South Africa. Du Bois's essay, published in the representative text of the renaissance movement, explained that anglophone Africa was more than a geographical entity. Du Bois portrayed anglophone Africa as a culturally and economically diverse territory marked by economic exploitation, political subjugation, and racial oppression; the Harlem Renaissance addressed these issues in the United States and should also confront them in the wider context of the African diaspora. To do so, and to appeal to the mind of Harlem, Du Bois interpreted British colonial rule in anglophone Africa

as fundamentally racist, with white British rulers and black African subjects. However, Du Bois was not alone in focusing on anglophone Africa as an aspect of the aesthetics of the Harlem Renaissance.

The magazines and newspapers of the Harlem Renaissance provided the best indicators of its interest in anglophone Africa. Publications such as books, edited volumes, and anthologies that dealt with topics ranging from folklore to the ancient and modern history of anglophone Africa were highlighted in reviews and articles in *Opportunity*, *The Crisis*, and Marcus Garvey's newspaper *Negro World*. Regular columns in *Opportunity* variously titled "Africana," "Africana and Exotica," and "Anthropology and Africana" listed books on anglophone Africa. Two columns that Du Bois wrote for *The Crisis*—"Opinion" and "The Looking Glass"—covered culture, politics, and aesthetics in anglophone Africa. Editorials, opinions, and letters to the editor in Garvey's *Negro World* promoted an agenda for anglophone Africa that insistently opposed British rule and affirmed African self-governance. At the time of the Harlem Renaissance, the International Institute of African Languages and Culture began to publish a journal in English, *Africa* (1928–1929), which offered scholarly and intellectual materials on Africa and anglophone Africa, and was therefore favorably reviewed in publications of the renaissance. In addition, reviews of texts on adventure, religion, geography, missionary activities, apartheid in South Africa, art in west Africa, and the "natives" and "primitives" of anglophone Africa appeared regularly in the newspapers and magazines of the renaissance.

For some anglophone Africans, Harlem's newspapers and magazines provided opportunities to question and oppose British colonial rule. Because of British censorship, newspapers in the colonies did not publish anticolonial writings. Not surprisingly, then, anglophone Africans in the colonies sent letters, opinion pieces, stories, and poems to publications in Harlem, calling for political self-representation and self-determination. Through their contributions, anglophone Africans shared in the aspirations of the Harlem Renaissance, which linked its ideology of racial equality in the United States to a call for the end of colonial rule in Africa. Harlem reciprocated not only by publishing the contributions of writers from anglophone Africa but also by espousing anticolonialism. Harlem's newspapers published profiles of various anglophone African countries, such as Sierra Leone, Uganda, and Kenya. Moreover, some of the major figures of the Harlem Renaissance—for example,

W. E. B. Du Bois and Langston Hughes—visited anglophone African countries, particularly in west Africa, and wrote about their experiences; these accounts were also published in the magazines and newspapers of the renaissance. Writers of the Harlem Renaissance also used anglophone Africa in their works, although their depictions were sometimes stereotyped. For example, Langston Hughes set the major action of his short story “Luani of the Jungle” in Lagos, Nigeria.

Literary works of anglophone Africans were also printed in publications of the Harlem Renaissance. For example, in 1922, *Negro World* published “The Sojourner,” a poem by William Essuman Gwira (Kobina) Sekyi of the Gold Coast—a lawyer, nationalist, Africanist, and pan-Africanist. The anglophone African strain in the Harlem Renaissance was evident in *Caroling Dusk: An Anthology of Verse by Negro Poets* (1927), edited by Countee Cullen. This anthology included poems by Gladys Casely Hayford (1904–1950), west Africa’s first modern female poet. *The Messenger* and *Opportunity* also published poems by Hayford. Her poetry captured the cultural and aesthetic mood of the Harlem Renaissance, and in particular the discourse on racial uplift through celebrating and affirming Africa and black beauty, praising individuality, and debunking Western myths and stereotypes of Africans.

In her biographical entry for *Caroling Dusk*, Hayford said that she was born in Axim, Gold Coast (Ghana), and that her parents were Ephraim Joseph Casely Hayford (1866–1930), a Ghanaian; and Adelaide Smith Casely Hayford (1868–1960), a Sierra Leonean. Hayford’s parents were prominent in the culture and politics of west Africa and had contacts with important figures of the Harlem Renaissance; Du Bois stayed in the Hayfords’ home when he visited Freetown in 1924. Hayford’s mother visited Harlem twice—in 1920 and in 1927—to raise money for a vocational school in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and during these visits she promoted African culture among African Americans. On her first visit, the *Crisis* of 20 August 1920 informed its readers in Harlem that Mrs. Casely Hayford was the “first West African woman to lecture in America” (169). With her niece, a Miss Easmon, she contributed to the production and performance of a pageant, *Asheeko* (1922), about the contributions of African Americans to the greatness of America. As a political activist, she was one of the black women (the only African) in Harlem who organized to raise funds for the fourth Pan-African Congress, held in New York in August 1927. The African countries represented at this congress, drawn primarily from anglophone west

Africa, were Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, Nigeria, and Liberia.

Gladys Casely Hayford’s father, Joseph Casely Hayford, was a prominent politician in the Gold Coast; because of his anticolonial, nationalist, and pan-Africanist views, he had contacts with significant figures of the Harlem Renaissance, such as Du Bois and Marcus Garvey. In 1920, he founded the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA), the first political movement in colonial west Africa, which comprised the British colonies of Sierra Leone, Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Nigeria, and the republic of Liberia. The main goal of NCBWA was the liberation of anglophone west Africa from British colonial rule; thus the organization was a natural ally of the anticolonialists of the Harlem Renaissance. Du Bois and Garvey saw NCBWA in west Africa and the pan-African and pan-Negro movements in Harlem as part of a global effort by black people to unify Africa and the African diaspora in the struggle against racial and colonial domination.

Politics was no doubt the most significant aspect of the relationship between the Harlem Renaissance and anglophone Africa. The political vision of self-determination and self-governance, articulated in the aesthetics of Harlem and transformed into political capital by Du Bois and Garvey, became very influential in anglophone Africa. Du Bois’s pan-African movement was initiated at about the time—the 1920s—when modern political consciousness and nationalism were taking shape in anglophone west Africa (as is evident in the formation of NCBWA); and Garvey’s vision and ideology of black empowerment were defined by his call “Africa for Africans.”

From Harlem, Garvey transformed his United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) into an anti-colonial movement, demanding that whites leave Africa; this position appealed to anglophone Africans under colonial rule. In 1922, Garvey told the British government that UNIA stood for the liberation of African colonies, particularly the British colonies of Nigeria, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, and southwestern and east Africa. In the 1920s, branches of UNIA were established in anglophone west Africa, although the British colonial governments disapproved of UNIA and monitored its activities in the region. In 1924, Garvey negotiated with Liberia for an immigrant settlement by UNIA in southern Liberia; but this attempt was thwarted by the English and French, who feared anticolonial Garveyite ideas in Africa, especially near their colonies. Garvey’s anticolonial *Negro World*

was very popular in anglophone Africa; the British considered it seditious, disloyal, and a threat to their interests in Africa, and therefore banned it in most of their African colonies. But despite government regulations and monitoring, *Negro World* was being received by African nationalists in South Africa as late as 1933. Garvey's political and anticolonial philosophy had an especially strong influence on anglophone west African political consciousness during its formative period, the 1920s. NCBWA, in defining its anticolonial position, incorporated Garvey's ideas on African and racial self-determination. On the eve of Ghana's independence, Kwame Nkrumah expressed his allegiance to Garvey's philosophy; and in his autobiography, he noted that as he formed his political ideas, he was influenced by Garvey's *Philosophy and Opinions*. Jomo Kenyatta, the leader of the Mau Mau and later president of Kenya, described

how in 1921 Kenyan nationalists, unable to read, would gather round a reader of Garvey's paper the *Negro World*, and listen to an article two or three times. Then they would run various ways through the forest, carefully to repeat the whole, which they had memorized, to Africans hungry for some doctrine which lifted them from their servile consciousness in which Africans lived. (James 1963, 397)

Garvey's wife recounted how the king of Swaziland had stated that the only two black men he was aware of in the Western world were the boxing champion Jack Johnson and Marcus Garvey.

Music was another link between anglophone Africa and the Harlem Renaissance, and in this regard, the music of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875–1912) was particularly significant. Coleridge-Taylor, who was born to a British mother and a Sierra Leonean father, was a famous composer of choral music, including *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* (1897); Du Bois, in *Darkwater*, eulogized him as the "immortal child." In his work, Coleridge-Taylor expressed his African and black identity, a theme many Harlem Renaissance musicians would later incorporate into their own compositions. He based some of his compositions on African and African American subjects and melodies. His *African Romances* (1897) and *African Suite* (1898) reflected his African heritage; *Sorrow Songs* (1904) and *Six Negro Melodies* (1905) drew on both African and African American song traditions. Coleridge-Taylor wanted to reclaim black identity—and even more, the dignity of the black man—through music; and he inspired

African American composers of the period leading to and including the Harlem Renaissance who used their music to inquire into their cultural roots and heritage. He directly influenced composers of the Harlem Renaissance such as Harry T. Burleigh (1866–1949) and, especially, Clarence Cameron White (1880–1960).

Anglophone Africa and Harlem shared a vision that was anticolonial and antiracist. The Harlem Renaissance contributed significantly to the development of political consciousness and activism in anglophone Africa, either through pan-Africanism and pan-Negroism, which provided political capital for self-empowerment and opportunities for addressing oppression and subjugation; or through art, which provided aesthetic capital for transatlantic contacts and cultural awareness. For its part, anglophone Africa became one of the many regions in Africa that the Harlem Renaissance used to conceptualize the meaning of heritage, roots, and history and to articulate racial pride. It should be noted, though, that the discourse of the Harlem Renaissance occasionally reproduced uncritically the stereotypical rhetoric about anglophone Africa that was part of the colonial representation of Africa as a whole.

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See also Burleigh, Harry Thacker; Crisis, The; Cullen, Countee; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Francophone Africa and the Harlem Renaissance; Garvey, Marcus; Hughes, Langston; Messenger, The; Negro World; Opportunity; Pan-African Congresses; Pan-Africanism; United Negro Improvement Association; White, Clarence Cameron

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Anglophone Caribbean and the Harlem Renaissance

The Harlem Renaissance and the anglophone Caribbean presence in the United States are intimately and inextricably bound together. Claude McKay, Eric Walrond,

Marcus Garvey, Hubert Harrison, Cyril Briggs, Amy Jacques Garvey, Wilfred A. Domingo, and Joel A. Rogers are only a few of the better-known Caribbean immigrants who were closely associated with the renaissance, which was as much a political as a cultural movement.

Caribbeans (especially those from English-speaking territories) distinguished themselves during the Harlem Renaissance as writers, editors, publishers of newspapers and magazines, organizers of political and cultural forums, street-corner orators, founders of dissenting political movements, and raisers of political consciousness. Their contribution is all the more remarkable when one considers that during this period, the foreign-born component never exceeded 1 percent of the black population in the United States. And were we to include those of Caribbean descent born in the United States, other notable figures of the period would be among them, such as W. E. B. Du Bois (whose father was born in Haiti but had roots in the Bahamas), James Weldon Johnson (whose mother was Bahamian), William Stanley Braithwaite (whose father was from British Guiana), and Grace Campbell (whose father was Jamaican)—all of whom expressed pride in their Caribbean background.

McKay's role as poet and novelist was pivotal in the renaissance. Eric Walrond's collection of short stories *Tropic Death* (1926) was an artistic triumph; but perhaps because the stories are set in the Caribbean and Central America and because the author was a pioneer in using regional creole languages for artistic expression, *Tropic Death* is less known and less appreciated in the United States than in Caribbean literary history and criticism. Although Walrond also wrote short stories set in the United States, he is recognized there more as a journalist and editor. Between 1921 and 1923, he served as associate editor of *Negro World*, the organ of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) founded and led by Marcus Garvey. Two years after his break with Garvey, Walrond was the business manager and contributing editor for *Opportunity*, founded and edited by Charles Johnson under the auspices of the National Urban League. In all his writings—short stories, book reviews, essays—Walrond revealed himself as a master prose stylist and a serious thinker. Wallace Thurman, the enfant terrible of the Harlem Renaissance and the most unsparing critic of his contemporaries (and himself), showered Walrond with praise. Of the renaissance writers, observed Thurman, "None is more ambitious than he, none more possessed of keener observation, poetic

insight or intelligence. There is no place in his consciousness for sentimentality, hypocrisy or clichés. His prose demonstrates his struggles to escape from conventionalities and become an individual talent." Thurman, however, felt that Walrond's talents were not fully realized, even in *Tropic Death*. He hoped that Walrond's promised novel on the Panama Canal, "The Big Ditch," which Walrond had received a Guggenheim fellowship to write, would prove an even greater triumph. But Walrond left for Britain in 1928 and never returned to the United States; he worked with the exiled Marcus Garvey in London on the latter's journal, *Black Man*, but the "The Big Ditch" was never finished. Resident mainly in Britain, Walrond traveled widely in Europe, despite failing health. He collapsed and died of a heart attack, his fifth, on a London street in 1966.

Caribbeans not only founded but also edited radical journals and newspapers such as *Voice*, *Crusader*, *Negro World*, *Promoter*, *Emancipator*, and *New Negro*. Hubert Harrison, an immigrant from the Virgin Islands, was a pioneer in this area of New Negro radical journalism; A. Philip Randolph called him the "father of Harlem radicalism." Harrison, a legendary orator, created *Voice*, the first journal of its type, in 1917. Two years later he brought out a short-lived magazine, *New Negro*, and before his own sudden death (from a ruptured appendix) in 1927 he had founded another journal, *Voice of the Negro*. Ephemeral though Harrison's magazines and journals were, his writings and example had a vast influence on the journalism of the time. Hodge Kirnon, in his obituary of Harrison, noted that *Voice* "really crystallized the radicalism of the Negro in New York and its environs." Kirnon, an immigrant from Saint Kitts, would draw on Harrison's example in founding his own magazine, *Promoter*.

Another Caribbean immigrant, Cyril Briggs, founded the magazine *Crusader* in 1918; it was the organ of the African Blood Brotherhood, which Briggs organized and led, between 1919 and 1923. W. A. Domingo (from Jamaica) and Richard B. Moore (from Barbados), two black socialists, founded *Emancipator* in 1920 mainly as a challenge to Garvey's movement. But *Emancipator*, although it had some influence over the black movement, especially through a famous exposé of the finances of Garvey's shipping company, the Black Star Line, was no match for UNIA; and unlike its black nationalist rival, *Negro World*, it lasted for only a few months.

Negro World, founded in 1918, was by far the most influential of these organs. During Garvey's tenure, each issue carried on the front page an editorial by

him addressed to the "Negroes of the World"; this newspaper would outlast Garvey's departure in the late 1920s, although it died slowly as UNIA imploded and disintegrated in the 1930s. During its heyday, *Negro World* attracted the writing of some of the most talented figures of the Harlem Renaissance: Zora Neale Hurston, Claude McKay, J. A. Rogers, Arturo Schomburg, Walrond, and others. Distinguished African American intellectuals such as T. Thomas Fortune, a firebrand from the 1880s; William Ferris, a graduate of Yale; and John Edward Bruce, the venerable black nationalist, served as editors on *Negro World* during the 1920s; and it was in the pages of *Negro World* that Hubert Harrison, who was its managing editor and later a contributing editor between 1920 and 1922, reached his widest audience. Harrison revamped *Negro World*, included more book reviews, and regularly ran "Poetry for the People," a forum, often filling an entire page, that carried a wide variety of poems by ordinary black people in the United States and around the world. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of *Negro World* was "Our Women and What They Think," a deliberately unorthodox women's page, edited by Amy Jacques Garvey (a Jamaican immigrant, Garvey's second wife), which ran in 1924–1927. Amy Jacques, who combined militant black nationalism and feminism, won the admiration of black women within and outside UNIA and alienated some of its more conventional male leaders; the movement killed her column in 1927.

Apart from their involvement in publications owned and run by Caribbeans, the immigrants made significant contributions to others. Domingo was Garvey's first editor of *Negro World* but was fired by Garvey in 1919 for his socialist writing and immediately became a contributing editor for the *Messenger* magazine, edited and run by the African American socialists A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen. Claude McKay returned from a yearlong sojourn in Britain in 1921 and became associate editor of the influential revolutionary socialist magazine *Liberator*, edited by Max Eastman. Rogers, Walrond, McKay, and especially Harrison contributed to a wide range of mainstream and black periodicals during the 1920s. Additionally, several of these Caribbean writers contributed to major anthologies. Alain Locke's influential *New Negro* (1925) included the work of McKay, Walrond, Rogers, and Domingo; V. F. Calverton's *Anthology of American Negro Literature* (1929) included McKay (poetry and prose) and Walrond. McKay's poems appeared in all of the anthologies of black poetry published in the

1920s: James Weldon Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922); Robert Thomas Kerlin, *Negro Poets and Their Poems* (1923); Countee Cullen, *Caroling Dusk: An Anthology of Verse by Negro Poets* (1927); and Alain Locke, *Four Negro Poets* (1927).

McKay and Walrond were among the immigrants who published volumes of their own work. The prolific McKay produced two highly influential and acclaimed volumes of poetry—*Spring in New Hampshire and Other Poems* (1920) and *Harlem Shadows* (1922)—and two pioneering and controversial novels: *Home to Harlem* (1928) and *Banjo* (1929). Hubert Harrison published two remarkable and influential collections of his essays: *The Negro and the Nation* (1917) and *When Africa Awakes: The “Inside Story” of the Stirrings and Strivings of the New Negro in the Western World* (1920). J. A. Rogers published several antiracist books before publishing, in 1931, the antiracist classic *World’s Great Men of African Descent* (later revised as *World’s Great Men of Color*). His most influential work in the 1920s was *From “Superman” to Man*, a Socratic dialogue in the form of a novel that first appeared in 1917 and was reprinted several times during the next decade. This book was acclaimed by all of the factions engaged in the black struggle, a rare accolade; UNIA made it required reading for members; and Du Bois wrote: “The person who wants in small compass, in good English and an attractive form, the arguments for the present Negro position should buy and read and recommend to his friends” Rogers’s book. Hubert Harrison, who dished out praise sparingly, described *From “Superman” to Man* as the “greatest book ever written in English on the Negro by a Negro.”

The great comedian Bert Williams (from Antigua) was a pioneer of black theater and helped open up Broadway to blacks. Williams received both praise and criticism. Theophilus Lewis, the theater critic for *Messenger*, averred that Williams “rendered a disservice to black people” by encouraging Broadway not to “countenance the Negro in serious, dignified, classical drama.” Walrond, writing in *Negro World*, disagreed. He held that Williams had made it possible for black shows such as *Shuffle Along* to be staged on Broadway and also had been “directly responsible” for bringing to Broadway more serious dramas, such as *The Emperor Jones*: “There is no doubt about it—Bert Williams will go down in history alongside the great artists of the theatre of all time. To us, to whom he meant so much as an ambassador across the border of color, his memory will grow richer and more glorious as time goes on.”

Much of the literature on the Harlem Renaissance focuses on the role of white patrons. Consequently, the role of the only notable black patron—Casper Holstein, born in the Virgin Islands—is often overlooked. Holstein made his money as a “numbers king” in Harlem; he was the most successful and most honest practitioner of this gambling game (unlike many others, he paid out when bettors won), and by far the most generous. Beginning in 1925, Holstein put up the prize money for *Opportunity’s* annual contest for Negro writers (which extended to composers of music as well). In 1926, this amounted to more than \$1,000—a not inconsiderable sum. Holstein explained that he had always been a “firm and enthusiastic believer in the creative genius of the Negro race, to which I humbly belong.” He congratulated *Opportunity* for organizing the contest, which he believed would “go far towards consolidating the interests of and bridging the gap” between black and white people in the United States. The contest, he wrote, “will encourage among our gifted youth the ambition to scale the empyrean heights of art and literature.” Holstein also made individual gifts to needy young artists. Eric Walrond was one of his beneficiaries and dedicated *Tropic Death* to him. Another was Holstein’s compatriot Hubert Harrison, who endured a mainly hand-to-mouth existence; Holstein also paid for Harrison’s funeral. When Garvey’s Liberty Hall was threatened with repossession, Holstein came to the rescue. From his associations, it is discernible that Holstein was not a conservative, despite his success in business. He had time and money for some of Harlem’s most radical citizens, and he spoke out in uncompromising terms against American rule in his native Virgin Islands (purchased by the United States from Denmark in 1917), publishing articles on the subject in *Opportunity* and *Negro World*. Through his various efforts, Holstein contributed to the artistic and political culture of the Harlem Renaissance.

Caribbean immigrants also distinguished themselves as some of Harlem’s and Afro-America’s most accomplished orators. Harrison was by far the most erudite and experienced, but Garvey was more popular as a platform speaker. Richard B. Moore quickly earned a reputation as a great orator—passionate, eloquent, and informed—surpassed only by his elders Garvey and Harrison at their best. In the 1920s and 1930s, Moore’s oratorical talents would be exploited to good effect by the Communist Party, which he had joined by 1923. J. Edgar Hoover’s spies from the Justice Department were not only alarmed but also impressed by these men’s eloquence, force, and impact as orators.

Men dominated the speakers' platforms in Harlem, on the street corners as well as indoors, but women were by no means absent. An African American, Henrietta Vinton Davis, the highest-ranking woman in UNIA, was among the very best orators of either sex. The fact that she had a successful stage career before devoting herself full time to Garvey's movement probably contributed to her effectiveness on the podium at Liberty Hall. Amy Jacques Garvey was a highly effective and popular public speaker, although she seldom spoke, preferring to devote her time to writing. Among the black socialists, Elizabeth Hendrickson, a Virgin Islander, was also considered among the best by her contemporaries.

But it was in radical politics, both black nationalist and socialist, that the Caribbean presence was most conspicuous during the Harlem Renaissance. Hubert Harrison once again stands out as a pioneer; amazingly, he won black converts to both revolutionary socialism and black nationalism. This apparent paradox is explained by the fact that Harrison was a member of the Socialist Party between 1909 and 1914 and subsequently moved toward black nationalism but never abandoned his deeply ingrained Marxism. Harrison left the Socialist Party because of the racism he encountered within it, even among its leaders. He felt that the party preached "class first" but practiced "race first," discriminating against the black working class, especially in the South; and that so as not to offend its southern white working-class members, the party had compromised its principles and succumbed to what he called "southernism"—the trumping of working-class solidarity by white supremacy. Harrison was suspended by the party in 1914 and subsequently resigned. (He apparently rejoined in 1918 but left again soon thereafter, never to return.) He insisted that because white socialists, except for the Industrial Workers of the World, practiced "race first and class after," African Americans should also practice "race first," if only in self-defense. To forward this ideology, Harrison formed the Liberty League of Negro-Americans in the summer of 1917. As Harrison put it, this league was part of Afro-America's "bold bid for some of that democracy for which their government [had] gone to war."

Moore, Domingo, McKay, and Frank Crosswaith first encountered Harrison during his socialist phase and were deeply affected by him. A. Philip Randolph recalled that when he and Chandler Owen encountered Harrison, they explained to him: "We want to develop a street forum comparable to yours. We don't plan to

have any competition, but we want to extend your work, what you're doing." The extension of Harrison's work would go beyond the street forum into the publication of *Messenger*, and by 1926 Randolph would also embark directly on the organization of the black working class in the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, in which Caribbean immigrants such as Ashley Totten, Thomas Patterson, and Frank Crosswaith would play leading roles.

When Garvey arrived in the United States in 1916, Harrison (then in his black nationalist phase) was the first to offer him a public platform in Harlem. Harrison would later work with Garvey, especially on *Negro World*, but apparently never joined UNIA. It was from Harrison that Garvey borrowed the slogan "race first," and much else. Garvey developed the largest black organization the world had ever known and mobilized ordinary African Americans to an unprecedented degree, especially in the South. The leadership of UNIA in the United States and abroad was disproportionately of anglophone Caribbean origin (Vincent, 1970)—as was Cyril Briggs's African Blood Brotherhood (ABB). ABB, founded in Harlem in 1919, began as a classical black nationalist organization. But its leaders, increasingly attracted by the anti-imperialism and antiracism of the Russian revolution and the Communist International, dissolved the organization and joined forces with the Communist Party of the United States in 1923.

At both the cultural and political levels, anglophone Caribbeans played a disproportionate role during the Harlem Renaissance. The reason for this is complex, but we can briefly outline some of its key components.

Approximately 143,000 black people immigrated to the United States between 1899 and 1932. About 80 percent of these came from the Caribbean. Although they made up less than 1 percent of the black population in the United States, Caribbean immigrants and people of Caribbean descent constituted 20 to 25 percent of the black population in Harlem during the 1920s. Thus their weight was far greater, and they were more conspicuous, in Harlem and New York City than nationally.

Far more than their African American counterparts in Harlem and elsewhere, Caribbean immigrants, especially those who came to New York, had a high level of literacy and professional training. These black immigrants were far more literate than European immigrants entering the United States at the time, and they were also more literate and generally better-educated than

the native-born white population. Some, such as McKay, Walrond, and Garvey, had begun their literary and journalistic careers before emigrating to the United States. By the time McKay left Jamaica, he was a well-known literary figure who was widely published in newspapers there and abroad and had written two highly acclaimed volumes of poetry. Walrond had started out as a journalist in Panama, where he grew up; Garvey had started in this field during his stay in Costa Rica and London, and then in Jamaica, before he came to the United States.

In the British Caribbean, the population was overwhelmingly black, and immigrants who came from there to the United States found it difficult to adjust to a minority status, or to being maligned, persecuted, and considered pariahs. McKay's reaction was typical: "It was the first time I had ever come face to face with such manifest and implacable hate of my race, and my feelings were indescribable. . . . I had heard of prejudice in America but never dreamed of it being so intensely bitter." When Hugh Mulzac first came to the United States, he was barred from entering a church because of his color; he quickly concluded of white America: "These people are not Christians, but savages!" Shock and frustrated hopes (especially among the most highly educated) contributed to Caribbean immigrants' radicalization and their disproportionate involvement in dissident political projects. McKay, in particular, would express bitterness and anger in his literary work and his politics. Moreover, the immigrants' shock and outrage were exacerbated by certain entrenched features of American society at the time they arrived, particularly Jim Crow (which was official in the South and unofficial in the North) and lynching.

The extensive travel and international experience of many of these migrants contributed significantly to the pan-Africanist and race-conscious thrust of the Harlem Renaissance. Contemporary commentators, black and white, attributed this internationalist dimension of the movement largely to the Caribbeans. Garvey, in particular, movingly recalled his travels to and experiences in Central America, Europe, and Jamaica, where he found that blackness was "the same stumbling block." He asked himself: "Where is the black man's Government? Where is his King and his kingdom? Where is his President, and his ambassador, his army, his navy, his men of big affairs?" He could not find them, and vowed: "I will help to make them."

Relations between Afro-Caribbeans and Afro-Americans were by no means untroubled. Ethnic epithets such as "monkey chaser" and "coon" were not

unknown. Wallace Thurman, McKay, and especially Rudolph Fisher scrutinized this tension in their fiction and elsewhere, making intraracial interactions a subject of the literature that emerged during the Harlem Renaissance. The moment of greatest tension was during the "Garvey must go" campaign of 1922–1923. But the historical literature on the relations between these two parts of the African diaspora in Harlem have tended to overstate ethnic conflict and understate the remarkable level of collaboration and cooperation between them. Afro-Americans and Afro-Caribbeans married one another; shared their culture (including cuisine, music, and sartorial tastes); learned to live with one another in a very densely populated place; and joined forces, fighting shoulder to shoulder, in political movements against racism and class oppression. The tension that did exist was largely confined to the petit bourgeois and professionals of both groups, and this tension abated significantly during the Depression, which was a calamity shared by Caribbeans and African Americans alike and brought the exuberance of the Harlem Renaissance to a sudden end.

The Caribbean legacy of the Harlem Renaissance in the arts and politics would continue in subsequent generations: Paule Marshall, Shirley Chisholm, Kenneth Clark, Malcolm X, Louis Farrakhan, Harry Belafonte, St. Clair Drake, Lani Guinier, and Constance Motley Baker are some of the direct descendants of those who arrived and settled during the renaissance. In their work and contribution to the black struggle and the life of the republic generally, one discerns the continuation of a tradition.

WINSTON JAMES

See also African Blood Brotherhood; Briggs, Cyril; Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; Calverton, V. F.; Domingo, Wilfred Adolphus; Emancipator; Garvey, Marcus; Harrison, Hubert; Holstein, Casper; Liberator, The; McKay, Claude; Messenger, The; Moore, Richard B.; Negro World; Numbers Racket; Opportunity; Rogers, Joel Augustus; Thurman, Wallace; Tropic Death; Walrond, Eric; *other specific individuals*

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Anita Bush Theater Company

The Anita Bush Theater Company—also known as the Anita Bush All-Colored Dramatic Stock Company and the Anita Bush Players and eventually renamed the Lafayette Players Stock Company—developed during the period 1910–1917, when Negroes were exiled from the downtown theaters of New York, as a setting in which black performers played to almost exclusively black audiences. This atmosphere offered a new freedom from the constraints of performing to white or predominantly white audiences. The performers in Bush's company came from the days of shows by Isham, Williams and Walker, and Cole and Johnson; they included Anita Bush, Ida Anderson, Andrew Bishop, Laura Bowman, Tom Brown, Jack Carter, Inez Clough, A. B. Comathiere, Cleo Desmond, Evelyn Ellis, Charles Gilpin, Lottie Grady, Sidney Kirkpatrick, Abbie Mitchell, Lionel Monagas, Charles Moore, Clarence Muse, Charles Olden, Susie Sutton, Edna Thomas, Walter Thompson, "Babe" Townsend, and Frank Wilson.

Anita Bush (1883–1974), a pioneer in black theater, founded her company in 1912, after an injury forced her to stop performing as a dancer. The Anita Bush Players toured the vaudeville circuit, presenting dramatic sketches based on life in the Old West and staged plays at the Lincoln Theater at 135th Street and Lenox Avenue until the company moved to the Lafayette Theater. Bush had taken her idea for a new stock company to Eugene "Frenchy" Elmore, assistant manager of the Lincoln Theater, which was newly renovated but was experiencing an economic slump. Elmore quickly signed a contract with Bush, who assured him that the company would be ready to perform in two weeks. Bush also persuaded Billie Burke, a white male director-playwright, to direct the group in his comedy *The Girl at the Fort*. The Anita Bush Players opened in this play at the Lincoln Theater on 19 November 1915, with Charles Gilpin as the leading man and Dooley Wilson in a supporting role. For the next six weeks, the company presented different plays at two-week intervals. However, Elmore left to take a position at the rival Lafayette Theater, and Maria C. Downs, who then managed the Lincoln, demanded

that Bush change the name of the company to the Lincoln Players. Bush refused and, with the help of the drama critic Lester A. Walton, moved to the Lafayette, at 132nd Street and Seventh Avenue.

The company, still bearing Bush's name, opened at the Lafayette on 27 December 1915 in *Across the Footlights* and for a while presented short plays each week. Many of the presentations were adaptations of Broadway melodramas and old favorites such as *The Gambler's Sweetheart* (adapted from *The Girl of the Golden West*); the company also produced a version of Dion Boucicault's *The Octoroon*.

By March 1916, as a result of financial difficulties, Bush sold the company, and with her consent its name was changed to the Lafayette Players Stock Company. She remained with the company until 1920, establishing new groups of Lafayette Players at other theaters on the touring circuit. By 1917, there were four troupes of Lafayette Players.

FELECIA PIGGOTT-McMILLAN

See also Bush, Anita; Clough, Inez; Ellis, Evelyn; Gilpin, Charles; Kirkpatrick, Sidney; Lafayette Players; Lafayette Theater; Lincoln Theater; Mitchell, Abbie; Muse, Clarence; Thomas, Edna Lewis; Walton, Lester; Wilson, Arthur "Dooley" Wilson, Frank

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Antilynching Crusade

The crusade to end lynching in the United States began in the final decade of the nineteenth century and continued relatively unabated until the middle of the

twentieth. During that time, organizations such as the Council on International Cooperation (CIC), Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), National Association of Colored Women (NACW), United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), National Citizens Rights Association (NCRA), National Equal Rights League (NERL), and American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) worked toward the eradication of lynching through programs of education, investigation, and publicity and through advocacy for a federal antilynching statute. Sometimes these groups cooperated in their efforts to end lynching, but more often than not, they found themselves at odds with each other over the best means to apply. While activists such as Ida B. Wells Barnett and organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL) fought valiantly for the enactment of federal antilynching legislation, they were never successful. The antilynching crusade nevertheless paved the way for the equal rights movement that followed, and it helped establish the NAACP as a national force to be reckoned with in the pursuit of political and social justice. Accompanying these efforts to eradicate lynching was the work of writers of the Harlem Renaissance, who dramatized the horrors of lynching in their poetry and prose and united to form the Writers' League against Lynching in 1933.

Between 1892 and 1940, there were approximately 3,000 lynchings in the United States; of those lynched, more than 2,600 were African American. This remarkable number and the terrible violence that characterized the lynchings compelled Ida B. Wells Barnett, among others, to organize in resistance. Wells Barnett eloquently challenged the most prominent myth about lynching—that most lynchings were justified as a response to the rape of white women by black men—by investigating lynchings throughout the South. In *A Red Record* (1895), she published her findings: that rape was seldom the charge for which black men were lynched and that the numerous lynchings of African American women directly challenged the connection between rape and lynching. Wells Barnett argued that lynching was more accurately described as a mechanism for depriving African Americans of their constitutional rights. This text—by debunking the myths that were used to justify lynchings, by publicizing the number and violent nature of lynchings, and by seeking to create economic disincentives for southern jurisdictions that were permissive regarding

“lynch rule”—set a precedent for subsequent antilynching campaigns (Brown 2000).

When the NAACP was founded in 1909, a vigorous antilynching effort was already under way. However, two of the NAACP’s leaders—James Weldon Johnson and, later, Walter White, whose *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch* (1929) remains an indispensable account—made lynching a primary focus of the organization. Using many of the techniques pioneered by Wells Barnett, the NAACP made its campaign against lynching the basis for numerous fund-raising activities, lobbied for federal antilynching legislation, and used its new prominence in the antilynching effort to draw attention to other racial inequalities. The NAACP hired Johnson in 1916, and by 1918 he had helped launch a five-year, high-priority attack on lynching. This undertaking included conferences, letter-writing campaigns, and countless editorials in the organization’s newspaper, *The Crisis*; but the most visible effort was support of the Dyer bill, antilynching legislation introduced by Leonidas Dyer (Republican, Missouri) in April 1918. Although the Dyer bill and others like it—including the Costigan-Wagner bill of 1937—would pass the House of Representatives, no federal antilynching bill ever received the approval of the Senate. Between 1918 and 1923, and again between 1933 and 1937, a large proportion of the NAACP’s operating budget and organizational efforts was directed toward the crusade to end lynching (Zangrando 1980).

Other organizations, some occasionally affiliated with the NAACP, worked hard to eradicate lynching. In 1922 the NAACP supported the creation of the Anti-Lynching Crusaders, a group headed by Mary Talbert (of the NACW) and dedicated to raising \$1 million from one million members to combat lynching. Although they never reached this goal, the Anti-Lynching Crusaders did raise nearly \$70,000. The ASWPL, founded in 1930 by Jessie Daniel Ames, attempted to combat lynching through investigations and publicity, and by seeking pledges from southern law enforcement officials to work against lynching. Despite their shared goal, the ASWPL and the NAACP were frequently at odds because the ASWPL was segregated and did not support federal antilynching legislation. In 1937, the NAACP’s field secretary Daisy Lampkin oversaw a “Stop Lynching” button campaign that raised awareness and nearly \$10,000.

In addition to these organized endeavors to end lynching through direct political action, there were numerous literary attacks. James Weldon Johnson not

only addressed lynching in his official duties for the NAACP but also vividly described the effects of lynching in his *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*. Other literary responses came from figures such as W. E. B. Du Bois (in his work for *The Crisis*), Jean Toomer (the poems “Blood-Burning Moon” and “Portrait in Georgia” in *Cane*), Claude McKay (the poems “If We Must Die” and “The Lynching”), Georgia Douglas Johnson, Angelina Weld Grimké, and others. Nella Larsen, Jessie Fauset, Mary White Ovington, Dorothy Parker, Sinclair Lewis, and Upton Sinclair were among the members of the Writers’ League against Lynching.

Although its inability to get federal legislation enacted was an important factor in its demise, the antilynching crusade had lost momentum for other reasons as well: a general decrease in lynchings during the period of World War II; widespread interest in atrocities abroad, rather than at home; and the NAACP’s shift in focus to more pressing matters—notably, segregation in the armed forces, housing, and the workplace. Despite the explicit failure of many of the antilynching crusaders, their work drew attention to the horrors of lynching, gained recognition for the NAACP, and laid the groundwork for other efforts on behalf of equal rights.

MATTHEW R. DAVIS

See also Barnett, Ida B. Wells; Johnson, James Weldon; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Talbert, Mary Burnett; White, Walter

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Apollo Theater

When the building that would become the famous Apollo Theater was erected in 1913, at 253 West 125th Street, it was an Irish music hall. By 1919 it became Hurtig and Seamon's Burlesque Theater, featuring white female performers, most notably Fanny Brice. Few African Americans were allowed to perform there, and the few black members of the audience had to sit in the balcony, which was poorly lit and often dirty. Another, much smaller burlesque theater, the Apollo, named for the Greek god of music and poetry, was also situated on 125th Street. Both theaters were shut in 1932 when Fiorello La Guardia, who was then a congressman, ordered all burlesque theaters to close. In 1934, Sidney Cohen bought the Hurtig building specifically to provide live entertainment by African Americans for African Americans in Harlem. He was the first to do anything like this on 125th Street, which was still catering to whites and still segregated. Cohen appropriated the name of the earlier small Apollo for the Hurtig building, naming his new venture the 125th Street Apollo Theater. It came to be known simply as the Apollo, and from 1934 to the present, it has been a center of African American entertainment.

Cohen's Apollo was newly decorated and had high-fidelity RCA sound equipment—an innovative system also used at Radio City Music Hall. The first show at the Apollo, *Jazz à la Carte*, opened in 1934 and was very successful. However, neither this show nor the regular appearance of talented performers such as Bessie Smith persuaded Harlem's residents to come to 125th Street, which remained segregated. In an effort to attract larger audiences, Ralph Cooper suggested that the Apollo host weekly amateur nights. Accordingly, in 1935, when the Apollo was on the verge of

bankruptcy, the first amateur night took place, with Cooper as the master of ceremonies.

Ralph Cooper's Harlem Amateur Night, as it was called, was intended not only as entertainment but also to provide an opportunity for talented residents of Harlem. However, Cooper knew that he had to find some way to handle the less talented entrants. He enlisted the aid of Norman Miller, a comic stagehand, to appear in eccentric costumes and gently and humorously usher the losing contestants offstage. Cooper made it clear that Amateur Night was not meant to denigrate any of the contestants or to hurt their feelings. Miller's job, then, was to make sure that everyone, including the losers, had a good time. Amateur Night quickly became a Harlem institution, just as well-known for its rowdy, booing crowds and its dancing clown as it was for the talent that graced the stage. That talent was often impressive: Early winners of amateur nights included Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, and Pearl Bailey.

An interesting tradition of the amateur nights had to do with the Tree of Hope. Nearly since the beginning of these events, each amateur performer touched a special piece of wood before going onstage. This chunk of wood had been taken from the Tree of Hope, a legendary shade tree behind the Lafayette Theater and Connie's Inn. The tree had been an informal meeting place for people in show business, where Harlem's stars told anecdotes about themselves and their tours and aspiring performers listened and dreamed. When Seventh Avenue was expanded around 1935, the Tree of Hope was cut down; but Ralph Cooper took a piece of the tree as a souvenir, had a set designer at the Apollo shellac it and mount it on an Ionic column, and placed it onstage where the audience and performers could see it, as a symbol of show business in Harlem. Contestants in the amateur nights began touching it for good luck, creating a new custom at the Apollo.

The Apollo's earliest competitor was the Lafayette Theater, owned by Leo Brecher and managed by Frank Schiffman. Later it became the Harlem Opera House, still owned by Brecher and Schiffman. Although Lafayette had been opened, strategically, only half a block from the Apollo, a campaign by the Harlem Opera House to lure Harlem's audiences away from the Apollo failed. However, when Sid Cohen died of a heart attack in 1935, Morris Sussman, the general manager of the Apollo, sold it to Brecher and Schiffman. Schiffman then took over as general manager of the Apollo, and another era of its history began.



Apollo Theater, 1920s. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

Under Schiffman's management, *Amateur Night* continued with Ralph Cooper as emcee. After his retirement in the 1960s, it still continued, as did performances by celebrities including Gladys Knight and the Pips, Patti LaBelle, the Jackson Five, and Parliament Funkadelic. By the 1970s, however, support for Schiffman's Apollo had waned; residents of the neighborhood were calling for more black-owned and black-operated businesses in Harlem. Nevertheless, Schiffman held on to the Apollo, although he sold many of his other theaters to religious organizations. When he died in 1974, the Apollo was the last of his holdings in Harlem still operating.

In 1977, the Schiffman family closed the Apollo. Its profits had been declining as the crime rate rose, and in 1975 there had been a shooting at the Apollo during a concert by Smokey Robinson. The family tried unsuccessfully to sell the Apollo to various church organizations; finally, it was bought by the Harlem Urban Development Corporation (HUDC).

In 1983, the Apollo, as Harlem's oldest theater, was registered as a National Historic Landmark. In 1984, it reopened as an auditorium, a television studio, and the home of a new weekly *Amateur Night* Contest. In 1992, *Showtime at the Apollo* premiered on television in national syndication, returning the theater to its former glory as a place of entertainment and opportunity.

CANDICE LOVE

See also Harlem: 3—Entertainment; Smith, Bessie; Tree of Hope

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Appearances

The events that led to the presentation of Garland Anderson's play *Appearances* (1925) on Broadway, and made Anderson the first African American playwright to have a full-length nonmusical drama produced there, are in themselves dramatic. Anderson, a bellhop in San Francisco, was inspired to write *Judge Not According to Appearances* (its original title) as an expression of his religious beliefs, based on the precepts of Christian Science, after attending a performance of Channing Pollock's religious melodrama *The Fool*. Anderson's protagonist is Carl, a black bellhop in a residential hotel to whom the white patrons turn for spiritual counsel. Wilson, an unscrupulous prosecuting attorney whose fiancée has faith in Carl, becomes envious and tries to frame Carl for the attempted rape of a white woman named Elsie. The second act takes place in a courtroom, where Carl refuses to mount a defense, simply trusting that his innocence will be revealed. The other black characters in the play—Carl's fiancée, Ella; and the hotel's porter, Rufus—try to give support. When Elsie is revealed as not white but mulatto, and as Wilson's mistress, Carl is exonerated. In the third act, all plotlines are resolved; the play has been a dream, but Carl's faith has made it come true.

On the advice of a friend, Anderson sent his script to the entertainer Al Jolson, who declined to produce the play but lent Anderson his press agent. Among other fund-raising efforts, the "bellhop playwright" presented a reading of the play by the actor Richard B. Harrison at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, met with Governor Al Smith of New York, and went to the White House, where he presented a script to President Calvin Coolidge. Anderson then returned to California and set forth across the country on a promotional tour.

On 13 October 1925, after successful out-of-town tryouts and bearing a shortened title, *Appearances* finally



Appearances, scene from the stage performance. (Billy Rose Theatre Collection, New York Public Library, New York City. ©The New York Public Library / Art Resource, N. Y. Keysheets Box 4, Image 26. Photographer White Studio, anonymous.)

opened at the Frolic Theatre on Broadway, where it ran for twenty-three performances. Carl was played by Lionel Monagas, a veteran of the Lafayette Players; Rufus by the vaudevillian Doe Doe Green; and Ella by a newcomer, Evelyn Mason. Although two white actors withdrew from the production rather than work in an integrated cast, there was no serious controversy (such as the one that had beset Eugene O'Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings* in 1924) over this issue.

The critical response to *Appearances* was mixed. W. E. B. Du Bois enthusiastically supported the play, partly because of its perceived antilynching message. Other African Americans, such as the historian J. A. Rogers, denounced Anderson as an opportunist. The character Rufus and Green's portrayal of him had overtones of minstrelsy and were particularly controversial. Alan Dale's review in the *New York World* probably summarized the response of most of the white critical establishment: "It would be absurd to waste much time in analysis of this play. . . . I admit that this little play is better than some of the offerings that have made Broadway wretched this season."

Anderson refused to let *Appearances* die. He raised enough money for a tour through the western United States in 1927 and a revival (running for twenty-four performances) at the Hudson Theater on Broadway in 1929. In November 1929, Anderson sailed to London, where the play was produced at the Royalty Theater; it ran there from mid-March through the end of May 1930.

Anderson claimed authorship of another play, *Extortion*, which was never produced; became a lecturer for a religious organization, Unity; and established

Andy's Nu Snack, the first milk bar in England, in London in 1934. While he was in England, he became the first black person to be admitted to the prestigious literary organization PEN.

FREDA SCOTT GILES

See also Anderson, Garland; Lafayette Players

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Armstrong, Louis

From 1925 to 1928, Louis Daniel Armstrong (a.k.a. Dippermouth, Satchelmouth, Satchmo, Pops) made a series of more than sixty recordings with his small groups the Hot Five and the Hot Seven. Jazz writers of later years hailed these recordings for their role in helping to transform jazz from an ensemble entertainment to a solo art. But observers in the 1920s admired Armstrong less for his recordings per se than for his utter dominance in a highly visible professional field. The respect and even awe that Armstrong aroused among white and black musicians alike made him a shining example of the New Negro, even though he was not involved in the more rarefied artistic aspects of the Harlem Renaissance. From his destitute youth in New Orleans to his triumphant performances on Broadway in 1929, Armstrong struggled to better himself musically and socially while stopping just short, as he put it, of "putting on airs."

Armstrong was born out of wedlock in the poorest section of New Orleans, in a neighborhood so violent that it was known as the Battlefield. His father moved out when Armstrong was a child, and his mother

supported the family as a domestic worker and part-time prostitute. Louis helped by singing in the streets for pennies and scrounging for food in garbage bins. In 1912, he was arrested for firing a gun in the air on New Year's Eve and was sentenced to eighteen months in reform school. At the school Armstrong was subjected to military-style discipline and learned to play the cornet. Upon his release he began developing a reputation as a gifted cornetist. He sought out musical instruction from his idol Joe "King" Oliver, performed with parading brass bands, and played the blues in honky-tonks late at night. When Oliver moved to Chicago in 1918, Armstrong took his place in Kid Ory's band, the leading jazz band in New Orleans. From then on, Ory recalled, Armstrong "went up like a sunflower. His name went right through New Orleans." Yet some contractors still wouldn't hire him for certain events in polite society. One of them, Edmond Souchon, considered Armstrong "a rough, rough character" who blew "false" (he may have meant out of tune) and played too loudly. Most of Armstrong's role models were also rough characters. Early on he had developed an admiration for pimps, gamblers, and other figures of the New Orleans underworld, the most charismatic and influential males in his cultural milieu. The drummer Baby Dodds recalled that in 1920–1921, Armstrong dressed like "low-class hustlers" and gamblers, "because that's what he wanted to be in those days. . . . Back at that time he was always broke from gambling."

Armstrong's aspirations changed after he moved North in 1922. He began his career in the North playing with King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band in Chicago and Fletcher Henderson's orchestra in New York. Armstrong seems to have been at least vaguely aware of artistic and cultural trends in Harlem. In his first autobiography (1936), he mentioned several black celebrities active in New York while he was there in 1924–1925, including James Weldon Johnson, Charles Gilpin, Paul Robeson, and Bill "Bojangles" Robinson. Armstrong was especially impressed with Robinson, whom he had seen perform in Chicago. Above all, Armstrong admired the dignity and independence Robinson brought to his stage performance. "To me, he was the greatest comedian + dancer in my race—better than Bert Williams," he recalled. "He didn't need blackface to be funny." Robinson, unlike the performers in minstrel shows, did not wear rags or tell self-disparaging jokes; he dressed immaculately and exuded power and self-confidence. The example of prominent northerners like Robinson moved Armstrong to embark on a somewhat ambivalent quest for

outward "respectability"—in manners, literacy, clothing style, and most significantly music.

A catalyst in this transformation was Oliver's pianist Lillian (Lil) Hardin, who became Armstrong's second wife. In 1918, in New Orleans, Armstrong had married a young prostitute named Daisy Parker. Their relationship was turbulent, involving brickbat fights in the streets and still more dangerous confrontations behind closed doors. After moving to Chicago, Armstrong divorced Daisy in order to marry Hardin, a woman from Memphis who had taken some classes at Fisk University. Hardin immediately began overhauling Armstrong's rough New Orleans persona, buying him new clothes, changing his hairstyle, and demanding a certain propriety in his behavior. When Daisy visited Chicago in an effort to reclaim him, Armstrong assured her that they were incompatible, especially since he had lately been trying to "cultivate" himself. Publicity photographs from the late 1920s show the results of Lil's handling: Wearing expensive clothing and jewelry, Armstrong invariably looks sophisticated. And yet despite his willingness to make changes in his appearance, Armstrong chafed under Lil's exacting standards in other realms. He ultimately rejected the highfalutin lifestyle that required, as he put it, "a certain spoon for this, and a certain fork for that." By around 1927 he had begun to live with Alpha Smith, a less pretentious working-class woman who would later become his third wife.

Armstrong may have resented Hardin's overbearing social direction, but he remained forever grateful that she had pushed him to expand his musical sensibility. From the moment he arrived in the North, Armstrong had electrified audiences with the boldness and originality of his playing. But the type of music he and other New Orleanians played—"hot jazz" and the blues—drew harsh criticism in the 1920s from moralists and social reformers. The critics denigrated such music, using epithets such as "lowdown" (or "low-class"), "gutbucket," and "barrelhouse," and worried that it inspired lewd dancing and generated business for nightclubs and speakeasies owned by mobsters. To insulate themselves from ill repute, many black musicians sought for "high-class," "dicty," or "society" credentials by working in vaudeville theaters, fashionable ballrooms, and dance orchestras that included elements of European art music in their programs. The ability to play within the European tradition demonstrated a literacy and refinement that raised the "class" quotient of any musician. The musicians who most self-consciously participated in the Harlem Renaissance—such as Robert Nathaniel Dett and

Roland Hayes—aspired to compose or perform works based on European classical practice. At Hardin’s urging, Armstrong tried to acquire some classical training; he practiced concert pieces at home to Hardin’s accompaniment on a grand piano, and he even studied briefly with a German trumpet teacher known in Chicago for advocating the “nonpressure” method of playing.

The bands and venues Armstrong played in after leaving Oliver show his concern for building a “high-class” musical reputation. In 1924, Fletcher Henderson’s orchestra was the leading black society dance band in the country. When an opportunity came for Armstrong to join the band, Hardin encouraged him wholeheartedly, even though it meant that the two had to live separately for a year. Henderson’s musicians, with their elegant deportment and thorough musical training, embodied the New Negro in popular music. In fact, Henderson, although impressed with Armstrong’s solos, told him: “If you gonna be good someday, you’ll take some [music] lessons.” Armstrong apparently ignored this advice. But when he returned to Chicago in 1925, he bowed to Hardin’s insistence that he join Erskine Tate’s “Symphony Orchestra” at the Vendome Theater, an organization featuring violins and double-reed woodwinds as well as the more traditional jazz instruments. At the Vendome, Armstrong became more skilled at reading music and learned to play pieces from the classical repertoire. He even performed featured solos during transcriptions of Italian operas such as Mascagni’s *Cavalleria Rusticana* and Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly*. Within a year or so Armstrong was playing at the Sunset Café, one of the most exclusive nightclubs in black Chicago. At the Sunset and later the Savoy Ballroom, Armstrong accompanied floor shows in a style that would have required considerable versatility and technical polish. A mere handful of recordings document Armstrong’s work with these bands: Erskine Tate, “Stomp Off (Let’s Go)” and “Static Strut” (both 1926); and Louis Armstrong and His Stompers (the Sunset band), “Chicago Breakdown” (1927).

During the same period that Armstrong was performing high-class music at the Vendome and the Sunset, he was also recording plenty of New Orleans-style blues and jazz, the kind that most appealed to working-class southern migrants. These records, known collectively as the Hot Fives and Hot Sevens, show the same gradual reconciliation of high and low that was occurring simultaneously in Armstrong’s personal life. The early Hot Five records—including such celebrated performances as “Cornet Chop Suey” and “Big Butter and Egg Man” (both 1926)—feature only New Orleans

musicians (except Hardin), emphasize traditionally raucous polyphonic textures, and often suggest a casual spontaneity with little advance preparation. Over time, however, Armstrong gradually introduced ritzy pre-arranged elements. In “You Made Me Love You” (1926), “The Last Time,” and “Once in a While” (both 1927), the band plays introductions and accompanimental figures redolent of the music of floor shows. In the Hot Fives of 1928, Armstrong replaced his New Orleans sidemen with the northern musicians he employed nightly at the Savoy. This last series of records features classical and other “society” elements in instrumentation, repertoire, texture, harmony, and form. For example, the meticulously arranged “Beau Koo Jack” has a structural complexity nowhere evident in earlier Hot Five recordings; and the band accompaniment to Armstrong’s solo in “Muggles” alternately rises and falls in volume, showing a classical concern for dynamics (patterns of loud and soft). And yet Armstrong did not cut himself off from his New Orleans roots. His most famous records of the period, such as “West End Blues” and “Weatherbird,” are a convincing hybrid of northern and southern, “high-class” and “gutbucket” elements.

By the late 1920s Armstrong’s musical innovations—particularly his virtuosity, power, coherence, rhythmic “swing,” and eccentric vocal style—had established him as a rising force in American popular music. His achievements had won over much of the black community, including those who earlier had fretted that the unsavory social aspects of jazz would have negative effects on the black cause. Dave Peyton, the chief music critic for the Chicago *Defender*, began calling Armstrong the “Great King Menalick” after Menelik II, the Ethiopian emperor who overthrew Italian domination in the late nineteenth century. Nor was Armstrong’s influence limited by race. At a banquet in 1929, a group of white musicians gave Armstrong a wristwatch engraved: “To Louis Armstrong, the World’s Greatest Cornetist, from the Musicians of New York.” Also in 1929, he created a sensation on Broadway singing “Ain’t Misbehavin’” in the musical *Hot Chocolates*. In 1930, he made his first film appearance in *Ex-Flame* (now lost), an achievement he proudly emphasized in his passport application two years later, wherein he stated his occupation as “actor and musician.” He needed the passport to undertake his first tour of Europe, where an already flourishing group of fans attested to his international popularity.

In the 1930s, European and American left-wing commentators lauded the Hot Five and Hot Seven recordings as great works of art. Such praise might



Louis Armstrong. (Brown Brothers.)

have gratified musicians of the Harlem Renaissance who consciously sought to equal the achievements of western classical composers. Armstrong, however, had a different goal: to bring his music—which he viewed primarily as entertainment rather than art—to the widest possible audience. In the 1920s, that had entailed diversifying and refining his music and his demeanor; in the 1930s it involved singing and telling jokes as well as playing the trumpet. During this period Armstrong became a hero to the black community for his high profile in recordings, radio, and film. But after World War II, black America required a new New Negro, one not only culturally accomplished but also politically assertive. In this changed environment many accused Armstrong of Uncle Tomism because of his sincere desire to please an audience. For Armstrong, though, professional success and mass appeal represented the most significant advance a black musician could make. Such recognition may not have satisfied the generation of the civil rights movement, but it fulfilled some of the highest objectives of the Harlem Renaissance.

Biography

Louis Armstrong was born 4 August 1901, in New Orleans, Louisiana. He attended Fisk School for Boys

until around age twelve and was confined in the Colored Waif's Home for Boys in 1913–1914. He joined Kid Ory's Brown-Skinned Babies in 1918, Fate Marable's band on the Streckfus Steamboat line in 1919, King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band in Chicago in 1922, and Fletcher Henderson's Orchestra in New York in 1924; performed in Chicago with the bands of Lil Hardin Armstrong, Erskine Tate, Carroll Dickerson, and Clarence Jones in 1925–1928; and accompanied many blues and vaudeville singers, including Bessie Smith and Alberta Hunter, in 1924–1930. He appeared in a Broadway show, *Hot Chocolates*, in 1929. He made his first European tours in 1932–1935; hired Joe Glaser to be his manager in 1935; hosted the Fleischmann's Yeast radio program on NBC in 1937; and appeared at Rockefeller Center in the musical *Swingin' the Dream* in 1939. Armstrong performed in the first Esquire All-American Jazz Concert at the Metropolitan Opera House in 1944. In 1947 he performed at Carnegie Hall and organized the septet Louis Armstrong's All-Stars. He performed at the first international jazz festival in Nice, France, in 1948, was featured on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1949, and made international tours in 1949–1968 and television appearances in 1949–1971. His television work included appearances on the shows of Horace Heidt, Ed Sullivan, Danny Kaye, Steve Allen, Mike Douglas, Jackie Gleason, Dick Cavett, David Frost, Johnny Carson, and Flip Wilson, and on *What's My Line?* He was given a seventieth (actually sixty-ninth) birthday tribute at the Newport Jazz Festival in 1970. Armstrong died in Queens, New York, on 6 July 1971.

BRIAN HARKER

See also Dett, Robert Nathaniel; Hayes, Roland; Henderson, Fletcher; Jazz; Music; Musicians; New Negro; Oliver, Joseph "King"; Ory, Edward "Kid"; Robinson, Bill "Bojangles"; Savoy Ballroom

Selected Recordings

As a sideman: K. Oliver, "Chimes Blues"/"Froggie Moore" (1923, Gen. 5135), F. Henderson, "Copenhagen" (1924, Voc. 14926), Red Onion Jazz Babies, "Cake Walking Babies From Home" (1924, Gen. 5627), Bessie Smith, "St. Louis Blues" (1925, Col. 14064D). Hot Five/Hot Seven: "Muskrat Ramble"/"Heebie Jeebies" (1926, OK 8300), "Cornet Chop Suey" (1926, OK 8320), "Big Butter and Egg Man" (1926, OK 8423), "Potato Head Blues" (1927, OK 8503), "S.O.L. Blues" (1927, Col.

35661), "Struttin' with Some Barbecue" (1927, OK 8566), "Hotter than That"/"Savoy Blues" (1927, OK 8535), "West End Blues" (1928, OK 8597), "Muggles" (1928, OK 8703).

Duet with Earl Hines: "Weatherbird" (1928, OK 41454).

Big bands: "Sweethearts on Parade" (1930, Col. 2688D), "Star Dust" (1931, OK 41530), "I Gotta Right to Sing the Blues" (1933, Vic. 24233), "Jubilee" (1938, Decca 1635), "Struttin' with Some Barbecue" (1938, Decca 1661).

All-Stars: "Rockin' Chair"/"Save It Pretty Mama" (1947, Vic. 40-4004), "Basin Street Blues" (1954, Decca 29102), *Louis Armstrong Plays W.C. Handy* (1954, Col. CL591), *Satch Plays Fats* (1955, Col. CL708), "Hello Dolly" (1963, Kapp 573), "It's a Wonderful World" (1967, ABC-Para. 45-10982).

Selected Films

Rhapsody in Black and Blue, 1932; *Pennies From Heaven*, 1936; *Artists and Models, Everyday's a Holiday*, 1937; *Going Places*, 1938; *Cabin in the Sky*, 1943; *Atlantic City*, 1944; *New Orleans*, 1947; *The Glenn Miller Story*, 1954; *High Society*, 1956; *Satchmo the Great*, 1957; *Jazz on a Summer's Day*, 1958; *The Beat Generation*, 1959; *Paris Blues*, 1961; *A Man Called Adam*, 1966; *Hello Dolly*, 1969.

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Art Criticism and the Harlem Renaissance

The Harlem Renaissance, with its emphasis on racial and ethnic distinctiveness, created an audience for visual art made by Americans of African descent. However, as an invention of the 1920s, the category "American Negro artist" would soon be suspended between the rhetoric of cultural nationalism and the reality of a segregated society as yet ill-equipped to fulfill its democratic promise. Within the African American community during these years, there were lively exchanges on the nature of "black creativity," typically in terms of a dynamic interaction between race and nationality. But critics writing for mainstream publications consistently emphasized that "Negro art" was separate from the overarching category "American art." As exposure to so-called Negro art grew, a set of critical constructs emerged, based on racial difference, that in effect isolated black art from the mainstream and contributed significantly to its subsequent historical neglect.

During the Harlem Renaissance and its aftermath, speculation on the relationship between race and creativity filled the pages of black periodicals and spilled over into the mainstream press. In these discussions, African Americans raised important questions about the responsibility of black artists to social (as opposed to aesthetic) issues, about the most desirable ways to represent members of the race, and about whether art should furnish cultural models or present actual individual experience. Articles highlighting the achievements of African American artists and articles about the current reappraisal of African art appeared regularly. The reader was frequently admonished to support black artists by buying their work, so that the artists would not be corrupted by too much white patronage.

But in this heady intellectual climate, black artists seeking a reputation in American art received complex and even conflicting messages. Although critics looked for growing technical facility in emerging black artists, their work was often considered interesting only to the extent that it differed from mainstream art. Critics were bored when the work of black artists appeared too derivative or too much like the work of artists who were not black. Yet critical standards were not altered to accommodate original or innovative expression when it did appear. To a certain extent, the perception of difference was encouraged by African American critics such as Alain Locke. Locke often referred to racially specific experience and culture; he urged black artists to express themselves in characteristically racial terms by drawing on the uniqueness of their experience and on their position as heirs to both an authentic American folk culture and the artistic traditions of ancestral Africa.

In considering art criticism and the Harlem Renaissance, genuine art criticism must be distinguished from what is more properly described as art journalism. These were very different modes of conveying information about African American art and artists, and most critical opinion on what is called the art of the Harlem Renaissance falls into the category of art journalism. Although critics and historians such as Locke and James Porter addressed complex issues of race, culture, identity, and nationalism, journalists writing for the popular press rarely went beyond basic questions such as what "Negro art" was and why anyone should be interested in it.

This situation reflected the state of American art criticism in general during the early twentieth century. With some notable exceptions, a good deal of the writing about art before World War II was a mixed bag of journalism and editorial commentary. Art criticism was not highly professionalized in the United States, and very few American critics applied a consistent, recognizable methodology. The writers of essays on art and culture in literary magazines and the popular press often had little background in the visual arts. Furthermore, in appraising African American visual art, these critics often relied on typologies from music and literature, with which they were more familiar. Thus they tended to raise general issues rather than engage in complex critical analysis of specific works or artists.

Moreover, the aggressive public relations strategies of the Harmon Foundation, the institution most involved in promoting African American artists during

the 1920s and 1930s, ensured its control over newspaper coverage of the Harmon awards for achievement in the visual arts and of its annual exhibitions of Negro art. In the period between the two world wars, a good deal of writing about African American art was simply the Harmon Foundation's publicity posing as art criticism; articles in the mainstream press often took the form of responses to, or paraphrases of, the foundation's promotional literature. Reviews and notices of the foundation's shows either focused on the evidence for and the merits of racial expression or dwelled on anecdote and biography. The black press stressed the professional accomplishments of successful artists; the mainstream press announced cash prizes awarded to artists who had emerged from extremely humble circumstances. In neither case was it common to find long analytical discussions of individual works of art.

Beginning in 1928, the annual exhibitions of the Harmon Foundation stimulated considerable discussion about the achievements and future direction of African American artists. Stemming from the larger debates about black creativity that were of central concern during the Harlem Renaissance, these discussions addressed many of the same issues that occupied critics in literary circles, where they were clearly articulated and hotly contested. Questions were raised about the relationship between contemporary black expression and black folk culture, about the meaning of Africa to modern American blacks, and about the transmission of racial characteristics across time and place. There was also intense concern about the proper representation of African Americans, especially in literary circles, as African American writers came to terms with a sudden fascination with black life in the 1920s. This interest in representation was coupled with an ongoing discussion about the nature of black creativity.

In this context, a set of issues emerged that provided mainstream art critics with a fairly consistent focus for considering the works of African American artists. The visual art of the Harlem Renaissance was typically evaluated according to a priori assumptions about amateurism, primitivism, Authenticity, and racial uniqueness. The fusion of these qualities created specific expectations: Authentic Negro art would be primitive because it was the product of amateurs or individuals predisposed to the primitive by virtue of their unique racial heritage; and such authenticity and uniqueness should be manifest in both the form and the content of Negro art. The ideology of racial primitivism, which often combined beliefs about authenticity,

amateurism, and atavism, resulted in a clear preference among mainstream critics for black artistic expression that manifested it. The fascination with tribal art would later, in the populist climate of the 1930s, be displaced by an idealization of folk art; but insofar as Africa and rural black culture were understood as authentic subject matter for African American artists, they were welcomed. The popularity in the late 1920s of the painters Archibald Motley and Malvin Gray Johnson can in part be explained by this fascination with the primitive.

Mainstream critics looking for racial primitivism in the work of African American artists were especially pleased when they discovered evidence of emotional sensibility based on southern black folk culture and religion. They were in fact seeking the visual equivalent of the Negro spiritual. This sentiment—nearly universal among critics who followed developments in African American art and literature—emanated from a widespread belief that cultural sophistication would be the ruination of the “real American Negro.” For many white Americans, the so-called sorrow songs were the most familiar, and therefore most representative, form of black expression.

Of the black visual artists of the Harlem Renaissance, Richmond Barthé and Archibald Motley were among those most consistently and favorably reviewed by the art press. By the end of the 1930s, Barthé was regarded as one of America’s most promising sculptors, a truly gifted artist who was also racially authentic. Art critics also often found value in the work of seemingly naive black artists such as William H. Johnson. Nineteenth-century American folk art was widely admired during these years as an example of authentic native expression from the past. Modern black folk art and the black folk spirit in professional art were thus often received with greater enthusiasm by art critics than the more obviously sophisticated productions of academically trained artists. Ultimately, these expectations would prompt critics to express displeasure when the work of African American artists presented itself as similar to, or derived from, mainstream artistic practices. Even though many African American artists followed the same general principles as their peers who were not black, racial difference was expected to override shared national cultural ideals or similar professional training.

Notices on the Harmon Foundation shows during the 1930s rehashed many of the same issues that had emerged in the early reviews. Reviewers continued to be disappointed by an evident lack of authentic racial

expression and to regard increased technical skill and the mastery of existing conventions as symptomatic of black artists’ regrettable eagerness to imitate mainstream traditions rather than creating their own. Critics of these later shows consistently remarked that work by black artists resembled the work of their white counterparts. Although William H. Johnson’s work was frequently considered the best in the show, it also commonly prompted (along with the work of Hale Woodruff) the observation that the Harmon collection did not differ significantly from that of any other modern art exhibition coming out of New York. Mainstream critics, straining to find distinctive racial qualities, resorted to clichés about Negroes’ rhythm, spontaneous emotion, and affinity for bright colors. But more often than not, writers concluded that, were it not for the ubiquity of black subjects, the work might “pass” for that of any group of contemporary artists.

The issue of aesthetic modernity and its relationship to traditional African art is also a recurrent theme in much writing about African American art after the Harlem Renaissance. In *The New Negro*, Locke emphasized that African tribal art had invigorated European painters and sculptors, helping to free them of academic practices, and he claimed that it could be an even more potent stimulant for modern African American artists. Although in some of Locke’s writing in the 1930s the emphasis shifts from the tribal antecedents of African American expression to native black American folk culture, Locke never abandoned his belief that African art could be a powerful source for black expression. The conflation of these ideals caused considerable confusion as critics and artists struggled to assess the emerging black modernist aesthetic, prompting the African American artist Selma Day to observe, in 1930:

A few of the artists are producing what is called modern art by some, Negro art by others, and still another group will name the same paintings primitive art. I imagine that one often wonders where one style ends and the other begins, and more often questions whether or not any such thing as modern art or Negro art or primitive art really exists.

The 1920s had forecast the coming of an invigorated American culture that would be expansive and replete with possibilities, and in this context, artists of the Harlem Renaissance made their claims as important contributors to American national culture. The critical writing of Locke and other African Americans

concerned with the progress of black artistic expression reflects a complex understanding of broad cultural discourse in America. Locke noted that although black artists have always sought cultural freedom through art, they have expressed themselves in artistic modes responsive to the American mainstream. Implicit in all of Locke's writing was an unswerving conviction that black Americans, by virtue of their distinctive racial heritage and singular experience, were destined to make a unique contribution to national culture at a critical moment in its development. However, mainstream art critics were more inclined to deal with the artist of African descent in the United States as an "American Negro" rather than a "Negro American," and so they typically did not acknowledge African American art as a vital manifestation of cultural nationalism. During the years between the wars, at a time when black expression, especially in music, was a powerful signifier of American culture in Europe, racism and segregation made it improbable that the visual art of African Americans would be so recognized at home.

Although visual representations of American blacks were considered authentic American subject matter, the discussions of democracy and culture that dominated the American art world, particularly during the Depression, rarely extended to the work of black artists. Instead, African American artists were constantly accused of sacrificing their birthright and were entreated to articulate their difference through archetypal images of suffering, naïveté, or racial primitivism. In an age that merged nationalistic and aesthetic issues, and in which critical discourse about art often lacked sophistication and focus, race seems to have remained the only relevant issue in considerations of African American art. The failure to fundamentally alter this fact has resulted in continued neglect and distortion of African American artists in both American art history and contemporary art; their work is rarely understood in terms that would affirm their participation in mainstream cultural ideals. In this respect, the Harlem Renaissance was a lost opportunity for American art critics, who failed to recognize the extent to which African American artists, both through their work and in their rhetoric, sought to participate in a collective project of national self-definition.

MARY ANN CALO

See also Barthé, Richmond; Harmon Foundation; Johnson, Malvin Gray; Johnson, William H.; Locke, Alain; Modernism; Motley, Archibald J. Jr; New Negro, The; Porter, James Amos; Primitivism; Woodruff, Hale

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Artists

During the Harlem Renaissance, the visual arts flowered with the same vigor as drama, dance, music, and literature. For a brief but resplendent moment in the

1920s and 1930s, Harlem was the center of a visual arts movement whose effects were felt across the United States and around the world, in places such as Atlanta, Chicago, Kansas City, San Francisco, Paris, Copenhagen, and Berlin. For the first time in history, there was a widespread interest in African American art among dealers, patrons, and curators. As early as 1919, an exhibit of the paintings of the African American expatriate Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859–1937), who was then living in Paris, was mounted at Knoedler Gallery in New York City. It was followed in 1921 by an exhibit of African American painting and sculpture at the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library (later known as the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture). This second show featured works by Tanner as well as other accomplished artists, such as Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller (1877–1968), William Edward Scott (1884–1969), and Laura Wheeler Waring (1887–1948). In 1926, the Harmon Foundation (a philanthropic agency that awarded prizes to African Americans for achievement in the visual arts) granted the first of many annual prizes to the painters Palmer Hayden (1890–1973) and Hale Woodruff (1900–1980); and in 1927, a pivotal exhibition, “The Negro in Art,” was presented by the Chicago Women’s Club.

Interdisciplinary collaboration also marked this period. For example, Aaron Douglas (1899–1979) designed covers for black periodicals such as *The Crisis*, *Opportunity*, and *Fire!!*; and artists illustrated books of scholarly writing, poetry, and fiction by literati of the Harlem Renaissance, including Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, Charles S. Johnson, Alain Locke, and James Weldon Johnson.

The Harlem Renaissance was pervaded by the concept of the New Negro—someone with, in Locke’s words, “renewed self-respect and self-dependence,” who found a voice in the arts. Locke’s sentiments were articulated in 1925, in an edition of *Survey Graphic* magazine dedicated to Harlem as the “mecca of the New Negro.” The magazine, which contained drawings, poems, essays, fiction, and social commentary by young African American artists, writers, and intellectuals, sold more than 5,000 copies and helped launch the literary and artistic movement that came to be known as the Harlem Renaissance. This special issue of *Survey Graphic* became the manifesto of the era; in addition to writings, it included illustrations and portraits of notable figures of the renaissance, such as the singer and actor Paul Robeson, the tenor Roland Hayes (who appeared on the magazine’s cover), and other distinguished African Americans.

The magazine’s art director was the artist Winold Reiss (1886–1953), who had emigrated to the United States from Germany in 1913 and became known for his documentary-style portraits of Americans from widely varied racial and cultural backgrounds. Reiss’s cover design for the Harlem issue of *Survey Graphic* featured a sensitive portrait of Hayes (as the New Negro) and a combination of African and art deco design elements. In fact, Reiss’s cover, with its emphasis on African forms and abstract design motifs, embodied the modern international spirit of the Harlem Renaissance—a spirit clearly arising from both European and African culture. Many of the Harlem Renaissance artists studied abroad, particularly in Paris (where Negritude, a counterpart to the New Negro movement, was forming) and incorporated elements of German expressionism and cubism (itself inspired by African sculpture) into their own art. The Harlem Renaissance may be considered one of the first truly international art movements to take root on American soil.

An unprecedented number of African American visual artists were able to achieve some degree of success during this period, owing in no small measure to the Harmon Foundation. Aaron Douglas, Augusta Savage (1892–1962), and William H. Johnson (1901–1970), among others, gained a national and even an international reputation with the help of this foundation, whose art prizes were intended to bring African American creativity to the attention of a broad public and to lend financial support to participating artists. The winner of the foundation’s Gold Medal Prize for art in 1926, and one of the first to benefit from the Harmon programs, was Palmer Hayden, who was then thirty-six. Hayden had earlier spent ten years in the armed services, during which time he enrolled in a correspondence course in drawing. After his discharge in 1920, he pursued further art study at Columbia University and at the Boothbay Commonwealth Art Colony in Maine. After winning the Harmon medal (and a \$400 prize) for an impressionistic marine painting, Hayden traveled to Paris, where he lived, studied, and exhibited for five years, from 1927 to 1932.

While abroad, Hayden made the acquaintances of Tanner and of Locke (who was traveling in Europe at the time). Locke, the major interpreter of Harlem Renaissance aesthetics, had received his Ph.D. at Harvard and had the distinction of being the first African American Rhodes Scholar (at Oxford). He also headed the philosophy department at Howard University from 1912 to 1953. Locke, whose pivotal essay “The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts” urged African American

artists to look to the art of their African ancestors for creative inspiration, argued that modern European art, particularly the works of Matisse, Picasso, Derain, and the German expressionists, had been substantially influenced by the abstract qualities of African sculpture. Locke believed that if African art was capable of arousing the aesthetic impulses of the European modernists, then surely it should inspire the same outpouring of creativity from the “culturally awakened” New Negro artist.

Locke’s hope that black artists would take inspiration from Africa found representation in one of Hayden’s best-known works, *Fétiche et Fleurs*, which won the Harmon painting prize in 1933. The painting comprised a still life of a vase of flowers, a Gabon Fang mask, and a Congo Bakuba cloth arranged in a Cézannesque design that tilted perspective and compressed the picture space. Hayden, who had by then returned to New York from Paris, continued to focus on ethnic subjects, but his style began to reveal a disturbing element of caricature that was evidently popular among the white clientele on whom most Harlem Renaissance artists depended for support. Hayden exaggerated the features of his subjects to the point, some people believed, of grotesqueness and, as a result, became a target of criticism, particularly from the respected art historian James A. Porter, the author of *Modern Negro Art* (1943). Porter objected to Hayden’s new painting style as “ill-advised if not altogether tasteless” and reminiscent of billboards advertising blackface minstrel shows.

Hayden, however, maintained that his purpose was not to mock or to satirize but rather to paint, in his own “naive” style, the life and people that he knew. He compared his means to the writing style of Langston Hughes (who admired Hayden’s work) and argued that the vernacular elements and characters found in Hughes’s writings were similar to those that he painted. Locke praised Hayden’s work and considered Porter’s assessment too severe; notwithstanding these conflicts, Hayden flourished. He worked for the easel division of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Federal Arts Project, which provided continued support to many artists of the Harlem Renaissance after the Harmon Foundation’s exhibits were discontinued in 1933. Hayden’s paintings, particularly those that centered on black life, had broad appeal and exerted an incontrovertible influence on perceptions of Harlem Renaissance aesthetics.

The artist most closely associated with the Harlem Renaissance was Aaron Douglas, who was born in

Kansas. Douglas espoused not only Locke’s ideal of art embodying African motifs but also a similar mandate set forth by the scholar and social activist W. E. B. Du Bois (in 1915, in an issue of the NAACP’s magazine *The Crisis*) that black artists should depict only the most ennobling self-imagery. Douglas studied fine arts as an undergraduate at the University of Nebraska and taught art briefly in Kansas City before coming to New York in 1924. There he met Winold Reiss, who encouraged him to incorporate African abstraction into his work.

Douglas quickly developed a unique method of painting, which combined accessible narrative imagery with a complex compositional substructure of geometric abstraction. His stylized representations of African American life and history greatly appealed to patrons and literati in Harlem. In 1925, Reiss included Douglas’s illustrations in the Harlem issue of *Survey Graphic*. That same year, Douglas received commissions to illustrate *Opportunity* (the publication of the New York Urban League) and *The Crisis* (for which Du Bois was a contributing editor). In 1926, Douglas helped illustrate the first issues of *Fire!!*, a cutting-edge periodical that was devoted to the works of young African American artists and writers; and in 1927, he collaborated with one of the cofounders of the NAACP, James Weldon Johnson, in creating drawings to accompany Johnson’s collection of poems *God’s Trombones*. In 1928, Douglas designed the jacket for Claude McKay’s highly successful book *Home to Harlem*.

Also in 1928, Douglas received an award from the Barnes Foundation that enabled him to study the Barnes collection in Merion, Pennsylvania. This experience and a one-year stay in Paris from 1931 to 1932 exposed Douglas to a variety of African art objects as well as to European modernism. The influences of both are revealed in Douglas’s mature style, which by the 1930s was a synthesis of African and European elements. By this time, Douglas was creating large-scale murals such as *Jungle and Jazz* for Harlem’s Club Ebony, and other murals for businesses and institutions beyond the borders of Harlem, including Fisk University in Nashville (where he would later be the chairman of the art department) and the Sherman Hotel in Chicago. Douglas’s most famous mural sequence was produced under the auspices of the WPA for the Schomburg Center in Harlem in 1934 and was called *Aspects of Negro Life*.

The large-scale oil compositions of *Aspects of Negro Life* comprise a chronological record of four critical

moments in African American history. The first panel, *The Negro in an African Setting*, portrays African dancers, musicians, and ritual objects during an elysian time before the African slave trade began. The second, *From Slavery through Reconstruction*, shows a scene of enslaved workers behind a screen of cotton plants, men breaking their chains, and a figure holding up a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation in the shadow of the Capitol building. *An Idyll of the Deep South* depicts a time just after Reconstruction, during the period of Jim Crow, when legal segregation and widespread lynchings marred African American life. Portrayed in this complex narrative is a group of farmworkers and banjo players amid stylized flora. The figures in this group are overshadowed by the specter of a victim of lynching—the dangling feet of a body hanging from a tree. In *Song of the Towers*, the fourth mural in the series, Douglas portrays a saxophone player (a symbol of the black creative spirit) and a businessman in a towering industrial setting. The composition—a requiem for the proletariat—is crisscrossed with sinister, shadowy forms that haunt the figures, who appear to be overcome by intense emotional anguish.

Douglas's inimitable fusion of disparate elements—abstraction and figuration, Africanism and modernism, social and historical narrative—within his signature lyrical, translucent, nearly monochromatic palette appealed to both the neophyte and the connoisseur. Unlike most social realist and regionalist artists of his time, Douglas was able to embrace geometric abstraction in a way that allowed his paintings to remain accessible to the broader public. The comprehensibility of his images, and their dignified black subject matter, made Douglas one of the most popular artists of the period. In fact, one year after the completion of *Aspects of Negro Life*, Douglas was elected president of the Harlem Artists' Guild (the Harlem affiliate of the Artists Union), through which he fought for better opportunities for black artists.

Douglas's contemporary William H. Johnson was equally prolific and talented. Johnson came to New York from South Carolina in 1918, studying art and supporting himself at a variety of odd jobs until 1926, when he moved to Europe. During his years in New York, Johnson studied the visual arts, taking classes at the National Academy of Design beginning in 1921 and winning several art prizes and scholarships. He also spent summers at the Cape Cod School of Art in Provincetown, Massachusetts, where his works were included in a group exhibition at the local art associa-

tion. After studying briefly with George B. Luks, the renowned American "ashcan school" artist, Johnson went to the Montparnasse section of Paris with funds given to him by the director of the Cape Cod School of Art, Charles W. Hawthorne.

Johnson was an exceptional draftsman. His early still lifes and figure studies show a keen understanding of form and color and evoke the loose brushwork and spatial analyses of the impressionists and postimpressionists. His portraits and landscapes during his first years abroad demonstrate his own painterly expressiveness and also reveal the influence of the French artist Chaim Soutine and the Norwegian symbolist painter Edvard Munch. Johnson experimented in a variety of two-dimensional media while he was in Europe, and his works, like those of Douglas, show evidence of a broad understanding of European modernism, particularly German expressionism.

While he was abroad, Johnson met and married the Danish artist Holcha Krake; they returned to the United States in 1929. One year later, encouraged by Luks, Johnson entered his work in the Harmon Foundation's annual exhibit and was awarded a gold medal for painting. Throughout the 1930s, Johnson continued to exhibit at the Harmon Foundation and at numerous galleries at home and abroad. In 1937, he took a position with the WPA as an instructor at the Harlem Community Art Center. At about this time, his work began to undergo stylistic changes. Under pressure from the Harmon Foundation (which disapproved of his single-minded espousal of a European aesthetic), and in response to the expectations of the broader public regarding African American artists in general, Johnson turned to more deliberately ethnic themes and to a less apparently erudite formal technique. He moved away from European modernism toward a pseudo-naïve *art brut* style that evoked vernacular art and African sculpture. He also began to focus on African American religious subjects and on genre scenes of couples in Harlem, street musicians, and farmworkers. In shifting toward an approach like that of folk art, Johnson was similar to Hayden, but, despite the guise of naïveté, Johnson's later works continued to show a keen sense of composition, an understanding of color and form, and an undeniable gift for complex design.

After his wife's death from breast cancer in 1944, Johnson's mental health began to deteriorate. While traveling in Norway, he was hospitalized for paresis (a disease of the central nervous system characterized by mental and emotional instability and paralytic

attacks). The U.S. State Department arranged for his return home, and he was admitted to Central Islip State Hospital in New York. Johnson would never paint again; he remained confined at the state hospital until his death. However, the more than 1,000 works he had produced during the Harlem Renaissance were rescued from a warehouse in Manhattan by the Harmon Foundation, which purchased his estate and donated his paintings and prints to the Smithsonian Institution, where they remain today. The immense body of work produced by Johnson during the Harlem Renaissance reflects his complex personality and his response to life between two world wars and on two continents.

In 1927, the Newark Museum of Art mounted an exhibition, "Paintings and Watercolors by Living American Artists." A delicately rendered portrait of an elderly woman, seated at her sewing beside a lace-covered table, was voted the most popular work in the show. The painter was an alumnus of the Chicago Art Institute, Archibald Motley Jr. (1891–1981); and the painting was *Mending Socks*—a carefully constructed composition portraying Motley's grandmother in near profile within a compressed space. *Mending Socks* represented Motley's unquestionable talent, but as an early work depicting a conventional domestic subject in a naturalistic manner, it was far from indicative of the stylized forms and edgy, urban themes (influenced by his onetime mentor, the American artist George Bellows) for which Motley would become known.

Motley's penchant for realism quickly gave way to a more modernist vision, developed during a year of study in Paris at the end of the 1920s. In his new paintings, Motley generalized figures and faces, simplified forms, and subordinated details in favor of mood or ambience. He was able to capture his emotional impressions as well as his visual impressions of each scene he chose, bringing to life crowded Harlem nightclubs or cobblestoned Parisian streets teeming with French *flâneurs*. He achieved this feat through the use of vibrant colors, diffuse lighting, overlapping forms, and unique angles of vision and handling of space. The results were often visually dazzling.

Motley preferred metropolitan themes: pool halls, dance halls, and street scenes. He was also one of the first American artists to treat the black female nude as a subject worthy of "high" art, rather than as an object of ridicule or pornography. His psychologically intense *Brown Girl after the Bath* (1931) reconstitutes a seventeenth-century Dutch motif with a realism and quiet authority that conveys not only a sexualized body but also a contemplative woman whose melancholy,

enigmatic gaze holds that of the viewer. Motley, who was supported throughout the Depression by the WPA, made a definitive and lasting creative contribution to the Harlem Renaissance—a contribution which, although largely ignored after the 1930s, has been recognized in recent years as integral to our understanding of the period.

Women artists, too, thrived during the Harlem Renaissance. One was the sculptor Nancy Elizabeth Prophet (1890–1960), who graduated in 1918 from the Rhode Island School of Design, and then moved to New York, attracted by the art scene there. She developed a significant alliance with Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, a member of New York's cultural elite and founder of the Whitney Museum of American Art. Whitney was responsible for some of the museum's first acquisitions of African American art: several works by the sculptor Richmond Barthé (1901–1989).

Whitney and Prophet were not only fellow artists but also close friends, and they shared a studio and exhibited together. In fact, in 1922 Whitney financed Prophet's first trip to Europe; Prophet would remain in Europe for ten years, studying and exhibiting throughout the 1920s and early 1930s—and becoming acquainted with W. E. B. Du Bois, Countee Cullen, and Augusta Savage, who were all sojourning in France. Toward the end of her stay in Paris, Prophet began to cultivate her reputation in the United States by sending two of her works to the Harmon exhibition of 1930 and winning a \$250 prize for one of them.

Returning to the United States in 1934, at the invitation of John Hope, the president of Atlanta University, Prophet joined the art faculty at Spelman College—one of the southern magnets for talented figures in the Harlem Renaissance (Hale Woodruff had recently founded the art department there). For a time, Prophet's career flourished. Her elegant portraits in wood, marble, and other three-dimensional media appeared in major American exhibitions, including the Whitney Biennials of 1935 and 1937, and in renowned collections such as the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In 1944, Prophet left her position at Spelman College; as a northerner, she had found the southern rural environment uninspiring. She returned to Rhode Island and made several attempts to further her professional goals; however, she found it impossible to repeat her earlier successes. To support herself, Prophet was forced to work as a housekeeper and as a live-in domestic servant. Occasionally, she made portrait busts for a ceramics factory to earn extra money, but her final years were spent in poverty and obscurity.

Another woman artist, Lois Mailou Jones (1905–1998), is a shining example of the creativity and productivity of the Harlem Renaissance. Unlike Prophet, Jones had nearly half a century of artistic success. Jones began her career in 1919 as a student at the High School of Practical Arts in Boston; her decision to pursue the arts as a profession was inspired, in part, by a meeting in the early 1920s with an older artist, Meta Warrick Fuller (whose sculpture *Ethiopia Awakening* of 1921 is considered one of the first to articulate the pan-Africanist philosophy of black enfranchisement that was integral to the New Negro and Negritude movements). Jones started by designing costumes and textiles, but she was also a prolific draftsman and painter. She held her first one-person show in 1923, when she was only seventeen. She spent her college years at the Boston Museum School on a four-year scholarship, majoring in design and winning numerous awards.

When she graduated, Jones relocated briefly to North Carolina and founded the art department at Palmer Memorial Institute in Sedalia. Her success there brought her to the attention of James V. Herring, then chairman of the art department at Howard University in Washington, D.C. (where Alain Locke headed the philosophy department). Herring invited Jones to join the faculty at Howard, and she would go on to teach design there for nearly fifty years. During her abundantly creative and productive life, Jones had more than sixty solo exhibitions, and she participated in literally hundreds of group shows, including the Harmon Foundation exhibits. Like Douglas, Jones also worked as a graphic designer, producing illustrations for a book by the African American historiographer Carter G. Woodson, *African Heroes and Heroines*, and designing covers for his *Negro History Bulletin*. Jones was a pioneer American abstractionist who combined a flair for decorative and geometric patterning with a keen understanding of human anatomy and a gift for portraiture. Responding to the inspiration of Locke and the Harmon Foundation, she focused consistently on African and African American subject matter, alternating these interests with a love of impressionist-style landscape.

The sculptor Augusta Savage—a contemporary of both Jones and Prophet—came to New York in the 1920s, like so many others, as part of the “great migration.” Savage was one of the most influential artists of the Harlem Renaissance, making her greatest impact as an educator and an activist for the arts. After a period of study at New York’s Cooper Union and a stay in Europe in the late 1920s, Savage returned to New York

in 1932 to establish her own Studio of Arts and Crafts. With aid from the WPA, this studio eventually evolved into the Harlem Community Arts Center, which provided art instruction to some 1,500 constituents and was a model WPA facility, visited by Eleanor Roosevelt and Albert Einstein. Savage’s students included Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000), Norman Lewis (1909–1979), and William Artis (1914–1977), who were then novices but would go on to become renowned artists.

In 1939, Savage was offered a professional commission by the organizers of the New York World’s Fair to create her sculpture *The Harp (Lift Every Voice and Sing)*. This monumental sixteen-foot plaster work featured a human harp consisting of singing African American figures. It also paid homage, through its subtitle, to James Weldon Johnson’s song “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” often known as the “black national anthem.” After the World’s Fair closed, Savage did not have the funds to cast or store this sculpture, and it was bulldozed when the fairgrounds were demolished. Savage also discovered that because she had been privately employed (even if only temporarily), she no longer qualified for her WPA position, and her employment with the Harlem Community Arts Center was terminated.

That year marked the last major showing of Savage’s work, and her further attempts to advance her career were unsuccessful. In fact, her later career paralleled that of Prophet. The fact that neither woman could make professional progress after the 1930s was largely because of the demise, in 1943, of the WPA Federal Arts Project, which—because of its mandates against racial and sexual discrimination—had provided a short season of opportunity to women and minority artists. The unprecedented opportunities afforded to women and minorities during this period ended as congressional budgets were cut or discontinued, as abstract expressionism began to replace social realism and other narrative art, and as socialist sentiments gave way to more conservative values. Like Prophet, Savage rarely exhibited or produced art after the early 1940s; eventually, she became an embittered recluse on an old farm in upstate New York, shunning the art community altogether. Despite this unfortunate conclusion to her own artistic life, Savage’s genius survived in the art of one of her most important students, Jacob Lawrence.

Lawrence’s art is epitomized in images of Harlem and of African American heroes and heroism, configured in meticulously structured spaces. Lawrence was only a boy during the Harlem Renaissance, but his

experiences in Harlem and in Savage's studio helped make him one of the most renowned African American artists of the twentieth century. His earliest painting cycles—*Frederick Douglass* (1938–1939), *Toussaint L'Ouverture* (1939), *Harriet Tubman* (1939–1940), *Migration* (1940–1941), *John Brown* (1941), and *Harlem* (1942–1943)—reflect his affinity with the Harlem Renaissance. Like Douglas, Lawrence was inspired by the formal principles of contemporaneous art movements such as cubism and art deco, and he produced a body of work that is visually, emotionally, and intellectually provocative.

Lawrence was born in Atlantic City and moved to Harlem when he was thirteen years old, at a time when the glittering nightlife and the social milieu of Harlem were being displaced by the harsh realities of the Depression. His series *Harlem* compassionately portrays and interprets his experiences of life in New York. The scenes, thirty in all, range from pulsating city views to intimate interiors and use an often explicit narrative vernacular that reveals the depth, breadth, and complexity of African American existence. Lawrence, who remained active into his eighties, spent a lifetime enchanting and enlightening audiences, and informing them about the African American experience; through his work, he carried the legacy of the Harlem Renaissance into the next millennium.

Romare Bearden (1912–1988), like Lawrence, was a youth in Harlem at the end of the renaissance. Bearden attended college in New York in the early 1930s and exhibited at the Harlem YMCA and at the Harlem Art Workshop (also headed by Savage). By 1940, Bearden had rented studio space on 125th Street in a building also occupied by Jacob Lawrence and Claude McKay. Bearden is seldom identified directly with the Harlem Renaissance, but his art, like the work of Lawrence, recontextualizes his experiences of Harlem. Although Bearden had left Harlem by the mid-twentieth century, remembrances of the old neighborhood would continue to appear in his art for decades.

In the true spirit of the Harlem Renaissance, Bearden took inspiration from African as well as various other sources, including medieval stylization, Chinese calligraphy, the work of the European masters, and biblical and literary themes. His later collages reflect his affinity with cubist structure and the painting of the American precisionist Stuart Davis (who was active in New York during the Harlem Renaissance), as well as his studies at the Art Students League in the 1930s with the political satirist George Grosz. Bearden was also a disciple of jazz, which he deftly translated into

visual form. In his compositions, he configured complex overlays of negative and positive space with the same intuitive rectitude as a jazz musician might conceive the compound relationships between sounds and silence. Bearden also applied the methods of the dada artists of the 1920s and 1930s, combining elements of montage, collage, and photography. His images are unique visions of tenement houses, conjure women, jazz sessions, and life in Harlem. Bearden was a man of many talents and deep emotional and intellectual commitments. In addition to his career as a visual artist, he studied philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris, spent two decades as a social worker, published poetry, and pursued a brief career as a songwriter. Bearden is recognized today as one of the great American modernists of the twentieth century and a quintessential “renaissance” man.

The artists discussed here are only a few of those whose lives and ambitions were interconnected during the years of the Harlem Renaissance. There are many others, such as the photographer James Van Der Zee (1886–1983), who recorded in pictures a crucial time in our history—creating, for example, valuable visual documents of the activities of Marcus Garvey's pan-Africanist organization, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Van Der Zee's photographic portraits of families and individuals in Harlem provide a breathtaking record of the age. Arriving in Harlem from Massachusetts in 1906, Van Der Zee was hired by the Gertz department store as a darkroom technician, and by 1917, he had opened his own portrait studio on 135th Street (by the early 1930s, he moved to a larger space on Lenox Avenue). Soon, Van Der Zee's talent for creative settings, elaborate props, and ennobling photographs of Harlem's citizens made him a celebrated artist in the community; ultimately, he achieved a reputation as one of the most important photographers in modern American history.

Other artists include the sculptor Richmond Barthé, who studied at the Art Institute of Chicago almost simultaneously with Motley; by the early 1930s, three of Barthé's elegant, lyrical bronze sculptures were purchased by the Whitney Museum. The painter and sculptor Charles Alston was one of the first African Americans to be given a supervisory position by the WPA. Under its auspices, Alston created murals for Harlem Hospital and opened a studio space at 306 West 141st Street. Alston's atelier, known affectionately as “306,” became a hub for African American artists and intellectuals, who gathered there to discuss important issues of the day.



William Johnson, *Street Life, Harlem*, c. 1939–1940. (Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Art Resource, New York.)



Miguel Covarrubias, *Rhapsody in Blue*, 1929. (Art Resource, New York. By permission of Fundación Covarrubias.)

Malvin Gray Johnson (1896–1934) studied at the National Academy of Design and exhibited with the Harmon Foundation. His Cézannesque portraits of African American subjects received some adverse criticism for their emphatic modernism, but they attracted the attention of commercial galleries and were given enthusiastic reviews. Sargent Claude Johnson (1887–1967), who was based in San Francisco, created African-inspired sculptural portraits that paid homage to the physical beauty of the black race; Johnson participated in Harmon shows throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Hale Woodruff, who was born in Illinois,



Aaron Douglas, *Song of the Towers*, 1934, at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. (Schomburg Center, New York Public Library; Art Resource, New York.)



Jacob Lawrence, *The Migration of the Negro*, 1940–1941, Panel 12: “The railroad stations were at times so crowded that special guards had to be called in to keep order.” Tempera on gesso on composition board, 12 by 18 inches; text and title revised by the artist, 1993. (© ARS, New York; © Digital Image; © The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Mrs. David M. Levy, 28. 1942. 6. Licensed by Scala / Art Resource, N. Y.)

was inspired by Mexican muralists; he received one of the first Harmon Foundation awards in 1926, and went on to paint social realist murals on African American history for the libraries of both Atlanta University (where he was chairman of the art department) and Talladega College in Alabama.

Although important research has been done on many visual artists of the Harlem Renaissance, numerous others remain unsung. Many of these men and women have faded into obscurity, but their legacy has not. The painters and sculptors of the Harlem Renaissance constitute a remarkably talented group, who made possible the successes of subsequent generations of African American artists, represented by Bearden, Lawrence, and others. Serious racial, economic, and sociopolitical impediments faced the artists of the Harlem Renaissance in the pursuit of their chosen vocation. Yet the particular circumstances of the period, which allowed a momentary flowering of genius, caused Americans to sit up and take notice of African American creativity for the first time in the history of the United States.

LISA E. FARRINGTON

See also Art Criticism and the Harlem Renaissance; Crisis, The; Europe and the Harlem Renaissance: 4—Paris; Federal Programs; Fire!!; Harmon Foundation; Locke, Alain; Modernism; Negritude; New Negro; 135th Street Library; Opportunity; Porter, James Amos; Survey Graphic; Visual Arts; Woodson, Carter G.; *specific artists*

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Associated Negro Press

The Associated Negro Press was not the first black news service. In 1884, Colonel William Murrell, general manager of the Washington, D.C. *Bee*, announced at a meeting of the National Colored Associated Press (NCAP) that Western Union had installed wires in its office to transmit news to other black newspapers around the country. Charles C. Stewart of the Baltimore *Vindicator* chose at least one black newspaper in each state to become a member of NCAP. In 1890, the Associated Correspondents of Race Newspapers (ACRN) was established. It consisted of at least forty reporters from ten newspapers around the country who were based in Washington, D.C., and sent news from Washington to newspapers other than their own ten. Matthew M. Lewey, owner and founder of the Gainesville *Sentinel* and president of the National Negro Press Association, realized that a more efficient system of exchanging articles was necessary to improve coverage by the black press. This topic was explored at the association's convention in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1911; later that year, Lewey arranged a meeting in Nashville, Tennessee, where a newspaper service for member weeklies was established. The service would gather news from all of the weeklies through Wednesday of each week for publication on Friday or Saturday.

In 1918, Claude Barnett, as part of a public relations campaign for the Chicago *Defender*, visited several black newspapers and learned that many of them had local coverage but lacked national and international news. He then approached Robert S. Abbott, owner and publisher of the *Defender*, and suggested starting a news service to provide stories to back newspapers. Barnett received no support, but in 1919 he launched the Associated Negro Press (ANP) in Chicago.

Barnett called ANP a news service, but its critics said that it was actually a clipping service because Barnett and his staff clipped articles from newspapers nationwide and included them in what ANP sent to its clients, along with articles rewritten from papers such as the Chicago *Defender* and only a handful of original articles from freelancers in Chicago and elsewhere. Abbott complained to a friend that Barnett was "stealing

my news and selling it to other papers for a profit" (Waters 1987, 419); and in general, historians—although they believe that ANP was more than a clipping service—agree with Abbott's accusation. Barnett was short-staffed at the outset and found that the most economical means of providing his service was to rewrite material from the *Defender*, which was then the leading black newspaper in terms of circulation and coverage. In this way, his small staff produced an impressive amount of copy. However, as ANP gained more clients, Barnett was able to attract news sources and thus decrease his dependence on the *Defender*.

Barnett's criteria included accuracy, human interest, coverage of racial concerns, and appeal to a wide audience. As ANP grew, it also attracted reporters from other newspapers: Nahum Brazier (Nahum Daniel Brascher) and Percival Prattis from the *Defender*, and Frank Marshal Davis from Atlanta. They broadened the product by enlisting well-known scholarly writers and personalities as columnists, who commented on a wide variety of topics including civil rights, sports, and science. Barnett paid his writers only a meager salary, on the assumption that they would become celebrated by having their articles and columns published in numerous newspapers. This appeal to fame rather than money helped keep ANP solvent.

ANP served newspapers, schools, organizations, businesses, and individuals; newspaper clients could pay for the service by providing ANP with their local news. ANP's news was mimeographed and delivered twice a week by first-class mail and special delivery. A delivery might consist of two or three packages of fifty to seventy-five legal-size sheets of single-spaced copy, depending on the circulation of the client newspaper. This represented more than enough articles to fill all the sections of the paper except for local stories. ANP's feature stories focused on black history, entertainment, women's fashions, and other subjects. Late-breaking stories and special events were sent over the wires. ANP had its own part-time correspondents in large cities and correspondents abroad in Paris, Moscow, London, Tokyo, and elsewhere.

ANP did not collaborate with its white counterpart, the Associated Press (AP); in fact, some of ANP's editors considered AP the enemy. Oswald Garrison Villard, for one, believed AP's coverage of Negroes was biased and tended to polarize whites and Negroes:

The Associated Press (white) . . . always in its first paragraph . . . attributes the source of trouble to our people "molesting white women." That, the

Associated Press knows, is always fuel for the fire of the fury. . . . It arouses certain elements of whites to indignation by the thoughts of the ever "burly black brutes," and it stirs the people of our group to a state of fighting made by the folly of it. (Pride 1974, 51)

But ANP was like AP in at least one respect: Both helped sustain newspapers. According to Waters, "Half, maybe three-fourths, of the papers could not have existed without the copy provided by ANP, just as most white papers would have folded had it not been for AP and UPI" (420). Historians credit ANP with building the Negro press by providing reliable content. Moreover, ANP did much to orchestrate the civil rights movement by reporting on racial discrimination.

ANP reached its height after the period of the Harlem Renaissance, during World War II, when it had 225 domestic subscribers. By 1958, it had only thirty-seven domestic clients. In August 1964, Barnett retired and sold ANP to Alfred Duckett, a public relations specialist in New York City. At that time, ANP had recovered somewhat; it had seventy-five domestic subscribers and two hundred international subscribers (mostly African newspapers). But even a reasonable number of subscribers could not sustain it: With the advent of television and the increased coverage of black issues in white dailies, black newspapers and eventually ANP lost importance. In the early 1960s, though, Barnett started an extension of ANP in Africa, called World News Service (WNS). In 1967, after a series of strokes, Barnett died in Chicago. Duckett distributed feature stories through ANP until 1969.

During the years when ANP operated, 1919 through 1969, nearly fifty African American news services cropped up. However, none of these was nearly as successful as ANP; and after 1969 the black press had no news service until April 1972, when the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA, based in Washington, D.C.) began to provide the National Black News Service.

GERI ALUMIT

See also Abbott, Robert Sengstacke; Black Press; Chicago Defender; Villard, Oswald Garrison

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Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and Journal of Negro History

Scholars tend to focus on the artistic and literary manifestations of the Harlem Renaissance, neglecting its historical component. In fact, though, the black history movement led by Carter G. Woodson, the second African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University, experienced growth and expansion during the time of the renaissance.

From its humble beginning in 1915, Woodson envisioned the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) as a scientific and scholarly organization dedicated to the promotion and dissemination of useful information about various aspects of black history. Central to this project was the publication of a scientific historical journal, the *Journal of Negro History* (*JNH*), founded in 1916. In format, *JNH* resembled the *American Historical Review*, edited by the prominent scholar J. Franklin Jameson, which was the official organ of the American Historical Association (AHA). Both ASNLH and *JNH* represented a century-long effort to establish black history, first in black academia—historically black colleges and universities—and later in American society in general. The Harlem Renaissance was not only the backdrop but also a significant impetus for this institutionalization. Several factors made a serious study of black history possible: They included (1) white patronage, from individual donors and philanthropic organizations; (2) Woodson's single-minded leadership and his ability to attract prominent white historians and black civic leaders; and (3) the shifting demographics of black America, caused by the "great migration." These same factors also allowed the construction of an intellectual apparatus through

which studies of black history could be disseminated to both African Americans and whites.

Throughout much of the nineteenth century, and up to the founding of ASNLH, black history was pursued in the narrow, parochial confines of specialized and localized black intellectual and historical associations. Among African Americans, interest in history and organization for its study were characterized by groups such as the American Negro Academy, founded by Alexander Crummell in 1897; and the Negro Society for Historical Research, founded in the early twentieth century by two black bibliophiles, John ("Grit") Bruce and Arthur Alonso Schomburg. Because their origins were in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, the American Negro Academy and the Negro Society for Historical Research relied heavily on nineteenth-century notions of gentlemanly deportment and on elitist ideas about scholarship. Their members, drawn mostly from the black elite, saw their role as disseminating information to educated audiences in the form of addresses, lectures, and treatises. The American Negro Academy published occasional papers, and W. E. B. Du Bois, one of its most distinguished leaders, considered its membership representative of the best men of the race. Although the Negro Society for Historical Research was less exclusive, it, too, had only a moderate impact on the larger community. It consisted primarily of serious collectors and bibliophiles who focused on the black experience, and it proved too insular to survive in a changing intellectual environment.

ASNLH represented a significant departure from these earlier societies. By the 1920s, it emerged from its shadowy position as a small, localized historical organization and became a recognized scholarly association for the promotion of black history. Much of this change was a result of Woodson's pioneering work. Woodson was a native of Kentucky and a graduate of Berea College and Harvard University. As a professionally trained historian, he strongly believed that history and historical understanding involved not only the collection and preservation of materials but also a rigorous application of scientific objectivity to historical data. He understood, furthermore, that to be respected as a legitimate scholarly enterprise and to sustain itself financially, his organization would need the endorsement of white historians, philanthropists, and prominent African American scholars and donors. One source of such support was the presence of leading figures in the white and black communities on the executive council of ASNLH. Throughout the 1920s,

prominent individuals from all walks of life served in this capacity. Historians were represented on the council by Carl Russell Fish of the University of Wisconsin and Albert Bushnell Hart of Harvard University. Philanthropists included Julius Rosenwald, chairman of Sears Roebuck and Company; and the financier George Peabody, a trustee at Hampton University. The council also included well-known white activists and black intellectuals. For example, two council members were Moorfield Storey, who served as executive director of the NAACP in the early twentieth century; and Monroe Nathan Work, a prominent black sociologist who was the editor of *Negro Yearbook*, an annual compilation of statistics regarding blacks in the United States. Perhaps the most prominent black college president to serve on the council was Robert Russa Moton, Booker T. Washington's successor at Tuskegee Institute; Moton had close ties to the Republican Party throughout the 1920s.

ASNLH also received \$25,000 from the Carnegie Institute, with the help of J. Franklin Jameson, the director of the foundation; and a \$25,000 grant from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Fund. These grants were used to collect data and fund several projects on free black families in the early republic (1789–1830) and in the antebellum period (1830–1860). The grants also supported a series of investigations by Alruthus Ambush Taylor, a graduate of the University of Michigan and Harvard University who was ASNLH's first associate investigator. Taylor collected information about African Americans during the Reconstruction period (1865–1877) and wrote two monographs: *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia* (1924) and *The Negro in the Reconstruction of South Carolina* (1926). In addition, the grants facilitated the hiring of Lorenzo Greene as a part-time associate and field investigator for ASNLH. Between 1928 and 1930, Greene made important contributions to several of Woodson's book-length studies, including *African Myths*, *The Negro in Our History*, and *The Negro Wage Earner*.

ASNLH hired several African American women as research assistants. Irene Wright was hired in 1923 to conduct research in archives at Seville, in Spain. Wright investigated the struggle between the British and Spanish empires for territorial control of the Americas during the colonial period; she also examined material related to the position of blacks in Spanish colonial society. Ruth Anna Fisher, a graduate of Oberlin College who was a research assistant to J. Franklin Jameson, conducted research in the British Museum and the Public Record Office and found

important letters as well as the diaries of captains of slaving vessels. Woodson's goal in having Fisher conduct research was to develop a documentary history and an anthropological portrait of Native Africans before the advent of the slave trade.

Another important component of the black history movement was the annual conventions held by ASNLH. Consistent with the overall goals of the organization and the fact that it sought to establish itself in large urban centers, meetings were held in cities with large black populations and established black communities: Baltimore, Maryland; Washington, D.C.; Chicago, Illinois; St. Louis, Missouri; Nashville, Tennessee; and elsewhere. These conventions often showcased the varied achievements of ASNLH and brought together distinguished individuals from many sectors of the population of the host city. The meetings of 1920 and 1924 can serve to illustrate the goals of ASNLH. The convention of 1920, held in Louisville, Kentucky, was devoted to the theme "Social and Economic Development of the Negro." Speakers focused on the early history of African Americans, the teaching of black history, and the specific contributions of enslaved Africans to civilization. The convention of 1924, in Baltimore, Maryland, examined (among other subjects) folklore among African Americans. Also, N. F. Mossell, author of *The Work of the Afro-American Women*, presented a paper, "History from the Point of View of a Child," in which he stressed the importance of elementary reading material in helping young students acquire a knowledge of their history.

These conferences not only highlighted black history but also addressed other concerns of ASNLH. Woodson felt that the role of the organization encompassed more than history as an academic discipline: It also extended to solving the problems of society. He hoped that ASNLH could help strengthen training in the social sciences in black schools and stimulate research and teaching about the social sciences and the economic problems of African Americans. Most important, he thought that ultimately his work could and would lead to an improvement in race relations.

One of the most enduring legacies of ASNLH was the establishment of Negro History Week in 1926. This event—celebrated in February, the month in which Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln were born—highlighted the work of ASNLH and drew attention to the importance of teaching black history in primary and secondary schools and at institutions of higher learning. Woodson never wanted Negro History Week to be observed only by the black community, so he

took great pains to disseminate information about it to members of the white community.

Like ASNLH, the *Journal of Negro History* (*JNH*) played a crucial role in the creation of a viable black historical tradition. The journal—edited by Woodson from 1916 until his death in 1950—was the organization's premier scientific publication. It was founded to meet the need for an accurate record of black people's past and, equally, to provide a forum where black scholars could publish studies challenging conventional wisdom about that past. As many scholars have noted, the major historical associations, such as the American Historical Association, rarely published scholarship by African Americans. The *American Historical Review* did not invite W. E. B. Du Bois to publish a paper until 1910; the Mississippi Valley Historical Association and the Southern Historical Association did not invite black historians to present papers until the 1940s.

JNH was also important because of its multifaceted presentation of African Americans' past. The journal featured articles, communications, informative letters from individuals, notices, and reports from the annual and spring conferences of ASNLH. Many books were first printed, in their entirety, in *JNH*. At the center of the journal's philosophy were "five ways to help the cause"—reminders about how subscribers could help promote the study of black history. They were as follows: "subscribe to the journal, become a member of the Association, contribute to the research fund, collect and send us the historical materials bearing on the Negroes of your community, and urge every Negro to write us all he knows about his family history."

JNH published a wide range of scholarship. It concentrated on revisionist history; for example, it challenged the southern historian Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, whose *American Negro Slavery* depicted slavery as fairly benign; and it also offered significant revisions of the concept of Reconstruction (1865–1876) as a "tragic era." The earlier, legendary account had taken a dim view of blacks' participation in Reconstruction; blacks, who were portrayed as docile, lazy, and incompetent, were said to have been manipulated by two invidious factions: northern carpetbaggers (northerners who packed all of their belongings in a carpetbag and came South to profit from Reconstruction) and southern scalawags (native southerners who profited from the corruption of the Reconstruction era at the expense of their fellow southerners). This older view was countered in articles by John Lynch, a participant in Reconstruction in Virginia; by Alrutheus Ambush Taylor's pioneering work on Reconstruction; and by Woodson's

own *Negro in Our History*, a scholarly textbook published in several editions throughout the 1920s. Moreover, Lynch, Taylor, and Woodson offered alternative portraits of black politicians and their activities in southern legislatures during Reconstruction, and thus did significant groundwork for the contemporary view of Reconstruction.

JNH also focused on the diaspora and its implications for African American life. The journal often included articles on the African past as well as the black experience in Latin America, Europe, and elsewhere. The article "Three Elements of African Culture," by Gordon Blaine Hancock, a well-known African American educator at Virginia Union, appeared in *JNH* in 1923. Also in 1923, in a nod to European history, *JNH* published Albert Perry's article on Abram Hannibal, an African who served at the court of the Russian czar Peter the Great. Perhaps the most interesting work of this kind was produced by Zora Neale Hurston. Hurston, who was a folklorist and ethnographer, spent considerable time in the 1920s documenting the folkways of rural African Americans throughout the South. Her contributions include "Cudjo's Own Story of the Last African Slavery" and a set of her own letters on the Mose Settlement, one of the oldest black colonies in Florida. Hurston's work complemented that of Elsie Clews Parsons, who worked intensely to stimulate interest in the collection of black folklore. ASNLH offered a prize of \$200 for the best material collected.

JNH also included other subject matter of importance to African Americans. Particular issues presented material on black people's feelings about World War I; letters from participants in the "great migration," the movement of blacks from the rural South to the urban North between 1915 and 1930; reviews of the work of prominent authors, such as W. E. B. Du Bois's *Darkwater* (1920); and advertisements for black colleges and universities such as Howard, Tuskegee, Fisk, and Morris Brown.

Some issues of *JNH* were devoted to a specific topic. The issue of July 1922, for instance, was devoted to the black church; articles by Woodson, John Cromwell, and Walter Brooks focused on denominations such as the Baptists and examined churches in specific geographic locales such as the District of Columbia. An issue in 1924 was devoted exclusively to civil rights groups in the black community. Mary White Ovington, a protégé of Du Bois, wrote an article about the NAACP; L. Hollingsworth Wood, who was an active member of the executive council of ASNLH and a longtime supporter of African American causes, wrote

an article on the Urban League; and the bibliophile and collector Jesse Moorland, a trustee of Howard University, wrote about the influence of the YMCA on African Americans. On important topics like Reconstruction, whole books were printed. For example, Alrutheus Ambush Taylor's *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia* and *The Negro in the Reconstruction of South Carolina* were first printed in *JNH*, in 1924 and 1926.

ASNLH and *JNH* represent the culmination of a century-long effort to make black history a professional discipline. Like the Harlem Renaissance, the black history movement represented an assertive effort to reconstruct the past through viable organizations. This goal was supported by several trends in the African American community and the wider American community. Urbanization and professionalization—which facilitated the growth of institutions such as the black press, black businesses, black academic associations, and graduate training for black historians—were directly responsible for the development of the black history movement. Thus this movement, not unlike the literature of the Harlem Renaissance, created a legacy for black and white Americans.

STEPHEN G. HALL

See also Bruce, John Edward; Greene, Lorenzo; Hurston, Zora Neale; Moton, Robert Russa; National Urban League; Ovington, Mary White; Schomburg, Arthur A.; Woodson, Carter G.; Work, Monroe Nathan

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Atlanta University Studies

The Atlanta University Studies series lies outside the historical context of the Harlem Renaissance. Nevertheless, under the editorship of the protean W. E. B. Du Bois (1897–1914), the series provided an intellectual foundation for many of the significant themes in the ideology of the New Negro. To be more precise, the studies provided an intellectual justification for attempts by social scientists, writers of fiction and cultural and social criticism, and graphic artists to unearth African elements retained in the black population not only in North America but also in the Caribbean and South America. Furthermore, with regard to the development of black businesses, the series provided a philosophical rationale that resonated in the rhetoric of many black political leaders, such as Marcus Garvey. Finally, the studies provided factual evidence of significant enterprise among blacks (both male and female) nationwide. Thus despite the unevenness of the publications

and the consequent acerbic criticism of Du Bois's efforts from white commentators who reviewed some of the studies, these works were an integral part of the philosophical rationalization of the New Negro movement.

The Atlanta University Studies series originated in 1896, at the annual Atlanta University Conference on Negro Problems. The annual conferences—the brainchild of the university's white president, Horace Bumstead; and one of its white trustees, a New Englander—were modeled after the Farmers Conferences of the Tuskegee Institute. Like Tuskegee's conferences, those at Atlanta were, in the words of the historian Leroy Davis, "laudable early attempts at meshing the needs of the community with the resources of the academy."

The studies conceived between 1897 and 1914 were edited primarily by Du Bois. His grandiose vision of the project called for a repetition of each topic every ten years. The proceedings of the studies ranged widely and (as noted above) varied in quality. Although Du Bois's plans did not reach fruition (and he did not participate in the project after 1914), his volumes in the series had a perceptible impact on the thought of people as varied as Alain Locke, Charles S. Johnson, and other patrons of the Harlem Renaissance; E. Franklin Frazier and other social and cultural critics; and sculptors and painters such as Richmond Barthé and Aaron Douglas.

As editor of and contributor to the series, Du Bois often vacillated between stereotypes of his African ancestors and genuine, lucid insights into their lives. For example, in *Efforts for Social Betterment Among Negro Americans* (1898), he referred to African religions as the "mystery and rites of . . . fetishism." As late as 1914, in *Morals and Manners Among Negro Americans*, Du Bois seemed to invent traditions, writing, "Africa is distinctly the land of the Mother." Nevertheless, Du Bois's thoughts on Africa and Africans were significant. Influenced by the immigrant German-Jewish anthropologist Franz Boas, who delivered the commencement address at Atlanta University in 1906, Du Bois again and again celebrated the contribution of blacks to world civilization, demonstrating that black Americans were descendants of peoples who had made and were perfectly capable of making essential contributions to the progress of humankind in the present and future. Furthermore, Du Bois anticipated the anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits and the works of the "father of Negro history," Carter G. Woodson, during the 1920s and early 1930s, that revealed African "retentions" in the black population in the United States. Africanism

in the African American peoples was a vital theme, promulgated time and again by major writers and artists during the Harlem Renaissance. Du Bois also overtly linked pertinent African retentions to the issue of black people's capability in business enterprises when he asserted, in 1897, that many Africans "are born men and traffickers." In 1899, in *The Negro in Business*, a work in the Atlanta series, he once again asserted that "the African Negro is born a trader." Accordingly, although one of the most renowned social critics of the Harlem Renaissance, E. Franklin Frazier, rejected the notion of Africanism as the source of some blacks' success in business, he nevertheless saw business enterprises as essential for any program of black liberation.

In sum, the Atlanta University Studies evidently provided a strong foundation for the rising New Negro ideologies of economic and cultural nationalism. That the artists and theoreticians of the Harlem Renaissance were unable to impose cultural nationalism perhaps had more to do with their economic dependence on white patronage than with any unwillingness on their part to seize the historical moment of the 1920s for black liberation.

VERNON J. WILLIAMS

See also Barthé, Richmond; Boas, Franz; Douglas, Aaron; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Frazier, E. Franklin; Herskovits, Melville; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Locke, Alain; New Negro; New Negro Movement; Woodson, Carter G.

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Attaway, William

William Alexander Attaway (1911–1986) was a novelist, songwriter, playwright, screenwriter, labor organizer, and actor. He was the son of a physician and a teacher in Greenville, Mississippi, and was born into a life of privilege, but he did not want to follow in his parents' professional footsteps. As a teenager he chose to attend

a vocational school and learn automotive mechanics; and although he soon yielded to family pressure and went to a regular high school, he continued to rebel against upper-class respectability. When a high school teacher introduced him to the poetry of Langston Hughes, he immediately decided to become a writer. He attended the University of Illinois at Urbana until his father's death, whereupon he dropped out to travel around the country as a hobo for the next two years. He returned to college and graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1936.

Attaway published his first short story, "Tale of the Blackamoor," in *Challenge* in June 1935. At about the same time he joined the touring company of *You Can't Take It With You*, helped by his sister, Ruth Attaway, who had begun her acting career as Rheba in the original production. While on the road, he learned that his novel *Let Me Breathe Thunder* had been accepted for publication, immediately quit the tour, and returned home to write.

The publication date of *Let Me Breathe Thunder*—1939—puts Attaway at the end of the Harlem Renaissance and the beginning of a period of realism. He established himself as a writer with this novel, a critically acclaimed story of two white hoboes and their Mexican charge. However, neither *Let Me Breathe Thunder* nor his next novel, *Blood on the Forge*, which was also well received by the critics, sold well (the latter, though, was reprinted in 1993). The reason may be that the landmark work *Native Son* by his friend Richard Wright, the icon of realism, was published in 1940, and Attaway's novels suffered in comparison. The three tragic Moss brothers in *Blood on the Forge*, like the white characters in *Let Me Breathe Thunder*, seem tame next to Wright's Bigger Thomas. (Attaway and Richard Wright had become friends in November 1935, when both were working on the Federal Writers' Project guide to Illinois.)

Attaway later turned to more lucrative forms of writing. He composed and arranged songs for Harry Belafonte, among others, and was involved in *Calypso Song Book* (1957, a collection of songs) and *I Hear America Singing* (1967, a children's book about the history of popular music). He also wrote scripts for radio, television, and motion pictures. One of his most important scripts was *One Hundred Years of Laughter* (1966), for a television special on black humor. After its completion he took his family to Barbados for what was to have been a week's vacation; they stayed eleven years. Attaway spent the last years of his life in Berkeley and then in Los Angeles, California. In 1985, while working

on a script for *The Atlanta Child Murders*, he suffered a heart attack from which he never fully recovered. He died in 1986.

Biography

William Attaway was born on 19 November 1911 in Greenville, Mississippi. His mother, Florence Parray Attaway, was a teacher; his father, William Alexander Attaway, was a physician and businessman who co-founded the National Negro Insurance Association. Dr. Attaway moved the family to Chicago when young William was about ten years old, to escape the segregated South; this migration northward became a central theme in Attaway's novel *Blood on the Forge* (1941). Attaway left college for two years and became a hobo—this experience was a theme in his novel *Let Me Breathe Thunder* (1939)—but eventually received his B.A. in 1936. He married Frances Settele on 28 December 1962, at the home of his friend Harry Belafonte. The Attaways had a son and a daughter. Attaway died on 17 June 1986, in Los Angeles.

CARMALETTA M. WILLIAMS

See also Federal Writers' Project; Wright, Richard

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Authors: 1—Overview

The authors of the Harlem Renaissance shared the goal of developing new forms of artistic representation of the African American experience. At the same time,

they manifested a wide range of aesthetic principles and radically diverse concepts of blackness. The Harlem Renaissance meant different things to different people. The novelists, poets, dramatists, and essayists whose activity was centered in Harlem, although aware of the unique value of African American culture and art, interpreted and represented this uniqueness in many, sometimes conflicting, ways, embodying the tensions and contradictions of their American context.

In their quest to move beyond the dominant white aesthetics, black writers and intellectuals, such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, and James Weldon Johnson, were convinced that the Negro Renaissance was an auspicious movement in American cultural life. Johnson, among others, believed that if it succeeded it would undermine prejudice, win respect for the intellectual and artistic achievements of blacks, and consequently promote equal rights.

The new sensibility of this period, first anticipated by Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* in 1903, affirmed the dignity and cultural potential of African Americans. Centuries of slavery and racial prejudice had imposed on them a “double-consciousness,” to use Du Bois’s term, and they were now challenged to acknowledge their own intrinsic power (such power is always closely connected to knowledge of one’s own value) and to explore broader personal and artistic territories. Du Bois promoted many talented young African Americans, and as one of the organizers of the Pan-African conference in Paris in 1919, he urged black artists to create works from their own experiences and to celebrate their African and African American cultural heritage.

Du Bois was a charismatic figure who had an unquestionable influence on the New Negro, but his elitist notion of the “talented tenth” was criticized by several artists of the period (Wallace Thurman, Claude McKay, Zora Neale Hurston, and Langston Hughes in particular) as a Victorian cliché. Also, Du Bois’s moral outlook contrasted with Locke’s broader celebration of the New Negro. Locke saw the New Negro movement as a spiritual coming-of-age and “the finding of one another” as the greatest experience for those who gathered in Harlem. He saw Harlem as an experiment in racial welding that would enhance race consciousness. In his anthology *The New Negro* (1925), illustrated by Aaron Douglas, Winold Reiss, and Miguel Covarrubias, Locke not only showed the world the impressive impact of modern black culture but also acknowledged an emerging “common consciousness.”

Many writers of the Harlem Renaissance were convinced that drama was the crucial form for the

future of blacks’ artistic development. As early as 1908 the first organization of African American theater professionals, the Frogs, was founded by George Walker and ten other members. Their purpose was to develop an archive of social, historical, and literary materials for a theatrical library. Around 1910 Egbert Austin (“Bert”) Williams, then America’s top comedian, was elected president of the Frogs.

Du Bois’s idea of theater was that it should be essentially political, so that drama would teach colored people the meaning of their history and also reveal African Americans to the white world. This concept was counterbalanced by that of Locke, who had a propensity for drama concerned not so much with protest or propaganda as with a revival of folklore. In Locke’s opinion, poetry and drama should reflect the soul of a people different in temperament from the “smug, unimaginative industrialist and the self-righteous Puritan.” The problem facing the black playwright was how to reconcile the vitality of folklore, an oral tradition, with the written language. Zora Neale Hurston (who won second prize for both fiction and drama in *Opportunity’s* literary contest of 1925) and Langston Hughes (who won first prize for poetry) did achieve a balance between these elements and conceived works based on black folk culture. In 1926, Locke, in “The Negro and the American Stage,” stressed the importance of folklore for the “complete development of the Negro dramatist”; that same year Hurston’s play *Color Struck* appeared in *Fire!!*—a magazine produced by the collaborative efforts of Wallace Thurman, Aaron Douglas, Bruce Nugent, John P. Davis, Gwendolyn Bennett, Hurston, and her friend Langston Hughes. *Color Struck* was the first of Hurston’s many achievements in drama, which she considered “inherent to Negro life.” In her plays as well as her prose, ethnography was applied to performance as a mode of scientific investigation and artistic representation. In 1930, Hurston and Hughes—who both received the patronage, and were subject to the psychological impositions, of Charlotte Mason—wrote *Mule Bone*, intending it to be “the first real Negro folk comedy.” Through a skillful use of black vernacular and black tradition, the play introduced a dramatic form that contrasted strongly with the stereotypical or ambivalent black characters in popular drama of the time, and also marked a clear departure from white American modernism.

Because of a disagreement between the authors over the copyright, *Mule Bone* could not be performed until several decades later (1991). Other African American

plays, however, did have a significant impact at the time. In 1929, *Harlem*, by Wallace Thurman and William Rapp, opened at the Apollo Theater and became the most successful work written by African Americans but produced for Broadway's white audience. In 1935, Hughes's play *Mulatto* opened on Broadway; it had the longest run of any play by an African American until Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, in 1959.

The aesthetic characteristics of the dramas of the Harlem Renaissance can also be found in its poetry and fiction. The first New Negro poets to attain recognition were Claude McKay and Countee Cullen. McKay, whose genius encompassed many contradictions, moved to Harlem from his native Jamaica in 1915; he immediately became a voice of unconventional wisdom and later was praised by Thurman as one of the few relevant artists "who had some concrete idea of style." McKay's *Harlem Shadows* (which included the famous sonnet "If We Must Die") was published in 1921, introducing him as the most fiery, radical, and powerful poet in Harlem's artistic world.

Countee Cullen was the boy wonder of the Harlem Renaissance and Du Bois's son-in-law. (He was married to Yolande, Du Bois's only daughter, in a memorable ceremony, and soon thereafter escaped to Europe with a male friend, Harold Jackman.) Cullen is a striking example of the controversial aspects of the vogue for Harlem. He tried to embody the spirit that made the New Negro respectable and worthy to white audiences. Fearing the dangers inherent in yielding to the contemporary fashion for exoticism and in exposing things that should remain secret, Cullen was among those who strongly objected to Carl Van Vechten's novel *Nigger Heaven* (1926). Cullen's own poetry, although it dealt with African and African American themes, conformed to traditional middle-class taste. Thurman gave an ironic picture of Cullen in his "creative hours, eyes on a page of Keats, fingers on typewriter, mind frantically conjuring African scenes."

James Weldon Johnson, a transitional figure who later became an inspiration for the Harlem Renaissance and a renowned poet, composed many songs for Broadway musicals, together with his brother Rosamond and Bob Cole. They also wrote several popular songs, including "Lift Every Voice and Sing," which became the unofficial black national anthem. Johnson is also important for his groundbreaking preface to *The Book of American Negro Poetry* in 1922; in this preface he stressed the literary potential of the black vernacular, as well as the power, emotional

endowment, and artistic originality of African American writers. At about the same time, Hughes was incorporating blues rhythms and vernacular idioms into his poetry; and his radical poems of the 1930s included realistic portrayals of black characters—the lives of plain black men and women and their struggles against injustice.

Writers of fiction often focused on a fascination with Harlem, on the complexities of interracial relations and relations among blacks, and on the black protagonist represented with all his or her uncertainties. In *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (published anonymously in 1912 but reprinted in 1927), James Weldon Johnson prefigured what would become a pattern of other works of the Harlem Renaissance: an often unreliable narrator who tells about his moving from the rural South to the metropolitan North, experiencing the excitement of groundbreaking intellectual and artistic activity, and becoming intrigued by African American tradition and folklore—stereotypes still prevalent in white culture.

Jean Toomer's novel *Cane* (1923), a montage of prose and poetry, was the most refined modernist attempt thus far to render the black experience, individual perceptions of that experience, and the ambiguities that persisted in cultural dialogues between the South and the North. *Cane* introduced many of the themes and concerns of later Harlem Renaissance fiction, including differences of geographical origin, class, and gender within the black community. McKay's *Home to Harlem* (1928) was an immediate success, but it was harshly criticized by Du Bois for its lack of social decorum and still remains largely unappreciated despite its modern style. McKay combines the narratives of two migrants to show how a working-class African American and an intellectual Haitian immigrant overcome their class and national prejudice to develop an increasing, albeit unlikely, sense of familiarity and comradeship. The following works all appeared in 1928, an important year for the black novel: Jessie Redmon Fauset's *Plum Bun*, focusing on middle-class urban blacks in the North; Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*, which took up complex themes and issues such as female identity, class, color, and gender; Rudolph Fisher's *The Walls of Jericho* (Hughes described Fisher as the wittiest writer of the Harlem Renaissance, "whose tongue was flavored with the saltiest humor"); and Du Bois's *Dark Princess*. In 1932, Wallace Thurman's *Infants of the Spring* caused an uproar because of its uninhibited depiction of nightlife in Harlem and because Thurman sharply criticized many representative figures of the

renaissance—his sarcastic bent made him disclaim the polite literature promoted by black leaders. (This inclination toward sarcasm was shared by several other authors, such as Claude McKay; Zora Neale Hurston, who dubbed Du Bois “Mr. Dubious”; Rudolph Fisher; and George S. Schuyler, who, as Hughes recalled, wrote “verbal brickbats that said sometimes one thing sometimes another but always vigorously.”) McKay was not only an able critic but also an exceptionally voracious reader; as a result, the publisher Macaulay hired him as a reader—the only African American reader to be employed by any of the larger white publishing firms. Interestingly, in *The Blacker the Berry* (1929), Thurman used a dark-skinned female protagonist; he was one of very few male writers who did this (Du Bois, in *Dark Princess*, was another).

Gender remained an issue in the Harlem Renaissance. The success of Nella Larsen’s cryptic, modernist fiction, such as *Quicksand* (1928) and *Passing* (1929), did not prevent her from falling into oblivion right after the crash of the stock market in 1929. The career of Jessie Redmon Fauset came to the same sad conclusion—as did the career of Zora Neale Hurston, although Hurston was one of the two literary giants of the Harlem Renaissance (the other was Toomer). The female poets Georgia Douglas Johnson, Anne Spencer, and Helene Johnson (whose “American Color Point of View” can be read as a feminine counterpart of Hughes’s “The Negro Speaks of Rivers”) went almost unacknowledged.

The New Negro movement seemed to decline with the crash of 1929 and the ensuing Great Depression, which led many artists and intellectuals to either an outright commitment to Marxism or an identification with American progressivism in general. Still, despite the shock caused by the Depression, the works published in the middle and late 1930s—Hurston’s novels, including her masterpiece *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), and her collection of tales *Mules and Men* (1935); Hughes’s autobiography *The Big Sea* (1940); McKay’s *Harlem: Negro Metropolis* (1940); and many others—confirmed the lasting legacy of this generous movement, which would leave its imprint on generations of writers to come. The vocabulary of color and sounds that James Baldwin borrowed from the Harlem Renaissance painter Beauford Delaney, the modernist surrealist mode of Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, the epic of the black struggle shown in the panels of Jacobs Lawrence and recounted in the novels of Toni Morrison—these are just a few examples of the inheritance left to today’s black artists.

See also Covarrubias, Miguel; Cullen–Du Bois Wedding; Delaney, Beauford; Douglas, Aaron; Lawrence, Jacob; Literature: 1—Overview; Mason, Charlotte Osgood; Modernism; New Negro; New Negro Movement; Opportunity Literary Contests; Pan-African Congresses; Reiss, Winold; Talented Tenth; Theater; Williams, Egbert Austin “Bert”; *specific writers and works*

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Authors: 2—Fiction

African American writers of fiction during the Harlem Renaissance continued a tradition that had begun in the mid-nineteenth century. In their novels and short stories, these writers developed themes of race, gender, class, justice, violence, history, migration, and cultural memory—themes that were similar to those found in the earlier fiction of, among others, William Wells Brown (*Clotel*, 1853), Harriet Wilson (*Our Nig*, 1859), Frances Harper (*Iola Leroy*, 1892), Pauline Hopkins (*Contending Forces*, 1900), Charles Chesnutt (*House Behind the Cedars*, 1900; *The Marrow of Tradition*, 1901), and James Weldon Johnson (*The Autobiography*

of an *Ex-Colored Man*, 1912). However, the fiction writers of the Harlem Renaissance broke away from the earlier tradition in that they “gave African American culture a more urban, assertive, and cosmopolitan voice” (Andrews et al. 1997). One significant factor in this transformation of the fictional voice was the migration of African Americans from the rural South to northern urban industrial centers as well as to urban areas of the South; another factor was African Americans’ travels in Europe during World War I and as part of the expatriate generation. At the same time, it is important to note that writers such as Zora Neale Hurston (in “Spunk,” 1925; “Sweat,” 1926; and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, 1937) and Jean Toomer (in *Cane*, 1923) paid homage to Africans’ and African Americans’ southern ancestral past.

The transformed voice permeating the fiction of the Harlem Renaissance expresses strong pride in blackness, and in some instances calls directly for resistance to both subtle and overt racial oppression. In calling for social and political equality for black Americans and encouraging African Americans not to acquiesce, fiction writers—along with poets and writers of prose—contributed to the racial uplift movement.

Many fiction writers of the Harlem Renaissance disagreed about whether the purpose of art should be aesthetic or propagandistic. Much of the fiction produced during this period served a political or propagandistic purpose whether or not an author intended a work to be used in that way. The fiction of the Harlem Renaissance emphasizes the richness and diversity within African American culture. Consequently, novelists such as Nella Larsen and Jessie Fauset provide a glimpse into middle-class black America, primarily in the North; Zora Neale Hurston provides an overview of class within African American communities in the South. The fiction of the Harlem Renaissance offers a panoramic view of African American life at various levels from the black bourgeoisie to folk culture. By exploring the diversity within African American culture, these writers point out differences in the experience of African Americans based on educational background and class, despite common experiences based on racial background.

Johnson: *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*

James Weldon Johnson’s novel *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912) can set the stage for the fiction

of this period, because Johnson developed common themes such as the construction of identity, “passing,” violence, and intraracial conflict. This novel was reissued in 1927, at the height of the Harlem Renaissance, perhaps because of those themes. Johnson examines the social construction of race through a mixed-race protagonist. Similar to several other fiction writers—such as Nella Larsen in *Quicksand* (1928) and *Passing* (1929), Jessie Fauset in *Plum Bun* (1929), and Wallace Thurman in *The Blacker the Berry* (1929)—Johnson explores the psychological consequences of blackness as a racial marker in a society that prefers biological and visible whiteness.

Johnson was a precursor of other writers of the Harlem Renaissance who examined race relations, violence, and interracial as well as intraracial conflict. For instance, Larsen, Fauset, and Toomer, like Johnson, explore interracial relationships at several levels: intimate, political, and social. Furthermore, Toomer in *Cane* (1923), Walter White in *The Fire in the Flint* (1924), and Langston Hughes in *The Ways of White Folks* (1933) examine the causes and effects of racial violence directed against African Americans.

During the Harlem Renaissance, fiction writers continued another tradition in African American literature: examining the effects of migration on black individuals and communities. Hundreds of thousands of African Americans migrated from the South to the North and within the South. Johnson’s protagonist in *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* migrates from the North to the South, to Europe, and then back to the United States. Similarly, in their fiction, Jean Toomer, Nella Larsen, Wallace Thurman, and Langston Hughes focus on the movement of blacks from one cultural space to another; Larsen and Toomer shed light on how the return to the South affected African Americans.

Toomer: *Cane*

Jean Toomer’s *Cane* was published in 1923. It received positive reviews for its modernist style and its examination of black migration and the connection between African Americans and their ancestral past in the South and in Africa. Many scholars associate the publication of *Cane* with the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance as a literary movement. *Cane* is certainly important in relation to other fiction of this period, given the common themes found in Toomer’s text and in subsequent works. However, it is difficult to place *Cane* within any one genre, because throughout this

work Toomer used elements of the short story, poetry, and the novel. *Cane* is divided into three sections, to chronicle black migration from South to North and back to the South.

Toomer explores the causes and effects of the psychic or spiritual death many African Americans underwent during this period. This theme of spiritual death is explored in both northern and southern settings. Toomer emphasizes the theme of migration to illustrate the cultural displacement and social isolation of blacks who went from the South to the urban North. The rural South depicted in *Cane* symbolizes African Americans' spirituality and strong communal bonds; the North symbolizes isolation, materialism, and individual success.

Other themes developed in *Cane* include sexual exploitation, miscegenation, generational shifts, work, violence, and resistance. Toomer develops these themes and the theme of spiritual death through individual narratives centered on archetypal characters representing a broad range of individuals. For instance, the text opens with "Karintha," in which the title character is a girl stifled by a sexually oppressive and exploitative environment; and in this part of the book, Toomer contrasts Karintha's beauty, and the beauty of certain aspects of nature, with the ugliness of the girl's poverty-stricken environment, the men who exploit Karintha, and the devastating psychological effects of sexual exploitation.

"Becky," the second vignette in *Cane*, explores the theme of interracial relationships and miscegenation. Becky is a white woman who gives birth to two African American boys. This is the first story in *Cane* to explore the tangled racial skeins in the South, but it revises the traditional narrative of miscegenation by focusing on the community's reaction to the forbidden sexual relationship between Becky and her black lover. In mainstream narratives that alluded to intimate relationships between black men and white women, the black man was more often than not described as a brute threatening the sanctity of white womanhood. Toomer challenges the stereotype of the black brute: He depicts Becky as willingly becoming involved with a black man. We know that Becky has entered this relationship willingly because in order to protect her lover from retaliatory violence by white "protectors" of womanhood, she never reveals his identity. Furthermore, the fact that she has two black sons indicates a long-term relationship with her lover.

Toomer addresses race as a social construction in "Becky," and also in "Bona and Paul." Becky's sons are described as Negro rather than biracial even though their mother is white. This accords with a practice of the time during which the story is set: the "one drop" rule, whereby people of mixed race were considered to belong to the socially subordinate race. Other fiction writers of the Harlem Renaissance—including Nella Larsen in *Quicksand* and *Passing*, Jessie Fauset in *Plum Bun*, and Langston Hughes in the short stories "Passing" and "Father and Son" from *The Ways of White Folks*—also take up the theme of race as a social construction, describing the plight of mixed-race individuals and people involved in interracial relationships in a racist society.

"Becky" also considers the hypocrisy of southerners who attempt to hide behind religion while engaging in unchristian behavior. Toomer writes: "She's dead; they've gone away. The pines whisper to Jesus. The bible flaps its leaves with an aimless rustle on her mound." The reference to the pines suggests that the crimes committed by presumably Christian yet racist southerners—in this case the death of Becky and the disruption of her sons' lives—will be revealed to a higher being. In the story, both whites and blacks isolate Becky and render her powerless. They assuage their guilt by leaving food for her and by building her a house, but the house is built on such shaky ground that it collapses, crushing her.

Each story in *Cane* builds on other stories in the text. For instance, "Fern" further develops the themes of isolation, sexual exploitation, and miscegenation found in "Karintha" and "Becky." Toomer also develops the theme of interracial relationships and sexuality and connects it to the theme of violence in "Blood Burning Moon." In "Blood Burning Moon," Toomer asks who has the right to the black woman, and he shows how this question is inextricably linked to the history of the socially condoned sexual exploitation of the black female body during the era of slavery. Although this story is set after that era, the narrator alludes to past differences in power—differences determined by race—and shows the connections between race relations during slavery and afterward.

Toomer addresses the causes and effects of racially based violence for the first time in *Cane* in "Blood Burning Moon." This story opens with a poem describing a woman's braid, which looks like a lyncher's rope. As in other stories in the text, the epigraph at the beginning foreshadows the prevalent theme. Writers

such as Toomer, Hughes, White, and Larsen present lynching as a theme because this was a very real threat to African Americans of the time.

The second part of *Cane* takes place in the urban North: in Washington, D.C., and Chicago. Here Toomer contrasts the earthy southern landscape with northern coldness. Toomer associates the cold with the isolation of blacks living in this new environment and with the concrete buildings characteristic of industrialization. Toomer demonstrates in Part Two how African Americans who deny Africa and the American South as a vital part of their heritage become consumed by an emphasis on money, “machines, nightclubs, newspapers, and anything else which represents modern society” (Bontemps 1972). The acceptance of materialistic, individualistic values has a devastating impact on the African American community because the emphasis on individual success can lead to estrangement from the black community and their ancestral past. Toomer’s critique of the northern urban environment suggests the disillusionment felt by many blacks who had migrated to the promised land and found that they still encountered racism and limited employment opportunities and were still subjected to violence.

Part Three of *Cane* takes the reader and Kabnis, the central character of this section, back to the South. Toomer depicts Kabnis as a man in search of his identity, and this is especially important because Kabnis rejects and hates the South upon first arriving there. In this section, Toomer chronicles Kabnis’s journey toward connecting with his black ancestral past.

Cane is a seminal work of fiction. Toomer addresses themes associated with the Harlem Renaissance; he also addresses concerns of modernist writers during this era, linking the literature of the Harlem Renaissance to the American modernist movement.

White: *The Fire in the Flint*

In *The Fire in the Flint* (1924), Walter White expands on Johnson’s and Toomer’s use of violence as a theme. During his tenure with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), White—who was able to pass as a white man—infiltrated and investigated white supremacist groups. As an eyewitness of the activities of white lynch mobs, he was able to give lawyers and others in the antilynching movement valuable firsthand information. In *The Fire in the Flint*, he not only exposes American racism

and lynching but also offers insights into the black labor movement and demolishes the myth of the African American brute.

Women Writers

African American women wrote some of the most important fiction of the Harlem Renaissance. Jessie Redmon Fauset, a prolific writer, wrote four novels—*There Is Confusion* (1924), *The Chinaberry Tree* (1931), *Plum Bun*, and *Comedy American Style* (1933)—as well as literary reviews, poems, and short stories. Nella Larsen wrote *Quicksand* and *Passing*. Zora Neale Hurston wrote short stories, plays, and novels including “Sweat,” “Spunk,” *Colorstruck* (1925), and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. The playwright Georgia Douglas Johnson wrote antilynching works and dramas focused on class, miscegenation, and the sexual exploitation of black women, such as *A Sunday Morning in the South* (1925), *Blue Blood* (1926), *Safe* (1929), and *Blue-Eyed Black Boy* (1930s). Mary Burrill, another playwright of the Harlem Renaissance, addressed themes similar to those of black female novelists and playwrights. Burrill’s *They That Sit in Darkness* (1919) focuses on motherhood and birth control; her *Aftermath* (1928) focuses on resistance to racial oppression and the position of black soldiers returning to the United States after fighting for American democracy.

Women authors such as Fauset, Larsen, Hurston, and Georgia Douglas Johnson provide a critique of both the “new woman” and the “New Negro” in their fiction. Fauset and Larsen illustrate the precarious position of African American women within both movements. In general, these women writers describe intersections of race, class, and gender. They create multidimensional female characters who overtly and covertly resist victimization based on their gender as well as their race.

Fauset, Larsen, and Hurston also offer a profound critique of marriage by examining the unequal power of men and women and the economic basis of marriage as an institution. As DuCille (1993) notes, writers such as Fauset, Larsen, and Hurston “use coupling as a metaphor through which to examine and critique the color consciousness, class stratification, social conventions, and gender relations of the burgeoning black middle class and working class communities.” Furthermore, these writers examine how African American women react to being considered sex objects. Hurston and Larsen illustrate how African American women develop a sense of sexual agency despite living in a

racist, sexist society. For instance, Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is a coming-of-age story describing the social and sexual development of the heroine, Janie Crawford.

Female authors also provide a critique of the educational and employment opportunities available to women. For instance, Larsen, in her depiction of Naxos in *Quicksand*, criticizes the southern black school for attempting to train pupils to imitate whiteness. Larsen's heroine has difficulty finding employment once she leaves Naxos, because of her race and gender. Fauset demonstrates how women are constrained by societal notions of acceptable employment for unmarried black women, such as domestic service, teaching, and office work. Hurston illustrates that women of higher socioeconomic status are judged harshly by society when they pursue nontraditional work; Hurston's character Janie Crawford ends up doing migrant farm work, side by side with her husband.

McKay: Examining Black Intellectuals and Expatriates

Claude McKay—and some other writers of the Harlem Renaissance, including Larsen, Toomer, Langston Hughes, Walter White, and James Weldon Johnson—looked at the role of the black intellectual and the black expatriate in their fiction. McKay, like some of his contemporaries, experimented with writing in a variety of literary genres, and he produced poetry as well as fiction. Critics often associate McKay's fiction with cultural primitivism because of his emphasis on black, especially Jamaican, folk culture. McKay's fiction includes *Home to Harlem* (1928), *Banjo* (1929), and *Banana Bottom* (1933). In these books McKay addresses the plight of the black intellectual and the relationship between black intellectuals and the mass of black people.

McKay felt that progress and true racial uplift depended on all segments of the black community, not just the educated black elite. According to McKay, educated African Americans during the 1920s espoused the need for a racial renaissance without considering the role of the common folk in this new cultural movement. McKay writes in his novel *Banjo*: "It's the common people, you know, who furnish the bone and sinew and salt of any race or nation. . . . If this renaissance is going to be more than a sporadic scabby thing, we'll have to get down to our racial roots to create it."

Home to Harlem provides one view of life in the black urban ghetto. McKay associates Harlem—where this novel is set—with a vibrant black culture, but he

also explores alienation, economic uncertainty, and negative aspects of American materialism. He contrasts two characters, Jake and Ray, to emphasize the division between common black folk and the so-called black intellectual. McKay's depiction of Jake, which is similar to Toomer's depiction of Rhobert in *Cane* and Larsen's depiction of Helga Crane in *Quicksand*, draws attention to the conflict between modern society and the vitality and passion associated with African cultural images and black life in Harlem. Ray represents the black intellectual who exchanges his humanity for a mainstream education (Bontemps 1972)—who separates the intellect from the emotions. Ray's inability to reconcile his intellectual and emotional development leads him to become an expatriate, and this decision suggests the alienation of the black intellectual and artist within the United States, largely because of American racism. Expatriation was in fact a realistic theme: Many black artists, as well as whites, were actually leaving the United States and moving to Europe to pursue their personal development.

McKay also examines the black expatriate movement and the plight of the black intellectual in *Banjo*. Ray, the character from *Home to Harlem*, reappears in *Banjo*; and McKay once again explores the causes and effects of the alienation of black intellectuals from the masses of black people and whites. The narrator notes that despite educational accomplishments and socioeconomic status, color and race shape the experiences of individuals in American society. African Americans do not participate as equals in the American dream; rather, regardless of their intellectual acumen, they are judged first and foremost as blacks and are consequently looked down on. McKay writes in *Banjo*: "The thinking colored man could not function normally like his white brother, responsive and reacting spontaneously to the emotions of pleasure or pain, joy or sorrow, kindness or hardness, charity, anger, and forgiveness." McKay illustrates how American mainstream society views African Americans as a monolithic group, whereas whites are judged on their merits as individuals.

In *Banjo*, McKay further explores the relationship between the artist and the folk in African American culture. Ray represents the black intellectual; Banjo represents the artist. Banjo describes his instrument as a reflection of his soul and himself, and McKay's emphasis on the banjo as an important instrument elevates African American folk art. (Similarly, Zora Neale Hurston elevates African American folk culture through her use of folklore and black dialect as art forms; and Langston Hughes elevates the black artist

and the spiritual tie between artists and their art through his depiction of Roy in “Home” and Oceola in “The Blues I’m Playing,” in his short-story collection *The Ways of White Folks*.) McKay likens the banjo to African Americans’ culture by noting that this instrument was preeminent in their creation of music. He also describes the banjo as affirming the existence of African Americans in a world where they were rendered invisible by the dominant culture. In *Banjo*, McKay celebrates African American folk culture and shows how black artists and their art help to empower African Americans in the face of attempts to displace them and despite the chaos associated with black life in the early twentieth century.

Thurman: *The Blacker the Berry and Infants of the Spring*

Wallace Thurman’s novels *The Blacker the Berry* (1929) and *Infants of the Spring* (1932) develop the themes of racial consciousness, the role of the black artist, and racism. *The Blacker the Berry* is unique because Thurman focuses on the effects of internalized racism and intraracial prejudice. *Infants of the Spring* provides a first-hand critical evaluation of the Harlem Renaissance.

Thurman—like Langston Hughes in *The Ways of White Folks* (1934), Rudolph Fisher in *The Walls of Jericho* (1929), and George Schuyler in *Black No More* (1931)—was a master of both satire and irony. *The Blacker the Berry* is a scathing critique of color and class prejudice within the African American community. This novel explores the development of Emma Lou, a dark-skinned African American, as she confronts not only the prejudice to which her family and her associates are subjected because of her darkness but also her own negative self-image, a result of internalized racism. Thurman took his title from a common saying among African Americans: “The blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice.” That folk saying, as well as Thurman’s novel, celebrates blackness.

Emma Lou desperately tries to transform herself by straightening her hair and using creams to lighten her skin. Although these attempts are in part a consequence of the psychological abuse she has suffered because of color prejudice within the black community, Thurman suggests that her own self-hatred has played an even larger role in causing her discontent. According to the narrator, Emma Lou eventually learns that she must “accept her black skin as being real and unchangeable . . . and with this in mind begin life anew, always fighting, not so much for acceptance by other people but for acceptance of herself by herself.”

Thurman’s novel *Infants of the Spring* provides a critique of African American artists, specifically those associated with the Harlem Renaissance. It exposes the foibles of and conflicts between some of the major figures in the Harlem Renaissance, including Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, Alain Locke, Countee Cullen, Rudolph Fischer, and Thurman.

Fisher: *The Walls of Jericho*

Rudolph Fisher uses satire in *The Walls of Jericho* (1928) to develop a critique of social class and racial conflict during the 1920s. Like Thurman, he exposes the dangerous elitism among the African American bourgeoisie. He also satirizes the relationship between African Americans and white liberals through one of his characters, the white socialite Agatha Camp (his model for this character was Charlotte Osgood Mason, a white patron of black artists). Essentially, Fisher demonstrates how relationships between African Americans and whites can develop only so far if whites take a paternalistic attitude.

Hughes: *Not Without Laughter and The Ways of White Folks*

Langston Hughes, one of the most prolific writers of the Harlem Renaissance, produced poetry, fiction, and nonfiction during this period and afterward. *Not Without Laughter* (1933) and *The Ways of White Folks* (1934) are two of his most intriguing works. *Not Without Laughter* is a coming-of-age story about a black boy in the Midwest. *The Ways of White Folks* focuses on relationships—intimate and superficial—between blacks and whites. Hughes uses satire to expose white racism; to criticize liberal (or presumably liberal) white Americans’ growing fascination with black culture, especially when this fascination stems from and perpetuates stereotypes of African Americans; and to criticize the patronage system that affected many artists of the Harlem Renaissance.

The writers discussed in this essay are among the best-known figures associated with the Harlem Renaissance. Their fiction reflects a new era in African American history: This period was characterized by the Jazz Age, the image of the New Negro, a renewed sense of radicalism among some African Americans, and a sense of pride in being black. Although the Great Depression of the 1930s marked the end of the Harlem Renaissance, the influence of the writers associated with this movement can be seen in much later works

by African Americans: the “black arts movement” of the 1960s and 1970s, the renaissance of African American women’s literature in the 1980s, and the fiction and poetry of African Americans today.

DEIRDRE J. RAYNOR

See also Literature: 4—Fiction; Mason, Charlotte Osgood; Modernism; Primitivism; *specific writers and works*

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Authors: 3—Nonfiction

African American and Jewish-American historians, anthropologists, psychologists, and sociologists who came of age between 1877 and 1919—an era that scholars of African American history often describe as

“the nadir”—laid the intellectual foundations for the nonfiction authors of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s and 1930s. African American historians in particular reacted against such blatant forms of racism as Jim Crow laws, disenfranchisement, extralegal violence, and the removal of blacks from positions involving skilled labor.

These nonfiction authors, figures such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson, used their writings not only in an attempt to bolster black racial pride and instill self-esteem in their people, but also to educate whites in what was a seething and sometimes explosive national atmosphere of racial conflict—despite Booker T. Washington’s public policy of racial accommodation. Du Bois and Woodson were the leading historians who wrote works extolling the achievements and capabilities of their people, not only in the United States but also in Africa, the Caribbean, and South America.

Du Bois was born into a poor, female-run household in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. He received degrees from Fisk and Harvard universities, as well as graduate training in the social sciences at some of the most prestigious German universities; but in his own ideology, he vacillated between color-blind universalism and cultural pluralism. He often spoke and wrote as if there were what David Levering Lewis called “distinct racial attributes.” Thus Du Bois argued—in his Atlanta University Studies and his seminal volume of African history, *The Negro* (1915), which drew on the pioneering work on Africa by Franz Boas, the great anthropologist of German-Jewish descent—that African peoples had made, and were perfectly capable of making in the present and future, achievements essential to human progress. In so doing, Du Bois discredited the claim of white supremacists that “color is a mark of inferiority.” At the same time, though, he argued that black peoples were distinct from whites “to some extent in spiritual gift.”

Carter G. Woodson, the son of former Virginian slaves, had lifted himself up from abject poverty to reasonable comfort through sheer pluck, hard work, and perseverance. Like Du Bois, he attended Harvard, where he received his doctorate despite being embroiled in disputes with his major professor. Woodson founded the *Journal of Negro History* in 1915. During the 1920s and 1930s he published several historical and sociological works, including five textbooks (one of which, *The Negro in Our History*, went through several editions during the years between its initial publication in 1922 and 1947). His work (as noted above) was

consciously aimed at enhancing black racial pride and, as a consequence, instilling self-esteem in his black readers.

Arthur Schomburg, a Puerto Rican immigrant who lived in New York City, is known primarily as a bibliophile (he sold part of his library to the Carnegie Corporation, which in turn donated the collection to the New York Public Library). However, Schomburg also made a vital contribution to Alain Locke's monumental anthology *The New Negro* (1925). In that collection, Schomburg wrote what has become a credo for present-day autodidacts: "The American Negro must remake his past in order to make his future." Like both Du Bois and Woodson, Schomburg sought—as the recent historian Winston James has pointed out—to construct a black "vindicationist" history.

For sociologists such as Charles S. Johnson and E. Franklin Frazier, the "social problems" of blacks during the 1920s and 1930s required environmental explanations rather than the racial explanation that pervaded most of the writings of most European-American social scientists at the time. Johnson, a native of Virginia, was trained at the University of Chicago and became an educator, author, and editor (he edited *Opportunity*, the organ of the National Urban League). He believed that a revitalization of African American folk culture was necessary in order to restore the values and behavior of the mass of black people who had migrated from the South to the urban industrial North. Johnson left New York City in 1926 to become a professor and later the first African American president of Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee; and in 1934, he published a classical sociological work, *Shadow of the Plantation*. This book documented the harsh, even brutal, conditions under which African American farmers lived in Macon County, Alabama; it was a crushing indictment of the sharecropping system—which, however, was changing because of the increasing number of literate young blacks in the country.

E. Franklin Frazier was a native of Maryland and a graduate of Howard University, Clark University, and the University of Chicago. Frazier, like Johnson, was alarmed by the anomie that characterized the northern urban industrial areas where the mass of transplanted southern immigrants lived. In *The Negro Family in Chicago* (1932) and his classic work *The Negro Family in the United States* (1939), Frazier publicized the plight of most African American migrants. Frazier, who had published essays in *Opportunity* between

1924 and 1930, intended to subvert the traditional orthodoxies regarding race and culture. Accordingly, he launched assaults against both strictly racial and strictly cultural explanations for the normlessness of black ghettos.

Anthropologists were especially fascinated by issues of race and culture with reference to blacks. Melville J. Herskovits, a Jewish-American anthropologist, believed that the discussion of race in the American social sciences had direct implications for the issue of the assimilation of blacks. At the beginning of his career, Herskovits, who was a student of the methodological puritan Franz Boas, was involved in arguments about the relative merits of the methodology of racist intelligence testers. As early as the 1900s his mentor, Boas, had attacked their empirical methodology and had concluded that there was no compelling evidence of "racial" mental differences among blacks. As a consequence, Boas argued that assimilation through miscegenation was the true solution to the problems centered on relations between blacks and whites.

In Herskovits's essay "The Negro's Americanism," published in Alain Locke's *The New Negro*, the tension between assimilation and racial essentialism was apparent. Nevertheless, the New Negro sought—with infectious enthusiasm—an essential cultural identity with bases in African and African American folk culture. As a result, Herskovits's embrace of the ideology of the intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance led him to his own search for African "retentions" in the Western Hemisphere, a search that had begun three decades earlier in the nonfiction writings of W. E. B. Du Bois.

Finally, African American and Jewish-American psychologists such as Howard Hale Long, Horace Mann Bond, Herman Canady, Martin D. Jenkins, Joseph St. Clair Price, Doxey Wilkerson, and Otto Klineberg published articles in *The Crisis*, *Opportunity*, and the *Journal of Negro Education* that raised issues related to the sources of racial differences between the scores of whites and blacks on intelligence tests. These authors were critical of the cultural biases in the tests.

In sum, the nonfiction authors of the Harlem Renaissance contributed narratives that countered the pervasive racism of the majority group in the United States. Seeking to revitalize African American culture, nonfiction authors challenged the dominant racial and ethnocentric discourse that attempted to use history, anthropology, sociology, and

psychology as the “social scientific” bases for white supremacy.

VERNON J. WILLIAMS JR.

See also Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and Journal of Negro History; Atlanta University Studies; Boas, Franz; Crisis, The; Literature: 6—Nonfiction; Opportunity; *specific authors and works*

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Authors: 4—Playwrights

Feeling overwhelmed by the numerous fictitious stories and plays published and produced during the early 1900s that perpetuated negative racial stereotypes, W. E. B. Du Bois made a public statement in an editorial in the February 1926 issue of *The Crisis* (the magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, NAACP), raising questions about the liability and social responsibility of artists and authors. The acclaimed Negro actress Hattie McDaniel, who was criticized by certain members of the Negro community for portraying negative racial images (she is credited with creating the quintessential

film representation of the “mammy” caricature), once remarked that it was better to play a maid than to be a maid and certainly more profitable. However, her critics—such as Jessie Redmon Fauset, the literary editor of *The Crisis*—argued that the long-term damage done by artists like McDaniel would preclude any hope of racial equality.

In his editorial in *The Crisis*—“The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed?”—Du Bois asked artists and writers to consider seven questions: (1) What is the actor’s personal responsibility in portraying black characters? (2) Can an author be criticized for depicting positive or negative characteristics of a racial group? (3) Should publishers be criticized for refusing to publish books with nonstereotypical representations of Negroes? (4) How can Negroes refute negative stereotypes that most Americans accept as cultural truths? (5) Should educated black characters receive the same sympathetic treatment from artists and audiences as Porgy received in the popular American opera *Porgy and Bess*? (6) How will white and Negro artists find the courage to create multiple representations of black characters when the world has seen only negative representations and believes that Negroes are incapable of behaving differently? (7) Who will tell the truth about the actual character of the Negro people if their young writers are tempted to follow popular trends?

Du Bois was not the only activist during the Harlem Renaissance to be concerned about the popular tendency, on most American stages, to portray Negro characters as minstrel-type clowns. Several writers, artists, philosophers, politicians, ministers, and housewives posed the same or similar questions and sometimes even tried to answer them. Those whose attempts to answer Du Bois’s questions were the most successful or caused the most controversy were probably the playwrights.

The playwrights of the Harlem Renaissance were unified in their determination to solve the problem of “race” through their work for the theater but were divided with regard to strategy. Some of them advocated “folk dramas”; others advocated history or pageant plays; still others thought that propaganda plays, such as plays about lynching, were the most effective. The merits of the various forms of Negro theater were often debated not only in Harlem and elsewhere in New York state but also in Washington, D.C., at the Saturday Nighters Club. The host for these passionate discussions in Washington was the well-known playwright and poet Georgia Douglas Johnson (1880–1966),

who wrote twenty-eight or more plays at her home on S Street in several genres, such as folk plays, anti-lynching plays, and history plays.

W. E. B. Du Bois

W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963), a widely respected Negro leader, philosopher, and playwright, greatly influenced Georgia Douglas Johnson's career and the discussions about the plight of Negro theater that were held at her house. As the editor of *The Crisis*, Du Bois sponsored playwriting contests and helped several playwrights produce their work professionally. However, when the debate over the portrayal of the Negro onstage and in film intensified, and when both the Negro masses and Du Bois's "talented tenth" became hopeless about racial oppression, he decided that further action was needed. In "Krigwa Players Little Negro Theatre: The Story of a Little Theatre Movement," an essay that also appeared in *The Crisis* in June 1926, he argued that the

plays of a real Negro theatre must be: 1. *About us*. That is, they must have plots which reveal Negro life as it is. 2. *By us*. That is, they must be written by Negro authors who understand from birth and continual association just what it means to be a Negro today. 3. *For us*. That is, the theatre must cater primarily to Negro audiences and be supported and sustained by their entertainment and approval. 4. *Near us*. The theatre must be in a Negro neighborhood near the mass of ordinary Negro people.

On 3 May 1926, Du Bois had made his dream a reality by opening a Negro "little theater"—the Krigwa Players—in the basement of the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library. The company staged three one-act plays: *Compromise* and *The Broken Banjo* (two tragedies by Willis Richardson), and *The Church Fight* (a comedy by Ruth Ann Gaines-Shelton). Du Bois hailed the event as an unquestionable success and said that enthusiastic audiences left the theater wanting more. His goal was to organize Krigwa Players Little Negro Theaters (KPLNTs) throughout the United States to stage works written by himself and others presenting his views about the future of Negro theater and the talented tenth. Several playwrights were influenced by Du Bois's little theater movement, including Marieta Bonner, Owen Dodson, Shirley Graham Du Bois, Zora Neale Hurston, Langston

Hughes, Georgia Douglas Johnson, May Miller, Willis Richardson, and Eulalie Spence.

Willis Richardson

Interestingly, Willis Richardson (1889–1977), whose plays were staged by Du Bois's KPLNT, had somewhat different views about the goals and future of Negro theater. Richardson, as noted above, was influenced by Du Bois, who was his mentor, but he was also inspired by a controversial anti-lynching play called *Rachel* (1916) by Angelina Weld Grimké (his former high school teacher) and by the Irish National Theater. In 1919, Richardson had addressed concerns similar to those of Fauset, in an essay in *The Crisis* titled "The Hope of a Negro Drama." Richardson believed that the Negro had a natural predisposition for poetry, that all playwrights are poets, and that therefore all Negro poets should write Negro drama "that shows the soul of a people; and the soul of this people is truly worth showing." He considered the Irish National Theater an excellent model for Negro playwrights because of its small size and its international reputation. He wanted his vision of Negro theater to reach the entire world; and even though he strongly encouraged Negro poets to write plays, he praised the work of playwrights who were not Negroes but nevertheless wrote about the "souls" of Negro people in a suitable fashion—playwrights such as Eugene O'Neill and Ridgley Torrence. Richardson did not agree with Du Bois that Negro plays had to be written by Negro playwrights, produced near Negro communities, or aimed at exclusively Negro audiences; he felt, rather, that Negro plays should be written for theatergoers worldwide. Despite their philosophical differences, Du Bois advanced Richardson's career by staging several of Richardson's plays and by advising him to share his work with Raymond O'Neil's Ethiopian Art Players in Chicago.

Richardson wrote at least forty-eight plays, including children's plays, historical plays, and family and marital plays; a few examples are *The Flight of the Natives*; *The Black Horseman*; *The House of Sham*; *Attucks, the Martyr*; *Near Calvary*; *Antonio Maceo*; *The King's Dilemma*; *The Dragon's Tooth*; and *The Gypsy's Finger Ring*. His one-act drama *The Chip Woman's Fortune*—a realistic work emphasizing cohesive relationships in a family despite generational gaps—was the first nonmusical play by a Negro to be produced on Broadway; it opened on 15 May 1923 at the Frazee Theater. Richardson also edited two anthologies of drama: *Plays*

and *Pageants from the Life of the Negro* (1930) and *Negro History in Thirteen Plays* (1935).

Richardson's distinguished career was shaped by many other mentors besides du Bois. Richardson met some of these mentors through his attendance at Georgia Johnson's Saturday Nighters Club. He was greatly influenced by the work of Alain Locke (1886–1954), a philosopher who was teaching at Howard University and was a cofounder of the Howard University Players. Richardson had originally submitted his plays to Locke, hoping that they would be produced at Howard University; but Locke's request to stage one of them was turned down by the president of the university, and Richardson then sought Du Bois's help.

Alain Locke

Locke was a mentor to numerous other playwrights of the Harlem Renaissance besides Richardson and was a judge in the playwriting contests sponsored by *Opportunity*, a publication of the Urban League. Locke published several essays on the New Negroes and their place in theater. He developed and published an extensive manifesto outlining his views on Negro folk drama and edited several anthologies that included plays representing his vision of this genre. Locke encouraged Negro artists to abandon commercial theater, in which stereotypes and caricatures of the Negro had dominated American and some European stages since the late 1800s. He believed that Negro theater should be housed at universities instead of community centers in major cities. In 1922, in an essay published in *The Crisis*, he wrote:

We believe a university foundation will assure a greater continuity of effort and insure accordingly a greater permanence of result. We believe further that the development of the newer forms of drama has proved most successful where laboratory and experimental conditions have obtained and that the development of race drama is by those very circumstances the opportunity and responsibility of our educational centers.

Ideally, these educational centers would replicate European theatrical training schools, such as the Moscow Art Theater, where novice actors could work with a master director.

Locke and his colleague Montgomery Gregory, the cofounder of the Howard Players, produced works by

professional playwrights (such as Ridgley Torrence) with professional actors (such as Charles Gilpin); they also produced plays written by students under the auspices of Howard University's theater department. Locke and Montgomery invited theater professionals, regardless of race, to help them train the Howard University Players. As time went on, Locke realized the importance not only of training actors but also of developing scripts. He began to publish a series of articles about the importance of folk drama and the stage voice of the "New Negro."

Locke argued that a problem with Negro theater was its desire to imitate western European theater. In his essay "The Negro and the American Stage," he asserted that "one can scarcely think of a complete development of dramatic art by the Negro without some significant artistic reexpression of African life and the traditions associated with it." Negroes had not been encouraged to explore cultural memory, retrieve artistic traditions from the past, or bring these traditions into their own work for the stage. Locke was interested in plays with African elements: themes, scenes, music, storytelling, ritual, and nonlinear plots. He believed that once Negro playwrights found the truth about their past, a new sense of cultural and artistic freedom would emerge and would naturally connect with American theatrical sensibilities, thereby creating a true or realistic form of Negro theater that illustrated the New Negro. Playwrights who were influenced by Locke's folk drama included Marieta Bonner, Owen Dodson, Shirley Graham Du Bois, Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, Georgia Douglas Johnson, Willis Richardson, and Eulalie Spence.

Zora Neale Hurston

Zora Neale Hurston (1891–1960) was especially intrigued by the possibilities of Locke's vision for the theater of the New Negro, and she experimented with its form throughout her life. Hurston studied with Locke and Montgomery Gregory at Howard University in the 1920s. She was greatly influenced by Locke, who encouraged her to write about Negro folklore and "Africanisms." At Columbia University, as a student at Barnard College interested in anthropology, and as a budding writer, Hurston—like Locke—refused to believe that people of African ancestry were innately inferior to whites. A popular study at this time was craniology, the size of the human head relative to the size of the brain; accordingly, she stood on various

street corners in Harlem and asked passersby if she could measure their heads. This use of science to prove that African Americans were not inferior to whites may have inspired Hurston, in her plays and novels, to depict the struggles of Negroes as they attempted to “love” themselves. For instance, in 1925, while she was a student at Barnard, she wrote what may have been her first play, *Color Struck*. It focuses on the inability of one woman to love herself because of racial shame: This woman does not have light skin, and she believes in a doctrine, espoused by racist scientists of the time, that darker-skinned Negroes were inferior to whites or mulattoes. She destroys her own life and causes the death of her mulatto daughter; still, she is an object of pity, not a villain. This controversial folk drama, written in Negro dialect appropriate for that period, forces audiences to confront issues of miscegenation and racial pride. Hurston submitted *Color Struck* to *Opportunity* magazine and won an award for it. The following year, she submitted her next play, *Spears*, to *Opportunity* and received an honorable mention. In 1927, she wrote the play *The First One*, which was published in *Ebony* and *Topaz* magazines.

All together, between 1920 and 1950, this extraordinarily prolific woman wrote nearly forty plays and musical reviews, four novels, two books of folklore, an autobiography, and more than fifty short stories and essays. She received a Rosenwald fellowship and two Guggenheim fellowships and was widely recognized as a successful writer. Still, she often found herself in poverty; and although she tried to break away from the confines of patronage, she has been criticized by some historians and biographers for accepting the support of a wealthy white woman, Charlotte Osgood Mason of Park Avenue. Mason, who enjoyed Negro literature, supported not only Hurston but also Langston Hughes during most of their literary careers. Alain Locke often met with Mason, and he encouraged her to support young Negro folk dramatists. But in return for her patronage she insisted that the playwrights refer to her as their “godmother,” and she also liked to be described as the “little mother of the primitive world” (Hurston 1979, 12).

In addition to experimenting with Locke’s form of folk drama, Hurston was interested in Du Bois’s theories of theater. She became a member of the “cabinet” for Du Bois’s Krigwa Players and participated in the company’s first season at the 135th Street Library. At this time she found herself under the tutelage of Locke

and Du Bois and hoped that her plays would be produced by the Krigwa Players and at Howard University. While working with Du Bois, she continued to write plays and attempted to produce Negro musical revues. She was selected to be one of nine writers for *Fast and Furious*, a Broadway musical revue in two acts and thirty-seven scenes. The famous figures involved in this production included Tim Moore and Jackie “Moms” Mabley, but when the revue opened in New York in September 1931, it was received unfavorably by several white theater critics. Hurston’s next theatrical venture, *Jungle Scandals*, was also unsuccessful; this was followed by *The Great Day*, which was praised by the critics but was not a financial success. *The Great Day*, which centered on “a day in the life of a railroad work camp,” incorporated themes from Negro folklore and included “Bahamian dances, conjure ceremonies, club scenes, work songs, and children’s games” (Perkins 1989, 78).

Hoping to forward her career in theater, Hurston applied for faculty positions in the theater departments of two historically black schools—Bethune-Cookman College and Fisk University—but was rejected by both. She then returned (after a six-year hiatus) to writing novels and short stories, that is, to the world of Negro fiction in which she had first achieved success. However, her theatrical career seemed to be rekindled in 1935 when the New York Negro unit of the Federal Theater Project (FTP) hired her as a drama coach, a position in which she worked directly with John Houseman. While working with FTP, she submitted several plays for production, most notably *The Fiery Chariot*. She did not succeed in this regard, although she was encouraged by Houseman, who seemed enthusiastic about the possibility that FTP might produce one of her plays in the future. In his autobiography, *Run-Through*, Houseman writes:

For a few days I thought I had found a solution in a new play by Zorah [sic] Hurston, our most talented writer on the project, who had come up with a Negro *Lysistrata* updated and located in a Florida fishing community, where the men’s wives refused them intercourse until they won their fight with the canning company for a living wage. It scandalized both the Left and Right by its saltiness. (quoted in Perkins, 78)

After the short-lived FTP came to a close, Hurston was hired from 1939 to 1940 to organize a drama

program at North Carolina College for Negroes in Durham. There, she developed a professional relationship with the playwright Paul Green, who was the winner of a Pulitzer Prize and worked with the drama department at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. Hurston and Green discussed collaborating on a play to be called *John de Conqueror* (Perkins, 78), but this plan ended when Hurston left North Carolina College to work for a year at Paramount Studios as a story consultant. At Paramount, Hurston tried hard to persuade various producers to use one of her novels or plays as a film script, but again she did not succeed. Her last attempt to achieve success in the theater was in 1944, when she and a white theater artist, Dorothy Varing, produced a musical comedy, *Polk County*, that was supposed to appear on Broadway in the fall of that year. However, the play lost its financial backing and never opened. Disgruntled and disappointed, Hurston returned to Florida (where she had grown up) and lived there until her death on 29 October 1960.

Langston Hughes

Langston Hughes (1898–1967), like Hurston, is often thought of as a poet but was also a prolific playwright: He wrote almost one hundred theatrical pieces, ranging from short scenes to full-length plays. In fact, he and Hurston collaborated on writing a play called *Mule Bone*, although because of personal differences they were unable to finish it. One of Hughes's full-length plays, *Mulatto*, opened on Broadway on 24 October 1935. *Mulatto* is about a mulatto son, Bert, who murders his father—the father having refused to acknowledge Bert as anything more than a slave plantation worker. Hughes was disappointed with the Broadway production because the white producer, Martin Jones, altered the script after buying the rights to the text. Nevertheless, *Mulatto* was the longest-running Negro play on Broadway until Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, which opened in 1959. Although *Mulatto* is a tragedy, Hughes primarily wrote comedies and musicals. His theater works include *The Barrier* (an opera); *Emperor of Haiti*; *Little Ham*; *Don't You Want to Be Free?*; *Limitations of Life?*; *Scarlett Sister Barry*; *The Em-Fuehrer Jones*; *Little Eva*; *Run, Ghost, Run—*; *Joy to My Soul*; *Simply Heavenly*; *The Sun Do Move*; *Tambourines to Glory*; *The Gold Piece*; *Soul Gone Home*; and *Black Nativity*.

After his experiences with having *Mulatto* presented commercially and trying to have his other plays produced professionally, Hughes wrote several essays outlining his hopes for the future of Negro theater. Hughes advocated a Negro theater similar in structure to what Du Bois envisioned. He believed that Broadway and Hollywood were too commercial, averse to experimentation, and interested only in minstrel-like caricatures of Negro life. (Hughes expressed these ideas in, for example, "The Need for an Afro-American Theatre" in *Anthology of the American Negro in Theatre*.) He also wanted Negro theater artists to be able to work in professional spaces; accordingly, he urged the formation of a national black theater. He considered it important for young playwrights to see revivals of the work of older playwrights; he also thought there should be a place like a national theater that could serve as a workshop for the next generation of artists. Hughes believed that without some sort of national African American theater, the world would have no opportunity to hear what he called "authentic" Negro voices, that is, diverse voices in the Negro community that also spanned lines of skin color and class; he also strongly believed that these voices would be heard by all Americans, regardless of color, if such a theater existed. In his own work—his poetry, his short stories, and especially his theatrical characters—he emphasized these authentic voices.

Georgia Douglas Johnson

Hughes enjoyed discussing his ideas with other Negro playwrights and artists of the Harlem Renaissance. He, Hurston, Locke, Richardson, and Du Bois all attended Georgia Douglas Johnson's Saturday Nighters Club—the salon on S Street in Washington, D.C., where the future of Negro art was debated. Johnson, who happily proclaimed herself the maternal hostess of the Harlem Renaissance outside New York City, once remarked, "I'm halfway between everybody and everything and I bring them together" (Hull 1987, 186–187). Johnson had a reputation for taking in stray animals and artists; Hurston, during her periods of financial difficulty, was a frequent and welcome guest at Johnson's house.

Johnson was a playwright as well as a hostess. She wrote dramas that reflected the political and social doctrines of Locke and Du Bois and attempted to address the questions raised by Du Bois. She was well

known in the African American and white American theater communities; thus it is not surprising that she worked, although indirectly, with the Federal Theater Project (FTP) from 1935 to 1939. She submitted six plays to FTP for production: four antilynching plays (*A Sunday Morning in the South*, versions 1 and 2; *Safe*; and *Blue-Eyed Black Boy*) and two historical dramas about slaves escaping from bondage to achieve freedom, or what should have been freedom (*Frederick Douglass* and *William and Ellen Craft*). FTP decided not to produce any of these plays, but that did not discourage Johnson; she continued to write not only plays but also poetry and dozens of musical compositions. She also wrote articles and essays for various black journals and newspapers; in these essays, she discussed the plight of Negro women and the political and social struggles of the Negro community. She was a contributing editor for the magazine *Negro Women's World* and an associate editor with *The Women's Voice*, periodicals located in the area around Washington.

Georgia Douglas Johnson wrote approximately thirty plays, but only five were published, and only a few of her scripts are still extant (her family has most of the unpublished plays). The five plays that were published were *A Sunday Morning in the South* (1925), *Blue Blood* (1926), *Plumes* (1927), *Frederick Douglass* (1935), and *William and Ellen Craft* (1935). Of these, only *Plumes*, *Blue Blood*, and *Frederick Douglass* have a record of theatrical production. The one-act play *Blue Blood* was first staged in New York City, starring Frank Horne and May Miller, who was also a playwright and poet of the Harlem Renaissance; it was later performed at Howard University as part of a program featuring three one-act works. *Blue Blood* attracted attention and was critically acclaimed after it won the playwriting contest sponsored by *Opportunity* in 1926; *Plumes* took first prize in that contest in 1927. *Blue Blood* is significant because it examines black women's struggle to redefine their lives: The female characters boldly confront issues of rape, miscegenation, the Negro elite, racism and classism within the African American community, and the concept of women as objects. Johnson's commitment to the development of Negro theater is demonstrated not only in her own theatrical work but also in her influence over many playwrights and artists of the Harlem Renaissance, including Du Bois, Locke, Richardson, Hurston, and Hughes.

It is worth noting here that Johnson's activism went beyond the theater; she was also a part of the

antilynching campaigns in African American communities during the 1920s.

Summary

In sum, the playwrights of the Harlem Renaissance—along with its artists and scholars—attempted to answer the questions posed by Du Bois. They were committed to demolishing the dehumanizing stereotypes of people of African descent, but they understood that changing dominant attitudes takes time. Most writers of the Harlem Renaissance were not interested in chastising an artist like Hattie McDaniel, who perpetuated the popular nineteenth-century image of the Negro as a clown from a minstrel show, because they understood the dilemma of such an artist, and they also often felt caught between the politics of the burgeoning Negro community and the white community's stereotypical perceptions of Negroes. They were more intrigued with finding a theatrical formula that would ensure "authentic" representations of Negro identity on the American stage. Du Bois argued that Negro artists who were writing about Negroes, for Negroes, in Negro communities could produce authentic Negro characters for the theater. Numerous theater artists—Marieta Bonner, Mary Burrill, Shirley Graham Du Bois, Angelina Weld Grimké, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Georgia Douglas Johnson, May Miller, Willis Richardson, Eulalie Spence, and others—were influenced by Du Bois's theories of theater. However, Alain Locke, although he admired Du Bois's historical pageants, had a different theory about the future of Negro theater. Locke believed that Negro theater should be produced at universities and that folk drama was the essence of cultural and artistic expression for the New Negro. He encouraged playwrights such as Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, Georgia Douglas Johnson, May Miller, and Willis Richardson to abandon western European theatrical standards for "Africanisms" or cultural memory. Hughes, Hurston, Johnson, and Richardson are just four of the playwrights of the Harlem Renaissance who transformed popular Negro theatrical characters from their predecessors in minstrelsy to diverse, realistic dramatic figures. These four playwrights experimented with Du Bois's and Locke's theories of drama but also remembered Willis Richardson's assertion that the most important goal was to create a "play that shows the soul of

a people; and the soul of this people is truly worth showing.”

JASMIN L. LAMBERT

See also *Blacks in Theater*; *Crisis, The*; *Crisis: The Negro in Art—How Shall He Be Portrayed? A Symposium*; Du Bois, W. E. B.; *Ethiopian Art Players*; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; *Krigwa Players*; *Literature: 3—Drama*; Mason, Charlotte Osgood; *Minstrelsy*; *135th Street Library*; *Opportunity*; *Porgy and Bess*; *Talented Tenth*; *Theater*; *specific writers and works*

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Authors: 5—Poets

Judged by its quality and popularity, poetry produced by African American writers in the 1920s constitutes a bright period in American literature. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1906) enjoyed international popularity, primarily for his humorous poems in dialect. From Dunbar’s

death to the early 1920s, no African American poet received a great deal of attention; but during the 1920s, with the advent of the New Negro movement, that situation changed dramatically. The high profile of poets during the Harlem Renaissance was influenced by changes in the American publishing scene as well as by the development of a more militant race consciousness in the black community.

Background

In the early decades of the twentieth century, many newspapers, including the black press, published poems on their editorial pages or in special literary columns. These poems were usually patriotic, sentimental, pleasantly philosophical, or humorous and were contributed by local readers as well as by more accomplished writers from all over the country. However, they were often regarded as filler by both editors and readers and did not get much serious attention. The critical consensus of the period was that most late nineteenth-century American poetry was undistinguished at best. There were other periodicals, though, in which poetry was taken more seriously, and by the beginning of the 1920s, such journals had created a resurgence of interest in poetry among the general public. Poets were gregarious or controversially argumentative, and poetry became fashionable for a season. That mood helped direct attention to African American poets as well.

For their part, African American readers seemed to be eager to read literature that expressed both their social and political aspirations as well as their resentment of the racial segregation laws and discriminatory customs that frustrated them. The phrase “New Negro” had been popularized around the turn of the twentieth century to indicate a new sense of self-awareness and militancy in the African American community. The young intellectuals who became the poets of the Harlem Renaissance proudly adopted that phrase, and Alain Locke (1885–1954), a professor of philosophy at Howard University, used it as the title of a groundbreaking anthology of sociological essays and literary works that he edited in 1925.

The poets who emerged in the 1920s were an incarnation of a people’s hopes. The first generation of the twentieth century, children of the African American middle class, were often college-educated and were able to aspire to much greater ambitions than their elders had ever imagined. They were proud of their

heritage and intent on celebrating African American culture, but they were also aware of the necessity of proving the value of that culture to the rest of the world. The work they produced illustrates two methods of accomplishing these goals: (1) some poets attempted to demonstrate their mastery of time-honored classical and traditional literary forms; (2) others, however, emphasized adapting colloquial language or folk-based motifs and investing them with artistic legitimacy.

An important aspect of the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance is the fact that it was primarily aimed at an African American readership. Although many of the works voiced a protest against the status quo, the poets attempted to avoid an attitude of supplication and what the critic John Henrik Clark has called the “literature of petition.” The journals that published their poetry facilitated this polemical position.

The Crisis, published by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the National Urban League’s *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life* were among the primary venues for the new poetry. The literary pages of the newspaper *Negro World*, published by Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), also promoted poets, as did political journals such as *The Messenger*, edited by the labor organizers Chandler Owen and A. Philip Randolph. Mainstream journals such as *Vanity Fair* and H. L. Mencken’s *American Mercury* were also supportive of African American poets. Across the country, local chapters of the NAACP and UNIA, women’s organizations, and churches encouraged book clubs, discussion groups, and elocution societies. Beginning in 1925, annual contests sponsored by *Opportunity* brought many talented young writers widespread attention, and celebrated judges such as Carl Van Vechten and Fannie Hurst were able to help these writers secure generous patrons or publishing contracts.

Poetry with a Purpose

The poetry of the Harlem Renaissance does not adhere to any one style, although most of it does appear to serve a particular purpose. Young poets such as Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes vociferously declared their artistic freedom to write in any way they pleased. Cullen went so far as to say that while he hoped his work would be appreciated, he didn’t particularly want to be identified primarily as a Negro poet. Even so, much of the poetry produced by Cullen, Hughes, and their peers focused on issues

and experiences specific to black Americans. Other writers articulated the movement’s goals in political terms. Both James Weldon Johnson and Alain Locke pointed out that literature might be a force in improving the way mainstream American society viewed African American people. In Johnson’s view, no race or nationality could be considered inferior if it produced great art. As early as 1918, Johnson had written, “The world does not know a race is great until that race has produced great literature.” Locke, in *The New Negro*, suggested that talented artists might emphasize African Americans’ contributions to society and culture and, by reversing the negative images of African people encouraged by slavery, help eliminate the “great discrepancy between the American social creed and the American social practice.”

Although it produced no uniform style of writing and followed no specific aesthetic guidelines, the New Negro poetic movement was not exactly a spontaneous or undirected development. The historian David Levering Lewis used the phrase “civil rights by copyright” to describe the strategy of improving the African Americans’ status by demonstrating intellectual and artistic excellence. The literary campaign was envisioned and carefully nurtured by W. E. B. Du Bois and Jessie Redmon Fauset at *The Crisis*, by Charles S. Johnson at the National Urban League, by the NAACP’s James Weldon Johnson, and by the scholars Alain Locke and Carter G. Woodson. These leaders in turn drew on the goodwill and significant connections of a network of white editors, sociologists, and charitable institutions.

The ideas that undergirded the creative activity were most clearly articulated by Alain Locke. Democracy could not succeed, Locke stated, “except through the fullest sharing of American culture and institutions.” *The New Negro* announced that the talented young people in the black community were ready to make their contribution. Locke hoped that this rising generation would be able to advance “from the arid fields of controversy and debate to the productive fields of creative expression.” Locke—like Du Bois and the white cofounder of the NAACP, Joel A. Spingarn—believed that the progress of an ethnic group or a nation-state depended on the leadership of cultured individuals. These leaders also firmly believed that the arts have the power to change society.

In his article “Criteria of Negro Art,” published in *The Crisis* in October 1926, W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) bluntly stated what Alain Locke and James Weldon Johnson had often implied. All art, Du Bois declared,

should be propaganda. Literary works should support an ethical or political point of view, be persuasive, and—in the case of the art of black Americans—promote the social advancement of the group. In fact, although younger writers might have resented the constraints implied by Du Bois, they attempted to produce poetry that would examine the characteristics of black life in the United States and inspire black readers with a sense of both individual and collective self-worth. They wrote poems clearly intended to redeem African American people in their own eyes by countering racist stereotypes, and in so doing, to inspire and promote political action for achieving the rights and privileges of citizenship.

The Early Poets

The forerunners of the Harlem Renaissance poets include two writers who achieved significant national attention following Dunbar's death. William Stanley Braithwaite (1878–1962) wrote elegant, sentimental, and somewhat mystical verse. His collection *The House of Falling Leaves* (1908) was warmly received. Braithwaite's true influence, however, came later, as he established himself as a major literary editor and critic. Fenton Johnson (1888–1958) published three collections of poems between 1912 and 1916. Although his earliest work was in the dialect mode popularized by Dunbar, he experimented with poems based on Negro spirituals and later became known for poems marked by an ironic tone and written in the avant-garde style that emerged in Chicago at the time of World War I. By 1922, however, perhaps because of his controversial political militancy, Johnson had stopped publishing poetry.

Two other poets named Johnson (unrelated to each other and to Fenton Johnson) achieved recognition as well. James Weldon Johnson (1871–1938) first achieved fame and wealth as a lyricist for Broadway musicals at the turn of the century; he wrote the words for "Lift Every Voice and Sing" (1900), a song cherished by millions of people as the "Negro national anthem." He also aspired to a literary career and, modeling himself on Dunbar, published *Fifty Years and Other Poems* (1917), a book divided between dialect verses and poems in standard English. The popular and prolific poet Georgia Douglas Johnson (1877–1966) received recognition and critical praise for her finely crafted verses in *The Heart of a Woman* (1918). Georgia Johnson, who was educated at Atlanta University, Oberlin

Conservatory of Music, and the Cleveland College of Music, married and settled in Washington, D.C., in 1909. Throughout the 1920s, she wrote a syndicated newspaper column and held a weekly literary salon at her home. On Saturday evenings, Alain Locke, Jessie Redmon Fauset, Jean Toomer, Anne Spencer, and others who might be visiting the city met to read their works and discuss artistic issues. After her husband's death in 1925, Georgia Johnson worked for various agencies of the federal government and raised two sons while continuing her literary activities. Her published works of poetry also include *Bronze* (1922) and *An Autumn Love Cycle* (1928).

Joseph Seamon Cotter Jr. (1895–1919), a journalist in Louisville, Kentucky, published an impressive collection titled *The Band of Gideon and Other Lyrics* (1918), but he succumbed to tuberculosis soon afterward. His poetry demonstrates his skilled approach to standard rules of versification, but some of the poems reflect the "imagist" approach of the modernists and some reflect his interest in colloquial African American idioms—an interest he shared with Fenton Johnson and James Weldon Johnson.

The multitalented W. E. B. Du Bois also published poems in the first two decades of the century. Several idiosyncratic, biblically cadenced verses were included in his book *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (1920). Focusing on events such as the mob violence that shook Atlanta in 1906, these are starkly angry, bitter poems.

Because of its stylistic innovation and racially focused subject matter, *Cane* (1923)—a book by Jean Toomer (1894–1967) that includes fictional vignettes, poems, and a play—is often considered the inaugural expression of the Harlem Renaissance. Poems such as "Song of the Son" and "Georgia Dusk" represent Toomer's lyrical attempt to capture what he felt was the beauty, as well as the memories of pain and hardship, of a southern rural way of life that was passing with the old century. Like Fenton Johnson before him, Toomer in "Song of the Son" elegantly captures the tone and flow of spirituals without resorting to dialect.

Claude McKay

The first major poetic voice of the Harlem Renaissance, however, was Claude McKay (1889–1948). McKay was born in Jamaica, West Indies, and had worked there as a policeman and published two volumes of

dialect verse based on his experiences before coming to the United States to attend college in 1912. He quickly became involved in radical politics and served on the editorial board of socialist magazines such as *Liberator* and *The Masses*. His bold antilynching poem “If We Must Die,” first published in *Liberator*, was a militant response to the “red summer” of racial violence in 1919. The poem’s powerful effect is derived from the seeming contrast of its immediacy of subject matter, its militant content, and McKay’s sonorous but meticulous Elizabethan sonnet form.

McKay could render beautiful images of nature and vibrant urban scenes, but he is primarily a poet of social engagement. He was a dedicated political activist, and in 1919 he was briefly associated with the International Workers of the World (IWW) and with socialists in Harlem such as Hubert H. Harrison and Richard B. Moore. Between 1920 and 1934 McKay lived and traveled widely in England, Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa, writing and publishing prolifically. Although he was not actually in the United States, his work remained central to the “New Negro” movement.

McKay’s poetry, as in “If We Must Die,” is uncompromising in its analysis of racial bigotry and his assertion of the will to overcome it. Poems such as “America” specifically address social conflict, and “Baptism” uses the metaphor of a trial by fire. “Into this furnace let me go alone,” writes McKay. This sonnet ends with the affirmation “I will come out, back to your world of tears, A stronger soul within a fine frame.” Trials, in McKay’s vision, strengthen the spirit of a race or an individual. In later years, McKay would seek a similar affirmation in religion.

Although he would go on to publish additional volumes of poetry, novels, journalism, and political commentary, McKay’s collection *Harlem Shadows* (1922) established a high standard for other poets—a standard that would be met by major poets such as Countee Cullen (1903–1946), Langston Hughes (1902–1967), and Sterling Brown (1901–1989).

Countee Cullen

Countee Cullen, who was the adopted child of Carolyn Mitchell Cullen and the pastor of the Salem Methodist Episcopal Church, Dr. Frederick Asbury Cullen, epitomized Harlem’s educated and polished upper middle class. A brilliant student and precocious writer, he received several academic and literary prizes, including the John Reed Memorial Prize from *Poetry* magazine.

His first collection of poems, *Color* (1925), published by the venerable firm Harper Brothers, was a best-seller. This book appeared just as Cullen graduated Phi Beta Kappa from New York University and went on to Harvard to earn a master’s degree.

At the beginning of his career, Cullen was easily the most acclaimed and prolific poet of the Harlem Renaissance. His work appeared in a wide range of African American and mainstream journals, and he published three books in 1927: *Copper Sun*, *The Ballad of the Brown Girl: An Old Ballad Retold*, and *Caroling Dusk: An Anthology of Verse by Negro Poets*. Two years later, his own book *The Black Christ and Other Poems* provoked some controversy. From 1926 to 1928 Cullen also wrote a literary column, “The Dark Tower,” for *Opportunity*.

Cullen insisted that while his subject matter might focus on African American life, his poetry was nevertheless part of a long English-language literary tradition. He argued that African American writers had more to gain from a study of that literature than from “any nebulous atavistic yearnings toward an African influence.” He definitely opposed the tendency of some poets to indulge in sensationalized “primitive” imagery. Other literary critics also expressed weariness with poets who seemed to exploit tawdry urban scenes.

In the anthology he edited, Cullen applauded the stylistic diversity of his contemporaries. He praised Anne Spencer’s “cool precision,” delighted in Lewis Alexander’s experiments with haiku, and admired McKay’s rebelliousness even though he feared that it sometimes “clouds his lyricism.” Above all, though, Cullen desired to “maintain the higher traditions of English verse.”

He was aware of the ambivalence in his own position. In his magnificent poem “Heritage” (1925), identifying himself as “one three centuries removed,” Cullen wonders, “What is Africa to me?” Self-doubt, social ostracism because of race, and skepticism about religious faith become powerfully conflicting forces. As with Du Bois’s famous formulation of “double consciousness” in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Cullen shows how the discrepancy between America’s democratic rhetoric and the realities of race threaten to unhinge black citizens.

Langston Hughes

Beginning with “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” published in *The Crisis* when he was nineteen years old, Langston Hughes made a tremendous impact on the

literary world; eventually, he achieved international fame that rivaled Dunbar's. Since his death in 1967, Hughes has been increasingly viewed by critics as a major American poet.

Hughes was born in Joplin, Missouri, and raised by his grandmother and mother in Kansas and Ohio. He was a voracious reader as a child, and while he was still in high school, he determined that he wanted to be a writer.

Influenced early on by the modernist poetics of Carl Sandburg and other practitioners of free verse, Hughes developed a terse, freely rhymed (almost syn-copated) style in short lyrics and dramatic monologues that captured aspects of everyday life. Hughes found support for his early writing from luminaries such as Du Bois and the popular poet Vachel Lindsay, who helped him make contacts that led to the publication of his first book in 1926. *The Weary Blues* sounded a new note in African American poetry. Hughes celebrated the common man; chose to write about situations that many thought unpoetic; and, without apology, used the folk blues stanza as if it were as acceptable as the sonnet. When *The Weary Blues* was reviewed in the *Times* of London, Hughes was slightly called a "poet of the cabaret" and unfavorably compared with Countee Cullen.

Such reviews might have angered him, but Hughes did not flinch before criticism. In 1928, in a letter to the editor published in *The Crisis*, he forcefully declared that he did not care if critics found the poems included in *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927) "low-down, jazzy . . . and utterly uncouth." He would be satisfied if his poems depicted the details and rhythms of urban African American life with lyrical realism. Hughes was concerned to show his readers—as he put it in his essay "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1926)—that "we are beautiful. And ugly too."

Despite his capacity for generating controversy, Hughes found favor with a middle-class audience and, particularly through the appearance of his poems in newspapers, an enthusiastic working-class readership as well. A nationwide tour in 1931–1932 boosted his popularity; he traveled across the country giving readings of his work at colleges, churches, and community auditoriums. Poems such as "I, Too, Sing America" captured the community's mood of pride, determination, and impatience with second-class citizenship. The beautiful monologue "Mother to Son," more than likely drawing on Hughes's own personal childhood experiences, spoke directly to both elders

and the rising generation, reinforcing the need for perseverance in the face of adversity and racism.

At the same time, Hughes's blues poems expressed the reality of hard times and bad luck. In "Po' Boy Blues," he states that "this world is weary/An' de road is long an' hard." But the blues poems also demonstrate how to use humor to survive the worst. Hughes was also capable of biting political satire. His "Advertisement for the Waldorf-Astoria" was a withering critique of the American economic system and the structural inequalities that were made apparent by the stock market crash of 1929. The poem brought him praise from the left wing but also cost him the support of Charlotte Osgood Mason, his wealthy patron. Regardless of his approach, in diction that seems both eloquent and effortless, Hughes produced a consistent stream of poems that people read with excitement and—as they had done with Dunbar's verses—memorized for their own entertainment.

Sterling Brown

Sterling Brown (1901–1989) was born in Washington, D.C., and literally grew up on the campus of Howard University, where his father was a faculty member. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Williams College, earned his master's degree at Harvard in 1923, and eventually became a beloved professor at Howard, serving for half a century. Under the mentorship of his colleague Alain Locke, Brown became both a formidable scholar and a public intellectual. He wrote a literary column for *Opportunity* and was an active folklore researcher. He pursued doctoral studies at Harvard and, in 1937, published two important critical surveys—*The Negro in American Fiction* and *Negro Poetry and Drama*.

Brown's folklore studies helped him develop into a marvelous storyteller, and in some ways he embodied the traits of the trickster Slim Greer, a figure he featured in a series of hilarious poetic monologues. Brown found beauty and grandeur in ordinary people, but he could evoke their sorrows, too. "Maumee Ruth," written in ballad meter, prematurely mourns the death of a rural matriarch. The reader is told, "Might as well drop her / Deep in the ground" because Maumee Ruth's children have been lost to the vices of urban life and have turned their backs on her. The use of colloquial idiom—without the usual mechanics of dialect verse—underscores the poem's ironic tone and emphasizes the tragic toll caused by prodigal sons and daughters.

Brown used dialect skillfully in poems such as “Odyssey of Big Boy” and “Long Gone.” In “Southern Road,” he incorporated the work song rhythms of a chain gang; and in “Ma Rainey,” he alternated dialect and standard English stanzas to explore the powerful attraction of the blues.

Minor Poets

Many excellent writers, not all of whom published their work in book form, made the Harlem Renaissance truly remarkable in terms of poetic activity. Although most of the best-known writers were located in New York, the creative flowering was actually a national artistic movement, and many fine poets could be found in all parts of the United States. There were vibrant literary scenes in cities such as Chicago and Washington, D.C. Black colleges and universities also supported artistic communities and employed professors with literary interests.

Among the noteworthy but lesser-known poets of the era are Helene Johnson, Walter Everette Hawkins, Gwendolyn Bennett, Anne Spencer, Waring Cuney, Frank Horne, Arna Bontemps, Esther Popel, and Lewis Alexander. While Helene Johnson and Bennett (like McKay and Cullen) cultivated the sonnet tradition, poets such as Cuney, Horne, and Alexander explored *vers libre* and other experimental forms. Hawkins, a regular contributor to *The Messenger*, exemplifies a boldly militant voice, continuing the tradition established by Fenton Johnson, Du Bois, McKay, and others.

Anne Spencer (1882–1975), a librarian and community leader in Lynchburg, Virginia, said, “I proudly love being a Negro woman.” Her poetry, however, was primarily focused on the beauties of nature and the elevating life of the mind. When she chose to write about social problems, it was often to focus attention on the quirks of human nature. In “Neighbors,” for example, considering people “who ask too much,” Spencer cleverly noted the dangers of friendliness: “Offered a hand, a finger-tip, / You must have a soul to clutch.”

Esther Popel (1896–1958), a poet who was concerned much more with politics, was a participant in Georgia Douglas Johnson’s literary salon and a frequent contributor to *Negro World*, *Opportunity*, and other journals. Popel graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Dickinson College and became a high school teacher in Washington, D.C. Her often bitterly ironic poems are as searingly effective as Claude McKay’s. Her “Blasphemy—American Style” (1934), for example, is

a prayer of thanks raised by a lynch mob. Popel did not, however, publish a book-length collection of her work.

Like Popel, Walter Everette Hawkins (b. 1883)—a postal clerk in Washington, D.C.—was among the more militant voices of the era. Hawkins published two collections of poems: *Chords and Discords* (1920) and *Petals From the Poppies* (1936). He was also featured in Nancy Cunard’s *Negro Anthology* (1934).

Frank Horne (1899–1974) had been trained as an ophthalmologist but eventually enjoyed a distinguished career as a college and government administrator. His grimly titled “Letters Found Near a Suicide” won a prize from *The Crisis* in 1925 and launched a series of spare but witty modernist poems that celebrate the vigor and camaraderie of youth while also attacking Victorian middle-class complacency.

Lewis Alexander (b. 1900), who had been educated at Howard University and the University of Pennsylvania, was an actor and theatrical director. As a poet, he preferred to write in traditional stanza forms but also experimented with free verse and Japanese forms such as haiku and tanka. At his best, Alexander could produce strikingly evocative images such as “The earth trembles tonight / Like the quiver of a Negro woman’s eye-lids cupping tears.”

Clarissa Scott Delany (1901–1927), the daughter of Booker T. Washington’s secretary Emmett J. Scott, was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Wellesley College. In her tragically short life she wrote excellent lyric poems and was capable of brilliant and memorable lines such as “Joy shakes me like the wind that lifts a sail.”

The equally talented Gwendolyn Bennett (1902–1981), a visual artist as well as a writer, graduated from Pratt Institute and studied in Paris at the Académie Julian and the École de Panthéon. Many of her poems exalted femininity and, in some cases, natural African beauty. In her poem “Heritage”—perhaps in response to Cullen—she offers romanticized images of dancers “around a heathen fire” and, in terms reminiscent of Dunbar, testifies to her desire to “feel the surging / Of my sad people’s soul / Hidden by a minstrel-smile.” During the 1920s, Bennett wrote a regular column for *Opportunity* and taught in the art department at Howard University.

Arna Bontemps (1902–1973) was for many years a librarian at Fisk University and collaborated with Langston Hughes on many projects, including their major anthology *Poetry of the Negro: 1746–1964*. During the 1920s, Bontemps published poems in *Opportunity*, *The Crisis*, and other journals. His powerful “Nocturne

at Bethesda" received the poetry prize from *The Crisis* in 1927 and has been frequently anthologized. Perhaps drawing on a technique used in spirituals and African American sermonic traditions, poems such as this one and "Golgotha Is a Mountain" (1926) use biblical stories but carefully relocate them in a contemporary historical setting.

Helene Johnson (1906–1995) was among the youngest and most talented of the Harlem Renaissance poets. She was raised in Boston, won an honorable mention in the first *Opportunity* literary contest, and settled in New York in 1927. Her poems appeared in *Vanity Fair*, *The Messenger*, *Fire!!*, and other journals, as well as in several anthologies. Some of her poems reflect a primitivistic theme by celebrating an imagined African state of nature.

Waring Cuney (1906–1976), a member of a prominent African American family, was a classically trained musician who graduated from Lincoln University and studied at the New England Conservatory of Music and in Rome. Cuney's "No Images" (1926) is a small modernist masterpiece that is often reprinted. An attempt to encourage personal and racial pride by contrasting a vibrantly mythical Africa and the anesthetic working-class city, "No Images" is the quintessential Harlem Renaissance poem.

Conclusion

These young writers were a remarkable cohort of brilliant, creative people who exemplified the "talented tenth" that Du Bois saw as the hope of the nation's future. Their ambitious and accomplished example demonstrated that only a seriously shortsighted society would deny their contribution or reject their promise.

While the poets of the Harlem Renaissance took pride in the "newness" of their work and their role as representatives of a newly awakened generation, they were also part of a literary tradition. In their attempt to distance themselves from the anxious alternation of dialect and standard English poetry practiced by Dunbar, the younger poets adopted a kind of division of labor: McKay and Cullen demonstrated their skill in expressing African American ideas in traditional stanzas, whereas Hughes and others enjoyed creating rhythmic literary experiments in colloquial black English. The movement launched the careers of several major writers and made a lasting impact on American literature. The poets of the Harlem Renaissance won favorable attention in Europe as their work was translated into other languages, and they served as an inspiration

to African and Caribbean writers, including the founders of the *négritude* movement. Since the 1990s, excellent annotated collections of several poets, major and minor, have appeared, and literary critics continue to publish studies and interpretations of the Harlem Renaissance group.

LORENZO THOMAS

See also American Mercury; Crisis, The; Fire!!; Harper Brothers; Literature: 7—Poetry; Mason, Charlotte Osgood; Messenger, The; Modernism; Negritude; Negro World; Opportunity; Opportunity Literary Contests; Primitivism; Riots: 2—Red Summer of 1919; Spingarn, Joel; Talented Tenth; Vanity Fair; *specific poets, writers, and works*

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Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man, The

James Weldon Johnson's novel *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912; sometimes spelled . . . of an Ex-Coloured Man) unsettles distinctions of genre just as its light-skinned narrator, who has lived on both sides of the "color line," unsettles racial distinctions. The work was originally published anonymously as an actual autobiography (the publisher was Sherman,

French of Boston) but was reissued as fiction (by Knopf) in 1927.

Johnson's text interweaves personal experience, sociological observation, and social protest. The narrator begins his life's story in the South, of which his vague memories include occasional visits from a white man he later learns is his father. When this man announces his imminent marriage to a white woman, the narrator and his mother move North, to a small town in Connecticut, where he grows up immersed in books and music. Inspired by his mother's singing of old southern melodies, he distinguishes himself by becoming a remarkable classical pianist with a distinct, "singing" style. Although his musicality seems tied to his mother's race, the narrator remains unconscious of his blackness until his teacher distinguishes him from the white students in the classroom, thus initiating a crisis of identity reminiscent of W. E. B. Du Bois's "double consciousness." His new sense of racial identity leads him back to the black South, where he plans to attend Atlanta University but instead ends up working at a cigar factory alongside black Cuban immigrants and teaching piano to middle-class black children. When the factory closes, he moves North again, to the emerging "black belt" of New York City, where he narrowly escapes the pull of gambling and other vices by discovering ragtime. After hearing a "natural" black musician play ragtime by ear, he brings his classical training to bear on this new music to develop his own ragtime style—"ragging the classics"—and quickly gains a reputation as the city's best ragtime pianist.

The narrator's playing attracts white audiences in particular, and one of his admirers, a young, disaffected millionaire, hires him as a companion and personal pianist on a trip to Europe. Although the narrator enjoys relative freedom from prejudice in London and Paris, he nonetheless leaves his employer after being inspired by a German pianist to consider a new way of combining his two musical—and racial—traditions. Instead of ragging the classics, the narrator decides to devote himself to incorporating black music into classical forms, and thereby make a name as an important black composer. This ambition takes him back to the American South, where, in search of "raw material" for his work, he finds himself moved beyond expectation by the music he hears. Before his project materializes, however, he witnesses the brutal lynching of a black man and, repulsed and "shamed" by the idea of belonging to a race that could be so demeaned, he returns to New York to live as a white man. By the end

of the narrative, at the moment when he begins to write his life story, the "ex-colored man" has made his fortune in real estate, married a beautiful "lily white" woman, and fathered two light-skinned children; but none of this outweighs his growing sense of regret that he has "sold his birthright for a mess of pottage."

Johnson began writing *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* at the end of a brief stint as a lyricist in musical theater; he published it six years later, while serving as an American consul in Latin America. Although some southerners who reviewed the edition of 1912 doubted its authenticity, most accepted the narrative as genuine autobiography and praised it as a "dispassionate" revelation of modern blacks' experiences and of race relations. When the text was reissued as fiction in 1927—at the height of the "Harlem Renaissance"—it carried the author's name and had a cover designed by Aaron Douglas and an introduction by Carl Van Vechten. Echoing earlier reviews, Van Vechten praised its "calm dispassionate tone" and its continuing relevance as "a composite autobiography of the Negro race."

Not until Robert Bone's *The Negro Novel in America* (1965) did critics begin to consider Johnson's narrator as a fictional character, rather than simply a mouthpiece for the author's opinions or a "dispassionate" conveyor of truths. Bone's characterization of the "ex-colored man" as a coward, and the novel as a "tragedy," opened the door to a range of new approaches to the literary qualities of the work and to the narrator's point of view. In the 1970s, critics attempting to articulate a black literary tradition considered the novel a link between nineteenth- and twentieth-century African American narratives. Both Houston Baker (1973) and Robert Stepto (1979) hailed it as an important revision of the slave narrative and a forerunner of black protest fiction.

Much early critical discussion concerns whether and to what extent the text uses irony to undermine the narrator's point of view. This criticism tends to fall into two camps: Some scholars, such as Robert E. Fleming (1971), read the narrator as wholly unreliable and maintain that his perceptions are colored by guilt over abandoning his race; and others, such as Eugene Levy (1973), insist that the narrator embodies, without irony, Johnson's own ambivalence and biases. Joseph T. Skerrett Jr. (1980) offers a compromise between these positions, arguing that Johnson used both irony and tragedy in constructing his narrator. Invoking biographical material, Skerrett suggests that Johnson "symbolically restructured" his own vexed relationship

to a college friend "D," about whose decision to pass as white he felt both envy and disapproval.

More recent critics have revisited the ambiguities of Johnson's novel with a new set of questions, interested less in defining Johnson's intentions than in exploring the text's challenges to notions of authenticity. Invoking Lacanian theory, Samira Kawash (1997) underscores the text's treatment of race as "specular image" and its rejection of any notion of racial authenticity. Donald Goellnicht (1996) draws a parallel between the fictional text's "passing" as autobiography and the narrator's passing as white, and argues that the text is a "subversion" of conventional literary and racial boundaries.

As this critical history demonstrates, Johnson's only novel has continued to inspire interest and debate since its original publication, providing evidence of the changing concerns of literary criticism and the heterogeneous resonance of this richly ambiguous text.

CRISTINA L. RUOTOLO

See also Douglas, Aaron; Johnson, James Weldon; Van Vechten, Carl

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Baker, George

See Father Divine

Baker, Josephine

Josephine Baker's performances and writings of the years 1925–1936 form an archive of the transatlantic dimensions and expressions of the Harlem Renaissance. Like many African American performers of the era, Baker found her audience in Europe, where the phenomenal popularity of black Americans came to be known as *le tumulte noir*, or "black rage." She made her debut in *La Revue Nègre* (1925), and its promotional posters, designed by Paul Colin, remain the most controversial and important images of Josephine Baker. After her *danse sauvage* with Joe Alex in *La Revue Nègre*, Baker was both hailed as a primitivist icon and denounced as an indecent savage by Parisian critics. Today, "Although many people celebrate Baker's career, many could argue that her initial success was achieved at the expense of her integrity and the principles of African Americans" (Barnwell 1997, 86). According to Sharpley-Whiting (1999), Baker doubtless "realized that her popularity . . . depended on her exploitation of French exoticist impulses . . . [and] the Black Venus narrative" (107). Baker achieved greater financial success and artistic freedom in France than she might have had in the United States, but she did not escape the problem of realizing her artistic ambitions within the limitations of stereotypical black roles. Still, like many artists of the Harlem Renaissance, Baker sought

to use entertainment to improve race relations, and she consistently praised the relatively liberal racial policies of the French, as an oblique critique of American racism.

Before she became a star in Paris, Baker had learned the ways of the entertainment world through black vaudeville. She toured with the Dixie Steppers on the Theater Owners' Booking Association circuit (TOBA, widely known as "Tough on Black Asses"), for a salary of \$9 per week. As a dresser for the blues singer Clara Smith, she tended to Smith's costumes and was probably influenced by Smith's preference for tight pink dresses, red wigs, and feather boas—in later years, Baker would be admired for the bravado of her own fashions. When the Dixie Steppers disbanded, Baker, who was then fifteen years old, made for New York, where she was hired to perform in the touring company of Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake's *Shuffle Along*. For \$30 a week, she played the chorus line's "Funny Girl," that is, the chorine on the end who doesn't quite get the routine. To the consternation of the other performers, Baker's funny faces, out-of-time kicking, comparatively dark skin, and skinny, rubbery body drew crowds and earned her admiring reviews.

Baker was then recruited by Caroline Dudley to perform in France, as a comic dancer in *La Revue Nègre* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris. Dudley assembled a troupe of twenty-five dancers and musicians, including the clarinetist Sidney Bechet, and they set sail 15 September 1925 aboard the *Berengaria*, arriving at Le Havre several days later. André Daven and Rolf de Maré had the company in rehearsals almost immediately, and in consultation with the music



Josephine Baker performing "The Conga" in the Ziegfeld Follies at the Winter Garden, New York, 11 February 1936.

(AP / Wide World Photos.)

hall choreographer Jacques Charles, the directors transformed the Harlem-style tap show with the aesthetics of French colonialist fantasy. The most significant revision of *La Revue Nègre* was Charles's creation of a pas de deux for Josephine Baker and Joe Alex called *La danse sauvage*. Baker and Alex danced topless in costumes consisting of feathers about the head, pelvis, and ankles that caused the show to be remembered long after its brief run (from 2 October until 19 November 1925) was finished.

In Paris, Baker added fantastic colonialist costumes of bananas, feathers, and grass to her repertoire of grimaces and dances, which included the eagle rock, turkey trot, kangaroo dip, itch, break a leg, pimp walk, through the trenches, shimmy, snake hips, black bottom, and mess around (Wood 2000, 24). She typically performed a series of dances with unexpected changes at a high speed, "violating white conventions of movement" (Rose 1989, 29). One interviewer praised her as a "black Venus, who turned our concept of rhythm and movement on its head" ("*Femmes d'aujourd'hui*," 3). Baker's performance style of the

1920s departed from the liquid prewar style of Vernon and Irene Castle and prefigured the scholarly choreography of Katherine Dunham, which was based on the African diaspora.

Baker's famous banana skirt was her costume for *la danse des bananes*, a scene in the film *La folie du jour* (1926). Archival footage shows Baker entering the scene on the high branch of a tree and descending to the stage laughing and shaking her bananas. Baker danced without a partner in *la danse des bananes*, but she is surrounded by black male drummers, and a lounging white explorer looks on. Baker later abandoned the bananas, except for her unfortunate performance in 1936 in the Ziegfeld Follies, in which she wore a more aggressive version of this comically sexy costume (Documents des Archives, Cinémathèque de la Danse).

After her world tour of twenty-five countries in 1928–1929, Baker would transform herself during the 1930s from a black novelty to an exotic singer of love ballads and a leading actress in colonial films, under the orchestration of Pepito Abatino, her manager and partner. Abatino engaged tutors in French, voice, and dance, and he himself gave his *vedette* (star) lessons in table manners and polite conversation. He negotiated Baker's contract to appear in a silent film, *Sirène des tropiques*, in 1927. His friend Arys Nisotti, a Tunisian casino owner, produced the films *ZouZou* (1934) and *Princesse Tam Tam* (1935). Abatino wrote the script and is credited as the artistic director for *Princesse Tam Tam*. Both films included narratives of transformation and unrequited assimilation and were meant as vehicles for the new "Parisianized" Josephine Baker. Of her movies, Baker said, "It all seems so real, so true, that I sometimes think it's my own life being played out on the sets" (Rose 1989, 163).

Baker's hope for roles in Hollywood movies did not materialize, but she did star successfully in an adaptation of Offenbach's operetta *La Créole*, realizing her goal of performing serious music in French with French actors. Thus, in the 1930s Baker struggled against the *sauvage* persona she had created in the 1920s. As a jazz empress during the 1930s she wore glamorous Poiret gowns, sang, and chatted with the audience in French; and when she danced, her movements tended to conform to the fluidity and the stationary upper body of ballet. The American vernacular dance called the Charleston would remain in her repertoire, however, and this dance and the song "J'ai deux amours" became her signature. The square near the Bobino Theater in Paris where this complex and brilliant star

gave her last performance has been named in her honor.

Biography

Josephine Freda McDonald Baker was born 3 June 1906 in St. Louis, Missouri. Her parents were Carrie McDonald and Eddie Carson; her stepfather was Arthur Martin; her siblings were Richard, Margaret, and Willie Mae. Her primary education was at public schools in St. Louis; she received private instruction in French, acting, voice, and dance at Beau-Chêne, France, in 1930–1931. Baker married Willie Wells in 1919. In 1920–1921, she was a dresser for Clara Smith and a featured blues singer and substitute in the chorus line with the Dixie Steppers (a vaudeville troupe) at the Booker T. Washington Theater in St. Louis, the Gibson Theater in Philadelphia, and elsewhere, earning \$9 a week. She married Willie Baker in September 1921. In 1922–1923, she was with the touring company of Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake's *Shuffle Along* as the "Funny Girl" in the chorus line, earning \$30 per week. In 1924–1925, she was the "Comedic Principal" in Sissle and Blake's *Bamville/Chocolate Dandies* on Broadway and on tour, at \$125 per week. Also in 1925, for several months, she was a dancer at the Plantation Theater Restaurant.

Baker emigrated to France in 1925, sailing on 22 September on the *Berengaria*. In France, she was a dancer with *La Revue Nègre*, featured in a *danse sauvage* with Joe Alex, at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées (opening 2 October 1925, closing 19 November 1925; directed by André Daven, produced by Caroline Dudley, choreographed by Jacques Charles) at \$200 per week. In 1926, she was a principal in *La folie du jour* at the Folies Bergère, featured in *la danse des bananes* (the composers were Irving Berlin, Spencer Williams, and Vincent Scotto). Baker opened Chez Joséphine on Rue Fontaine, in the Montmartre district of Paris, on 14 December 1926.

Baker's films of the 1920s include *La folie du jour*, directed by Mario Nalpas (silent, 1926); *Un vent de folie*, which opened in April 1927; and *An Excursion to Paris*. There is also a film of her performance in *La Revue des revues* (1927, directed by Mario Nalpas). She appeared in the short silent film *Le pompier des Folies Bergères/Les hallucinations d'un pompier* (c. 1927, possibly with Pierre Brasseur). She starred in *Siren of the Tropics* (silent, 1927; directed by Henri Etiévent and Mario Nalpas). In 1927, Baker published the first of

five collaborative autobiographies: *Les mémoires de Joséphine Baker, recuillis et adaptés par Marcel Sauvage*, which had drawings by Paul Colin. She also endorsed a hair-straightening pomade, Bakerfix, patented by an Argentinean chemist. In 1928–1929, she undertook a tour of twenty-five countries.

During the 1930s, Baker published a novel, *Mon sang dans tes veines* (1930); was a principal in *Paris qui remue* at the Casino de Paris (1930–1931 season); recorded her signature song "J'ai deux amours" (July 12, 1930); starred in the film *ZouZou* (1934, a backstage musical with Jean Gabin, directed by Marc Allégret); starred in a remake of Offenbach's operetta *La Créole*, which opened 15 December 1934 in Marseilles; and starred in the musical comedy film *Princesse Tam Tam* (1935, directed by Edmond Gréville). Baker was the first black woman to appear in the Ziegfeld Follies (1936). On 30 November 1937, she acquired French citizenship by her marriage to Jean Lion. In September 1939, she performed in the revue *Paris-Londres* with Maurice Chevalier.

In 1940, during World War II, Baker joined the French resistance; she served as a sublieutenant in southern Europe and North Africa in 1940–1942. In 1942–1944, she organized the equivalent of the American United Services Overseas for the Free French. In 1943, *The Josephine Baker Show*, a benefit concert for the French Red Cross, was presented in Casablanca, Morocco. In 1945, Baker starred in *Un soir d'alerte/Fausse alerte*, directed by Jacques de Baroncelli. She was awarded the Croix de Lorraine by General Charles de Gaulle, in appreciation of her wartime efforts, and the Médaille de la Résistance, on 6 October 1946.

Baker toured the United States in 1951. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) declared Sunday, 20 May 1951, Josephine Baker Day in recognition of her civil rights activism. She renovated her chateau in France, Les Milandes, as a tourist attraction and home, and she adopted the twelve children of her "Rainbow Tribe" in 1954–1962. In 1945, she established the Josephine Baker Foundation, hoping to use it to support the College of Brotherhood. In 1961, she was awarded the Légion d'Honneur by General de Gaulle. In 1963, she addressed the March on Washington, D.C., and starred in concerts at Carnegie Hall to benefit the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the NAACP, and the College of Brotherhood. She sold Les Milandes on 3 May 1968 to reimburse her creditors. In 1973, she starred in concerts at the Palace Theater; in 1974, she starred in *Joséphine's Story*, a benefit for the Red Cross presented at Monte Carlo. Her last

Baker, Josephine

show was *Joséphine*, in 1974–1975. Baker died in Paris 12 April 1975.

TERRI FRANCIS

See also Bechet, Sidney; Chocolate Dandies; Dance; Primitivism; Shuffle Along; Smith, Clara

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Selected Films

Les hallucinations d'un pompier/Le pompier des Folies-Bergère, c. 1927 (credits unknown)

Princesse Tam Tam, 1935 (color; dir. Edmond Gréville)

Sirène des tropiques, 1927 (black-and-white, silent; dir. Maurice Dekobra)

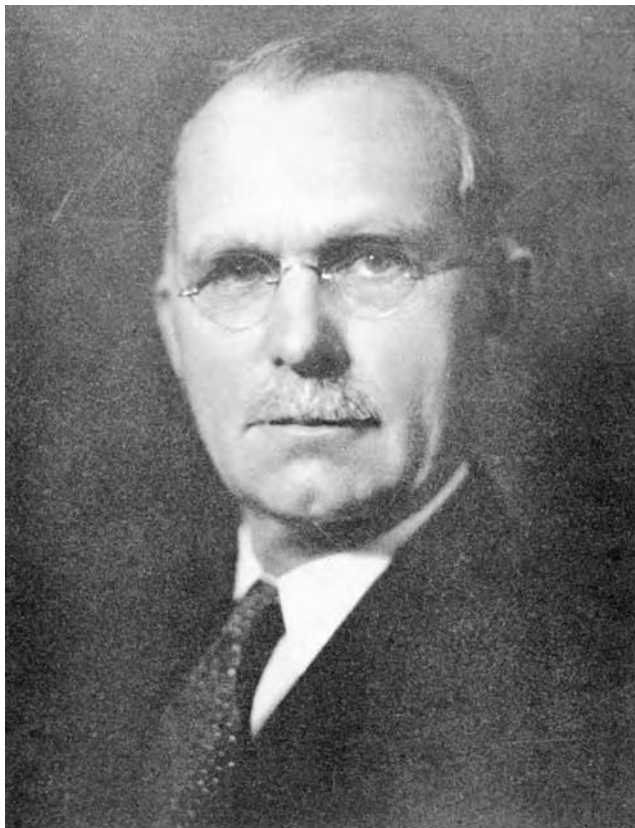
ZouZou, 1934 (black-and-white, with Jean Gabin; dir. Marc Allégret)

Baker, Ray Stannard

Ray Stannard Baker, one of the significant journalists of the muckraking period, joined the staff of the revolutionary *McClure's Magazine* in 1892. Working alongside Lincoln Steffens and Ida Tarbell, Baker produced a variety of investigative articles that molded his political beliefs. Initially, he wrote with little sympathy for the worker, feeling that protesters and strikers failed to understand the problems of a growing nation. Soon, however, his perspective changed, as he investigated lawlessness, monopolies, and corruption. Although he was not pro-labor, he began to distrust corporations, and a series of articles that he wrote about railroads pushed him further toward progressivism. When Steffens, Tarbell, and John S. Philips resigned from *McClure's* to buy *American Magazine*, Baker joined them. A study of the nation's racial divide would be his first investigative series for this new reformist publication.

At the time of the race riots of 1906 in Atlanta, Baker traveled South to investigate America's "color line." He had previously written about racial issues in two articles for *McClure's*; for those articles, he had traveled to the sites of four widely publicized lynchings and studied the lawlessness that characterized racial problems in the United States. In his new series, however, he planned to examine the "Negro problem" in depth. His research included interviews with southern leaders, both black and white, as well as clergymen, farmers, scholars, and other citizens. At one of these meetings, Baker sat down with W. E. B. Du Bois, then a professor of economics at Atlanta University, along with the white Episcopal clergyman Cary Breckenridge Wilmer. As Du Bois and Wilmer debated racial issues, both acknowledged they had never before done so face to face with someone of the opposing race (Tuttle 1974, 242).

In April 1907, the *American* published the first article in Baker's series, which concentrated on the race riot and the situation of blacks in Atlanta. After four more pieces, which covered topics such as Jim Crow laws and black life in the city, Baker broadened his



Ray Stannard Baker, c. 1930–1946. (Library of Congress.)

study, examining the color line in the North. The completed series, while presenting few solutions, pointed to various trends in American racial politics. Baker considered the impact of the “great migration,” divisions within the African American community, and the many societal factors that made racism a regional and national issue.

Despite their thorough—and rare—analysis of the subject, however, Baker’s articles fell short of radicalism. In a conversation with Baker, his colleague John Philips had reminded him to “keep the interests and friendliness of southern readers. . . . They are the people whom we wish to reach and enlighten.” Also, many scholars have noted that Baker was never particularly extreme, or even immoderate, on the issue of race. Ideologically, he was allied with the progressive philanthropists and with Booker T. Washington; as a result, his articles received compliments from white liberals and moderate black leaders, and only slight criticism from more radical leaders like Du Bois.

In 1908, Baker published the series in a book, *Following the Color Line*. During the following years, he continued to write about race relations and also published a succession of idealistic books about country

life under the pseudonym David Grayson. In 1918–1919, Baker served as director of the press bureau for the American peace commission at Versailles, where his close relationship with President Woodrow Wilson enabled him to define the role of press secretary. After the war, Baker continued to write; he produced an autobiography and fifteen volumes on Wilson.

Biography

Ray Stannard Baker was born 17 April 1870 in East Lansing, Michigan. He attended public schools in St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin; received a bachelor of science degree from Michigan Agricultural College (later Michigan State) in East Lansing, Michigan, in 1889; and studied at the University of Michigan Law School in 1891 (he did not graduate). Baker was a reporter for the *Chicago News-Record* (1892–1896); an associate editor at *McClure’s Magazine* (1897–1906); a part owner and editor of the *American Magazine* (1906–1915); a freelancer for *Century*, *Harper’s Weekly*, *Outlook*, *World’s Work*, and other publications; and director of the press bureau of the American peace commission (1918–1919). He received the Pulitzer Prize for Biography in 1940. Baker died in Amherst, Massachusetts, 12 July 1946.

JOSHUA A. KOBRIN

See also Great Migration; Lynching

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Baltimore Afro-American

The outburst of literary creativity known as the Harlem Renaissance might have been little noticed or remembered were it not for black newspapers. Black newspapers publicized and provided media outlets for black novelists, poets, and essayists. Although black and white magazines of the 1920s such as *Opportunity*, *The Crisis*, and *American Mercury* did publish Harlem Renaissance artists and writers, the black newspapers exposed them to a much wider audience. One black newspaper, the Baltimore *Afro-American*, provided an invaluable if little known outlet for the Harlem Renaissance.

The Baltimore *Afro-American* was and is one of the most important black newspapers. During the 1920s, it was the most widely read black newspaper on the East Coast. It was founded in Baltimore in 1892 by a group of black entrepreneurs and ministers led by Rev. William Alexander. John H. Murphy, its printer, acquired the newspaper in 1897, and his descendants have owned and operated it down to the present. In 1918, his son Carl Murphy, who was a graduate of Howard and Harvard universities, became the editor of the *Afro-American*. When John H. Murphy died in 1922, the family chose Carl Murphy to run the newspaper. Under his leadership, which lasted until 1967, the *Afro-American* became one of the top three black newspapers in the United States, matching its competitors the *Chicago Defender* and the *Pittsburgh Courier* in circulation and influence.

During the 1920s, the *Afro-American* reported news about the black community and crusaded for racial justice locally and nationally. It also extensively publicized black artists and entertainers. This last function was its greatest contribution to the Harlem Renaissance.

The *Afro-American* endlessly publicized jazz, blues, and the concert singers and musicians of the Harlem Renaissance—figures such as Marian Anderson, Louis Armstrong, Josephine Baker, Eubie Blake, Duke Ellington, Roland Hayes, Florence Mills, and Bessie Smith. It also gave prominent coverage to the singer, actor, and activist Paul Robeson. It regularly reviewed Broadway plays with black themes, such as *The Emperor Jones*, and occasionally published excerpts from these plays. It also published excerpts from the works of black novelists of the era such as Jean Toomer; and it frequently published the poems and essays of such Harlem Renaissance figures as Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Alain Locke, Claude McKay, and Zora Neale Hurston. Countee Cullen became a columnist for the newspaper, and Langston Hughes, later on in the 1930s, covered the Spanish Civil War for it. The *Afro-American* encouraged young black writers by publishing serials and short stories in its magazine section; eventually these stories were published in an anthology edited by Nick Aaron Ford, *Best Short Stories by Afro-American Writers*. In addition, the *Afro-American* publicized black playwrights and advertised local presentations of their plays. It publicized and published, as well, such intellectual and political leaders as W. E. B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, James Weldon Johnson, and Kelly Miller. Its homegrown columnist Ralph Matthews became nationally known

as the “black H. L. Mencken.” In all these ways, the *Afro-American* supported the Harlem Renaissance.

HAYWARD “WOODY” FARRAR

See also American Mercury; Black Press; Chicago Defender; Crisis, The; Cullen, Countee; Emperor Jones, The; Garvey, Marcus; Hughes, Langston; Matthews, Ralph; Mencken, H. L.; Miller, Kelly; Murphy, Carl J.; Opportunity; Pittsburgh Courier; Revue Nègre, La; *specific entertainers, musicians, and writers*

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Barnes, Albert C.

Albert C. Barnes established the Barnes Foundation in Merion, Pennsylvania, in 1922, having amassed the largest private collection of modern and African art in the world. Most important, Barnes appreciated African sculpture as art, not simply as artifacts that were best placed in museums of ethnography and natural history. He also understood the profound impact of African sculpture on the formal and aesthetic innovations of the European avant-garde—artists such as Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, and Henri Matisse.

In addition, Barnes was a tireless and aggressive champion of the cultural importance of African art for African Americans: “Negro art is so big, so loaded with possibilities for a transfer of its value to other spheres where Negro life must be raised to higher levels, that it should be handled with the utmost care. . . . It involves intellectual, ethical, social, psychological, [and] aesthetic values of inseparable interactions.” As a consequence, Barnes soon caught the eye of Alain Locke, the editor of *The New Negro*, who may be considered the philosophical “midwife” of the Harlem Renaissance and who was himself seeking to make the art of Africans and African Americans the locus of a new aesthetics and a new racial consciousness. Thus began a complex friendship that would also involve Barnes’s relationship with other prominent figures of the Harlem Renaissance, in particular the novelist Walter White and the editor of *Opportunity*, Charles S. Johnson.

Barnes met Locke in Paris in December 1923 and the next month sought Locke’s assistance with an article, “Contribution to the Study of Negro Art in America,” that was to be published in both *Ex Libris* and *Les Arts à Paris*. Three months later, at Barnes’s suggestion, Johnson devoted a special issue of *Opportunity* (March 1924) to African art; this issue included Barnes’s own article, “The Temple,” together with Locke’s “A Note on African Art” and Paul Guillaume’s “African Art at the Barnes Foundation.” One year later, Locke included Barnes’s “Contributions to the Study of Negro Art” (retitled “Negro Art and America”) in a special issue of *Survey Graphic*, “Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro” (March 1925); soon afterward, he included this same article in *The New Negro*.

Barnes was an important cultural resource—a person to consult regarding African art. George Hutchinson has claimed that Locke and *Opportunity* relied on Barnes as their “house expert” on African aesthetics and its relation to European modernism. One must be careful, however, not to overstate this influence. Locke was not entirely satisfied with Barnes’s “Negro Art and America,” which offered little help in Locke’s own effort to provide a cultural context for African art. Partly for this reason, Locke offered “The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts” to supplement Barnes’s effort. For the remainder of the decade and into the next, Locke continued to champion African art. He now argued, however, that to see African art through the eyes of modernists such as Barnes, who so strongly emphasized form, was to see it “through a glass darkly.”

Barnes, Albert C.

Biography

Albert C. Barnes was born 2 January 1872 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He studied at public schools in Philadelphia; at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, 1892; and at Heidelberg in Germany, 1900. He established the Barnes Foundation in December 1922. Barnes transferred 710 paintings from his personal collection (works by Picasso, Van Gogh, Renoir, Cézanne, and Matisse) to the foundation and first purchased African sculpture in 1922. He was named an Officier de l'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur by the French government on 27 July 1936 and was made an honorary doctor of science by Lincoln University on 5 June 1951. Barnes died 24 July 1951. (His provisions for the Barnes Foundation have since given rise to continuing controversy.)

MARK HELBLING

See also Johnson, Charles S.; Locke, Alain; Modernism; New Negro, The; Opportunity; Survey Graphic; White, Walter

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Barnett, Ida B. Wells

Ida Bell Wells Barnett was born a slave in Holly Springs, Mississippi, in 1862. She began her work as a teacher in the rural schools of Mississippi but then went to Memphis, a move that radicalized her and gave her an opportunity for a new career and for leadership. In the late nineteenth century she was one of the best-known African American women in the United States and internationally.

In Memphis, Barnett became part of a politically and intellectually active community. She joined a lyceum, composed primarily of other public school teachers, whose members enjoyed music, reading together, debating issues of the day, giving recitations, and writing and presenting essays. She contributed



Ida B. Wells Barnett in a photo published in 1891.
(Library of Congress.)

essays to a periodical associated with the lyceum, the *Evening Star*, then served as its editor; she was also a columnist for another local paper, *Living Way*. An incident that informed her editorials and articles at this time took place when she was forcibly removed from a train for taking a seat in the ladies' coach (rather than in the smoking car, as Jim Crow regulations required) and led to a lawsuit against the railroad, the Chesapeake, Ohio, and Southwestern. She won the suit, and although the decision was overturned by the supreme court of Tennessee, the episode began Barnett's lifetime of outspoken activism and advocacy. Barnett also wrote articles about the poor conditions in schools in the African American community (these writings got her fired from the teaching pool), and she encouraged African Americans, including members of her own family, to leave Memphis and seek justice and political and economic opportunities in the West.

During this period, Barnett was a full-time investigative journalist; a co-owner and editor of her own newspaper, *Free Speech and Headlight* (1889), with Rev. Taylor Nightingale and J. L. Fleming; an astute businesswoman and professional woman who made her paper a successful enterprise; an active member and then secretary of the predominantly male National Press Association; a columnist syndicated in African American periodicals throughout the country; and an outspoken crusader for justice. In 1892, she wrote an editorial about the lynching of three of her friends, Thomas Moss, Calvin McDowell, and Lee Stewart, who had been co-owners and operators of the People's Grocery, in competition with a store owned and operated by whites. Barnett was a sharp-tongued political observer, and in her editorial—which, like all of her writing, was short, simple, and direct—she argued, provocatively, that these and other lynchings were not what the white establishment claimed them to be. The white power structure in Memphis reacted with threats and the actual burning of her newspaper offices, but she herself was in New York at the time and prudently remained there. In fact, she did not return to the South until January 1922, when she went to Little Rock, Arkansas, as an advocate against injustice and terrorism during a riotous period in which many African Americans were incarcerated or murdered.

Barnett's exile from the South gave her another arena for political action. Though she remained an active journalist for the rest of her life, she also began a career as a public speaker and a lifelong commitment to community development and political organization.

From 1892 on, she traveled and spoke frequently as a political activist.

Barnett had a reputation as a "difficult" woman who was often involved in public disagreements if not out-and-out feuds with a broad range of adversaries. Some of these were with highly respected white reformers: for example, in 1893, Barnett disputed with Frances Willard (of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union) and the evangelist Dwight Moody, because she considered their response to lynching inappropriate. Another adversary was a white journalist, John W. Jacks, president of the Missouri Press Association; in 1895, Jacks wrote a scathing attack on the morals of African Americans generally, and Barnett in particular. There was also tension between Barnett and some women who were part of the African American elite, such as Mary Church Terrell and Fannie Barrier Williams, who both vied with Barnett, for several decades, for leadership and power in various organizations. Some of Barnett's disagreements were with African American men, most notably Booker T. Washington during the time when he dominated the black leadership: Barnett found his political position intolerable. She also disagreed with political organizations; for instance, although she herself was a founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), in 1910, she considered it too conservative and overly controlled by white rather than African American viewpoints.

However, not all of Barnett's activity was so contentious. She was always an active member of the African American church, most consistently in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, but in many others as well. She joined many professional, social, and community organizations whose goals were self-improvement and securing justice, equality, and empowerment for all. Before the turn of the twentieth century, she organized one of the most successful anti-lynching campaigns: documenting cases; developing careful, thorough arguments; and offering proposals to end this type of terrorism. After the turn of the century, she continued the antilynching crusade but also became active in the woman's suffrage movement and the settlement house movement. With regard to settlement houses and community development, one of her striking achievements was the founding, in 1913, of the Negro Fellowship League in Chicago; she kept this organization alive and functioning for ten years before competing organizations and a lack of resources compromised her ability to continue. By the 1920s and 1930s, Barnett was also involved in political campaigns,

and she herself ran for the state senate in Illinois in 1930, although she was defeated.

Barnett died in 1931, never having lost her passion for justice, never having wavered in her commitment to people who were disenfranchised politically or economically, and leaving as her legacy a remarkable record of achievements. She was a successful and significant investigative journalist, an insightful political observer and analyst, and a creative community organizer who was able to put together a network of services in support of specific needs. She was also an intellectual with a genuine vision of possibilities for African Americans. Perhaps most important, she was a leader who helped to identify strategies for social and political action that would constitute a framework for positive change for generations to come.

Biography

Ida Bell Wells Barnett (or Wells-Barnett) was born 16 July 1862 in Holly Springs, Mississippi. Her parents, James and Elizabeth Warrenton Wells, were politically active after the Civil War; they and one of her brothers died in the yellow fever epidemic of 1878, and she was left to care for her surviving siblings. Barnett attended elementary and high school at Shaw University, later renamed Rust College. She taught in the public schools of rural Mississippi and Shelby County, Tennessee. She was a contributor to and later editor (1886) of the *Evening Star* and a columnist for *Living Way*, both periodicals in Memphis, Tennessee; was a co-owner and editor of *Free Speech and Headlight* (with Rev. Taylor Nightingale and J. L. Fleming), 1889; and was elected secretary of the National Press Association, 1889. In 1892, she wrote an editorial that made her famous as a leader of the antilynching movement and in effect exiled her from the South for the next three decades. In 1893 and 1894, she made two speaking tours of England, Scotland, and Wales. Barnett was active in several political organizations—including the National Afro-American League, Afro-American Council, National Association of Colored Women, National Equal Rights League, Ida B. Wells Woman's Club, and National American Woman's Suffrage Association—and in the Niagara movement, the woman's suffrage movement, and the international peace movement. She was a cofounder of the NAACP (1910) and a founder of the Negro Fellowship League (1910) and the Alpha Suffrage Club (1913). She ran unsuccessfully for the Illinois state senate in 1930.

Barnett died in Chicago (of uremic poisoning) 25 March 1931.

JACQUELINE ROYSTER

See also Antilynching Crusade; Lynching; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

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Barthé, Richmond

James Richmond Barthé (1901–1989), a formally trained academic sculptor, was one of the most widely collected and publicized artists of the Harlem Renaissance. His work was characterized by racial pride, naturalistic representation, movement, sensuality, and spirituality; it appealed to a clientele extending beyond the black American community and attracted patronage from the white American mainstream; and it helped form the image of the “New Negro.”

In the 1920s, when Harlem was coming into vogue and the young Barthé was experimenting in art, he received funding from a pastor to attend the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. There, he acquired a traditional academic education strongly influenced by European art in the classical and Renaissance styles. At first, he studied painting under Charles Schroeder; later, however, an exercise in molding clay, intended to enhance his appreciation of three-dimensional forms, thrust him into the spotlight.

In 1927, the Chicago Women’s Club, a progressive group interested in the fine arts as a social commentary on race, sponsored an unprecedented exhibition of art, music, and literature by black Americans and needed some three-dimensional works to be placed alongside African sculpture. Two sculptured busts that Barthé had made for an art course were included in this exhibition, which was part of the *Negro in Art Week* programs. It introduced him to the world of professional artists and led, in 1928, to his first commissions for sculptures: portrait heads of Henry O. Tanner and Toussaint-Louverture. Throughout Barthé’s long career, his principal source of income would be such figurative bronze sculpture, particularly commissions for single portrait busts of Africans, African Americans, Caribbean-Americans, and European-Americans, although he also produced realistic freestanding full-length nude and clothed statues, some groups of figures (often with African themes), and some religious sculpture.

Barthé met Alain Locke during the *Negro in Art Week* programs; they developed a lifelong friendship,

and Locke became a loyal supporter of Barthé’s work. During this time Barthé also met Frank Breckinridge and Julius Rosenwald, two prominent and influential businessmen in Chicago. This acquaintance led to a one-year travel grant to New York City in 1929, enabling Barthé to create works for an individual exhibition at the Chicago Women’s Club in 1930. A year earlier, he had exhibited four sculptures in New York in a show sponsored by the Harmon Foundation—*The Jubilee Singer* (1927), *Toussaint L’Overture* (1928), *Head of a Tortured Negro* (1929), and *Tortured Negro* (1929)—and they received an honorable mention. *The Jubilee Singer* appeared on the cover of *Opportunity* in 1928. Barthé continued to exhibit regularly with the Harmon Foundation until 1933 and received tremendous publicity and recognition through its promotion of black American artists.

Barthé became a permanent resident of New York City in 1931, attracted by its artistic culture and especially its progressive black arts community. He met artists, writers, and intellectuals such as Aaron Douglas, Langston Hughes, Wallace Thurman, and Carl Van Vechten and attended the salon of A’Lelia Walker. Through this salon he secured work such as a sculptured portrait of Walker herself.

Barthé lived not in Harlem but on Fourteenth Street in Chelsea, where he also opened a studio. He may have found the “New Negro” arts movement too restrictive because it focused on Afrocentric imagery, and he may have wanted more exposure in mainstream artistic circles. He seems to have concluded that his primary customers and patrons would be whites rather than blacks, and that by living and working downtown he could make himself more accessible to whites. If this was his strategy, it succeeded; he received numerous commissions and exhibitions and was praised by white and black critics in the 1930s and 1940s. Still, Barthé was a figure in Harlem, enjoying its nightlife, interacting with the literati of the Harlem Renaissance, and attending dance, music, and theater performances, although he maintained some measure of anonymity.

During the time of the Harlem Renaissance, mainstream institutions in culture, entertainment, and publishing were extraordinarily open to black Americans, and Barthé evidently took advantage of this openness. His work was displayed in exhibitions at the Whitney Museum (which acquired some for its collection), the New Jersey State Museum, the Corcoran Galleries, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and the Carnegie Institute, among others. His acquaintance

with businesspeople led to public commissions, notably a frieze for the Harlem River Housing Project, *Green Pastures: The Walls of Jericho* (1938); and the Arthur Brisbane Memorial (1939), a monument to the newspaper editor and columnist. Barthé was also acquainted with people in theater, and he created many portrait sculptures for stars such as Phillips Holmes, John Gielgud, and Katharine Cornell.

Some of Barthé's sculpture—such as *African Dancer* (1933), *Wetta* (c. 1934), *Feral Benga* (1935), and *African Boy Dancing* (1937)—had African themes that appealed to the popular culture of the day: the Afrocentric self-awareness of blacks, and the expectation of whites that black artists would infuse their work with African "primitivism." Dance was a central motif in much of Barthé's art; Barthé had enrolled in classes in modern dance to enhance his understanding of the human figure in motion. His mastery of human anatomy, acquired during his years of academic training, combined with this appreciation of dance allowed him to capture emotion, movement, and sensuality, especially in his more stylized, elongated pieces.

Recent scholars have pointed out homoerotic aspects of Barthé's sculpture and have suggested that his use of the black male nude was a way of working out of his own sexual conflicts. His sensual sculptures of nude black males, such as *Feral Benga*, *The Boxer* (1940), and the robust *Stevedore* (1937), may well have appealed to white homosexuals who saw eroticism in their interpretation of images of African male "primitivism." The suggestion that Barthé had a double life during the Harlem Renaissance—participating in an intricate network of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals—may explain his wide appeal and patronage, especially among New York's homosexual and artistic circles; it may also explain his apparent need to obtain privacy by living downtown rather than in Harlem.

Barthé did cross racial, gender, and class lines in his career. Yet he may have made his greatest contribution to the Harlem Renaissance as a role model for other black American artists, demonstrating through his life and work the heights that artistic creativity could achieve in an integrated society.

Biography

James Richmond Barthé was born 28 January 1901 in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. He studied at Saint Rose de Lima (a parochial school) and Valena C. James High School; at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago,

1924–1928; with Charles Schroeder and Albin Polasek, privately; and at the Art Students League, New York, 1931. Barthé traveled and worked in Italy and Iolous, Jamaica. His awards included the Eames McVeagh Prize, Chicago Art League, 1928; a Rosenwald Foundation fellowship, 1928–1929; an honorary mention from the Harmon Exhibition, for *Tortured Negro*, 1929; an honorary master of arts degree from Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana, 1934; a Guggenheim Memorial Foundation fellowship, 1940–1941; the Edward B. Alford Award; an award from the National Sculpture Society, 1945; the James J. Hoey Award for Interracial Justice, 1945; the Audubon Artists Gold Medal of Honor, 1945; an honorary doctorate in fine arts from Saint Francis College in Brooklyn, New York, 1947; and election to the National Academy of Arts and Letters, 1949. He died in Pasadena, California, 6 March 1989.

CLAUDIA HILL

See also Art Criticism and the Harlem Renaissance; Artists; Douglas, Aaron; Harmon Foundation; Harmon Traveling Exhibition; Locke, Alain; Primitivism; Salons; Tanner, Henry Ossawa; Van Vechten, Carl; Walker, A'Lelia

Selected Individual Exhibitions

1930: Chicago Women's Club, Chicago
1931: University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin
1931: Caz-Delbo Galleries, New York
1931: Rankin Art Galleries, Washington, D.C.
1933: Caz-Delbo Galleries, New York
1939: Arden Galleries, New York
1941: De Porres Interracial Center, New York
1942: South Side Art Center, Chicago
1945: International Print Society, New York
1947: Margaret Brown Galleries, Boston
1947: Duncan Phillips Memorial Galleries, Washington, D.C.
1947: Grand Central Galleries, New York
1948: Saint Peter College, Jersey City, New Jersey

Selected Group Exhibitions

1927: Chicago Women's Club, Chicago
1928: Chicago Art League, Chicago
1929: Fisk University, Nashville
1929: Harmon Foundation, New York
1930: Regal Theater, Chicago

1931: Harmon Foundation, New York
 1933: Harmon Foundation, New York
 1933: Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
 1933–1934: Century of Progress Show, Chicago
 1934: Salons of America, New York
 1934: Howard University, Washington, D.C.
 1934: New School of Social Research, New York
 1934: Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
 1935: New Jersey State Museum, New Jersey
 1935: Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
 1936: Corcoran Galleries, Washington, D.C.
 1936: Texas Centennial Exposition, Texas
 1938: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia
 1939: Baltimore Museum, Maryland
 1939: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia
 1939: Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
 1939: World's Fair, New York
 1939: Harlem Art Galleries, New York
 1939: Sculptors' Guild Outdoor Exhibition, New York
 1940: American Negro Exposition, Chicago
 1940: Pennsylvania Museum Sculpture Show
 1941: Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh
 1941: Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia
 1943: Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois
 1947: World's Fair, New York

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Batouala

René Maran's novel *Batouala* (1921) is set in the French colony of Ubangui-Shari and takes the reader into the cultural practices and emotions of the people whom Maran came to know as an administrator in the French colonial empire. Sexually explicit and dramatically exotic, *Batouala* was an immediate sensation and caused a furor in France. Although it won the Prix Goncourt, the most prestigious award France has to offer a young writer, the book was banned for many years, and Maran was forced to resign his post. The most incendiary part of *Batouala* was the preface, in which Maran, who was from Martinique, attacked the French in Africa and equated colonialism with deceit and genocide: "You build your kingdom on corpses. . . . You aren't a torch, but an inferno. Everything you touch, you consume." Not only had this "brother of France" declared that assimilation was a myth but he had also used his position of authority to question the *raison d'être* of the French presence in Africa. After he returned to France, Maran became involved in various pan-African movements, joining the Ligue Universelle de la Défense de la Race Noire (as a member of the editorial staff of its journal, *Les continents*) and the Comité Universel de l'Institut Nègre de Paris (its literary journal was *La revue du monde noir*).

Many people consider *Batouala* the founding text of African nationalist literature. For writers and

intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance, the novel and its author evoked strong feelings of racial pride and testified to the artistic potential of Africa. In Marcus Garvey's *Negro World*, for example, *Batouala* became a cause célèbre. As a consequence, Maran's salon in Paris soon became a meeting place for African and West Indian intellectuals (most notably Aimé Césaire, Léon Damas, and Léopold Senghor), as well as African American intellectuals. In 1924, Alain Locke met Maran in Paris; this meeting was the beginning of a long friendship. Maran introduced members of the Harlem Renaissance to the French public in such articles as "Le mouvement negro-littéraire aux États-Unis"; he was also instrumental in having Walter White's *Fire in the Flint* translated into French. At the same time as Maran began to appear in *Opportunity*, the *Revue de monde noir* began to publish the writings of Locke, Jean Toomer, Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, and James Weldon Johnson.

African Americans have long considered France the "garden spot of Europe." *Batouala* served both to complicate that understanding and to bring intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance into the larger political and cultural universe of the African diaspora.

MARK HELBLING

See also Césaire, Aimé; Damas, Léon; Europe and the Harlem Renaissance: 4—Paris; *Fire in the Flint*, The; Francophone Africa and the Harlem Renaissance; Francophone Caribbean and the Harlem Renaissance; Locke, Alain; Maran, René; *Negro World*; *Opportunity*; Pan-Africanism; Senghor, Léopold

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Bearden, Romare

Among African American artists, Romare Bearden is one of the most inventive, distinctive, and famous and has received more critical acclaim and scholarly analysis than nearly anyone else. His art evolved considerably during his career: Early on, he was committed to social realism and political illustration; after World War II, he was one of the few African American painters who embraced abstract expressionism; at the beginning of the 1960s, his art became more representational but remained highly modernist in style and materials. When the civil rights movement erupted during the 1960s, he began to explore the social, economic, cultural, and political issues of African American life, through his many collages, which were made with found images from newspapers, magazines, and photographs. Although collage was hardly new at that time, Bearden was radical in his use of brutally factual photographic images to visualize the African American



Romare Bearden, photographed by Carl Van Vechten. (Library of Congress.)

experience from his personal perspective. It is for these works that he is still best known.

Bearden was born around 1912 in Charlotte, North Carolina, and was raised there and in Pittsburgh and Harlem. He came to Harlem as a child and often visited his grandmother in Pittsburgh, where he eventually lived for a few years during his childhood. In Pittsburgh he had a friend named Eugene whom he later credited with inspiring his desire to draw and therefore his career as an artist. As a youth, Bearden came into contact with many artists and writers associated with the Harlem Renaissance, because his mother worked for the New York office of the *Chicago Defender*, an African American newspaper.

After college, Bearden studied at the Art Students League with George Grosz, who was then one of the great political satirists in graphic media. Bearden himself worked as a political cartoonist in the mid-1930s, first publishing cartoons in *Medley*, a humor journal published by New York University, then having illustrations and cartoons published in *Collier's*, *Fortune*, the *Baltimore Afro-American*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*. Thus, early in his artistic career he was creating images weighted with social commentary and observation, undoubtedly having learned this skill from Grosz. At about this time he became associated with the 306 Group of African American artists based in Harlem; this group included Charles Alston, Aaron Douglas, Jacob Lawrence, and Augusta Savage and was named for a salon that developed at 306 141st Street.

By the mid-1940s—after the period of the Harlem Renaissance—Bearden began to receive recognition for his social realist paintings. His work was exhibited in 1945 in the Whitney Museum Annual, and in the next three years he had exhibits at the Kootz Gallery. Ironically, though, his social realist works from these years are little known today, especially compared with his later collages; and social realism was not a long phase in his development as an artist. It seems that he felt some displeasure with how African American artists were publicly received at the time and with his own identity, and this discontent led him to take new stylistic directions. Still, social realist paintings such as *Two Women in a Landscape* (1941) reveal his keen observation of the problems of ordinary people, particularly poor African Americans, during the Great Depression; and his painting *Factory Workers* (1942) was used to illustrate “Negro’s War,” an article in *Fortune* magazine.

In his paintings of the mid-1940s, many of biblical subjects, his style was becoming much more abstract. In the late 1940s, Bearden was deeply involved in

studying the paintings and drawings of the old masters, European artists of the Renaissance and later. He did not care to sketch in public at museums; instead, he made photocopies of masterworks and hung them in his studio so that he could study them conveniently and carefully. However, during the late 1940s and early 1950s, he was not very productive as a visual artist.

Bearden, who had served in the army during World War II, was able to go to Paris in 1950 to study philosophy at the Sorbonne, thanks to the GI Bill. He was very active in Parisian artistic and intellectual circles and got to know many older artists who had been part of the rise of modern art early in the century, as well as younger expatriate American writers and artists.

From the mid-1950s to the early 1960s, he continued to paint abstractly. Abstract expressionism was then at the height of its popularity, and Bearden’s works have the painterly, agitated brushwork and diverse tonal colors that were typical of this style. A characteristic technique of his own was to pull painted pieces of paper off canvases, creating rough, uneven, gritty paint surfaces. But although the abstract expressionists’ philosophical introspection and self-discovery might have appealed to Bearden, he and other African American artists of this period felt alienated from the New York school, which was all-white. At the same time, they seemed to feel that representational, socially conscious painting was no longer meaningful or effective.

In the early 1960s, as the civil rights movement was advancing, Bearden’s own art—and his idea of what African American art should be—changed dramatically. In 1963, he and several other African American artists in New York City, including Norman Lewis, Hale Woodruff, and Charles Alston, formed the group *Spiral* to help promote distinctly African American aesthetics and find a way to use art for the benefit of the civil rights movement. This group, which at its largest numbered sixteen artists, met frequently in Bearden’s studio in SoHo to discuss various philosophical and political views concerning the social turmoil of the day and the members’ own place as visual artists in the struggle for equality. After the march on Washington, D.C., in 1963, they organized an exhibit of their recent work; this was held in Manhattan and was called “Black and White” because all the works were done using only black and white. The exhibit was interpreted as fiercely political despite the artists’ attempt to minimize polemical responses to their work.

Also in 1963, Bearden began to create his socially conscious collages about African American life and culture. He concentrated on several rather broad themes, such as the inner city, the rural South, music, and musicians. Hoping that the artists with whom he was associated would collaborate with him on these collages or follow his lead, he collected a huge number of fragmentary cutout images and brought them to the meetings of Spiral, and two members—Richard Mayhew and Reginald Gammon—did start to work with him, but they soon lost interest and stopped.

Bearden created his collages by first assembling the fragmentary images, then painting over them in scattered places, then using a brayer to work a resin emulsion adhesive over the whole. The collages were then photocopied and enlarged. It was in this enlarged format that they were first exhibited, in 1964, under the collective title "Projections." They have been described as projections (a term referring to the method of enlargement) but also as "photomontages." These works were well received by most critics, whose response encouraged Bearden to abandon painting and devote himself to collage. It should be noted, though, that the critics were reacting at least partly to the newsworthy content of the works, and this is how they have usually been interpreted by scholars. Bearden himself did not approve of that approach, however, because the collages were not meant to illustrate or be parallel to the civil rights movement.

Bearden's collages feature disparate, abruptly juxtaposed found images. Bearden cut them out of various popular magazines of the time, such as *Life*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Ebony*, and *Look*. Abrupt shifts in depth and scale create intense, provocative scenes of ordinary people and their activities. His composites of cutout images can create extremely realistic or very distorted figures and settings. Photographic images that were originally without color or had been stripped of their color during the photocopying are sharply contrasted with colored photographs and periodical illustrations and brightly painted areas. (Color derived from found images or created with paint is seen in the later collages, but the breakthrough works of the mid-1960s are without color.) Bearden evolved his own fully realized, tonally charged aesthetics, and his collages seem to reverberate with the rhythms of jazz and the blues and the movement and speed of urban life. They were often inspired by the artist's recollections of his youth and his perceptions of the life of rural and urban African Americans. Themes of travel and motion, usually with some reference to trains, appear frequently.

Because Bearden had produced illustrations and cartoons thirty years earlier, he knew the expressive power of images in the mass media; but when he began his collages he resisted the literal, direct approach of illustration. Photographs, with their striking immediacy, were a provocative, enticing means of visualizing the reality of life for a part of America that had been historically poor and alienated from the dominant mainstream culture.

Dove (1964) shows urban dwellers on a tense, noisy, crowded street. Its title refers to a bird, in the upper center, that suggests peace, tranquillity, and spiritual release and is in sharp contrast to all else that is depicted. The faces are brutally real; scale and depth are not. *The Prevalence of Ritual—Baptist* (also 1964) includes some of the most important themes in Bearden's collages: Christian references, the concept of inclusion or exclusion, the rituals of black culture, and the ritualistic quality of making art. *Pittsburgh Memories* features two large faces of black men; these faces suggest African masks, are made up of fragments of photographs (in a way influenced by cubism), and are surrounded by assembled photographs of city buildings. As with many of Bearden's collages, the inspiration for this image was the artist's recollection of his youth. *Watching the Good Trains Go By* and *Train Whistle Blues Numbers 1 and 2* show one of Bearden's most persistent themes: the train. Bearden said that for him the train represents how white society encroached on African American society. It may well also be his personal reflection on the migration of many African Americans from the South to the North in the early decades of the twentieth century, a theme that Jacob Lawrence immortalized in his series of paintings *The Migration of the Negro*. *The Conjur Woman* depicts an African American folk mystic who could supposedly work magic and cast spells. *Summertime* (1967) contrasts the sentimental wholesomeness of a girl eating an ice cream cone with the impoverishment of people behind tenement windows, who seem to be caged in.

After the 1960s, Bearden returned to painting. He depicted socially conscious themes and scenes of African American life in vivid colors, sometimes with scratchy, agitated brushwork. Some of these works are pleasantly abstract scenes with large, bold areas of color, whereas others are violent and disturbing.

Late in life, Bearden was a mentor to younger black artists and an advocate of African American art. He received widespread recognition and acclaim for his work, becoming one of America's most famous black artists. In 1967, he was a cocurator of "The Evolution of Afro-American Artists, 1800–1950" at City College

in New York City, an exhibit that was one of the first to explore the history of African American art. Bearden wrote "Rectangular Structure in My Montage Paintings," an important treatise on his own collages, in 1968. In 1969, he and the abstract artist Carl Holty wrote *The Painter's Mind: A Study of the Relations of Structure and Space in Painting*. Bearden's years of research became the foundation for *A History of African American Artists: From 1792 to the Present*, of which he and Harry Henderson were coauthors; this was one of the first major surveys of the topic. Bearden died of cancer in 1988.

Biography

Romare Bearden was probably born 2 September 1912 in Charlotte, North Carolina. (There is some disagreement among sources as to the year of his birth, with dates ranging from 1911 to 1914. According to the Register of Deeds in Charlotte, he was born in 1912.) He was brought as a child to New York, where his father was an inspector for the Department of Sanitation. Bearden studied at Boston University while playing for one of the Negro baseball leagues; he eventually received a B.S. in mathematics from New York University in 1935. He also studied at the University of Pittsburgh, the American Artists School, and the Art Students League, New York City. In the late 1930s and then again from the early 1950s to the mid-1960s, he was a social worker in New York City. Bearden served in the army from 1942 to 1945, traveled to Paris in 1950, and married Nanette Rohan in 1954. His awards include the National Medal of the Arts and numerous honorary doctorates. He was a member of Spiral, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Bearden was involved in music as well as art: he wrote music for well-known performers such as Billie Holiday; started his own business, the Bluebird music company; and had twenty of his songs recorded. Bearden died 12 March 1988 of complications from cancer.

HERBERT R. HARTEL JR.

See also Alston, Charles; Artists; Baltimore Afro-American; Chicago Defender; Douglas, Aaron; Lawrence, Jacob; Savage, Augusta; Woodruff, Hale

Individual Exhibitions

1940: "Romare Bearden: Oils, Gouaches, Watercolors, and Drawings, 1937–1940," Addison Bates Studio, New York

1944 and 1945: G Place Gallery, Washington, D.C.
 1945: Duvuloy Gallery, Paris
 1945: Caresse Crosby, Washington, D.C.
 1945, 1946, 1947: Samuel Kootz Gallery, New York City
 1948: Niveau Gallery, New York City
 1955: Barone Gallery, New York City
 1960: Michael Warren Gallery, New York City
 1961: Cordier and Ekstrom Gallery, New York City
 1964: "Projections," Ekstrom's Gallery, New York City
 1965: "Projections," Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C.
 1966: Dundy Art Gallery, Wattsfield, Vt.
 1967: Michael Warren Gallery, New York City
 1967: J. L. Hudson Gallery, Detroit
 1968: "Romare Bearden: Paintings and Projections," Art Gallery, State University of New York at Albany
 1969: Iowa State University, Iowa City
 1970: Michael Warren Gallery, New York City
 1971: "Romare Bearden: The Prevalence of Ritual," Museum of Modern Art, New York City
 1972: Studio Museum in Harlem
 1975: Gallerie Albert Loeb, Paris
 1975: Madison Art Museum, Madison, Wis.
 1980: "Romare Bearden: 1970–1980," Mint Museum, Charlotte, N.C.
 1986: "Romare Bearden: Origins and Progressions," Detroit Institute of Arts
 1991: "Memory and Metaphor: The Art of Romare Bearden, 1940–1987," Studio Museum of Harlem, New York City
 1992: "A Graphic Odyssey: Romare Bearden as Printer," Cleveland Museum of Art
 1997: "Romare Bearden in Black and White: Photomontage Projections, 1964," Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City
 1997: "The Painted Sounds of Romare Bearden," Mount Saint Vincent University Art Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
 2003: "The Art of Romare Bearden," National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Group Exhibitions

1945 and 1946: Whitney Museum Annual
 1946: Durand-Ruel Gallery, New York City
 1948: Six American Painters, Galerie Maeght, Paris
 1948: Art Institute of Chicago
 1948: Barnett-Aden Gallery, Washington, D.C.
 1950: "American Painting Today: A National Competitive Exhibition," Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City

Bearden, Romare

- 1955: Clearwater Art Museum, Clearwater, Fla.
1960: "Recent Acquisitions," Museum of Modern Art, New York City
1961: Carnegie International, Pittsburgh
1964: Farleigh-Dickinson University, Madison, N.J.
1964: "Black and White," Christopher Street Gallery, New York City
1966: New School of Social Research, New York City
1966: UCLA Art Gallery, Los Angeles
1967: City College, City University of New York
1967: Forum Gallery, New York City
1968: "International Exhibition of Posters," Sofia, Bulgaria
1968: Minneapolis Museum
1969: "New American Painting and Sculpture," Museum of Modern Art, New York City
1969: Detroit Museum
1969: Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, Mich.
1971: "Seventeen Black Artists," Newark, N.J.
1975: "Art Students League Anniversary Exhibition—100 Artists," Kennedy Galleries, New York City
2003: "Challenge of the Modern: African-American Artists, 1925–1945," Studio Museum in Harlem
2003: "African-American Artists, 1929–1945: Prints, Drawings, and Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art"

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Beavers, Louise

The actress Louise Beavers, like the better-known Hattie McDaniel, was a favorite "mammy" figure in American film—a wise if sometimes naive servant, cheerful and loyal, who provided her white employers, and a predominantly white audience, with sage advice, commentary, humor, and a reaffirmation of the status quo.

Beavers began her career as a member of the Lady Minstrels but soon started to get small parts in silent films. She made her feature debut in *Gold Diggers* (1923) and also appeared in the 1927 version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. During this period Beavers was being trained to fit into the "mammy" and "Aunt Jemima" mold; in fact, she was asked to gain weight so that her image on the screen would conform to the imagined ideal. With the advent of talkies, her career took off, and between 1929 and 1960 she appeared in more than one hundred films. The characters Beavers played generally brought comic relief or served as a counterpart of the Greek chorus, commenting on the foibles of the leading characters. She was described as conveying sincerity, authenticity, and warmth, and as seeming tamer and less cantankerous than McDaniel.

The highlight of Beavers's career was a dramatic role: she played Delilah Johnson opposite Claudette Colbert in the tearjerker *Imitation of Life* (1934). In this film Beavers and Colbert portray single mothers juggling the demands of jobs and parenthood. Beavers's character still functions as a loyal servant who makes sacrifices for her white employer. However, her conflict with her daughter (played by Fredi Washington), who tries to pass for white, suggests the influence of racism in American society. Beavers received critical praise for her role in *Imitation of Life*, but in her remaining films she once again played the stereotypical servant.

The Harlem Renaissance partly coincided with the arrival of sound films in Hollywood; and both the renaissance and the talkies opened new doors not

only for African American performers who had been active in New York's theaters and nightclubs but also for those who were establishing their careers elsewhere in the United States. More work was available, and there were new avenues for artistic expression. However, Hollywood was affected by the racism and discrimination that also characterized American society as a whole; as a result, only minor roles—as servants, entertainers, or comic characters—were generally available to black actors. Moreover, these roles were stereotypical. This kind of casting drastically limited the parts that African Americans, such as Beavers, could play. Nevertheless, during the 1920s and 1930s, a performer like Beavers could still manage to create a unique screen persona within these confines.

Beavers, who had died in 1962, was posthumously inducted into the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame in 1976.

Biography

Louise Beavers was born 8 March 1902 in Cincinnati, Ohio, and moved to Los Angeles as a teenager. She made her feature film debut in 1923 and appeared in some one hundred films between 1929 and 1960. Later, she brought her screen persona to television in the situation comedies *Beulah* and *The Danny Thomas Show*. She died of a heart attack 26 October 1962 in Hollywood, California.

DWANDALYN R. REECE

See also Film: Actors; Film: Blacks as Portrayed by White Filmmakers; Washington, Fredi

Selected Films

Gold Diggers. 1923.
Uncle Tom's Cabin. 1927.
Coquette. 1929.
Girls About Town. 1931.
What Price Hollywood? 1932.
She Done Him Wrong. 1933.
A Shriek in the Night. 1933.
Bombshell. 1933.
Imitation of Life. 1934.
Palooka. 1934.
It Happened in New Orleans. 1936.
Made for Each Other. 1939.

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Bechet, Sidney

Sidney Bechet, who has been called the “wizard of jazz,” was perhaps the most prominent virtuoso to emerge from the early jazz community in New Orleans and was certainly the hottest reed man of this era. He was born a Creole in New Orleans—the city often associated with the birth of jazz—and was considered a child prodigy, having taught himself the clarinet on his brother Leonard's instrument. By age eight Bechet was performing with neighborhood bands; at age fourteen he had played with the greats in New Orleans: Bunk Johnson, King Oliver, Louis Armstrong, and Freddie Keppard. Bechet left New Orleans around 1916 and after several detours reached Chicago in 1918. There he encountered musicians from New Orleans: Keppard, Oliver, Armstrong, and Jelly Roll Morton. Bechet, who was always adventurous, set out for Europe in 1919 with Will Marion Cook's orchestra and traveled to England, France, and eventually Russia. The hotheaded Bechet was deported at one time or another from both England and France, and in 1928, he spent almost a year in jail in France for having been involved in a shooting scrape. On other trips to England and France, though, he gave command performances for royalty.

After a brief downturn in his popularity, Bechet became a significant figure in the jazz renaissance of the 1940s; he would maintain this role in the rebirth of jazz for the rest of his life. In 1951, when he took up permanent residence in France, he became an idol to the French people and played and recorded with several French jazz orchestras. A street—rue Sidney Bechet—was named in his honor.

Bechet's first love was the clarinet, but during his first trip to Europe he bought a soprano saxophone, the instrument on which he later excelled. Until John Coltrane took up this instrument in the 1960s, Bechet

was the premier performer on it. The soprano saxophone is a lead and solo instrument; in sound and quality, it can pervade an ensemble much as the trumpet—the “king of instruments”—does. Many observers say that if Bechet’s instrument had been the trumpet, he would have been as famous a virtuoso as Louis Armstrong.

As it was, some authorities on jazz name Bechet, Armstrong, and Duke Ellington as the three top figures in the development of jazz, with regard to improvisation and virtuosity. Although Bechet had his detractors, he was widely considered a gifted and passionate improviser and a consummate artist who inspired his fellow musicians to transcend the mediocre. According to Williams (1978, 1989), Bechet was also a great blues player. (Reportedly, Bechet performed with Bessie Smith, the “empress of the blues.”) Williams also says that Bechet had impressive powers—paraphrase, invention, and adaptation to a particular musical climate—as well as an “outstanding sense of overall structure.” Bechet’s musical legacy includes hundreds of recordings with several groups, on American and French labels.

We may appropriately end with a quotation from about 1919 from the classical maestro Ernest Ansermet (1883–1969), then the resident conductor of the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande: “There is in the Southern Syncopated Orchestra an extraordinary clarinet virtuoso who is, so it seems, the first of his race to have composed perfectly formed blues on the clarinet. I wish to set down the name of this artist of genius; it is Sidney Bechet.”

Biography

The clarinetist and saxophonist Sidney Bechet was born in New Orleans in 1897. Bechet was a child prodigy who played with the greats in New Orleans at age fourteen, in 1911. He came to Chicago in 1918 and went to Europe in 1919, playing with major jazz groups in the United States and abroad. Around 1919, he was praised by the Swiss classical conductor Ernest Ansermet. At about this time Bechet took up the soprano saxophone. He traveled back and forth to Europe, toured extensively, and recorded numerous jazz tracks. In 1951, Bechet settled in Paris; he became an idol of the French from then until his death. He married a German, Elizabeth Zeigler (an event reported in *Life* magazine), and they maintained an imposing residence near Paris; however, he also had a mistress,

with whom he had a child, Daniel. Bechet died in Paris in 1959.

MALCOLM BREA

See also Armstrong, Louis; Cook, Will Marion; Jazz; Morton, Jelly Roll; Music: Bands and Orchestras; Oliver, Joseph “King”

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Becton, George Wilson

George Becton—the “dancing evangelist”—is perhaps most remembered today through Langston Hughes’s poem “Goodbye Christ,” which rails against religious hypocrisy in Harlem and across the globe. Hughes specifically indicts “Big black Saint Becton/ Of the Consecrated Dime” and laments that “The popes and preachers’ve/Made too much money from [the Bible].” Although Hughes mentions Becton by name only in “Goodbye Christ,” he almost certainly had Becton in mind in other poems with a similar theme, such as “To Certain ‘Brothers’” and “Sunday Morning Prophecy.” It should be noted that the working-class people of Harlem undoubtedly remember Becton quite differently. Hughes may have best summed up Becton’s life and career in one sentence in



George Wilson Becton: inset, and in his living room, 1930s.

(Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

The Big Sea (1940, 275): “Dr. Becton was a charlatan if there ever was one, but he filled the huge church—because he gave a good show.”

George Wilson Becton was born in Clarksville, Texas, where he was known as the “boy clergyman.” From an early age he felt that he had a calling as an evangelist and began practicing the trade; eventually he went to Ohio to pursue his career. He earned degrees from Payne Theological Seminary at Wilberforce University before becoming the pastor at Zion Baptist Church in nearby Xenia. In the mid-1920s, he moved to Harlem, where he landed at the Salem Methodist Episcopal Church on the corner of Seventh Avenue and 129th Street. F. A. Cullen (father of the poet Countee Cullen) was its pastor. There, Becton became known for his upbeat services. He would swagger onto the stage wearing a pearl-gray suit, a top hat, and white silk gloves and carrying a malacca cane, followed by his “twelve disciples” and accompanied by the music of a jazz band with seven to fifteen players (reports vary). Becton was gentle-looking, baby-faced, fleet of foot, poetic, quick-witted, and charismatic. His congregation swooned, shouted, danced, and, most important, contributed to the collection basket. Becton called his show “The World’s Gospel Feast Party,” and the primary tenet of the organization was the “consecrated dime.” Every member of this working-class congregation was to put a dime a day into an envelope, and on Sunday Becton would collect the envelopes, each containing seventy cents of hard-earned money. Becton would consecrate the dimes to God

during the worship service but put them into his own pocket afterward. He lived in an extravagant apartment, wore the finest clothes, and bought real estate. When asked about his wealth, Becton delivered the familiar refrains “If Jesus were alive, he would dress like me” and “God ain’t broke!” (Anderson 1981, 249). At the height of his popularity as Harlem’s favorite evangelist, he founded a magazine, *The Menu*, and took his “World’s Gospel Feast Party” on the road.

Becton was visiting one of his churches in Philadelphia on 21 May 1933 when he was gunned down, presumably by members of the policy racket, a mob-run lottery system, of which he was a vocal opponent. He died four days later. Mourners piled into the Salem M. E. Church (which had a capacity of 3,000) on the morning of 30 May 1933 for the funeral, and more than 5,000 lined the street—so many, in fact, that a small riot broke out. Despite Becton’s unrestrained swindling of the poor, it was clear that in both life and death “he gave a good show.”

Biography

George Wilson Becton was born 15 April 1890 in Clarksville, Texas. His parents were Matthew and Lucy Ann (Bagsby) Becton. He attended Payne Theological Seminary at Wilberforce University in Wilberforce, Ohio; he received a bachelor of divinity degree in 1910, a bachelor of arts degree in 1917, and the Rust prize for oratory in 1913 and was selected as the speaker for Founders’ Day in 1914. Becton was the pastor of Zion Baptist Church in Xenia, Ohio, c. 1913–1925. He then moved to Harlem, where he worked at Salem Methodist Episcopal Church (Seventh Avenue and 129th Street) under Rev. Dr. F. A. Cullen. Becton married Rev. Josephine Bufford, pastor of Allen Memorial Spiritualist Church at 135 West 120th Street, and resided at 62 West 120th Street. He was the founder and president of the World’s Gospel Feast Party, Inc., and publisher of and contributor to a bimonthly magazine, *The Menu*. Becton was known for leading upbeat evangelical revivals and preaching the concept of the “consecrated dime.” He was shot by mobsters in Philadelphia on 21 May 1933 and died 25 May 1933 (although some sources give the day of his death as 31 May). His funeral was held on 30 May 1933; thousands attended, and rioting broke out.

STEPHEN F. CRINITI

See also Cullen, Frederick Asbury; Hughes, Langston

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Bennett, Gwendolyn

Gwendolyn Bennett was a graphic artist as well as a writer. Because her writing tapered off in the 1930s, she can only be considered a minor figure now; but to her contemporaries she was one of the most promising of the younger artists and a very visible part of the Harlem Renaissance.

Bennett was born in Giddings, Texas, in 1902. After her parents divorced, her father stole her from her mother, and Bennett spent much of her early life moving from place to place. Her father later remarried and settled in Brooklyn, where Bennett graduated from high school in 1921 at the top of her class. After graduation she decided to pursue art as a career, studying fine art at Pratt Institute and taking classes at Columbia University. In 1923, her poem "Heritage" was published in *Opportunity*.

In 1924, she was introduced to Harlem's literary circles at a dinner for Jessie Redmon Fauset. The poem "To Usward," which she read to the gathering, was subsequently published in both *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* and became a rallying cry for the aspirations of the "New Negro." Bennett quickly found herself caught up in a young literary group that included Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Eric Walrond, Wallace Thurman, and others. In 1925, her poem "Song" appeared in Alain Locke's influential anthology *The New Negro*.

In 1924, Bennett took a position at Howard University, in the fledgling fine arts department. The next year she went to Paris to study. Her letters to Cullen

and others back home are full of events in Harlem but also describe buying James Joyce's *Ulysses* and visiting the famous Parisian bookseller Shakespeare and Company. France had a great effect on her art, and her two published short stories both involve Paris.

Bennett became an assistant editor at *Opportunity* in the summer of 1926, and she kept her affiliation with *Opportunity* even after returning to Howard. Most significantly, 1926 marks the beginning of "The Ebony Flute," a gossipy monthly column in *Opportunity* that would last for nearly two years. "The Ebony Flute" is filled with vivid details about the goings-on of the young literary community in Harlem and is a unique record of the avant-garde of the Harlem Renaissance.

Bennett married a doctor, Alfred Jackson, in 1927 and moved with him to rural Florida. Her marriage ended her career at Howard and also ended "The Ebony Flute," as she was no longer part of events in Harlem. The Jacksons' marriage became increasingly unhappy because of financial pressures and the young couple's isolation. By the time Bennett and her husband returned to New York in 1930, the Harlem Renaissance was nearly over. Bennett was able to resume some of her former lifestyle, but her marriage continued to be troubled, and financial problems finally caused the Jacksons to lose their home on Long Island. Dr. Jackson died in the early 1930s.

As late as 1937, Bennett corresponded regularly with Claude McKay and Cullen and was active in their literary circle. Accusations of communist affiliations cost Bennett a job with the Federal Arts Project in 1941 and brought her under investigation by the House Un-American Activities Committee. This seems to have broken her spirit, and by the early 1940s she had retreated into anonymity. Eventually, Bennett remarried and moved to Kutztown, Pennsylvania, to retire. She died there in 1981.

Biography

Gwendolyn Bennett was born in Giddings, Texas, 8 July 1902. She graduated from Pratt Institute, 1924; studied at Columbia University, 1921–1924; and studied at Académie Julian and École du Pantheon, Paris, 1925. She was an instructor in watercolor and design at Howard University, 1924 and 1926; and taught art education and English at Tennessee State College, 1927. In the 1930s, Bennett was associated with the Federal Arts Project and with the Harlem Community Art Center, as assistant director (1937) and as director

(1938–1941). She was a teacher and administrator at the Jefferson School for Democracy, c. 1941; director of the George Washington Carver School, beginning in 1943; secretary of Consumer's Union, mid-1940s; and an antique dealer in Kutztown, Pennsylvania. She received a fellowship from the Alfred C. Barnes Foundation, 1926. Bennett died in Kutztown in 1981.

STEVEN NARDI

See also Authors: 5—Poets; Crisis, The; Cullen, Countee; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Fire!!; Hughes, Langston; Literature: 7—Poetry; McKay, Claude; New Negro, The; Opportunity; Thurman, Wallace; Walrond, Eric

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Bentley, Gladys

Gladys Bentley once wrote: "It seems I was born different. . . . From the time I can remember anything, even as I was toddling, I never wanted a man to touch

me. . . . Soon I began to feel more comfortable in boys' clothes than in dresses." She left home at age sixteen, bound for Harlem and the chance to be a jazz singer. There was a public hungry for gay and lesbian entertainers, and in Harlem Bentley carved out a niche for herself among what were known as "pansy acts" and "hot mamas." Bentley began performing at house-rent parties and in the speakeasies of the nightclub district called Jungle Alley, at 133rd Street between Lenox and Seventh avenues; and in the 1920s, she achieved international fame as a male impersonator who cultivated an image as a bulldagger. She sang at Harlem's most fashionable clubs, dressed in her signature tuxedo and top hat, and openly flirted with female patrons. Bentley would playfully transform popular tunes of the day by adding raunchy lyrics. Her popularity and her earnings were ever-increasing, and she was frequently mentioned in many of the entertainment columns of the day. Characters based on her appeared in novels such as Carl Van Vechten's *Parties* and Clement Wood's *Deep River*. Moreover, she was a major influence on the careers of other blues singers, including Bessie Smith.

Bentley's enormous popularity on the stage led to a highly successful recording career when she was twenty-one. She recorded eighteen songs for the Okeh company and a side with the Washboard Serenaders on the Victor label. Her recordings—unlike her stage act—had no homoerotic elements and no lesbian lyrics.

As the era of the "New Negro" ended and the Great Depression began, Bentley moved to Los Angeles to care for her ailing mother and to continue her career as an entertainer. She had some success during World War II, performing at Loquin's El Rancho in Los Angeles and at Mona's in San Francisco, a club whose motto was "Girls Will Be Boys" and where she was known as the "brown bomber of sophisticated songs." However, the McCarthy era brought with it a great deal of homophobia, and Bentley's act was targeted. In response, she stopped wearing her tuxedo onstage and appeared in dresses instead. In 1950, Bentley wrote an article for *Ebony* magazine, "I Am Woman Again," in which she claimed that she was no longer a lesbian, having cured herself with hormone treatments. After two marriages to men (one of which was disputed by the bridegroom, J. T. Gibson), and two divorces, she went back to performing at the Rose Bowl in Hollywood. She also recorded a song on the Flame label and appeared twice on Groucho Marx's television show.

Bentley became a member of a church called the Temple of Love in Christ, Inc., and was preparing to become a minister; but she died, at age fifty-two, before she could be ordained.

Biography

Gladys Bentley was born 12 August 1907 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; her father was American-born, and her mother was a native of Trinidad. She left home to go to Harlem at age sixteen and became famous as a male impersonator during the 1920s. At the beginning of the Depression, she moved to California, where she continued her career as an entertainer during World War II; but in the postwar period her homoerotic act became less acceptable. She announced in 1950 that she had been “cured” of lesbianism, and she was married twice (to men). Both marriages ended in divorce, and Bentley then returned to performing; however, at the time of her death—in 1960, during a flu epidemic—she was planning to become a minister

COURTNEY JOHNSON

See also Homosexuality; House-Rent Parties; Jungle Alley; Smith, Bessie; Van Vechten, Carl

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Bethune, Mary McLeod

Mary McLeod Bethune, educator, clubwoman, political appointee, and civil rights activist, believed in the power of education, the need for collective action,

and political protest to gain social justice for African Americans. She was a major educational and political leader during the Harlem Renaissance. Through the institutions she founded and the posts she held, Bethune encouraged political activism and resistance to oppression. She struggled to make African American voices heard and to move black Americans from the sidelines to the center of American social, economic, and political life.

In an era of accommodation and a strong belief in industrial education, Bethune established the Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute for Negro Girls to provide a classic liberal arts education and to train young women for leadership. Through Daytona Institute Bethune became a role model in community activism—initiating outreach and cultural programs and setting up mission schools, community centers, reading rooms, summer schools, playgrounds, a hospital, a visiting-nurse service, and farmers’ institutes. She organized black voters to support a mayoral candidate who had come out against the Ku Klux Klan, and on election day she marshaled 500 eligible black voters who successfully challenged and undermined the Klan’s political dominance. This episode drew attention to the importance of the black vote, the power



Mary McLeod Bethune. (Library of Congress.)

of collective action, and the use of the ballot as a political weapon.

As a member of the black women's club movement, Bethune further demonstrated the importance of collective action in advancing black people's interests. She herself was president of the Florida State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, founder of the Southeastern Federation of Colored Women, and the Circle of Negro War Relief, and a lecturer for the Red Cross. Other black clubwomen opened the Home for Delinquent Girls in Ocala, Florida; supported the United States' involvement in World War I; began interracial organizations; actively addressed the problems of black workers; and took up the cause of world peace. As a two-term president (1924–1928) of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), Bethune established its permanent national headquarters in Washington, D.C.; she saw this as a first step toward making NACW the official, authoritative female voice for the concerns of African Americans. The permanent headquarters gave NACW legitimacy, set it on an equal footing with similar white women's organizations, gave black women a place for making international contacts, and became the official archive of NACW. Bethune, who had gained recognition through her club work, became an adviser to two administrations—those of presidents Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover—on African American educational issues through the National Child Welfare Commission.

In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed Bethune as director of the Office of Minority Affairs in the National Youth Administration (NYA). This was the first federal office created for a black woman. In this position Bethune publicized New Deal programs to ensure participation by blacks and used NYA programs to empower African Americans politically. She diminished the control of local white administrators over programs and funds by persuading racially liberal federal administrators to appoint qualified African Americans to positions in which they could make decisions that directly affected black students. She ensured that black state administrators dispensed funds to black people and used those same administrators to build an autonomous national black field staff that reported directly to her. By creating a Special Negro Higher Education Fund, Bethune gained direct control over some \$600,000 in New Deal funds that secured graduate training for African American students. Bethune also organized the "black cabinet" and used her position to arrange public conferences between civil rights activists and government officials; these

conferences succeeded in putting civil rights on the national political agenda.

Personal political appointments made Bethune aware of how few African American women held decision-making positions. She soon concluded that black women should create a national coalition to effect political change; accordingly, she organized the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) in 1935. This was an umbrella organization designed to give black women political visibility and power on the national level. Through its programs, NCNW encouraged independent action by African American women, taught self-reliance, and honed women's leadership skills. A significant portion of these programs was educative. Women investigated problems in their communities, analyzed political campaigns and party platforms, and became familiar with state constitutions and voting laws. They organized voter registration campaigns and mobilized women voters. They studied and publicized voting records and drew up and presented petitions. NCNW's programs made many black women astute political activists and lobbyists. As a result of the political education women gained through NCNW, ten of its members secured federal administrative and judicial posts between 1941 and 1946. Once in place, these women promoted legislation designed to improve conditions for the entire race, including laws against lynching and against the poll tax; and they fought for public health, equal education, and equal employment opportunities. Their politics addressed the everyday struggle for survival as well as movements intended to change power relationships. Through political education and collective action, NCNW compelled the government to recognize African American women's legitimate place in federal programs and taught black women how to effect long-term political change by giving them a voice in the national political arena.

Mary McLeod Bethune's impact was significant. She used education, clubs, government appointments, and collective action to change individual consciousness while organizing African Americans to fight collectively for the transformation of social, economic, and political institutions. She worked to improve African Americans' lives and to change the contours of American democracy. She used insight, determination, and persuasiveness to make African Americans more visible in American social, economic, and political life; and she continually fought for social justice for African Americans.

Biography

Mary Jane McLeod Bethune was born 10 July 1875 in Mayesville, South Carolina. She studied at Trinity Mission School in Mayesville; Scotia Seminary (later Barber-Scotia College) in Concord, North Carolina (1893); and Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois (1895). She taught at Trinity Mission School in Mayesville (1895); Haines Institute in Augusta, Georgia (1895–1896); Kendell Institute in Sumter, South Carolina (1897–1998); and Palatka Mission School in Palatka, Florida (1899–1903). She was founder and president of Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute for Negro Girls (1904–1923), later Bethune-Cookman College (1923–1942); Southeastern Federation of Colored Women's Clubs (1920); National Council of Negro Women (1935–1949); and the Mary McLeod Bethune Foundation (1953). Her government positions included the National Committee for Child Welfare (1924–1928); the Executive Committee of the National Youth Administration (1935); director of Minority Affairs of the National Youth Administration (1936–1943); special assistant to the secretary of war, for selection of candidates for the first officers candidate school for the Women's Army Corps (1942); and consultant to the San Francisco Conference on drawing up the charter for the United Nations (1945). Bethune received honorary degrees from Wilberforce University (1915), South Carolina State College (n.d.), Lincoln University (1935), Tuskegee Institute (1938), Howard University (1942), Wiley College (1943), Bennett College (1945), West Virginia State College (1947), and Rollins College (1949). She was affiliated with or held positions in the following: Association for the Study of Negro Life and History; International Longfellow Society (honorary president); Commission on Interracial Cooperation (vice president); National Council of Women of the United States (honorary president); Afro-American Life Insurance Company (vice president); Southern Conference for Human Welfare (vice president); Central Life Insurance Company (member of the board of directors, and president); National Association of Colored Women (president); Florida State Teachers Association (president); Florida State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs (president); Florida Council on Human Relations (state director); National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (member of the board of directors, and vice president); National Urban League (vice president); National Sharecroppers Fund (member of the board of directors);

Southern Conference Educational Fund (member of the board of directors); American Women's Volunteer Service (member of the board of directors); American Mother's Committee (member of the board of directors), Bethune-Volusia Beach (founder, treasurer). She was a member of the General Conference of the Methodist Church, Women's Army for National Defense, National Commission on Christian Education, Council of Church Women, Social Service Commission of the Methodist Church, Americans for Democratic Action, National Civil Liberties Union, First Daytona Beach Housing Authority, American Council on African Education, National Committee on Atomic Information, and Good Neighbor Association. She received the Spingarn Medal (1935); Francis Drexel Award (1937), First Annual Youth City Award (1941), Thomas Jefferson Award (1942), Haitian Medal of Honor (1952), Haitian Star of Africa (1953), and Dorie Miller Award (1954). Her writings include contributions to *What the Negro Wants*; "Spiritual Autobiography"; columns in the *Chicago Defender* and the *Pittsburgh Courier*; articles in *Journal of Negro History* and *Ebony*; and editorials in *Afro-American Woman* and *Women United*, the official publications of the National Council of Negro Women. Bethune died in Daytona Beach, Florida, 18 May 1955.

JOYCE A. HANSON

See also Harlem Renaissance in the United States: 9—Washington, D.C.

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Birth of a Nation, The

The Birth of a Nation, D.W. Griffith’s controversial film, premiered on February 8, 1915, at Clune’s Auditorium in Los Angeles. It had cost a remarkable \$110,000 to make, more than had ever been spent on a film, and it was a huge box-office success. At twelve reels, it was probably the longest and most impressive piece of filmmaking to date. In it, Griffith concentrated on storytelling and characterization, and this approach would come to dominate American filmmaking.

Released fifty years after Robert E. Lee’s surrender at Appomattox, *The Birth of a Nation* was Griffith’s attempt to present a history of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Griffith believed that, as a medium, film could be objective and was therefore well suited to history. He wrote at the time, with regard to the historical film, “There will be no opinions expressed. You will merely be present at the making of history” (Griffith 1915). But *The Birth of a Nation* was hardly objective. It was



Scene from *The Birth of a Nation*. (Photofest.)

based on a novel, Thomas Dixon's *The Clansman* (1904), which had presented the Civil War and Reconstruction from the perspective of the Democratic Party, criticizing the radical Republicans for treating the South punitively after the war. Dixon was known to be a racist, and many people considered his novel racist propaganda. *The Birth of a Nation* would face the same accusation.

The Birth of a Nation depicts the radical Republicans of the North as villains who exploited freed slaves and used the freedmen's vote to disenfranchise and victimize white Southerners. To appeal to the viewers' emotions, Griffith chose to narrate these events not as an impersonal epic but rather as the story of two families: the Stonemans, who are liberal, abolitionist Northerners; and the Camerons, who are slaveholding Southerners living on a plantation. The cause of the rift between these two families, and between the North and the South, is clear. The first image in the film is a "tableau of a minister praying over manacled slaves to be auctioned in a town square"; and the accompanying intertitle states, "The bringing of the African to America planted the first seed of disunion," pointing to blacks as the primary threat to national unity. Through what Griffith called "historical facsimiles"—reenactments of historical events—we watch the destruction of the South at the hands of the newly enfranchised blacks. Again and again, the film shows the Civil War and Reconstruction as violations of the South, a point vividly dramatized by the attempted rape of one of the Cameron daughters by a black man. Ultimately, the nation is preserved by the union of the two families by marriage. But first, the threat from the African Americans must be contained. At the climax of the film, the Ku Klux Klan rides triumphantly through the town of Piedmont, South Carolina, signaling the defeat and ultimate eradication of African Americans there and in the world of the film. An intertitle reads, "The aftermath. At the sea's edge, the double honeymoon," and is followed by an image of the two couples: first, Margaret Cameron and Phil Stoneman; then, seated on a bluff overlooking the sea, Ben Cameron and Elsie Stoneman. The double wedding heals the breach between North and South.

From the outset, the blatant racism of *The Birth of a Nation* engendered controversy and aroused protests. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) sent out thousands of pamphlets to even the smallest towns in an effort to prevent the film from opening in New York, and blacks began

a nationwide campaign against a movie that "few eyes had ever seen" (Cripps 1993, 52–53). Although the protests achieved limited success on the West Coast, where some of the most gruesome and violent scenes were cut from the film, *The Birth of a Nation* did open in New York, at the Liberty Theater. And despite the protests by blacks, whites flocked to see it in record numbers. In the press, the film was lauded as "the last word in picturemaking" (Vance 1915/1994) and as "the soul and spirit and flesh of the heart of your country's history, ripped from the past and brought quivering with all human emotion before your eyes" (Greene 1915/1994).

In writing about *The Birth of a Nation*, film scholars have long faced the problem of reconciling the film's overt racism and its impressive stylistic innovations. Critics have tended to address either race or aesthetics, but primarily the latter. Because Griffith is widely considered the father of American cinema, many critics have been reluctant to take up the question of race at all. But Taylor (1996) has argued that it is indefensible to disregard racism, because the film's ideology and form cannot be separated. Griffith uses lighting, framing, costumes, and camera angles to induce the spectator to look favorably on some characters and unfavorably on others. Because this film is focused on families, it actually has more in common with the popular genre of melodrama than with the discipline of history. Melodrama neatly divides the world into good and evil. In *The Birth of a Nation*, white women, the symbols of goodness and purity, are continually threatened by black and mulatto men, who are represented as dangerous. Furthermore, Lang (1994b) argues that with the depiction of Abraham Lincoln as "the Great Heart . . . even politics becomes 'familiarized'" (22). The family rift, the Civil War, must be resolved by the joining of the white Northern and Southern families in matrimony, in preparation for the "birth of the nation." According to White (1994), history is a mere pretext in this film, "the premise or occasion for developing a story whose values and meanings extend beyond the purview of any single social-historical moment" (214). Ultimately, if Griffith is to be considered the father of American cinema, then *The Birth of a Nation* is a constant reminder of its racist heritage.

ALISON LANDSBERG

See also Birth of a Race, The; Film; Film: Blacks as Portrayed by White Filmmakers; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

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Birth of a Race, The

The history of the silent film *The Birth of a Race* (1918) is bound up with that of a more famous film—D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915). *The Birth of a Nation* was strikingly innovative in many ways and was widely praised as the best film of its day. However, it was also blatantly racist, portraying black and mulatto characters as villainous and the Ku Klux Klan

as heroic. Black critics and intellectuals were outraged by *The Birth of a Nation* and even more outraged by its huge popularity. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) organized protests against it, and the backlash was so strong that Griffith filmed a prologue at Hampton Institute (or using footage from Hampton) to be included in future prints of the film (he had wanted to film the prologue at the Tuskegee Institute, but Booker T. Washington refused). Griffith's attempt at an apology seemed feeble and did not mollify the growing number of objectors, many of whom, including W. E. B. Du Bois and William Howard Taft, began to call for some other cinematic response.

Initially, the NAACP planned to spearhead the "official response" to Griffith's film. A consortium of artists, with financial backing from Carl Laemmle, the president of Universal Pictures, came together to film an adaptation of Washington's book *Up From Slavery*. From the beginning, however, there was discord. Blacks and whites had conflicting interests in the project, and there was disagreement over whether the film should be a work of art, a political statement, or a work for profit. Universal withdrew its financial support when the NAACP could not provide matching funds, and soon afterward the NAACP dropped out. The project was then taken over by Emmett Jay Scott. But Scott (who in 1917 was appointed a special assistant to the secretary of war) was more concerned about black Americans in the armed services than about responding to *The Birth of a Nation*; accordingly, the script was changed—as was the title, from *Lincoln's Dream* to, finally, *The Birth of a Race*. Scott decided not to rely on money from white-owned businesses; instead, he financed his production company by selling stock to more than 7,000 shareholders, most of them black.

At this point, the project was still supposedly a history of the black race. A later advertisement would claim that it was "[t]he true story of the Negro—his life in Africa, his transportation to America, his enslavement, his freedom, his achievements together with his past, present, and future relations to his white neighbor and to the world in which both live and labor." However, the demands of the investors changed the scope of the film, and Scott, owing to his concerns regarding World War I, moved the content more toward Judeo-Christian ideals and anti-German sentiments. Scott was eventually removed from the project, but not before directing most of the footage that appeared in the final cut. The final product, conceived by a committee and worked on by a variety of artists, was

a series of loosely related vignettes associating biblical stories (the story of Noah, Moses freeing the slaves from Egypt, and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ) with events in American history (Christopher Columbus's discovery of the new world, Paul Revere's ride, and Reconstruction). The final two-thirds of the film focused on the problems faced by those involved in World War I, including a German immigrant family in the United States that was split by the conflict.

After three years of work, including numerous pauses in production caused by financial problems, *The Birth of a Race* was released in 1918. At the time of its release, it was considered a critical and popular failure, and it was a financial fiasco. The sudden jumps between eras and vignettes disoriented most audiences, who found the film sprawling and not always coherent. A review in *Moving Picture World* concluded, "The names of three men are given as the authors of the scenario. It will be a deed of charity not to reveal their identity nor the names of the members of the cast. All have well-earned reputations and are probably anxious to live down their connection with the entire affair."

The Birth of a Race quickly faded from the national consciousness and in fact was thought to be lost for many years, while *The Birth of a Nation* became one of the most noted and controversial films of all time. In the long run, however, *The Birth of a Race* proved to be effective. Although the final version was far removed from what had first been envisioned, this film demonstrated to black America that a distinct market existed for black cinema. Also, *The Birth of a Race* had a tremendous influence on young black filmmakers, encouraging Oscar Micheaux and two brothers, Noble and George Johnson, to widen their horizons. The Johnson brothers formed the Lincoln Motion Picture Company, which independently created and released films from 1916 to 1923.

In the early 1980s, a print of *The Birth of a Race* was discovered in Texas. Although (as of this writing) it has not been released to the public, several clips can be found on a DVD version of *The Birth of a Nation*, and some critics have seen it and evaluated it. In general, *The Birth of a Race* is still considered a salient moment in the evolution of black expression in cinema; but there is an undercurrent of objections. The main objection is that this film actually reinforces some unfortunate stereotypes. In certain passages, black subjectivity is linked to aggression, even prejudice; in the film's most famous scene, for instance, a black farmer and a white farmer, holding plows, fade into soldiers marching in

uniform and carrying rifles. Nevertheless, the film does imply that the army is a force for integration. And although there may have been compromises, so that the film fell far short of the initial aspirations, *The Birth of a Race* did actively seek an alternative tradition, one more racially equitable than was suggested in *The Birth of a Nation*.

ANDREW HOWE

See also *Birth of a Nation, The; Film; Johnson, Noble; Lincoln Motion Picture Company; Micheaux, Oscar; Scott, Emmett Jay; World War I*

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Birthright

Birthright is T. S. Stribling's first novel with a southern setting. It was initially serialized in *Century Magazine* from October 1921 to April 1922, then published by the Century Company in New York in the spring of 1922. It was filmed twice by the famous black director Oscar Micheaux: in 1924 (as a silent movie) and 1939.

With *Birthright*, Stribling became a pioneer in the southern literary renaissance. The novel is characterized by a keen social consciousness, a sympathetic and empathetic portrayal of the black race, and a high degree of realism, and it was a new departure in the treatment of race relations by a white southerner. Stribling satirizes bigotry, hypocrisy, conventional thinking, and narrow-mindedness and accuses whites of dehumanizing blacks.

The similarities between his novel and Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* (1920) were frequently pointed out by critics; in fact, *Birthright* was called "a Negro *Main Street*," a southern rendition of Lewis's novel.

Birthright presents the spiritual journey of an educated southern mulatto, Peter Siner, after he graduates from Harvard University and returns to his hometown, Hooker's Bend. Siner comes home with idealistic plans for the education of black children in town. However, his hopes soon turn into frustration and disillusionment. Stribling describes the plight of the young protagonist realistically and sympathetically, showing how Siner becomes a victim not only of white hatred and oppression but of the entire racist caste system in the South. Siner considers himself an "evangel of liberty" to the black people. However, both his "white blood" and his "white Harvard education" create an unbridgeable gap between him and his people. *Birthright* explores Siner's difficulties in his process of self-formation. Influenced by white standards, he is profoundly disturbed by what he sees as signs of the inferiority of his race: odor, uncleanliness, sexual promiscuity, and dishonesty. He suffers from what W. E. B. Du Bois called "double-consciousness." Siner feels ashamed of his own people in Niggertown, whose real trouble is that they have adopted the white man's estimate of them as worthless, immoral, and subhuman. Considering her immoral, he rejects the girl he loved. He temporarily finds a safe retreat in the library of a white patron, Captain Renfrew, his unacknowledged father, only to find out that Renfrew is a traditional southern racist.

However, Siner's spiritual journey ends with an affirmation of his blackness and acceptance of his people. He marries Cissie, who has just come out of jail and is pregnant with another man's child, and he leaves Niggertown to find work in the North. The ethics that he acquired in Harvard proved untenable in the odd morality of Niggertown; eventually, though, Siner outgrows "white ethics," rejects the notion of absolute morality, and embraces the idea that morals are relative and that they differ from one race to another. In the end, practicality wins out over idealism and altruism. Still, Siner retains some of his idealism: as he sets out for the North with his bride, he hopes to find there the equality and opportunity that turned out to be impossible in his southern hometown.

ASLI TEKINAY

See also Micheaux, Oscar; Stribling, Thomas Sigismund

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Black and Tan Clubs

Black and Tan clubs were nightclubs where African Americans and whites could be found socializing and listening to jazz. These clubs were always located in the predominantly black sections of towns, notably "Bronzeville" in Chicago and Harlem in New York. African Americans rarely entered white neighborhoods after dark, but young white enthusiasts and musicians could always venture to black neighborhoods for entertainment. So, in addition to an appreciation of jazz, there was a sense of excitement among the whites who came to these clubs, which were part of a culture of jazz, liquor, and race.

Though New Orleans is often considered the birthplace of jazz, Chicago emerged as its second home. During the period of black creativity known as the renaissance, Harlem became its third. These urban centers appealed to black musicians because in the South they were rarely allowed to play on the same stage as whites, and any social mixing of the races was even rarer. World War I and growing industry in the North around 1920 led to an exodus of African Americans northward, and jazz went with them. Prohibition and the temperance movement were also important factors in the development of the culture of the Black and Tan

clubs. In 1920, the Eighteenth Amendment made illegal the manufacture, sale, and transport of alcoholic beverages. Its advocates had hoped that it would foster temperance; instead, trafficking in bootleg liquor became a profitable enterprise, and crime rates soared. The illegally run clubs that sold bootleg liquor were called speakeasies, and many of these were Black and Tans, with an interracial clientele and an interracial roster of entertainers.

There is no definitive explanation of how the name Black and Tan began, but there are at least two plausible origins. The first explanation is that the name was probably coined by some of the recent immigrants who controlled bootleg liquor during Prohibition and who would no doubt have kept abreast of happenings abroad. In Ireland, the “black and tans” were British officers who aided the Irish police in quelling the Irish Republican Army in 1920 and 1921; these officers wore a distinctive uniform: khaki coat, black trousers, and black cap. The gangsters in America, therefore, may have adopted “black and tan” as an apt description of the clubs’ clientele (if so, the term would have had wry connotations, since the “black and tans” in Ireland were notoriously brutal). The second explanation is that white Americans who came to the black neighborhoods were different from the whites who disavowed jazz and African American culture in general. “Tan,” then, would have been slang for whites who immersed themselves in black musical culture, pretending for a brief time that they belonged to the black community, and who were thus, in a sense, neither white nor black.

The most famous Black and Tan in Chicago was the Sunset Café, which was remodeled in 1937 and renamed the Grand Terrace Ballroom (it was designated a historic landmark in 1998). The Sunset Café was a host to the elite of jazz, including Earl “Fatha” Hines and Louis Armstrong. Another notable club was the Silver Frolics. The Black and Tan clubs of note in Harlem were Connie’s Inn, Small’s Paradise, and Barron Wilkin’s club; all three presented Ethel Waters, Count Basie, Thomas “Fats” Waller, and other famous figures. Many of these clubs were a training ground for aspiring jazz musicians—not only African Americans but also many young whites, particularly Jimmy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, and Bix Beiderbecke.

The Black and Tan clubs often seemed to symbolize racial harmony and testify to the universality of music. However, Langston Hughes noted in his autobiography, *The Big Sea* (1940), that “ordinary Negroes [did not] like the growing influx of whites in Harlem . . .

flooding the little cabarets and bars where formerly only colored people laughed and sang. . . . Thousands of whites came to Harlem night after night, thinking the Negroes loved to have them there.” To accommodate this influx, some Black and Tan clubs began to follow the example of the famous Cotton Club, which—despite being in Harlem and showcasing black entertainment—discouraged black patronage and catered exclusively to whites. Still, a large part of the appeal of the Black and Tans was the thrill of watching the people of Harlem in their own environment.

By the late 1950s, a few Black and Tans were still operating, but race relations in the United States were becoming increasingly strained, and hardly anyone, black or white, frequented these clubs. This was an ironic and sad end to an institution that had fostered jazz and had contributed, in its way, to improving relations between the races.

CANDICE LOVE

See also Cotton Club; Jazz; Nightclubs; Nightlife; Small’s Paradise

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Black and White

Black and White was a film project—an attempt to make a movie in the Soviet Union about the plight of African Americans in the United States. It exemplifies a growing interest among blacks during the 1930s in

challenging American racism through communism and the international arena.

The project began in March 1932, when the American communist James A. Ford, acting for the Meschrabpom Film Corporation of the Workers International, recruited African American performers and intellectuals and created the Cooperating Committee for Production of a Soviet Film on Negro Life. The committee's sponsors included Whittaker Chambers, Malcolm Cowley, W. A. Domingo, Waldo Frank, and Rose McClendon; its corresponding secretary, Louise Thompson, organized the cast. (Meschrabpom gave the performers a salary and room and board in Moscow, but they had to pay for their own transportation.)

The diverse group that arrived at the Brooklyn Pier on 14 June 1932, to board the German ship *Europa* included, in addition to Thompson herself, the aspiring fiction writer Dorothy West (one of the youngest figures of the Harlem Renaissance); the journalists Henry Lee Moon and Theodore Poston of the *Amsterdam News* in New York; two social workers, Leonard Hill and Constance White; an art student from Hampton Institute, Mildred Jones; a pharmacist, Mollie Lewis; a postal clerk, Homer Smith (who had a degree in journalism); a salesman, Alan McKenzie (the only member of the Communist Party of the United States in the group); the writer Loren Miller (who was a friend of Langston Hughes and of Thompson); an agricultural worker, Laurence Alberga; an insurance clerk, Matthew Crawford; a paperhanger and house painter, Lloyd Patterson (who was a graduate of Hampton); a student at Howard University, Frank Montero; Juanita Lewis, who had sung with Hall Johnson's choir; Thurston McNairy Lewis; Katherine Jenkins, who was a tenant at Thompson's home; George Sample; and only two experienced actors: Sylvia Garner and Wayland Rudd (who had appeared in *Scarlet Sister Mary* and *Porgy*, respectively). At the last minute, Langston Hughes arrived, having agreed to help write the English dialogue for the screenplay.

During the voyage, the group studied the Russian language and some history but more often played cards, danced, and lounged on deck; Dorothy West wrote, in her letters home, about champagne parties and "congenial folks." A proposal to send a cable of support to Ada Wright, the mother of one of the Scottsboro boys, was voted down—a hint of differences between the more and less political members of the group.

On 25 June 1932, the group arrived in Leningrad (Saint Petersburg), by train from Berlin, to be greeted

by representatives of Meschrabpom and a brass band playing the "Internationale"; the next day the cast members were warmly welcomed at Nikolayevski Station in Moscow, photographed, and taken to the luxurious Grand Hotel in a fleet of Buicks and Lincolns. The Soviet Union was like nowhere else these African Americans had ever known. Meschrabpom paid them 400 rubles a month each and provided ration books for shopping; Russians on crowded streetcars offered them seats; they were ushered to the front of every line; and they were guests of honor at receptions, museums, factories, and schools. "For all of us who experienced discrimination based on color in our own land, it was strange to find our color a badge of honor," Thompson (1968) recalled.

But the film itself was another matter. The German-born director Karl Yunghans found the cast inexperienced in acting and singing and uninformed about the black working class; furthermore, he himself spoke neither English nor Russian, and knew, in Langston Hughes's (1956) words, "nothing at all about race relations in Alabama, or labor unions, North, South or European." Worse, the screenplay—by a Soviet writer, in consultation with Lovett Fort-Whiteman, an African American communist who had emigrated to the Soviet Union in 1928—bore no resemblance to the sweeping history of the African American experience that the cast and their sponsors had expected. Instead, it was a fictional account of black steelworkers in Birmingham, Alabama, who try to organize a union, wrest power from their corrupt white bosses, and overcome racism and class antagonism by joining forces with oppressed white workers. This story may have expressed communist ideals, but it hardly reflected race relations in the South; Langston Hughes (1956) said it was "improbable to the point of ludicrousness."

The script had been approved by Comintern, and by the time Meschrabpom finally agreed to make revisions, the performers, bored by weeks of waiting and anxious about the film's prospects, had become edgy and quarrelsome. One woman (probably Sylvia Garner) fell in love with another (probably Constance White), was spurned, and attempted suicide; Thompson objected to the "embarrassing" behavior of Ted Poston and Thurston Lewis, who had romped naked in the river near Moscow's Park of Rest and Culture; and the political divisions became sharper as the group debated whether or not to attend a rally for the Scottsboro boys.

Meschrabpom rescheduled the filming for 15 August and took the cast to the Black Sea, at the invitation of

the Theatrical Trade Unions, for sunbathing in Odessa and a cruise to Sebastopol and Yalta. But when the group returned to Odessa from the cruise, they found Henry Lee Moon, who had not accompanied them, waving an edition of the *Paris Herald-Tribune* with the headline "Soviet Calls Off Film on U.S. Negroes; Fear of American Reaction Cause," and "hell broke loose. Hysterics took place" (Hughes 1956).

Thompson, Hughes, and Loren Miller defended Meschrabpom; but Moon, Thurston Lewis, Leonard Hill, and Laurence Alberga considered Thompson gullible (they called her "Madame Moscow") and denounced Meschrabpom, the Soviet Union, and Joseph Stalin for selling out the black race under pressure from the United States. An American engineer, Colonel Hugh Cooper, was then overseeing the building of the important Dnieprostroi Dam, and one story was that he had threatened to end construction unless *Black and White* was stopped. Another story, reported by Homer Smith (1964), was that the project was canceled out of fear that the United States would withhold diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union. An article in the *Afro-American* on 8 October 1932 offered a third reason: that the Soviet Union was courting American favor because it was threatened by Japan's aggression in Manchuria. The competing accounts were debated in the African American press for months. Moon and Poston published statements in the *Amsterdam News*, and Thompson and Hughes replied in *The Crisis*, *International Literature*, and the *Daily Worker*.

Nevertheless, the film project and the Soviet Union left an indelible imprint on the African American participants. Many cast members extended their visit: Hughes spent six months traveling around Central Asia on a writing assignment; Dorothy West and Mildred Jones stayed in Moscow for another year writing for an English-language newspaper; Lloyd Patterson married a Russian woman and settled there; Wayland Rudd stayed on to study singing, fencing, and dancing; Alan McKenzie accepted a job with Meschrabpom; and Homer Smith became a consultant at the central post office in Moscow and remained in the Soviet Union until 1947.

Even those who returned home immediately remained impressed. Matthew Crawford told his wife that the trip had converted him to socialism; Loren Miller wrote that "the Soviet Union is the best friend of the Negro and all oppressed people"; Louise Thompson announced in the *Amsterdam News* that "Russia today is the only country in the world that's really fit to live in"; and Henry Moon wrote in *The Nation* in 1934 that

he had "never felt more at home among a people than among the Russians."

Note: Papers of Louise Thompson Patterson and Matthew Crawford are at Emory University in Atlanta. Documents related to the film project can also be found in the papers of Langston Hughes in the James Weldon Johnson Collection at the Beinecke Library at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut; and in the papers of Dorothy West at the Schlesinger Library at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

CLAIRE NEE NELSON

See also Amsterdam News; Communist Party; Domingo, Wilfred Adolphus; Europe and the Harlem Renaissance: 5—Soviet Union; Frank, Waldo; McClendon, Rose; West, Dorothy

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Black Bohemia

Black bohemia, as both a place and a group of people, was a significant aspect of the Harlem Renaissance. Black bohemians were creative artists—the literati,

intellectuals, writers, musicians, actors, and visual artists—who lived and worked in Harlem in the 1920s and created and critiqued the Harlem Renaissance. Black bohemians were also the political activists, nightclub owners, nightclub habitués, petty criminals, hustlers, and the other characters who defined and participated in the counterculture that flourished in Harlem during the decade or so following World War I.

“American bohemianism” refers to the men and women who turned their backs on conventional, bourgeois culture and values and instead embraced the “modern.” They repudiated the economic, political, social, and cultural conventions of their day in favor of the experimental, in art and aesthetics and in their personal beliefs and lifestyle. In the United States bohemian communities sprouted in most major cities among creative and educated young people, but the center of the movement was in New York City’s Greenwich Village. It grew out of a writers’ colony that settled there in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth. By 1920, these writers had transformed a once dingy neighborhood into a district that epitomized the modern and avant-garde. Writers and artists congregated in its cafés and discussed aesthetics and politics with its radicals. They adopted the life of the “intellectual,” a new term coined by the political left that referred to people who supported themselves through careers in the arts or literature. Intellectuals belonged to the professional class (rather than the working class), but they generally were not men or women of wealth or social status. Indeed, a certain level of poverty usually went hand in hand with the intellectual or bohemian lifestyle.

Although bohemians might thumb their noses at most social conventions, Greenwich Village was about as segregated as other neighborhoods in New York during the early twentieth century, with no significant interaction between blacks and whites. However, a black bohemia developed, initially in the Tenderloin district, on the west side North of Greenwich Village and South of Times Square, and then—at about the turn of the century—in an area centered near West Fifty-third Street. The Tenderloin neighborhood had tenements, boardinghouses, theaters, hotels, and restaurants but also speakeasies, brothels, and gambling houses. Among the neighborhood’s pimps and prostitutes, and amid its loan sharking, gambling, and assorted vices, a community of writers, musicians, and entertainers emerged. Paul Laurence Dunbar and James Weldon Johnson lived in the Fifty-third Street area during the first decade of the twentieth century

and described this early black bohemia and its habitués in two novels: Dunbar’s *The Sport of the Gods* (1902) and Johnson’s *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912). Others who frequented these neighborhoods in the prewar period included the musicians and performers Bob Cole and John Rosamond Johnson, Will Marion Cook, Willie “the Lion” Smith, Jelly Roll Morton, and Scott Joplin. The Tenderloin district between Twenty-seventh and Fifty-third streets had clubs and restaurants; and Fifty-third Street itself was the site of the Marshall and Maceo hotels, both of which were operated by African Americans and served as gathering places for black artists, performers, and sports celebrities. Musicians and entertainers frequently gathered at the Marshall Hotel, among them James Reese Europe and his Clef Club Orchestra; the comedian-songwriters Bert Williams and George Walker; the musicians Willie “the Lion” Smith, Jelly Roll Morton, and Scott Joplin; and the heavyweight champion Jack Johnson. Black literati and artists mingled with white performers at the Marshall (which was across the street from the Clef Club); Diamond Jim Brady, Lillian Russell, Florenz Ziegfeld, and Anna Held often dined there.

By the outbreak of World War I, black bohemians had followed the rapidly growing black population into Harlem. A typical example is James Weldon Johnson: When he returned to New York in 1914 after an absence of eight years, he relocated from Fifty-third Street to 507 Edgecombe Avenue in Harlem. By the mid-1920s, Harlem was home to most of the creative artists associated with the Harlem Renaissance, as well as to major African American political and civil rights organizations, publications, and institutions. Although it lacked an African American university, Harlem supplanted Washington, D.C., and Atlanta as the center of African American intellectual life. Furthermore, among its tenements, apartment buildings, and brownstones, and amid its poverty and wealth, an African American bohemian community flourished. Harlem’s cafés and nightclubs nourished an artistic, intellectual lifestyle. Gatherings of artists, writers, critics, and political radicals debated aesthetics as well as politics and race.

Like their white counterparts, black bohemians embraced political and aesthetic beliefs and a lifestyle that put them in sharp contrast to both the previous generation and their more conventional contemporaries. However, connections between Harlem and Greenwich Village were limited. Radical politics led Claude McKay downtown from his home in Harlem.

The first poems that he published in the United States appeared in 1917 in *Seven Arts* and in 1918 in Frank Harris's *Pearson's Magazine*, two avant-garde literary journals. Then he linked up with Max Eastman and Crystal Eastman and the more political *Liberator*. In addition to publishing a number of poems and essays in *Liberator*, for six months in 1922 McKay coedited this radical journal with Herbert Gold. Although the relationship between McKay and Gold was occasionally stormy, McKay's radical politics, sympathy for the Bolshevik revolution, and free-spirited lifestyle fit well with the political radicalism of Greenwich Village. Jean Toomer, whose interests were more philosophical and aesthetic than political, also connected with the artistic community in the Village. During the time when Toomer was writing *Cane*, his main literary connections there were Waldo Frank and Frank's associates. Later, as Toomer entered a spiritual search that took him away from race and literature, the photographer Alfred Stieglitz and the artist Georgia O'Keeffe became his close friends.

Most of the interaction between the Village and Harlem was in the other direction. Legal and extralegal segregation, zoning laws, racism, homophobia, sexism, and resistance to conventional values linked black and white bohemians. Well before World War I black bohemia and the Tenderloin had become a playground for literary and visual artists, theater people, lesbians and gays, gangsters, and prostitutes of both races; and elite activities took place concurrently with what was generally regarded as vice. The privileged hobnobbed with the proletariat, and whites frequented black communities—although de jure and de facto segregation inhibited African Americans from making reciprocal jaunts to white neighborhoods. The law circumscribed black bohemia, and certain activities were relegated to within its circumference. By the 1920s, this activity had shifted to Harlem and had greatly accelerated. White thrill seekers joined white bohemians in the cabarets and nightclubs of Harlem.

The person most responsible for making Harlem a vogue was the author Carl Van Vechten, a product of the bohemia in Greenwich Village. Even before his best seller *Nigger Heaven* popularized Harlem as a playground, he had led groups of daring downtowners through Harlem's nightlife. To his credit, Van Vechten was sincerely interested in African American life and became a major promoter of African American music, art, literature, and theater. He also opened his home to African Americans. At the gatherings and parties in his apartment on Fifty-third Street black

bohemians and intellectuals met and established contact with their white counterparts.

In the cabarets and parties of Harlem, the discouraged white youth of the "lost generation" mingled with the African American "encouraged youth"—Alain Locke's New Negroes. The former were the descendants of landed immigrants; the latter were the descendants of the African diaspora and constituted the first critical mass of educated blacks. The viewpoints of both groups had been affected by World War I, though in different ways: white young people lost their belief in humanity, whereas optimism and determination took root among black young people, who believed that their military service entitled them to the social and economic equality that their parents had waited for so patiently. One thing the two groups had in common was their commitment to art and modernity. Among the white writers were T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Edith Wharton, Ernest Hemingway, Sinclair Lewis, Eugene O'Neill, Willa Cather, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. These authors produced a number of works critical of American life and society, and Eliot, Pound, Wharton, and Hemingway became expatriates in Europe. African American writers included Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen; Claude McKay, Wallace Thurman, James Weldon Johnson, Nella Larsen, Jessie Redmon Fauset, Zora Neale Hurston, and Rudolph Fisher. These black writers—and visual artists like Aaron Douglas and Augusta Savage—all met with white publishers at Van Vechten's apartment or at James Weldon Johnson's apartment in Harlem.

Harlem provided a sociopolitical milieu for black bohemia. It was home to a wide range of political ideologies, including the cultural nationalism exemplified by W. E. B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey's "back to Africa" movement, Charles S. Johnson's sociology of racial advancement, the militant socialism of A. P. Randolph and *The Messenger*, and the radical racial politics of the African Blood Brotherhood. Harlem was also a place where the intelligentsia mingled with the criminal underground and frequented establishments owned by gangsters: the accoutrements of Prohibition allowed interracial socializing, and as in many major cities throughout the 1920s, blacks and whites transcended race, class, and gender.

Prohibition contributed the development of Harlem's black bohemia. Laws prohibiting the manufacture, sale, or exportation of alcohol spawned illegal sources of alcoholic drinks and entertainment, beyond the restraint of law and convention. Speakeasies flourished in urban centers nationwide, and Harlem was

a hotbed of them. Organized crime provided the management and capital for many of Harlem's legal and illegal nightspots. The presence of criminals and the potential for violence, along with the relaxation of racial and sexual mores, added to the attractiveness of Harlem for both black and white bohemians.

Not all speakeasies were backstreet dives. Some evolved into legitimate nightclubs, but racketeers tended to retain their ownership of clubs that provided black entertainment for white patrons. Many of these establishments became venues for the rapidly evolving African American music scene. Black musical styles migrated to the North and merged to engender new forms. Clubs proliferated; they included Barron's Exclusive Club, Connie's Inn (where Thomas "Fats" Waller played piano for white customers), Connor's Club, Edmond's Cellar, Ed Small's Paradise, the Manhattan Casino on West 155th Street, and the renowned Cotton Club. The Cotton Club, owned by the white gangster Owney Madden, featured "café au lait" women; Cab Calloway and his band included in their repertoire compositions with titles like "Tall, Tan, Terrific" and "Copper Colored Gal of Mine," exemplifying the audience's preference for women of color as entertainers at such a club. Duke Ellington and his orchestra had a twelve-year association with the Cotton Club, during which Ellington popularized a sound called jungle music; this was the sound that white people slumming in Harlem wanted to hear, because it fulfilled their preconceived notion of blacks as exotic. The Cotton Club was on 133rd Street between Lenox and Seventh avenues, a strip known as "Jungle Alley." It was one of eleven clubs in the area.

The Cotton Club catered to a wealthy white clientele. Indeed, it was segregated: the only African Americans who gained admittance were the performers and a handful of black celebrities. Its major patrons were the white international "high bohemian" crowd who traveled to Harlem in their Stutzes and Daimlers and reportedly included Princess Violette Murat, Cecil Beaton (the British artist, designer, and photographer), Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (founder of the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1930), Otto Kahn, James J. Walker (mayor of New York from 1926 to 1932), Lady Mountbatten, Libby Holman, Michael Arlen (the British novelist and short-story writer), Beatrice Lillie (the Canadian-born actress), Harry K. Thaw (infamous for murdering the celebrated architect Stanford White), Muriel Draper, and Harold Lloyd (the silent film comedian).

As a result of this surge in the black population, and as a result of the productivity of black literati, artists, and entertainers, new cultural venues such as theaters and ballrooms emerged and contributed to the culture available to black bohemians. These included a number of theaters—the Roosevelt, Douglas, West End, Lincoln, and Lafayette—as well as Hurtig and Seamon's Burlesque (which later became the Apollo Theater), Keith's Alhambra, the Harlem Opera House, and Loew's Seventh Avenue. Ballrooms were inspired by the music of the jazz age; the three most renowned were the Savoy, Renaissance, and Alhambra.

Literary and artistic salons also emerged. A'Leia Walker held "invitation only" gatherings and soirées for writers, artists, entertainers, and statesmen in her mansion, twin town houses at 108–110 West 136th Street, generally referred to as the "Dark Tower" after Countee Cullen's column in *Opportunity*. This was an important meeting place for black and white artists and writers who came after dark, circumventing the segregation laws. There Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Countee Cullen, and many other black literati met successfully with Carl Van Vechten, Mabel Dodge, Nancy Cunard, and other influential white writers, publishers, and philanthropists. A block down the street was one of the better-known black bohemian institutions, "Niggerati Manor," a rooming house at 267 West 136th Street where Wallace Thurman, Zora Neale Hurston, and Langston Hughes lived in the mid-1920s and held far more informal and interesting gatherings of young black writers and artists. A few blocks away Alexander Gumbly's studio on Fifth Avenue between 131st and 132nd streets was a place for frequent gatherings of black and white literati where bathtub gin and stronger intoxicants flowed and racial and gender lines blurred.

Like their white counterparts in Greenwich Village, the black bohemians embraced modernity and the counterculture. They were at war with their elders and the bourgeois leadership of the race, especially anyone who attempted to restrict their life and work by imposing racial, political, aesthetic, or sexual barriers. Like their counterparts downtown, they rejected conventional sexual morality and tended toward promiscuity and experimentation. Homosexuality and bisexuality were far more open in Harlem than in Greenwich Village; this may have been one reason for Van Vechten's attraction. Although few works focused specifically on homosexuality (Richard Bruce Nugent's short story of 1926, "Smoke, Lillies, and Jade," is a notable exception), many literary works and songs of

the Harlem Renaissance contained references to homosexuality, and many of the people involved in the renaissance experimented with homosexuality or bisexuality.

Homosexuality among black bohemians, especially its appearance in their creative works, was one of the issues separating African American leadership from the movement. Political and intellectual leaders like W. E. B. Du Bois and even Alain Locke argued that too much sexuality of any sort, but especially homosexuality, in black art would reinforce negative white stereotypes of black sexuality and immorality, and harm the race politically. Most of the creative artists rejected this criticism, as well as any effort by the older generation to impose limits on the creative process. Langston Hughes expressed this rejection of the aesthetics and morality of conventional black leadership in 1926, in his essay "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain." Also in 1926, the one-issue literary magazine *Fire!!* by Wallace Thurman and his black bohemian cohort reinforced the determination of young black intellectuals to move beyond the values and aesthetics of their elders.

The determination of black writers and artists to assert their independence from conventional values and leadership did not mean that black bohemians were apolitical. On the contrary, politics and political radicalism were at the center of the black bohemian experience. This was especially true during World War I and the immediate postwar period, when the Bolshevik revolution, the racial and social turmoil of the "red summer" of 1919, and the racial militancy associated with the "New Negro" and with Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association aroused unprecedented political excitement in Harlem. African American radical and political periodicals like *The Messenger* and *Negro World* joined more mainstream civil rights publications like *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* in publishing and promoting black creative arts. And although no single political viewpoint dominated black bohemia or the creative work of black bohemians, an essential part of their work was politics—generally radical politics. Claude McKay, with his connection to radicals in Greenwich Village and his reputed involvement in the Communist Party, is one example. Langston Hughes is another. Hughes, who seemed to eschew propagandistic art in his essay of 1926, nevertheless cited political differences, especially his refusal to write apolitical poetry, as a cause of his breakup with his patron, Charlotte Osgood Mason. In the 1930s, Hughes, like McKay before him, would travel

to the Soviet Union, celebrate the Bolshevik revolution in his writings, and define himself as a "social poet."

Black bohemia was essential to the Harlem Renaissance. It provided a community in which black creative artists and intellectuals operated. Like all bohemian movements, it was characterized by a sense of independence from conventions and from outdated concepts and aesthetics, and it was in rebellion against traditional values and traditional leadership. It embraced modernity and rejected the bourgeois life and values of the previous generation.

ELIZABETH AMELIA HADLEY

GARY D. WINTZ

See also African Blood Brotherhood; Dunbar, Paul Laurence; Eastman, Crystal; Eastman, Max; Europe, James Reese; *Fire!!*; Frank, Waldo; Garvey, Marcus; Greenwich Village; Homosexuality; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Johnson, James Weldon; Johnson, John Rosamond; Joplin, Scott; Liberator; Madden, Owen Vincent "Owney"; McKay, Claude; Morton, Jelly Roll; Nigger Heaven; Seven Arts; Smith, Willie "the Lion"; Tenderloin; Toomer, Jean; Van Vechten, Carl; Walker, A'Lelia; Williams, Egbert Austin "Bert"; *other specific performers, writers, and artists; specific nightclubs*

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Black History and Historiography

History and historiography were significant aspects of the Harlem Renaissance, along with artistic expression. The historical tradition among black Americans was informed by two parallel developments. First, black thinkers continued and refined “contributionism”—a late-nineteenth-century trend that emphasized African Americans as participants in and contributors to American life. Second, professional historical organizations and professionally trained historians emerged.

The contributionist tradition had flourished from about 1880 to 1900. Blacks used history as a marker of racial progress, and many “race histories” were published, including George Washington Williams’s *History of the Negro Race* (1883), William Alexander’s *History of the Colored Race* (1887), William Simmons’s *Men of Mark: Eminent, Progressive, and Rising* (1887), Joseph Wilson’s *Black Phalanx* (1890), Leila Amos Pendleton’s *Narrative of the Negro* (1903), and John Wesley Cromwell’s *History of the American Negro* (1915).

Another component of contributionism derived from the largely proto-professional projects of African American literary and historical societies. Early societies often merged the social, political, and intellectual agendas of the rising black middle class with “uplift”—the idea that, for blacks, respectability was a matter of social class and intellectual attainments. The interest in black history among the urban black elite is evident in early literary and historical societies, such as the Bethel Literary and Historical Association (1881, based in Washington, D.C.), the American Negro Academy (1897), and the Negro Society for Historical Research (1911, based in New York).

Bibliophiles were also important. One of the most accomplished collectors was Arthur A. Schomburg. He was born and educated in Puerto Rico, emigrated to the United States in 1891, and established himself as a collector of rare books and manuscripts on the African diaspora. Schomburg was an early proponent

of teaching black history in colleges and universities; his widely quoted paper *Racial Integrity* (1913) was one of the first calls for a chair of black history in black colleges. Cognizant that historical work was becoming increasingly professional, Schomburg joined the American Negro Academy in 1914.

Contributionism was perhaps best expressed in Schomburg’s essay “The Negro Digs Up His Past” (1925), in Alain Locke’s *The New Negro*. This essay emphasizes history as a factor in group identity and describes the maturation of race history. Schomburg argues that the popularizers who simply listed blacks’ achievements have been replaced by true historians who present evidence systematically. Although he was critical of white racialists who attributed all of the world’s great accomplishments to Europeans, he also criticized “Ethiopian racialists,” who did much the same for blacks. Schomburg always sought the contributionist goal—history as a sustainer of group pride and identity—but he also believed in merging contributionism with newer objective, scientific models.

The second development, as noted above, was a professionalized milieu for black history and historians. In the late nineteenth century, American scholars began to move away from the notion of history as an avocation for gentlemen. Drawing on German historiography, which emphasized objectivity and the methods of the natural sciences, Americans created graduate programs in history—for instance, at Johns Hopkins, Wisconsin, Harvard, and Yale universities. The American Historical Association was founded in 1884, the *American Historical Review* in 1895, and the precursor of the Organization of American Historians in 1909.

Carter G. Woodson, the second African American to earn a Ph.D. in history from Harvard University, founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) in 1915. He established the *Journal of Negro History (JNH)* the following year, and later Associated Publishers, the publishing arm of the ASNLH. For the first five years of *JNH*, most of its writers were contributionists. After World War I, J. Franklin Jameson, director of the Department of Historical Research at the Carnegie Institution of Washington, supported Woodson with a \$25,000 grant from the Carnegie Foundation. As a direct result of that grant, Woodson received a \$25,000 grant from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Fund, enabling him to hire several investigators who would be instrumental in recasting African American history.

Three investigators during the 1920s were Alrutheus Ambush Taylor, Charles Wesley, and Lorenzo Greene. Taylor had earned a degree in mathematics at the University of Michigan in 1916, and Woodson arranged for him to receive graduate training in history under Edward Channing at Harvard University in 1922. Taylor's studies *The Negro in the Reconstruction of South Carolina* (1924), *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia* (1926), and "Negro Congressmen During Reconstruction" (in the *Journal of Negro History*) challenged the legend of the "tragic era"—John W. Burgess's and William Archibald Dunning's concept of Reconstruction as having been characterized by the political malfeasance and incompetence of blacks supported by the Republican Party. Wesley, a historian trained at Harvard, received his doctorate in 1925 and published his revised dissertation, *Negro Labor in the United States, 1850–1925*, in 1927. Also in 1927, Wesley joined Woodson's staff as a part-time investigator; later, he directed a survey on the African American church. Wesley himself was a minister in the African Methodist Church (AME) and wrote an early scholarly treatment of Bishop Richard Allen. Greene, a graduate of Howard University, joined ASNLH to work on a church research project. After that project ended, he wrote *The Negro Wage Earner* (1930); later, he wrote *The Negro in Colonial New England* (1942).

Woodson himself produced monographs and published the textbook *The Negro in Our History* (1922), one of the first scholarly treatments of the subject and one of the most widely circulated textbooks before John Hope Franklin's *From Slavery to Freedom* (1948). Monographs written or edited by Woodson included *History of the Negro Church* (1921); *The Negro Professional Man and the Community* (1924); *Negro Orators and Orations* (1925); *Free Negro Heads of Families in the United States in 1830* (1925); *Free Negro Owners of Slaves in the United States in 1830* (1925); *The Mind of the Negro as Reflected in Letters Written During the Crisis, 1800–1860* (1926); and *African Myths* (1928).

In 1926, Woodson led the movement for "Negro History Week," to be observed in February (the month when Abraham Lincoln and the abolitionist Frederick Douglass were born). This week highlighted the work of ASNLH and promoted African American history in secondary schools. As ASNLH opened chapters in cities across the country, the annual celebrations of Negro history also extended to the larger white community.

Woodson spent considerable time collecting primary documents on the black experience—scouring

black newspapers and maintaining ties with black churches, fraternal organizations, bibliophiles, and literary and historical associations. Printed notices appeared regularly in *JNH*, asking individuals who possessed documents to bring them to ASNLH's offices in Washington, D.C.

In addition to these community-based activities, Woodson had relied on grants from the Carnegie Foundation and the Social Science Research Committee. However, because he insisted on autonomy and refused to affiliate ASNLH with other black organizations, his foundation support eroded. A \$25,000 three-year matching grant from the Rockefeller Foundation in 1930 was his last. Thereafter, he turned almost exclusively to the community. Woodson founded the *Negro History Bulletin* in 1937. Despite his contributions to professionalization, he never entirely abandoned contributionism and "uplift."

The emergence of a professional milieu for black history is surely one of the legacies of the Harlem Renaissance. In many ways, historiography, like the renaissance itself, was an outgrowth of migration, urbanization, and industrialization—factors in the rise of urban institutions, such as the black press and literary societies, that gave expression to cultural knowledge and pride. The study and preservation of history served much the same purpose, and it has continued to offer insights into American history.

STEPHEN G. HALL

See also Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and *Journal of Negro History*; Greene, Lorenzo; *New Negro, The*; Schomburg, Arthur A.; Woodson, Carter G.

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Black Manhattan

In *Black Manhattan* (1930), James Weldon Johnson intended to provide a history of blacks' progress in theater in New York. What resulted was much more: Johnson produced a history of blacks in New York from the time of its establishment as a colony in 1626 through its heyday at the height of the Harlem Renaissance. *Black Manhattan* is an interdisciplinary history that sets the theatrical successes and global fame of Harlem in the context of many complicated historical, political, and geographical trends up to 1930, the year of its publication. In broad strokes, this book also presents a very general history of blacks in America. Johnson traces Negro life in New York in order to describe how African Americans formed a thriving black community centered in Harlem.

In *Black Manhattan*, Johnson prefers description rather than depth, argument, or analysis, although his descriptions of events and performances are at times

quite detailed. The ways that Johnson contextualizes his subject, however, indicate his belief that the condition and progress of Negro culture (to use the terminology of the time and of the text) in the United States relate directly to the struggle against violence and discrimination and the struggle for full citizenship—efforts that took myriad forms throughout American history. The list of historical facts begins with the settlement of New York as a colony in 1626, slavery under the Dutch, and the number of slaves and freedmen in the area at the time. Johnson describes major events in American and African American history and the involvement of black New Yorkers in these events. Among them are the establishment of free education in New York, the manumission and abolition movements, black publications, the colonization movement, New Yorkers and the Civil War, antiblack draft riots, blacks in the military in World War I and the attending antiblack violence, attacks against blacks in cities in 1919, and Marcus Garvey's movement. In relating this history, Johnson focuses on all aspects of performance that gave blacks fame (and sometimes notoriety) in New York, including theater, sports, club life, and music.

In developing the history of theatrical performance, Johnson loosely defines three phases in the development of Negro theater that he unceremoniously names according to their order: the "start of the Negro in American theater," the "middle theatrical period," and the "third theatrical period," which lasted from about 1918 through the 1920s. Johnson categorizes black American theater chronologically and only very informally according to content and trends in performance. Since the characteristics of each theatrical period have as much to do with the state of race relations in the nation and what audiences would accept as with artistic license, the development of black audiences and a broadly visible black cultural presence that accompanied the formation of the Harlem community was a key to the maturation of black theater. Geographical and community development greatly influenced the content and character of black theatrical performance. Thus the concept of "Harlem" as a place, an idea, and a cultural community facilitated artistry and complexity in black theater and influenced the way that Johnson was able to describe theater history. Without such an environment, consistent development and evaluation of theatrical content were only faintly possible.

The first phase, the "start," occurs very roughly between about 1820 and 1880. Although this period included a burgeoning club life that nurtured black

artistic talent, it was characterized primarily by black minstrel performances, which were popularized fairly late in the nineteenth century. Several “all-Negro” companies, such as Lew Johnson’s Plantation Minstrel Company and the Georgia Minstrels, are described. This period is also sparsely punctuated with classical plays performed by the African Company at the African Grove Theater and the mainly international work of the actor Ira Aldridge.

The second or “middle” phase in black theater begins in the mid- to late nineteenth century. Musical revues and programs produced and performed by black artists dominated this period. Musical comedies by the famous Cole and Johnson, Williams and Walker, and Ernest Hogan are described. Other productions highlighted include *The Octoroons*, *Oriental America*, *A Trip to Coontown*, and *Clorindy—The Origin of the Cakewalk*.

The onset of the third theatrical phase was facilitated by what Johnson calls the “conquest of Harlem,” a process in which African American real estate developers and residents of New York initiated a complicated and challenging move involving houses to be bought and the surplus of apartments in upper Manhattan in the early 1900s. The “invasion” of this area was the beginning; by 1930, the neighborhood had become home to 200,000 blacks. The characteristics of the third theatrical period have mainly to do with the quantity, diversity, quality, and “seriousness” of the plays and revues.

In the final third of *Black Manhattan* (the last hundred pages or so), Johnson details the theatrical, artistic, and cultural developments of the 1920s. The large amount of theatrical and literary production described in these chapters makes it clear why this decade has been considered the high-water mark of the Harlem Renaissance. Theatrical events that, according to Johnson, changed the status of the Negro in American theater include a revival of *Shuffle Along*, *All God’s Chillun Got Wings*, *The Emperer Jones*, *Porgy*, and *The Green Pastures*. The emergence of a number of stars—Florence Mills, Charles Gilpin, Paul Robeson, Bill Robinson, and Ethel Waters, among others—is also described. Literary and poetic works and blacks’ efforts in the fine arts are described, along with major productions and plays.

Johnson directly links Harlem—its location, population, community, and history—to the advent of the black renaissance in literature and performance that occurred in the 1920s. He helps us understand why this period was called the *Harlem* Renaissance.

Black Manhattan is a narrative of struggle and accomplishment in which Johnson holds up the rich, diverse culture of this massive northern community of black American citizens for the world’s respect and admiration.

STEPHANIE L. BATISTE

See also Blacks in Theater; Emperor Jones, The; Gilpin, Charles; Green Pastures, The; Johnson, James Weldon; Mills, Florence; Porgy: Play; Robeson, Paul; Robinson, Bill “Bojangles”; Shuffle Along; Theater; Waters, Ethel

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Black Migration

See Great Migration; Great Migration and the Harlem Renaissance

Black Opals

A small group of young black intellectuals and creative writers in Philadelphia published three issues of the literary journal *Black Opals* between the spring of 1927 and June 1928. Though it was only a short series, not a true magazine, it was part of a continuing discourse about what was considered the proper direction for blacks' writings.

In almost every good-sized American city at the time, groups of African American "culture nurturers" were supporting literary publications. In Boston, for example, the Quill Club launched the *Saturday Evening Quill*. Although many of these societies were more social than literary, the journals provided a sounding board for the work of writers of the Harlem Renaissance. *Black Opals* was one of the most promising of the Afro-American "little reviews" of the 1920s.

Led by the folklorist, civil rights activist, and educator Arthur Huff Fauset, the venture was originally intended as an outlet for students of the local high school as well as the Philadelphia Normal School, Temple University, and the University of Pennsylvania. It was established because of "the desire of older New Negroes to encourage younger members of the group who demonstrate talent and ambition."

The poet Langston Hughes and the writer Alain Locke lent their influence to the enterprise. Locke wrote "Hail, Philadelphia!" for the first issue in an attempt to close the gap between conservative and radical voices among black writers and scholars. (Arthur Fauset was basically conservative but was willing to present works of either side in his publication.) The first issue also carried three poems by Langston Hughes. The poets Nellie Bright and Mae V. Cowdery were among the other significant figures associated

with *Black Opals*. Contributors to the later issues included the short-story writer Marieta Bonner; the writer Lewis Alexander; and Arthur Fauset's sister, the novelist Jessie Redmon Fauset, who was a former literary editor of W. E. B. Du Bois's periodical *The Crisis*. The poet Gwendolyn Bennett, who taught art at Howard University, was a guest editor of *Black Opals*. The journal exposed a growing reading public to these and other talented literary people.

Countee Cullen, who at that time was the new literary editor of *Opportunity* magazine, praised "some highly commendable material" in the first issue of *Black Opals*, especially two poems by Bright and Cowdery. Cullen also wrote that *Black Opals* "is a venture we should like to see sweeping the country." W. E. B. Du Bois wrote that he was happier with *Black Opals* than he had been with earlier efforts of black writers to publish a literary "little magazine."

The writers in Philadelphia planned to make *Black Opals* a quarterly, but, like other publications of its kind, it did not have sufficient support or a wide enough readership: the subscription list required that only 250 copies of each issue be printed. *Black Opals* ceased publication after the issue of June 1928, which had been prepared by an editorial board. Its presence, though brief, made the point that Harlem was not the sole locale of the black arts movement in the period after World War I.

KATHLEEN COLLINS

See also Bennett, Gwendolyn; Bonner, Marieta; Cowdery, Mae Virginia; Cullen, Countee; Fauset, Arthur Huff; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Harlem Renaissance in the United States: 6—Philadelphia; Hughes, Langston; Locke, Alain; Saturday Evening Quill

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Black Press

The black press flourished during the Harlem Renaissance. There were many reasons for its success. First, the massive increase in northern black urban populations

as a result of the “great migration” of black southerners in the years beginning about 1915 provided northern black newspapers with a greatly expanded circulation. For example, the circulation of the Baltimore *Afro-American* rose from 19,200 a week in 1919 to 40,432 in 1930 (from its Baltimore and out-of-town editions). Other black newspapers saw similar increases in circulation. Second, the black migrants hungered for news about themselves and the communities they had moved to. Black newspapers, especially the Chicago *Defender*, Pittsburgh *Courier*, and Baltimore *Afro-American*, satisfied this hunger by offering intensive, often sensationalistic coverage of news relevant to black audiences. Third, increased circulation made the black press more attractive to advertisers who wanted blacks to purchase their products. Fourth, the increased wealth of black newspapers enabled these enterprises to upgrade their staffs and physical plants, provide a stronger institutional base for black journalists, and create outlets for the black essayists, poets, playwrights, and novelists of the Harlem Renaissance.

It is useful to consider what a black newspaper looked like in the era of the Harlem Renaissance, and the Baltimore *Afro-American* will serve as a representative example. The *Afro-American* typifies the black press of the Harlem Renaissance. It was the most widely circulated black newspaper on the East Coast, and it matched the Pittsburgh *Courier* and Chicago *Defender* in national impact. The *Afro-American* constantly crusaded for racial reform, especially in jobs, politics, housing, and education. These topics, as well as civil rights, black uplift, crime, sports, entertainment, and society news, dominated its pages.

A typical issue of the *Afro-American* in the 1920s was that of 24 April 1926. Its front page headlined the discovery of the body of the Reverend J. E. Fitchett, who had been a prominent black minister on the eastern shore of Maryland and had been missing for three months after being caught with the wife of a parishioner. The front page also carried an account of an interracial conference in Birmingham, Alabama, at which Will Alexander, chairman of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, called for an end to Jim Crow laws and an end to the occupation of Haiti. Also on the front page were stories dealing with a divorce suit, a conference of African Methodist Episcopal (AME) ministers, and two black students who had won Guggenheim fellowships.

Pages 2 and 3 contained news from Washington, D.C., and advertisements. The fourth, fifth, and sixth pages were the entertainment pages; they carried

copious advertisements for motion picture and vaudeville theaters, dance halls, and cabarets in Baltimore that catered to blacks. Pages 7 and 8 were the sports pages; they dealt with Negro League baseball, black college baseball, boxing, tennis, and the Penn Relays track and field competition. Advertisements—mostly for cigars, clothing, and quack doctors—were also found on the sports pages. The ninth page was Baltimore society news. Page 10 was local Baltimore news, mostly having to do with crime.

Page 11 was the editorial page; this was the most serious section of the *Afro-American*. The editorials on 24 April commented on President Calvin Coolidge’s inaction concerning black disenfranchisement in the South; on the appointment of a black to the executive committee of the American Federation of Labor; and on Dartmouth College’s awarding of a prize for achievement in biology to Lowell Wormley, a black student. Also on the editorial page was the column of letters to the editor. Among them was one complaining about the *Afro-American*’s campaign for more black Republican patronage in the South. Another congratulated the newspaper for its championing of exploited black workers. A third described how conditions on Pennsylvania Avenue, the “main street of Black Baltimore,” were leading black youngsters to crime. Completing the editorial page were columns by Kelly Miller, a dean of Howard University; William N. Jones, city editor of the *Afro-American*; and Ralph Matthews Sr.

The rest of the *Afro-American* consisted of more society news from Baltimore; a magazine section, which featured the short stories “On the Rock” and “Home Made Goods”; and miscellaneous local news. Church news and announcements, a survey of local black business, court news, and the classified section filled the final pages.

The Chicago *Defender* and the Pittsburgh *Courier*—which were the chief national competitors of the *Afro-American*—tended to publish the same type of news, though with differing emphases and in different formats. On 24 April 1926, the *Defender* and the *Courier* both headlined stories of domestic scandals: the *Defender* reported that a police raid had caught a prominent black minister in bed with a nineteen-year-old woman; the *Courier* reported that a young black woman had shot and wounded a man who was pestering her with unwanted attentions. Both the *Defender* and the *Courier*, owing to their national status and reputation, carried more national news on their front pages than the *Afro-American*. Otherwise, however, the *Defender* and the *Courier* carried the same mixture as

the *Afro-American*: local news—mostly about crime, reported as sensationally as possible; society; theater; and sports—and service features.

The editorial page was not as extensive in the *Defender* as in the *Afro-American*; the *Defender* had only one signed column, on health, whereas the *Afro-American* had three. The editorial page of the *Courier* was more like that in the *Afro-American*: the *Courier* carried two signed columns dealing with current issues, one by Walter White of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the other by George Schuyler, who fancied himself a black H. L. Mencken. All three newspapers had congruent editorial ideologies, though in depth and breadth of editorial opinion the *Afro-American* was superior to the other two.

Black newspapers such as the *Afro-American* also covered and commented on national issues such as presidential elections, which they tried to influence by endorsing candidates; Marcus Garvey's movement; and the Harlem Renaissance.

Black voters were a growing force in the North, and black newspapers attempted to harness that force through endorsements for president. In 1924, for example, the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *Chicago Defender*—both longtime supporters of the Republican Party—endorsed Calvin Coolidge (a Republican) over the candidate of the Democratic Party, John W. Davis. The *Afro-American*, however, broke with the two major parties by endorsing a third-party candidate, Robert La Follette, a Progressive, because he supported voting rights in the South and equal employment opportunity and specifically opposed the Ku Klux Klan, discrimination in the allocation of federal patronage, and lynching. The editors of the *Afro-American* felt that neither of the other two candidates had such an impressive record on black people's concerns. In the election, Coolidge won a landslide victory over Davis, and La Follette won no electoral votes at all (though he did win some 5 million popular votes). Its maverick endorsement of La Follette in 1924 cost the *Afro-American* influence and prestige in national black Republican circles.

In 1928, the *Afro-American* again broke from the pack and endorsed the Democratic candidate for president, Governor Alfred E. Smith of New York, whose record on race relations seemed more progressive than that of his Republican opponent, Herbert Hoover. Smith was the first Catholic to run for president, and the *Afro-American* believed that the religious bigotry he had experienced made him sensitive to the plight of other oppressed minorities. In this election, the

Afro-American was not the only black newspaper to desert the Republican Party and support a Democratic candidate; it was joined by the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, the *Boston Guardian*, and the *Atlanta Independent*. But the two largest black newspapers—the *Chicago Defender* and *Pittsburgh Courier*—remained in the Republican fold, as did *New York Age* and the *New York Amsterdam News* in Smith's home state. These newspapers questioned Smith's commitment to racial reform, since his running mate was a segregationist senator from Arkansas, Joseph T. Robinson. As in 1924, the endorsement of the *Afro-American* did its candidate no good: Smith was buried in Hoover's landslide victory. However, the *Afro-American* was no longer isolated in its independence from the Republican Party with regard to presidential endorsements.

The black press was ambivalent toward Marcus Garvey's movement. Garvey, a Jamaican printer and social activist, emigrated to the United States in 1916. The next year he founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), which was based in Harlem; by 1919, he had built the UNIA to a point where it claimed to have more than 2 million members. Though its membership figures may have been exaggerated, the UNIA and Garvey, its "provisional president," had become important forces in black America. The UNIA owned a newspaper, *Negro World*; owned an auditorium, Liberty Hall, which seated some 6,000 people; and operated several businesses, the most prominent of which was the Black Star Line, a steamship venture to promote trade between black America, Africa, and the world. Nothing like Garvey's movement had ever occurred in black America. For the first time a black advancement organization was gaining widespread support among the black masses, who hitherto had made their desires known only through migration.

Some black newspapers, such as the *Courier* and the *Afro-American*, initially supported Garvey's movement, believing that it was a positive influence in its emphasis on racial pride, solidarity, and enterprise, and that its goal of an independent, powerful Africa was a worthy one. Other newspapers, such as the *Defender* and *New York Age*, were harshly critical of Garvey. For example, *New York Age* ridiculed his plans for Africa, and the *Chicago Defender*—black America's leading newspaper—disparaged him. Moreover, the editor of the *Defender*, Robert S. Abbott, signed a letter to the U.S. attorney general, Harry Daugherty, asking him to investigate Garvey for mail fraud in connection with the sale of stock in the Black Star Line.

Garvey's black nationalism was more appealing to the black masses than the assimilationist doctrines expressed by the middle class through such organizations as the NAACP. Black newspapers such as the *Afro-American*, while supporting racial integration as an ultimate goal, advocated a kind of black nationalism, constantly calling for the creation of black businesses, the establishment of an independent black vote, and black control of institutions serving blacks. This position accounts for the benign treatment that Garvey received from some of these newspapers in the years preceding his trial for mail fraud. However, by the time the trial took place, the black press had pretty much broken with Garvey. This was probably because the middle-class owners of black newspapers wanted men like themselves to lead the masses—not a man like Marcus Garvey, whose flamboyance, bombast, and financial incompetence disturbed their sensibilities.

Black newspapers in major markets, such as the *Afro-American*, encouraged the outburst of literary and artistic creativity known as the Harlem Renaissance. In its feature pages, the *Afro-American* published poems and essays by Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and Claude McKay. It also encouraged young black writers by publishing serials or short stories in its magazine section (in 1950, Nick Aaron Ford compiled and published a selection of these short stories). The Chicago *Defender* employed Langston Hughes, and George Schuyler—one of the leading columnists, essayists, novelists, and satirists of the era—wrote not only for the Pittsburgh *Courier* but also for A. Phillip Randolph and Chandler Owen's magazine *The Messenger*, which employed Wallace Thurman as well. Garvey's *Negro World* initially supported aspects of the Harlem Renaissance, though it turned against the renaissance from 1923 on, owing to its distaste for the more bohemian aspects of the renaissance.

Apart from the major-market black newspapers with a regional or nationwide circulation, it is not clear how, if at all, the Harlem Renaissance affected or was affected by the black press. Neither of the two main surveys of the black press in the hinterlands (Suggs 1983, 1996) mentions coverage or critiques of writers of the renaissance in black newspapers—although each survey discusses the development of these newspapers as businesses and their political and civil rights crusades. Presumably, these regional newspapers devoted some attention to the Harlem Renaissance, but the specific details are no longer known (much work needs to be done in this regard). The large-circulation black newspapers did publish some of the writers of

the Harlem Renaissance, but their editorial attitude toward these writers is not clear. Presumably, given the middle-class orientation and sensibilities of the editors, the major black newspapers—especially the *Afro-American*—would not have looked favorably on such works as Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* or Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem*, which offered explicit depictions of black life. These editors would have sided with W. E. B. Du Bois, who felt that black art should uplift black life and protest against racism, since their newspapers emphasized those points as well. (Again, though, much work needs to be done on this topic.)

As noted above, the major black newspapers such as the *Afro-American*, *Defender*, and *Courier* supported the Harlem Renaissance to some extent; and the black magazines *The Crisis*, *Opportunity*, *The Messenger*, and *Fire!!* supported it even more. *The Crisis*, the magazine of the NAACP, was edited by Du Bois and employed the novelist Jessie Fauset as its literary editor. Fauset encouraged and was one of the earliest publishers of Langston Hughes and Jean Toomer. Du Bois, who was a novelist himself, favored the promotion and publication of young black writers. In 1924, *The Crisis* began a literary contest, and in 1926, it published a symposium called "The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed?" Through such activities Du Bois and *The Crisis* hoped to determine the course of the Harlem Renaissance. However, with the publication in 1926 of Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* and in 1928 of Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem*, Du Bois turned from a supporter to a critic of the renaissance. Though he was becoming more radical in his politics, Du Bois was culturally conservative, and both novels presented a slice of African American life that he felt should not be portrayed. Jessie Fauset, a leading supporter of the Harlem Renaissance, left *The Crisis* in 1927; with her departure, the magazine deemphasized coverage of this literary phenomenon.

Opportunity, the magazine of the Urban League, edited by Charles Spurgeon Johnson, helped to give birth to the Harlem Renaissance by sponsoring literary contests and prizes beginning in 1925. Among the winners were Sterling Brown, Arna Bontemps, Zora Neale Hurston, and Langston Hughes. Though Johnson is better known as a sociologist, he made a valuable contribution to the Harlem Renaissance by encouraging, publishing, and awarding prizes to some of the literary lights of that period.

The Messenger, a radical socialist magazine published by A. Phillip Randolph and Chandler Owen, also provided an outlet for writers of the Harlem Renaissance. Its most important contribution was

"These Colored United States," a series of articles it ran between 1923 and 1926, giving a panoramic view of black American communities at the time. *Fire!!*, which began publication in 1926, was the only periodical established and edited by members of the Harlem Renaissance. It was edited by Wallace Thurman, and its contributors and editors included Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Aaron Douglas, Countee Cullen, and Arna Bontemps. Its unvarnished depictions of black life provoked extreme reactions in the black middle class and among black intellectuals; some loved it for its dedication to the truth, whereas others hated it for its sometimes unflattering portrayals of black life. *Fire!!* never gained enough financial support to be viable; it lasted for only a few issues.

Black newspapers were an integral resource for the black community of the Harlem Renaissance. Without the black press, that community would have been voiceless and powerless. It was black periodicals such as *Opportunity*, *The Crisis*, *The Messenger*, and *Fire!!* that provided the main print outlets for the poets, essayists, and novelists of the Harlem Renaissance. If not for black newspapers and magazines, the social, political, and cultural gains of the Harlem Renaissance would have been impossible.

HAYWARD "WOODY" FARRAR

See also Amsterdam News; Baltimore Afro-American; Chicago Defender; Crisis, The; Crisis, The: Literary Prizes; Crisis: The Negro in Art—How Shall He Be Portrayed? A Symposium; Fire!!; Garvey, Marcus; Garveyism; Harlem Renaissance: 1—Black Critics of; Journalists; Messenger, The; Miller, Kelly; Negro World; New York Age; Opportunity; Opportunity Literary Contests; Party Politics; Pittsburgh Courier; Schuyler, George S.; Universal Negro Improvement Association; White, Walter; *specific writers*

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Black Star Line

Black Star Line Steamship Corporation was founded in Harlem in June 1919 and lasted until 1922. It was established under the auspices of the Universal Negro



Black Star Line, certificate for one share, issued in November 1919. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

Improvement Association (UNIA) and the stewardship of Marcus Garvey and was an integral part of Garvey's "back to Africa" program. The company was a manifestation of his desire to help blacks achieve economic independence and to give African migrants across the world a sense of unity.

With the enthusiastic participation of UNIA's membership, Garvey raised the money for this venture. Shares valued at \$5 each were sold at UNIA meetings and through mailed circulars, traveling agents, and advertisements in the newspaper *Negro World*. Nearly \$200,000 was raised in less than four months. Much of the capital came from the working poor of the Caribbean and the United States.

The available capital allowed Garvey to purchase a ship just months after Black Star's incorporation. The company's first vessel, the SS *Yarmouth*, which Garvey intended to rename the *Frederick Douglass*, set sail with an all-black crew on 31 October 1919. Thousands crowded the dock at 135th Street in Harlem to witness the event. However, the *Yarmouth*, which had transported coal in World War I, was in poor condition when the UNIA bought it for \$165,000, and on its maiden voyage for Black Star, fears about poor equipment and a lack of proper insurance kept the ship's crew from venturing past the Twenty-third Street pier.

Two other ships joined the line in 1920: the SS *Shadyside*, and the steam yacht *Kanawha*, renamed SS *Antonio Maceo*. All three ships were commissioned to transport manufactured goods, raw materials, and produce for black businesses in North America, the Caribbean, and Africa. The backers hoped that the

enterprise would allow African Americans to return to Africa and would also enable black people around the Atlantic to exchange goods and services. Unfortunately, in the autumn the *Shadyside* sank, after having provided only passenger travel on the Hudson River; and the *Kanawha* blew a boiler on its maiden voyage, killing a man onboard.

Mismanagement and expensive repairs severely disrupted the operations of the fleet. In February 1922, Garvey was indicted on charges of mail fraud related to promotional claims made for the Black Star Line during the company's sale of stock. Soon afterward he suspended company operations. Estimates of Black Star's losses were as high as \$1.25 million. Garvey was eventually convicted of mail fraud in 1923 and imprisoned in 1925 as the Justice Department pursued legal action, bolstered by information from J. Edgar Hoover's Federal Bureau of Investigation (an organization that Garvey's supporters accused of sabotage). The government later commuted Garvey's sentence, only to deport him to Jamaica in November 1927.

The troubles of the Black Star Line were chronicled by two African American leaders—W. E. B. Du Bois and A. Philip Randolph—who cautioned black Americans about investing in schemes that required operational complexity but had no proper management. Still, Garvey was a respected advocate for African culture and progress. He believed that mass urban organization by African Americans in the North could provide the necessary wealth and unity to combat imperialism in Africa and discrimination in the United States. The Black Star Line was a symbol of unfulfilled potential during a period of dynamic change in Harlem.

R. JAKE SUDDERTH

See also Garvey, Marcus; *Negro World*; Universal Negro Improvement Association

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Black Swan Phonograph Company

Black Swan Phonograph Company was the first record label substantially owned and operated by African Americans. It advertised its product as “the only records made entirely by colored people,” though that claim was true only for the first year of its existence. The label was named after a nineteenth-century African American classical singer, Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield, who was known as the “black swan.” Its proprietor, Harry H. Pace, had been a banker and insurance executive in Memphis, Tennessee, when he met the bandleader and composer W. C. Handy around 1905. The two formed the Pace and Handy Music Publishing Company in 1907, with Pace managing the business, while Handy composed the music. They had only modest success until Handy’s “Saint Louis Blues” (1914), the first blues song published, was a national sensation. Business picked up, and they moved their operation to New York in 1918, considering themselves uniquely positioned to publish music by African American composers.

Immediately following World War I, recorded music became increasingly popular, and publishers and other businesspeople were scrambling to produce records. Equally important to Pace, a black entrepreneur in music, was the success of Okeh Records’ “race” recordings (music performed by blacks), particularly Mamie Smith’s two blues hits for the Okeh label in 1920. These records sold in the hundreds of thousands, especially among southern blacks, a fact not lost on the entire record industry, which had never seriously marketed to African Americans. Other white-owned labels rushed to follow Okeh’s lead, and Pace saw an opportunity to enter the field. In 1921, he severed his ties with W. C. Handy and opened the Pace Phonographic Company to produce records under the Black Swan label. After a difficult three-month search

for a pressing plant (competition was fierce, and the problem was compounded by racism), he secured a deal and began to hire a staff. Pace lured away from Handy’s publishing firm Fletcher Henderson, to direct the musical operations, and the composer William Grant Still, as chief arranger. Serving on the board of directors of the upstart label were W. E. B. Du Bois and the African American real estate developer John E. Nail.

Harry Pace fundamentally agreed with many leaders of the Harlem Renaissance that the true future of African American music lay not in the “lower” folk idioms of blues and jazz but in classical genres. Black musicians would be seen as the equals of white Americans or Europeans on the concert stage, and black composers would demonstrate the value of black musical themes in works composed for orchestras and chamber and vocal ensembles. Thus Pace sought to build a varied catalog of light and serious classical music, as well as more popular dance bands and jazz and blues vocals. It is the jazz and blues recordings, however, that brought financial success and represent some of the most important documents of black popular music in New York during the early 1920s.

After a series of mediocre light classical recordings, the first important success for Black Swan came in the spring of 1921, when the black vaudeville and blues singer Ethel Waters recorded “Down Home Blues” and “Oh Daddy.” Waters, Henderson, and other Black Swan artists toured black vaudeville theaters as the Black Swan Troubadours in 1921 and early 1922, bringing increased attention to the label. The outstanding sales of its blues line suddenly put Black Swan on the same level as Columbia and Okeh in the “race records” market, and Pace began to expand his catalog to include more blues artists. Alberta Hunter, Trixie Smith, and Lucille Hegamin all had hits in 1921, presenting a problem for Pace—the need for more recording facilities. In April 1922, Pace entered a partnership with John Fletcher, a white businessman who had an interest in the struggling Olympic Records, and the team purchased Olympic’s former pressing plant. Also, the Olympic catalog, consisting exclusively of white popular and classical musicians, devolved to Black Swan Records.

With these moves, Pace’s company seemed the mirror image of white-owned labels that had ventured into recording black musicians and had begun to hire black staff members to produce their race records. Yet the company publicly maintained the

image of an exclusively African American enterprise. Its advertisement in the *Chicago Defender* in February 1923 claimed that “[A]ll stockholders are Colored, all artists are Colored, all employees are Colored”; its black clientele, however, did not know that the company featured white bands such as Fred Smith’s Society Orchestra and Henderson’s Dance Orchestra.

Regardless, Pace attempted to fulfill his mission to record black concert artists, and in 1922 he began an opera series featuring African American singers including the soprano Antoinette Gaines of the Chicago Grand Opera. However, the blues and jazz recordings of Alberta Hunter, Trixie Smith, and other singers were actually the mainstay of the label, as there was simply no substantial market among its African American customers for classical music or the lighter popular fare performed by white and black acts. The true market for race records was to be found among southern black audiences, where there was no interest in classical forms. White-owned companies could unabashedly sell blues and jazz to these markets while retaining their white audiences by offering more familiar fare, an option not open to Pace.

This was not the only problem for Pace and Black Swan. By early 1923, the emergence of radio had devastated the young, fragile recording industry, leaving many companies struggling for survival. Moreover, the Columbia and Paramount labels had tremendous success with Bessie Smith and Gertrude “Ma” Rainey, respectively, and Paramount had lured Ethel Waters, Trixie Smith, and Alberta Hunter away from Black Swan with more lucrative contracts. Both Columbia and Paramount had hired African Americans to run their race records lines and had created their own rosters of prominent black musicians. By late fall 1923, Pace declared bankruptcy and leased his catalog to Paramount, which reissued the recordings by the black stars.

Many Black Swan artists, who had not achieved success, never recorded again. Pace left the music business altogether and served many years as president of the Supreme Liberty Life Insurance Company.

WILLIAM J. NANCARROW

See also Hegamin, Lucille; Henderson, Fletcher; Hunter, Alberta; Nail, John E.; Pace Phonographic Company; Rainey, Gertrude “Ma”; Saint Louis Blues; Smith, Mamie; Smith, Trixie; Still, William Grant; Waters, Ethel

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Black Zionism

Black Zionism is the name given collectively to the movements among blacks of the diaspora for self-determination, economic independence, and cultural renewal. Since the mid-1960s, scholars in African American studies have used the term “diaspora,” borrowed from the Jewish tradition, to refer to the historical experience of blacks who were forcibly transferred from their African homelands to the new world by European slave traders. Despite significant differences, the African diaspora and the Jewish diaspora are both understood as exile from a lost ancestral homeland. With the advent of various nationalist movements in nineteenth-century Europe, Jewish leaders such as Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), Moses Hess (1812–1875), and Leo Pinsker (1821–1891) argued that Jews needed a sovereign state of their own in order to end centuries of oppression and restore ethnic pride and unity. These leaders were called Zionists, after a biblical name for the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judea, which the legendary descendants of the Jews had lost to the Romans and other invaders in the first century after Christ. Herzl’s political tract *The Jewish State* (1896) and his astute leadership of the World Zionist Organization had a profound influence on the beliefs and practices of black leaders such as Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832–1912), W. E. B. Du Bois, and Marcus Garvey, who advocated various strategies for political and economic liberation and greater race consciousness in the African diaspora.

Since the beginning of slavery in the new world, there have been numerous efforts by individuals and groups to return slaves and free blacks to Africa. These efforts are based on a utopian belief that blacks

and whites should live separately for the good of all concerned. Early instances of separatist organizing include the Free African Societies of the 1780s and Abraham Lincoln's emigration plan of 1862. After Reconstruction came to an untimely end with the Compromise of 1877, black leaders like Blyden and Bishop Henry M. Turner (1834–1915) of the African Methodist Episcopal Church abandoned the hope that blacks could ever achieve real equality as a minority group in a racist culture. In the years before World War I, these men and others raised funds, wrote propaganda, and founded steamship companies to encourage diaspora blacks to resettle in independent West African states such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the Gold Coast (Ghana).

In his pamphlet *The Jewish Question* (1898), Blyden commended Herzl's bold political vision and his tremendous influence among European Jews. He also called on Jews "to come . . . to the assistance of Ishmael in the higher work for Africa which Japheth, through a few struggling representatives, is laboring heroically under great disadvantages to carry out." Blyden's invocation of biblical metaphors was not only a strategy for reaching out to religious Jews but also part of the black Protestant tradition of mythologizing the diaspora with figures borrowed from scripture. John Gibbs St. Clair Drake (Washington 1984) has suggested that the Jewish patriarchs have had a distinct resonance for diaspora blacks, who, like the ancient Israelites, longed for both political deliverance and spiritual redemption: the spirituals and sermons of black churches, the jazz songs of Louis Armstrong, and the poetry of James Weldon Johnson and Paul Laurence Dunbar are full of allusions to the Hebrew Bible.

In the Harlem of the 1920s, one of Blyden's most ardent admirers, Marcus Garvey, led a second wave of black separatist activity that was especially popular with lower-class urban blacks who could not benefit from philanthropic initiatives like Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute. Garvey was born in Jamaica, where he founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in 1914. He came to the United States in early 1916 and went on the lecture circuit, touring thirty-eight states before establishing a branch of the UNIA in Harlem that same year. Although he began by addressing the black elite, he soon took to the streets, where his gift for oratory drew great crowds. In Garvey's speeches, he extolled the virtues of the racially pure Negro and the superior achievements of ancient African civilization, claiming

that whites had insidiously suppressed history and had taught diaspora blacks to hate their own bodies. He also announced the goals of the UNIA, which were to encourage stronger economic, political, and cultural ties between Africans around the world; to agitate against European colonization of the African continent; and to enact "back to Africa," a massive emigration and resettlement program. To further these goals, Garvey and other executives of the UNIA—including his second wife, Amy Jacques Garvey—established a merchant marine, the Black Star Line; a newspaper, *Negro World*; and a manufacturing chain, the Negro Factories Corporation, which was operated entirely by blacks.

The driving force behind the UNIA was Garvey's vision of a prosperous, proud, unified black people, a vision that has been called pan-Africanism. Representatives of the UNIA, many of them West Indians or native Africans, often spoke of the common ground of Garvey's pan-Africanism and Jewish Zionism. Because of his charismatic and often theatrical style of leadership, Garvey was nicknamed the "black Moses" (similarly, many Jews were inspired to describe Herzl in messianic terms).

Garvey's program, like that of the Jewish Zionists, had aesthetic as well as political and economic dimensions. The newspaper of the UNIA, *Negro World*, published many leading writers of the Harlem Renaissance, including Zora Neale Hurston, Claude McKay, and Alain Locke, as well as international figures like the Egyptian nationalist Duse Mohamed Ali. These writers contributed poetry, reviews, polemical essays, and journalistic sketches of Africa, all of which exhibited a general concern for promoting pan-African consciousness in the diaspora. Tony Martin has collected some of the best writing from *Negro World*, including articles by Garvey himself, as part of the New Marcus Garvey Library series.

Garvey's incendiary comments on racial matters and his mismanagement of the UNIA's business ventures often provoked the ire of political opponents such as W. E. B. Du Bois, the chief founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), whose own newspaper, *The Crisis*, was unsparing in its criticism of Garvey's movement. The story of Garvey's legal entanglements that led to his political demise can be read elsewhere. But it is important that Garvey and Du Bois, despite their mutual hatred, were both pan-Africanists who modeled some of their rhetorical and administrative strategies

on the successes of Jewish Zionism. In fact, it was Du Bois who convened the first Pan-African Congress in Paris in 1919, a year before Garvey's own international gathering at Liberty Hall. Du Bois wrote many articles, pamphlets, and scholarly books about African culture and history, and eventually settled in Ghana as a distinguished citizen. In his essay "The Negro's Fatherland" (1917), Du Bois wrote, "The African movement means to us what the Zionist movement means to the Jews." As a committed socialist and a person of multiracial descent, Du Bois argued for the cooperation of whites and blacks in the struggle for basic human freedoms, yet he also insisted that group identity and the preservation of inherited traditions were essential to the continued progress of civilization.

Black Zionism never had much appeal for middle-class blacks of the 1920s and 1930s, who tended to favor either the pragmatic approach of Booker T. Washington or the policy of the Communist Party, "self-determination in the black belt"; however, its broad legacy extends through radicals of the 1960s like Malcolm X and the Black Panthers to contemporary pan-Africanists like Louis Farrakhan and Ntozake Shange. Furthermore, the Afrocentric aesthetic experiments of the cohort at *Negro World*, as well as similar experiments by writers like Langston Hughes and Richard Wright, were highly instrumental in shaping the black cultural revolution that is known today as the Harlem Renaissance.

DARYN GLASSBROOK

See also Black Star Line; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Garvey, Marcus; Negro World; Pan-Africanism; Universal Negro Improvement Association

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Blackbirds

Blackbirds was the title of a series of musicals with all-black performers, produced and directed by Lew Leslie, a white former vaudevillian. The shows were presented from the late 1920s through the 1930s. They included singing, dancing, and blackface comedy skits and were a stepping-stone to greater fame for



Blackbirds of 1928, Poker scene from the stage production. (Billy Rose Theatre Collection, New York Public Library, New York City. Photographer: White Studio.)

many of the featured performers. *Blackbirds of 1928* was the most successful version of the series; it became the longest-running all-black show of its time.

As the manager of a cabaret at Café de Paris on Broadway in 1921, Lew Leslie (whose original name was Lev Lessinsky) was inspired by the success of Eubie Blake's and Noble Sissle's *Shuffle Along*, an all-black musical hit on Broadway. Leslie began to produce and direct successful all-black shows (*Plantation Revue*, *From Dover to Dixie*, and *From Dixie to Broadway*) at the Café de Paris, in Broadway theaters, and at venues in London and Paris. Leslie added Florence Mills from *Shuffle Along* to the cast of his shows, to great acclaim. The title of Leslie's *Blackbirds* series came from a popular song ("I'm a Little Black Bird") performed by Mills in *From Dover to Dixie*.

After a successful run in Harlem, *Blackbirds of 1926* played to enthusiastic audiences in Paris and London. This production starred Florence Mills. Although her performance in Europe made her an international star, the show was the last before her death in 1927.

The most successful of Leslie's productions, *Blackbirds of 1928*, starred Adelaide Hall, replacing Mills. It also featured Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, whose dancing was a hit with audiences and critics alike. Other performers included Peg Leg Bates, a one-legged tap dancer. Famous songs from *Blackbirds of 1928* included "Diga Diga Do," "I Can't Give You Anything but Love," and "Doing the New Low Down" (a dance number featuring Robinson). The singing and dancing were accompanied by stereotypical sketches such as the blackface poker skit "According to Hoyle." The show also offered parodies of novels and plays, including DuBose Heyward's *Porgy*, and it featured a tribute to Florence Mills sung by Adelaide Hall. *Blackbirds of 1928* played on Broadway for 518 performances, the longest run for an all-black musical to that point.

The *Blackbirds* shows, like Leslie's earlier all-black productions, were intended for all-white audiences and were usually written by whites. The white audiences' stereotypes of blacks were reflected in formulaic numbers: plantation scenes, African primitives, black performers doing skits in blackface, and parodies of popular plays and novels, exploiting the novelty of all-black casts in versions of white works. It was typical at the time for whites to have artistic and financial control of Broadway shows with all-black casts. Despite the stereotypes and racism in the shows, though, many black performers appreciated the chance to appear in productions on the grand scale such as Florenz Ziegfeld's *Follies*.

Leslie never repeated the success he had with *Blackbirds of 1928*. *Blackbirds of 1930*, although it had music and lyrics by the African Americans Eubie Blake and Andy Razaf and starred Ethel Waters, played for only fifty-seven performances on Broadway. *Blackbirds of 1933* played for only twenty-five performances on Broadway, and the critics said that the dancing of Bill Robinson, who was a guest performer, was the only redeeming feature of the show. *Blackbirds of 1939* (the final edition) featured a newcomer, Lena Horne, but played on Broadway for only nine performances.

HEATHER MARTIN

See also Blackface Performance; Blake, Eubie; Hall, Adelaide; Leslie, Lew; Mills, Florence; Musical Theater; Razaf, Andy; Robinson, Bill "Bojangles"; *Shuffle Along*; Waters, Ethel

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Blackface Performance

Blackface performance emerged as a form of theatrical entertainment for American audiences who desired new and more enthralling pastimes. The early minstrel show consisted of white performers who mocked, with excessive exaggeration, the behavior of blacks. They adorned their faces with greasepaint or burnt

cork to create a dark complexion; their lips were painted red, or a large, rounded white circle was left to intensify the exaggeratedly full lips and gaping mouth; the eyes were bulged. A costume of rags was added, for a more effective theatrical and comic reincarnation of the black slave. Blackface performances in the theaters of metropolises like New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago appealed to audiences partly because of the songs, dances, and comic repartee, but also because they reflected ideas about white superiority and class conflict.

Early blackface minstrel performances attracted audiences from among lower-class, middle-class, and upper-class American audiences and became very popular; this form of entertainment served as a common denominator. White audiences enjoyed the racial ambivalence of blackface performance, which reinforced not only white superiority but also black inferiority. The performances often included songs with lyrics extolling the South, dances accompanied by fiddles or banjos, and comic dialogues insisting that the black slave loved his master and plantation life. Often, the blackface roles included caricatures like Sambo, Jim Crow, and Zip Coon, whose songs, dances, and comic routines conveyed dubious interpretations of blackness as well as conflicting depictions of cultural exchange.

During the nineteenth century, some blackface productions offered literary works and new material. William Shakespeare's *Othello* was the blackface production most often performed on American stages; it was first presented in 1751 and was eventually performed more than 400 times. Other popular blackface productions included Samuel Woodworth's *The Forest Rose; or, American Farmers* (1825), which had 126 performances, and R. B. Peake's *The One-Hundred-Pound Note* (1827), which had 109 performances.

During the late 1820s and early 1830s, two main blackface roles were popularized: the first was a ragged, happy southern plantation hand eager to please and serve his master; the second was a black imitation or burlesque of the white dandy. In 1822, Charles Mathews, an English actor, based his one-man blackface act on these images; he also often used the black preacher as his main character. In 1828, Thomas Dartmouth Rice created "Jim Crow," a crippled plantation slave who sang and danced. By 1832, when Rice arrived in New York City after touring along the northeastern seaboard, he was a celebrity: Audiences were eager to see his act, and other performers tried to imitate him.

In the late 1830s, two new types of blackface performance emerged that changed the nature of this kind of theater. Whereas the stage figures Jim Crow and Zip Coon had relied on orchestral accompaniment, the redesigned acts included only the solo banjo or solo dancers. William Whitlock, known as the "king of banjo players," performed simply instrumental pieces or played a tune and sang. Whitlock and John Diamond, who was known Master Diamond and was noted for his skill at "Negro dancing," became one of the most popular blackface comedy teams during the early 1840s; this new form of entertainment became a favorite of white American audiences.

In 1843, blackface entertainment, also commonly known as minstrelsy, was changed forever by several factors. Faced with a financial crisis, the theaters in New York reduced ticket prices and performers' wages. Theatrical ensembles increased in size from duos to teams of three or four, which usually included a banjoist and two dancers. This form became more highly regarded with the success of the Tyrolese Family Ranier, who introduced a family quartet consisting of two women and two men.

Another change in blackface productions was the appearance of black performers, although this practice was not very common. Before the early 1840s, blacks did not legitimately perform on American stages for white audiences; however, they did on rare occasions appear in theaters exclusively for blacks. During the mid-1840s, William Henry Lane, known onstage as Master Juba, became the most renowned, and nearly the only, black performer to appear before white audiences. John Diamond, after being defeated by "Master Juba" in a dance competition in 1844, said that Lane was the best dancer he had ever seen.

In the 1850s, blackface performance became more controversial, and it was banned in some southern cities as issues related to slavery intensified. A financial crisis in 1858 and the onset of the Civil War in June 1861 marked a decline in public interest in blackface performance; however, this decline was temporary: interest revived as social and political unrest subsided. Some black minstrel troupes were formed in the midst of the Civil War, and such troupes became more common after 1865. At first, black minstrels did not usually wear blackface, but by the end of the nineteenth century, white audiences were demanding blackface even for black performers.

Although blacks became more widespread in blackface performance, whites still dominated the circuit for this kind of entertainment, as performers,

managers, and owners. By the late 1870s, white minstrel groups had virtually cornered the market in the United States and abroad, although blacks were making great strides toward eliminating stereotypes and ambivalent interpretations of blackness onstage. Two successful shows—*Clorindy* (1898), which mainly featured a chorus line of female dancers, and *Creole Show* (1899), featuring well-dressed cakewalk teams—were instrumental in establishing new images. Vaudeville, introduced in the 1880s, also offered various opportunities for black performers, despite the fact that two vaudevilles existed, one for blacks and one for whites.

By the twentieth century, professional minstrel troupes were no longer a principal form of entertainment for American audiences. The Harlem Renaissance introduced new types of entertainment, including jazz and the blues; Dizzy Gillespie, Gertrude “Ma” Rainey, and Josephine Baker are just three of the performers who generated this transformation. Nevertheless, blackface performance had served as a foundation for black music and theater in the United States and across the world.

GENYNE HENRY BOSTON

See also Jim Crow; Minstrelsy

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Blacks in Theater

Ideological constructions of African American identity (what the novelist Toni Morrison in our own time has called American Africanisms) were central in the development of American and African American theater long before black people made a collective effort to shape that theater through their artistic contributions. One source of American stage history is blackface minstrelsy, which probably began in the 1820s or 1830s with the song-and-dance routines of performers like T. D. Rice. Rice is said to have created the figure “Jim Crow” after seeing a lame black man dancing on the street in a southern city, possibly Lexington. The legend is that Rice assumed this street performer’s shabby clothes and dance steps, and with his own “Jump Jim Crow” humorously imitated and exaggerated them onstage. Thereafter, the stereotypical traits of this minstrel character—comical shiftlessness, laziness, and bumbling foolishness—became fixed in the American consciousness as defining characteristics of the American Negro. These perceived traits diminished black people’s humanity in the eyes of the nation. Still, the origins of minstrelsy in the cultural productions of enslaved African Americans—their song, dance, and music—gives credence to the designation of minstrelsy as the first authentic American theater form.

During the Harlem Renaissance, the works of “New Negro” performing artists and intellectuals were intended to inscribe on the national consciousness a new and more progressive image of blackness. Believing that social change and racial equality could be achieved through their contributions to the arts, including theater, New Negro artists considered drama a means of waging the struggle for self-determination and self-expression. Their theatrical performances and dramatic works were created in the shadow of minstrelsy. At the same time as mainstream theatrical depictions of African Americans continued to reflect and perpetuate the stereotypical images that had emerged from minstrelsy, the dramatists of the Harlem Renaissance, whose work was often staged in smaller, less commercial spaces, challenged these debasing notions about blacks.

During the early twentieth century, it was easy to discern the continuing presence of minstrel traditions in performances by African Americans in vaudeville and on Broadway. For example, George Walker and Bert Williams—who were thought of as being among the brightest Negro stars on Broadway—frequently depicted recognizable types from the minstrel stage. They billed themselves as “Two Real Coons”: Walker played a smooth, wily dandy, and Williams played a shuffling buffoon. Their talent for comedy made an impression on their audience, and they formed a company that made a successful transition from vaudeville and the minstrel stage to Broadway. The Williams and Walker Company included Jesse Ship, Alex Rogers, Will Marion Cook, and Walker’s wife, the dancer and choreographer Ada Overton Walker. They created a number of musical and comic revues that did well on Broadway, including *In Dahomey* (1902–1905), *Abyssinia* (1905–1907), and *Bandana Land* (1907–1909). Overton Walker choreographed all the shows, and her introduction of the cakewalk in the production of *In Dahomey* made the dance a sensation in both the United States and Europe.

Overton Walker felt that she was in a position to contribute to the dance concert stage. In 1908, she staked a claim for black performers’ participation in classical dance by choreographing a version of *Salome* from the 1907 production of *Bandana Land* and then reprising it at the Roof Garden Theater in 1912. In creating and performing a dance based on the biblical story of the seductress Salome, she joined a number of white female modern dancers who were choreographing similar pieces and who were seen as participating in a more serious classical dance tradition. Overton Walker’s tentative expansion of the vocabulary of black theatrical dance anticipated a greater shift in sensibilities in the mid-1920s. By 1925, Hemsley Winfield—one of the first men to attempt to dance the role of Salome—was involved in theatrical ventures in Yonkers, in Harlem with the Krigwa Players, and in Greenwich Village with the Provincetown Players; and Edna Guy began her studies with the Denishawn School of Dance in New York. These dancer-choreographers all had to contend with an assumption on the part of critics and audiences that black bodies were suitable only for performances of more exotic fare, such as African and Caribbean dance, or for vernacular dances that made use of jazz or blues.

Bert Williams himself faced obstacles when he wanted to take roles that strayed from the limited possibilities offered to blacks in the popular imagination.

After the Williams and Walker Company disbanded in 1909, Williams spent the next nine years with the Ziegfeld Follies, performing routines that showcased his mastery of comic timing and mimicry but repeated the sad-sack type he was known for on Broadway. Williams was a well-read man whose formal speech suggested considerable complexity beneath the simple types he depicted, but he found no other vehicles for his gifts for humor and mimicry. He famously remarked: “I have never been able to discover that there was anything disgraceful in being a colored man. But I have often found it inconvenient—in America.”

In the early years of the twentieth century, being a black performer in popular theater entailed other inconveniences in addition to the limited range of roles. The Theater Owners’ Booking Association (TOBA), also known as “Toby”—a consortium of forty theaters, mostly in the South—was one of several outlets for black entertainers and audiences in the 1910s and 1920s. But it was controlled primarily by whites, and performers said that TOBA stood for “tough on black asses” because their wages were low and unreliable and their acts were subject to unexpected cancellation. Moreover, as performers traveled through the segregated South, they often suffered the indignities of Jim Crow in transportation and housing. Other, smaller circuits existed, including the Dudley circuit, which was run by the African American producer and theater owner Sherman “S. H.” Dudley and operated from 1911 to 1916; and the Southern Consolidated Circuit (SCC), which operated from 1916 to 1925. After the demise of his own circuit, Dudley owned a controlling interest in the SCC. He attempted to provide an alternative for black performers by regulating hiring and payment practices and minimizing the corruption that characterized relations between performers and theatrical managers and agents. He also owned more than a dozen theaters and produced, wrote, and acted in several successful musicals.

Audiences in New York and around the United States showed an obvious and enduring interest in black musical and comedic performances. The Harlem Renaissance is noteworthy, however, for a groundswell of interest in serious African American drama. This shift in what American audiences were prepared to see in depictions of black life was marked by the success, in the autumn of 1917, of Emily Hapgood and Ridgely Torrence’s three one-act plays. At the Garden Street Theater, Hapgood produced Torrence’s *The Rider of Dreams*, a voodoo tragedy; *Simon the Cyrenian*, a passion play; and *Granny Maumee*, a comedy. The

all-black casts enacted dignified characters that were the antithesis of the minstrel types mainstream audiences were accustomed to seeing onstage. The dignity of these roles made the productions notable, as did the critics' acclaim and the audience's positive response.

This landmark performance was followed by a number of other noteworthy dramatic performances by black actors. In 1920, Charles Gilpin captivated audiences in Eugene O'Neill's *Emperor Jones*. Gilpin played Brutus Jones, a con artist who becomes the emperor of an unnamed Caribbean island. Jones' subjects eventually discover his deception, and they pursue him to his death. Critics praised Gilpin for the magnetism and power of his performance; and the play eventually moved to Broadway, where it was a huge hit. Gilpin also toured the country, playing the lead in some 200 performances in more than thirty cities between 1921 and 1922. Gilpin's acting career had begun several years earlier, when he performed at the turn of the twentieth century as a singer and dancer. As his reputation grew, he was hired to start up Harlem's Lafayette Theater in December 1915. Gilpin left that position, however, and went on to play Rev. William Custis, an "old slave," in John Drinkwater's *Abraham Lincoln* on Broadway; he then took what would become his greatest role, Brutus Jones.

Paul Robeson, Gilpin's heir as the stage's great black dramatic actor, made his theatrical debut in Mary Hoyt Wilborg's *Taboo* (1921), and he was an understudy in Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle's pioneering musical *Shuffle Along*. But it was a revival of *The Emperor Jones* in 1924 that made Robeson's career—along with his star turn the same year in O'Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings*, which was also a sensation. *All God's Chillun Got Wings* examined miscegenation and costarred Mary Blair. After these performances, Robeson was offered roles in international and Broadway productions, including the Broadway revival of Oscar Hammerstein II and Jerome Kern's *Show Boat* in 1932. Robeson's rendition of "Ol' Man River" in *Show Boat* became a classic.

Other notable theater events included, in 1926, the Provincetown Players' production of *In Abraham's Bosom*, which won a Pulitzer Prize in 1927. The cast featured Rose McClendon, Abbie Mitchell, Frank Wilson, and Jules Bledsoe. Also in 1927, the Theater Guild produced *Porgy*, Dorothy and DuBose Heyward's adaptation of his novel of the same name. In 1930, at the end of the first decade of African Americans' participation in American legitimate theater, Marc Connelly's *The Green Pastures*—a play based on Roark

Bradford's tales of southern folk life, *Old Man Adam and His Chillun*—was produced. Richard Harrison, playing "De Lawd," led an all-black cast that included Rose McClendon, Frank Wilson, Georgette Harvey, Leigh Whipper, and Jack Carter; the Hall Johnson Choir also performed. *The Green Pastures* won the Pulitzer Prize and had one of the longest runs in the history of African American theater.

In addition to these successful stage productions, which were presented in both large and small spaces, there were one-act plays written and performed in more intimate venues that offered some of the most innovative work being done in the American theater at the time. Eugene O'Neill, for example, was one of three associate directors of the Provincetown Players, a theater company in Greenwich Village that produced his "Negro drama," which included *The Emperor Jones* and *All God's Chillun Got Wings*. O'Neill and his associates hoped to rejuvenate America theater by exploring contemporary topics and using native themes such as race. He, George Cram Cook, Susan Glaspell, and Edna St. Vincent Millay initiated the "little theater" movement, which grew out of the discontent of actors, writers, and directors with the obvious commercialism of large Broadway-style productions. Experimental theater companies like the Provincetown Players strove to create alternatives to the formulaic dramas and gaudy spectacles that they considered the primary fare of more commercial venues.

These collaborations between white writers, directors, and producers and black actors and musicians left a mixed legacy. Many of these plays won popular and critical acclaim, but they still conveyed deep-rooted racial attitudes and perpetuated stereotypes of black characters as inferior and primitive. Because they kept alive negative images of African Americans, the plays often received mixed reviews from black audiences and critics. At the same time, African American playwrights had to struggle to make their voices heard in a climate of hostility or indifference. Many black writers considered themselves lucky if a church or community group staged a reading, and it was improbable that their scripts would ever make the transition from page to stage.

For example, young playwrights like Zora Neale Hurston and Marieta Bonner would have gone unrecognized if not for the support of Negro journals such as *Crisis* and *Opportunity*. Hurston is more widely known as a novelist, but in 1925, her play *Color Struck* won second prize in the drama division in a contest run by *Opportunity*. This play had originally been

published in *Fire!!*, a journal produced by younger, more radical members of Harlem's literary establishment, who wrote for a primarily black audience. *Color Struck* explores the issue of "colorism" in a black community in Florida, showing the damage done to a single black woman's consciousness by the community's assignment of privilege according to degrees of darkness and lightness of complexion. This play also features a cakewalk contest as a communal ritual, underscoring Hurston's interest in vernacular culture.

Marieta Bonner's plays were rarely if ever staged. She was most widely known as a short-story writer, but in 1927, she wrote three plays: *Exit: An Illusion*, *The Pot Maker*, and *The Purple Flower*. Both *Exit: An Illusion* and *The Purple Flower* won first prize for playwriting in a contest in *Crisis* that year. Bonner had graduated in 1922 from Radcliffe College, where she majored in comparative literature and became fluent in German. Her education introduced her to German expressionist drama of the 1920s, and her own plays reveal its influence. Like the German expressionists, Bonner wanted to expose social truths and shock society out of its complacency. In *The Purple Flower*, for example, Bonner relies on allegory more than realism to explore the themes of racial injustice and resistance. The play centers on a character, Old Man, who is a member of the "Us's," representative of African Americans, who are pitted against the more powerful and exploitative "Sundry White Devils." Old Man eventually realizes that his passive resistance to the injustices of the White Devils is misguided and that the only avenue to liberation is violence. The play ends with a call to revolution.

Bonner's abstraction of racial themes contrasted with a dominant trend toward realism among African American dramatists as they addressed social and political themes. The theatrical counterculture that the "little theaters" represented could be found in black circles as well. By the mid-1920s, every major urban center had an African American theater. Such theaters developed because members of the black middle class were seeking spaces for cultural expression and enrichment and were also contending with apparently entrenched racial segregation and even with interracial violence. Some of the best-known theaters were the Harlem Experimental Theatre, Lafayette Players, and Hapgood Players in New York; the Krigwa Theater of New York and Washington, D.C.; the Howard University Players Theater and Dunbar Players Theater of Washington, D.C.; the Ethiopian Art Theater and Folk Theater of Chicago; the Dunbar

Theatre of Philadelphia; the Dixwell Players Theater of New Haven, Connecticut; and the Karamu House's Gilpin Players Theater in Cleveland. These spaces were situated in black communities and aimed their projects toward a black audience; they staged readings and presented plays and musicals by black playwrights.

The most influential African American theaters were the Lafayette in Harlem and the Ethiopian Art Theater in Chicago. The Lafayette opened in 1915 and for about ten years catered to a black audience, often staging plays from Broadway that had been altered to suit the tastes of this audience, and showcasing black casts in productions originally written for white actors. The Ethiopian Art Theater was founded in Chicago in 1923 by Raymond O'Neill and was sponsored by Sherwood Anderson's wife. The troupe made its debut in New York that same year at the Frazee Theatre with a series of plays that included Willis Richardson's *The Chip Woman's Fortune*, Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, and a jazz version of Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*. As noted above, the group's production of *Taboo*, a study of voodoo by Mary Hoyt Wilborg, started Paul Robeson on the road to stardom.

Two other theaters are worthy of notice because they were affiliated with W. E. B. Du Bois and Alain Locke, who were leaders of the New Negro movement and important supporters and shapers of African American theater. Du Bois's Krigwa Players, who met in the basement of the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library in Harlem, had their inaugural season in 1926. In 1927, they produced two plays by Eulalie Spence (1894–1981): *Her* and *Foreign Mail*. Spence's plays were acclaimed by critics in the black press, but Spence encountered opposition from Du Bois because she refused to treat her art as propaganda. She did not believe that drama could compel white society to empathize with the victims of lynching and rape; instead, she tried to portray black life realistically. In Washington, D.C., Alain Locke and Montgomery Gregory organized the Howard University Players in order to cultivate African American drama. The Howard Players produced *Simon the Cyrenian* and *The Emperor Jones* in March 1921; in the latter play, Charles Gilpin and Jasper Deeter had the leading roles, and students filled the supporting roles. The Howard group also produced plays written by students in Howard University's drama department, as well as one-act plays by Thelma Duncan and Willis Richardson.

Du Bois and Locke were important in black theater during this period because they controlled the means

of and possibilities for publication and production through their books (such as Locke's anthology *The New Negro*), journals (such as *Crisis*), and theater, which provided the primary venues for black playwrights. For this reason, Du Bois's belief in art as propaganda, Locke's insistence that authentic black drama must emphasize folk life, and their shared conviction that art can be an instrument of social change were prominent features of much drama written and produced during this era. This was particularly true of the community theaters that provided an alternative to large commercial Broadway spectacles. However, although both Du Bois and Locke believed that art could change society, Locke did resist the temptation to make art synonymous with propaganda, believing instead that the African American folk experience provided rich material for drama and gave voice to free and full self-expression. Locke was instrumental in developing black drama during this period. He attended Georgia Douglas Johnson's literary soirees at her home in Washington, D.C., and sponsored both her and Willis Richardson's plays, including Richardson's *Mortgaged* at Howard University in 1924. Locke reviewed and critiqued Georgia Johnson's and Richardson's plays and included Richardson's *Compromise* in *The New Negro*.

Du Bois's definition of "race drama" gave a nationalist dimension to the New Negro manifestation of the "little theater" movement. Referring to his Krigwa Little Theatre, Du Bois wrote in 1926 that African American theater must follow four principles: it should be "about us," that is, with plots about black life; "by us," written by African American authors who by birth, affiliation, or both had an understanding of what it meant to be black; "for us," catering primarily to black audiences; and "near us," in black neighborhoods.

New Negro dramatists tended to treat black folk culture seriously. They believed in art as propaganda, and they intended to provide alternatives to mainstream depictions of black primitivity, exoticism, and decadence. They also believed that small theaters producing work with black themes contributed more to black communities than large Broadway-style productions. In this sense, then, it would be incorrect to conclude that black dramatists were absent from the more commercial venues solely because they were unable to find a receptive audience there. They intentionally wrote one-act plays to be performed in churches, meeting halls, college theaters, and private homes.

Georgia Douglas Johnson and Willis Richardson—the most prolific playwrights of the 1920s—offer two models of dramatic creativity during the Harlem Renaissance. Although both lived in Washington, D.C., they were identified as artists of the renaissance, and their plays presented the characters' racial pride, resistance to oppression, and moral rectitude. Richardson joined luminaries such as Alain Locke, Jean Toomer, and Jessie Redmond Fauset at Johnson's weekly literary salon, which provided a fertile ground for black theater. Another source of nourishment was the existence of a solid black middle class in Washington; this middle class flourished because of the city's nonsegregated government jobs and excellent schools, including Howard University. Moreover, Washington's large black population provided a ready audience for non-musical drama.

Georgia Johnson published two books of poetry before 1925, but she mostly deferred her creative and professional ambitions in order to raise her family and help her husband, who was a lawyer in Washington. When her husband died in 1925, Georgia Johnson began to flourish artistically. In 1926, her play *Blue Blood* received an honorable mention in a contest in *Opportunity*; in 1927, her play *Plumes* took first prize in *Opportunity's* contest. *Plumes* introduces a mother, Charity Brown, who must decide whether to pay for an expensive operation for her daughter or bury the daughter in style; she is also torn between conventional medicine and her belief in herbalism. Ultimately, Charity's hesitation in deciding costs the daughter her life, and the mother buries the daughter in grand style. This play was produced twice in 1928, in Harlem and Chicago.

Willis Richardson studied drama, rhetoric, and English under the playwright Mary Burrill at the respected M Street High School in Washington, D.C. In 1923, his play *The Chip Woman's Fortune* was the first nonmusical drama by an African American to be produced on Broadway. He won the *Crisis* playwriting award twice, in 1925 and 1926.

Antilynching plays are an important subset of the serious dramatic productions written and performed during this period. From the mid-1910s through the 1920s, several antilynching plays by African Americans were produced. Dramatists such as Mary Burrill, Georgia Douglas Johnson, and Angelina Weld Grimké wrote in response to the mob violence that broke out in both southern and northern cities. They used realistic settings and characters and vernacular language to address social injustice. These women playwrights

created strong female figures who had to contend with the effects of racial violence. Grimké's *Rachel*, the first full-length antilynching drama, was written and produced in 1916 in Washington, D.C., by the drama committee of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The play was taken up and performed in regional theaters as well, including the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York, and in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It recounts the decision of a sensitive, educated African American woman to forgo motherhood rather than bring children into a world where they would be hated and effaced. Rachel has learned that, before she was born, her father and older brother were lynched in the South; she realizes that black mothers cannot protect their loved ones, and she resolves to keep future generations of black children from the fate of being victimized by racial violence. The original title of *Rachel* was *Blessed Are the Barren*.

Georgia Douglas Johnson wrote three antilynching plays: *A Sunday Morning in the South* (1925), which was submitted to the Federal Theatre Project between 1935 and 1939 but was never produced or published; *Blue Eyed Black Boy*; and *Safe*. All three plays are sentimental, portray folk life, and make a plea for society to recognize the damage wrought by lynching.

Mary Burrill, Willis Richardson's drama teacher at the M Street High School, wrote two plays—*Aftermath* (1919) and *They That Sit in Darkness* (1919)—dealing with lynching and birth control. Both were published in journals: *They That Sit in Darkness* was published in the *Birth Control Review* in September 1919, and *Aftermath* in *Liberator* in April 1919. Du Bois's Krigwa Players produced *Aftermath* in 1928.

Although many of these productions received critical acclaim when they were produced in small regional theaters, and although race dramas by white playwrights were popular, black dramatists did not find an enthusiastic reception on Broadway. With the exception of some sketch writers and an occasional librettist for musical shows, black writers did not often have opportunities to create works for Broadway. From 1917 to 1930, fifteen playwrights presented works on the Broadway stage that dealt with African American themes and characters, but only five black playwrights found a stage for their plays about black life. When blacks did manage this feat, they were met with skepticism about the interest of a mainstream audience. Willis Richardson's *The Chip Woman's Fortune* did make the leap from "little theater" venues to Broadway. It was first produced by the Ethiopian Art

Theater in Chicago, eventually moved to Washington, then moved to the Lafayette Theater in New York, and finally—in May 1923—came to New York's Frazee Theater, where (as mentioned above) it became the first drama by an African American to be produced on Broadway. It was, however, a commercial failure, as was Frank Wilson's *Meek Mose* (1928). Garland Anderson's *Appearances* (1925), which focused on Christian Science, cannot strictly be called an African American drama. However, it was performed by a mixed cast of fourteen whites and three blacks, and a black actor played the principal character. Wallace Thurman's *Harlem* (1929), written in collaboration with William Jordan Rapp, a white man, was a melodramatic treatment of a family's attempt to survive after moving to Harlem from the South.

The few plays that reached the stage were often presented on the outskirts of Broadway, in neighborhoods that raised doubts about the respectability of the productions and their casts. However, the tremendous popularity of *Shuffle Along* caused producers to reconsider their attitude toward black productions.

Shuffle Along was by far the most popular musical among both white and black audiences during the Harlem Renaissance. Before it became a hit on Broadway, it had first been given for black audiences at the Howard University Theater in Washington, D.C., and at the Dunbar Theater in Philadelphia. In 1921, *Shuffle Along* opened at the Sixty-third Street Theater. This landmark production had music, lyrics, choreography, a cast, and a production that were entirely created, made up of, or controlled by African Americans. James Hubert (Eubie) Blake had collaborated with the lyricist Noble Sissle and the comedy duo Flournoy Miller and Aubrey Lyles to write the music and dialogue for *Shuffle Along*. Blake and Sissle began their careers in vaudeville, performing ragtime, jazz, and sentimental melodies. Blake's "I'm Just Wild About Harry" and "Love Will Find a Way" were only two of the many songs from the show that became American standards, and the show was so popular that it ran continuously on Broadway until 1928. It also inaugurated the careers of Paul Robeson, Josephine Baker, and Florence Mills.

Shuffle Along takes place in "Jimtown," a fictional southern black city. The plot revolves around a mayoral election in which there are three candidates: Steve Jenkins and Sam Peck, the unscrupulous partners of a local grocery store; and Harry Walton, an honorable man whose love for Jessie Williams will go unrequited unless he wins the election, which he is expected to

lose. This musical succeeded in striking an unlikely balance: it depicted black characters who had integrity while also appealing to audiences' nostalgia for minstrel humor. *Shuffle Along* had stock characters such as the "Uncle," actors performed in blackface, and the female dancers were dressed provocatively. Moreover, Miller and Lyles's comic routines used the racial humor that made their vaudeville routines so popular. But the show also had noble characters, attractive, well-dressed young people who spoke standard English, and a romantic black couple.

The audiences who flocked to *Shuffle Along* also attended other musicals, including *Put and Take* (1921); *Strut Miss Lizzie*, *Plantation Revue*, *Oh Joy*, *Liza*, and *Runnin' Wild* (1923); *The Chocolate Dandies* and *Dixie to Broadway* (1924); *Lucky Sambo* (1925); *Blackbirds of 1926* and *Blackbirds of 1928*; and *Africana* (1927). These musicals introduced a number of talented performers and made many songs and dances created by African Americans popular with mainstream audiences. For example, *Runnin' Wild* introduced the Charleston to America and the world and helped to define the jazz age. *Chocolate Dandies* starred Josephine Baker and was a step in her path to international stardom. Florence Mills became a star in 1924 in *From Dixie to Broadway* and went on to even greater success in Lew Leslie's *Blackbirds*. Next to Baker, Mills was the most successful African American female performer of the 1920s. Mills was a protégée of Ada Overton, from whom she learned to cakewalk. She began performing in vaudeville as a child and later joined the Williams and Walker Company. Going by the names "Little Baby Flo," "Little Twinks," and "Little Blackbird," she became popular in numerous musical comedies. At the peak of her career (1921–1927) she appeared in *Shuffle Along*, *Plantation Review*, and *Dover to Dixie* (which was renamed *Dixie to Broadway* when it moved to Broadway). In 1926, she performed in Paris in *La revue nègre*, the cabaret act that made Josephine Baker a star. Mills's final performance was in *Blackbirds of 1926*, which opened at the Alhambra Theater in Harlem before touring Europe. Finally, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson dazzled audiences with his complex, improvisational footwork onstage and on the screen. He appeared in a number of Broadway shows including *Brown Buddies* (1930), *Blackbirds of 1926* and 1933, and *The Hot Mikado* (1939).

The talent, ambition, and vision of African American playwrights, actors, dancers, composers, and musicians during the first decades of the twentieth century are indisputable. More debatable is their success in

achieving the social change to which so many New Negro artists aspired. Nonetheless, the period was one of newfound freedom of artistic expression and creativity. It is a historical juncture that contributed much to the emergence of a new, more modern, and more progressive image of the African American as an artist and a human being.

DAPHNE LAMOTHE

See also Antilynching Crusade; Authors: 4—Playwrights; Blackface Performance; Community Theater; Crisis, The; Dance; Du Bois, W. E. B., Fire!!; Liberator; Literature: 3—Drama; Locke, Alain; Minstrelsy; Musical Theater; 135th Street Library; Opportunity; Opportunity Literary Contests; Theater; Theater Owners' Booking Association; *specific people, plays, theaters, and theater groups*

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Blake, Eubie

In a professional career that spanned more than eighty years, James Hubert (Eubie) Blake was celebrated, successful, and influential as a ragtime pianist, a vaudeville performer, a songwriter, and a composer of musicals. Blake wrote at least 300 compositions and also recorded hundreds of songs in arrangements for solo piano, small orchestras, and other configurations.

Blake was the only surviving child of two former slaves. When he was six, his parents bought him an organ and sent him to an instructor, hoping that he



“Charleston Rag” by Eubie Blake, c. 1917: a page of the composer’s manuscript. (Library of Congress.)

would take up religious music, but he was irresistibly drawn to the ragtime and popular music that he heard blaring from neighborhood brothels, nightclubs, and parades. His professional career began when he was fifteen, in a local brothel where he composed his ragtime masterpiece “Charleston Rag” in 1899. Blake’s early career as a ragtime pianist included playing in traveling shows and taverns in Baltimore and Atlantic City, New Jersey; in 1907, he worked in Baltimore’s prominent Goldfield Hotel. Blake was one of the first ragtime players to publish songs: In 1911, his “Chevy Chase” and “Fizz Water Rag” were printed as sheet music. In New York he encountered flashy, competitive ragtime pianists who inspired him to develop his own virtuosic style, characterized by syncopated right-hand figures, steadily descending bass lines, and—because of his unusually long fingers—extended octave runs.

In 1915, Blake met the singer and lyricist Noble Sissle, with whom he would have a longtime partnership. Almost immediately, the two embarked on a series of collaborations that would bring them fame and fortune and make musical theater history. Their first

song, “It’s All Your Fault” (1915), was popularized by the legendary vaudeville singer Sophie Tucker. Sissle was responsible for Blake’s move to New York in 1916 and his employment by the most famous black bandleader of the day, James Reese Europe. In 1919, Sissle and Blake formed a successful traveling vaudeville act, the Dixie Duo. They rejected the standard black-face makeup, ragged minstrel attire, and “comic ducky” behavior expected of African American performers. Wearing black tuxedos, the dapper Sissle and Blake presented a classy act that featured dynamic piano playing and singing of fresh, original material—with none of the usual stereotyped clowning, exaggerated dialect, or mugging. The Dixie Duo performed on the road, in Harlem, and at New York’s prestigious Palace Theater, and Blake and Sissle’s act was considered among the best of the 1920s and was widely imitated.

In 1921, Sissle and Blake collaborated with the comedy team Flournoy Miller and Aubrey Lyles to produce the most acclaimed musical of the period, *Shuffle Along*. This has been widely described as a “Broadway show” that paved the way for a succession of black musicals on Broadway, but *Shuffle Along* actually had its very successful run (fourteen months, 500 or more performances) in a hastily refurbished lecture hall that opened as the Sixty-third Street Theater, far away from Broadway’s main entertainment district. *Shuffle Along* was also a hit on tour throughout the United States for three years after its New York run. Its unprecedented success and its mixture of lively dancing, hilarious comedy, charismatic actors, and appealing music set a standard for the style and format of future musicals, drew attention to all forms of black entertainment (especially in Harlem), and introduced stars like Florence Mills, Paul Robeson, and Josephine Baker. *Shuffle Along* had a number of songs by Sissle and Blake that became hits nationwide, including “Bandana Days,” “I’m Just Wild About Harry,” and “Love Will Find a Way.” Although syncopation was to remain a characteristic of Eubie Blake’s music, this show gave him an opportunity to turn from ragtime to composing slower ballads influenced by light opera; he did not compose rags again for over twenty years.

Blake and Sissle were the first African Americans to appear in a sound film: they performed two songs in *De Forest Phonofilm* (1923), which premiered in New York. They also wrote other musicals together—the mildly successful *Chocolate Dandies* (1924), for which Blake was also the conductor and music director; and unsuccessful remakes of their earlier hit *Shuffle Along*

in 1933 and 1952. Shortly after a European tour of their vaudeville act in 1927, Sissle and Blake split up as a team, but on rare occasions thereafter they did collaborate on some projects.

Blake continued to write songs with other lyricists, as well as record and compose for shows. The revue *Hot Rhythm* (1930) featured his hit “Loving You the Way I Do.” He teamed up with the lyricist Andy Razaf and produced twenty-eight songs for Lew Leslie’s *Blackbirds of 1930*, which included several hit standards: one was “You’re Lucky to Me” (popularized by Louis Armstrong’s recording in 1930), and another was Blake’s most famous composition, the sentimental ballad “Memories of You.”

During the Depression, black Broadway musicals declined. Blake then formed a studio orchestra that made recordings, performed in plays, and appeared in the films *Harlem Is Heaven* and *Pie, Pie Blackbird* (both 1930). He became somewhat less active in the 1930s, but he and Razaf produced new music for *Swing It!* (1937, a show sponsored by the Works Progress Administration) and the revue *Tan Manhattan* (1940). A song from the latter, “I’ll Take a Nickel for a Dime,” became a standard in lounge acts after being featured by the singer Joe Williams in the 1950s.

During World War II, Blake headed a USO touring troupe and played at hospitals and military bases throughout the United States. In 1945, Blake—now a widower, and an avid ladies’ man—married for the second time; his new wife, Marion, became his business manager.

When his musical style was no longer in vogue and he was financially secure, Blake planned a quiet retirement. But he became bored by leisure and enrolled at New York University, where he studied the Shillinger system of musical composition between 1946 and 1950. In 1948, “I’m Just Wild About Harry” became a hit again (and introduced Blake’s name to a new generation) when Harry Truman used it as a presidential campaign theme song. Blake’s life changed unexpectedly and dramatically in the 1950s when a ragtime revival—inspired by the book *They All Played Ragtime* (1950)—focused attention on him as one of the style’s few remaining original figures. Suddenly he had a new career, performing (though sporadically), lecturing, recording, and giving interviews. Blake was now recognized as the elder statesman of ragtime.

In his seventies and eighties, Blake proved to be much more than a charming relic of a bygone era. In the late 1960s, he made several appearances that proved that he had lost none of his ability. He was still

a technically adept and innovative pianist who practiced regularly and continued to develop new songs and creative ideas. Blake’s later style dazzled musicians and audiences alike. It featured dramatic chord flurries, syncopated right-hand melodies and runs, dynamic improvised breaks, and steady “wobble-wobble” bass lines; it represented an original and personalized blend of ragtime, show music, jazz, classical music, and Harlem stride piano.

Blake’s career reached even greater heights after the release of his recording *The Eighty-six Years of Eubie Blake* (1969, Columbia), which made him an international star during the 1970s. He was now featured on television talk shows, in newspapers and magazines, and at concert halls and music festivals around the world. He received numerous honors and awards from universities and social, civic, and professional organizations. In 1972, at age eighty-nine, he formed Eubie Blake Music (EBM), publishing music and producing records (mainly his own). A successful Broadway revue, *Eubie!* (1978), featured his music and focused even more attention on him. He maintained an active schedule of appearances until age ninety-eight. Blake died in 1983, five days after his hundredth birthday.

Blake left an important legacy. During his long, productive, and prosperous career, he had been an early ragtime virtuoso, a songwriter, a defiant vaudeville entertainer, and a trend-setting composer of musical shows. With his compositions, recordings, and performances, he transformed rags, classical pieces, marches, show music, ballads, and (rarely) blues into his own distinctive, dramatic syncopated style. Throughout his life he was a pioneer who influenced the direction, perception, and visibility of black entertainment and oversaw its leap into the American mainstream during and after the Harlem Renaissance.

Biography

James Hubert (Eubie) Blake, a pianist and composer in ragtime and musical theater, was born 7 February 1883 in Baltimore, Maryland. He studied music at New York University and received a bachelor of arts degree in 1950. He founded the music publishing and record company Eubie Blake Music (EBM) in 1972. Blake was a member of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) and the American Federation of Musicians. His honors and awards include the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1981) and honorary doctorates from Brooklyn College

Blake, Eubie

(1973), Dartmouth College (1974), Morgan State University (1973), New England Conservatory of Music (1974), Pratt Institute (1975), and Rutgers University (1974). Blake died 12 February 1983 in Brooklyn, New York.

MICHAEL WHITE

See also Baker, Josephine; Blackbirds; Chocolate Dandies; Europe, James Reese; Lyles, Aubrey; Miller, Flournoy; Mills, Florence; Musical Theater; Razaf, Andy; Robeson, Paul; Shuffle Along; Sissle, Noble; Vaudeville

Selected Compositions

- "Bandana Days." 1921. (With Noble Sissle.)
"Charleston Rag." 1899. (Originally "Sounds of Africa.")
"Chevy Chase." 1911.
"Fizz Water." 1911.
"Gypsy Blues." 1921. (With Noble Sissle.)
"I'm Just Wild About Harry." 1921. (With Noble Sissle.)
"It's All Your Fault." 1915 (With Noble Sissle and E. Nelson.)
"Love Will Find a Way." 1921. (With Noble Sissle.)
"Memories of You." 1930. (With Andy Razaf.)
"Thinking of You." 1924. (With Noble Sissle.)
"You Were Meant for Me." 1922. (With Noble Sissle.)
"You're Lucky to Me." 1930. (With Andy Razaf.)

Musicals

- Blackbirds of 1930.* 1930.
The Chocolate Dandies. 1924.
Shuffle Along. 1921.
Swing It. 1937.
Tan Manhattan. 1940.

Selected Recordings

- The Eighty-six Years of Eubie Blake* (Columbia: C2S847, 1969)
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Bledsoe, Jules

For two decades, Jules Bledsoe was the most famous African American singer of classical music, as well as an actor and composer. He made his professional singing debut on April 20, 1924, at Aeolian Hall in New York City, performing the music of Bach, Brahms, Handel, and Purcell, then began a career performing on concert stages throughout the United States and Europe. A baritone with a wide range, he sang evocatively in several languages. He performed with some of the leading orchestras of the day, including the Boston Symphony (1926) and the British Broadcast Company Symphony in London (1936). In 1931, he presented a program at Carnegie Hall. Bledsoe was also a talented actor, receiving critical praise for his role as Tizan, the Voodoo King, in W. Frank Harling's opera *Deep River* (1926), the first opera performed in the United States with a racially mixed cast. Bledsoe performed in Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Aida* with the Cleveland Stadium Opera in 1932, with the Chicago Opera Company in 1933, and with the Cosmopolitan Opera Company in New York in 1934; and he sang the leading role in the opera *The Emperor Jones* by Louis Gruenberg in 1934.

Bledsoe is perhaps best known for creating the role of Joe in Jerome Kern's musical *Show Boat*, in which he sang "Ol' Man River." Kern had conceived the character and written the song, which became an American classic, specifically for Bledsoe, after hearing him sing. Bledsoe played the role through the run of the show at the Ziegfeld Theater, but Paul Robeson, not Bledsoe, was eventually chosen to play the role in England and in the film version.

Bledsoe went on to other roles and other work. In 1927, he was hired as a member of the music staff at the Roxy Theater in New York City, becoming the first African American to have an ongoing position on Broadway. He left the Roxy in 1930 to resume his concert schedule in the United States and Europe. He moved to Hollywood in the early 1940s and played dramatic roles in *Drums of the Congo* (1942) and other feature films.

Bledsoe wrote several of the songs he performed, sometimes borrowing the language and style of spirituals and folk music. One of his songs, "Pagan Prayer," was based on a poem by Countee Cullen; his one opera, *Bondage*, was based on the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe. He also wrote patriotic songs, including "Ode to America" (1941), which he dedicated to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and "Ballad for Americans." He composed a series of songs, *African Suite*, for voices and orchestra. Bledsoe was well aware of the privileges he enjoyed as a successful black artist in a segregated country. In an article he wrote for the July 1928 issue of *Opportunity*—"Has the Negro a Place in the Theater?"—he described the responsibilities that he believed accompanied those privileges.

Biography

Julius Lorenzo Cobb Bledsoe was born 29 December 1897 in Waco, Texas. He graduated (as valedictorian) from Central Texas Academy in Waco in 1914 and from Bishop College (with a B.A.) in Marshall, Texas, in 1918; was in the ROTC at Virginia Union University, 1918–1919; and studied medicine at Columbia University in New York City, 1920–1924. He was a professional singer and actor, appearing in concerts, onstage, and in films, 1924–1941; and a composer, 1931–1942. Bledsoe died 14 July 1943 in Hollywood, California.

CYNTHIA BILY

See also Cullen, Countee; Emperor Jones, The; Opportunity; Robeson, Paul; Show Boat; Singers

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Blues

The music known as blues (or as "the blues") can be counted among the remarkable achievements of the twentieth century, not only in its own right but as an influence on artistic production in a variety of genres and settings. To a number of writers and artists of the Harlem Renaissance—who were seeking connections with their African and African American past and a native idiom that would capture the spirit of the lives of many blacks in America—blues provided an ideal source and an ideal vehicle for their creative output. Although the influence of Europe is clear in the language (English) and strophic elements of blues, several other characteristics are derived from African modes of performance, including its strong rhythmic emphasis, syncopation, percussive techniques, call-and-response patterns, blue notes, improvised lyric moments, musical instruments, and vocal timbres. Also, the griot performers in African societies may have been figurative ancestors of the African American blues singer. Particularly in its use of integrated polyrhythms and antiphonal techniques, we can see that blues has affinities with African societal structures and life, which were communally oriented and in which art was, intentionally, an integral part of everyday life rather than an adjunct. One can also trace a number of these elements in African American music that preceded the blues, such as spirituals, jubilees, and ragtime: this earlier music surely bequeathed some African strains to the blues tradition.

In form, blues loosely follows a relatively small number of musical and lyric stanza patterns. The combination of the field holler vocal with a harmonic pattern common to European-derived ballads seems to have produced the stanza forms that are used most frequently in blues. Those stanzas most often consist formally of variations of the chord progression I–IV–V lasting for eight bars, twelve bars, sixteen bars, or

occasionally some other number of bars. Most frequently, blues songs tend toward a roughly twelve-bar musical pattern. This is described as a “tendency” because the singer could frequently draw out the length of a word or line to indefinite length, as frequently occurred in the work songs and field hollers that preceded the blues. This practice was based on the feelings and exigencies of the moment, and therefore a song could be structured in emotional or social terms rather than according to strict, metronomic formal demands. With regard to the lyrics, there are also a number of pattern variations. For twelve-bar blues, there are usually three roughly equal four-bar segments that rhyme in one of the following strophic patterns: one “line” or thought repeated three times (AAA); one line repeated twice and completed by a different line that end rhymes (AAB); one line sung once and then completed by a second line, with the end rhyme repeated twice (ABB); or a rhyming couplet completed in four bars followed by a refrain of eight bars. The other eight-bar, sixteen-bar, and longer blues stanzas frequently present some kind of variation or adaptation of these patterns.

Some commentators consider this apparent simplicity a limitation; but for blues performers, the basic patterns are a challenge—the performer tries to maintain an essential historical and emotional connection to the community while creating a distinctive individual voice that, through infinite variation and invention, avoids any descent into monotony or self-caricature. Additionally, within the basic structure a great deal of variation is possible in performing techniques, instrumental combinations, and settings. In fact, a wide array of blues styles developed over the years, influenced by geographical, chronological, and social factors, including the dominance of a local musical figure in the blues community. All the while, blues has offered musicians a remarkable opportunity to explore a variety of themes and issues: the complexities of male and female relationships, domestic violence, alcoholism, natural disasters, social protest, labor difficulties, alternative sexual identities, and many others. In fact, blues can be seen as a forum for raising important issues, if not explicitly, then implicitly, and therefore as an important means of creating and sustaining a voice for those who are frequently voiceless in the African American community. These were voices that many creative artists of the Harlem Renaissance wanted to hear, represent, and express in their work.

It was no accident that the musical genre known as blues and the literary movement known as the Harlem

Renaissance both emerged on the national and international scene in the 1920s. Both traced their roots back to the nineteenth century during the period when the first generation of freeborn African Americans were coming of age. At this point, most African Americans were facing for the first time the prospect of life outside the oppressive plantation system, and there was no older generation with experience in such a context to help them deal with new modes of oppression. Blues seems to have been created to explore the new experiences and new difficulties facing African Americans. It provided a flexible new structural and emotional setting that still had ties to previous African and African American musical genres. Blues focused primarily on love between men and women and on wanderlust—two major issues confronting African Americans outside the system that had controlled the slaves’ sexuality and mobility—and this music gave performers ample opportunities to express in a direct, earthy, pithy way the joys, sorrows, and ambiguities of their experiences. Blues, then, provided both structural guidelines and expressive freedom.

While writers such as Charles Chesnutt and Paul Laurence Dunbar, the premier African American dialect poet, were exploring the lives and language of African Americans through the local-color tradition, musicians were creating and spreading the feelings, forms, and techniques that made up the budding blues tradition—which would receive a great deal of attention from folklorists, songsmiths, literary artists, and eventually the general public. The establishment of the American Folklore Society at Harvard University in 1888 was an impetus for the study and collection of American, including African American, folklore; shortly thereafter, reports began to surface of blues or blueslike songs heard by W. C. Handy and Gates Thomas in 1890, Charles Peabody in 1901, Gertrude “Ma” Rainey in 1902, and Howard Odum between 1905 and 1908. The first three blues songs published in history were Artie Matthews’s “Baby Seals Blues” (August 1912), Hart Wand’s “Dallas Blues” (September 1912), and Handy’s “Memphis Blues” (late September–early October 1912). In just a few years, blues would be available on phonograph records and would inspire dance crazes (Noble Sissle claimed that Handy’s “Memphis Blues” had inspired Vernon and Irene Castle’s fox trot), and a flurry of activity would bring blues to the attention of the American intelligentsia and to mainstream popular culture as well.

African Americans had appeared in recordings possibly as early as 1890–1892, when the Bohee Brothers

recorded titles (now unknown) for Edison cylinders (unfortunately untraced) in London; also, the white Victor Military Band had recorded instrumental blues as early as 1914; and beginning in 1916 the *Chicago Defender* had been urging African Americans to release records. However, African American vocal blues made their first appearance on phonograph records in 1920. Perry Bradford took Mamie Smith—an artist from his revue *Made in Harlem*—first to the Victor label and then to Fred Hager at Okeh, where Smith recorded “That Thing Called Love,” which was successful enough to earn her another recording date the same year. At her second session, she recorded “Crazy Blues,” the first vocal blues recorded by an African American artist, and its effect on the market was electrifying. “Crazy Blues” sold 75,000 copies in the first month after its release and persuaded a number of other companies in New York City to jump into what came to be called the “race” record market, even though these companies had initially been reluctant to record African American performers. Recordings by Lucille Hegamin, Lillyn Brown, Lavinia Turner, and Bessie Smith soon followed. Harlem had mounted one parade to welcome soldiers returning home from World War I, and another (10,000 strong) to protest against lynchings and racial discrimination in 1917; and Smith’s recording seemed to be one more sign of the imminent emergence of the New Negro onto the American scene.

The first five years or so of blues recording were dominated by these women vaudeville blues singers, who performed blues based on folk blues but composed, arranged, and clearly aimed at a more refined audience. The recordings were in part influenced by the efforts of trained composers and musicians such as Handy, who saw a chance to make blues more “respectable” and marketable. Handy smoothed off what he saw as some of the “rough edges” and made blues more palatable by using trained, reading musicians who had a sense of timing and technique less idiosyncratic than that of the frequently untrained folk performers. Vaudeville blues often consisted of a sung narrative or lyric introduction preceding the main body of the song and setting up the situation that the singer was about to lament, followed by either twelve-bar stanzas or some sophisticated popular modification of the twelve-bar pattern, accompanied by professional musicians on piano, brass, and reeds who gave the recordings a tinge of jazz. This is not to suggest that all vaudeville blues performers sounded alike: There was a remarkable diversity in styles, vocal

timbres, and stage presence, and the tradition included a range of artists from hog-maw earthy to saccharine-sweet.

As writers sought to represent not only the lives but the spirit of African Americans, blues seemed to demonstrate how a people had been able to survive systematic oppression and discrimination by generating an art that explicitly or implicitly examined the deprivations imposed by slavery and Jim Crow—and how blacks had risen above and become superior to oppression by creating their own artistic system, which was more democratic than the putative democracy that had enslaved them. African American writers of the 1920s searching for an alternative to the worn-out literary modes and values of the previous generation found in the blues and jazz traditions a meaningful historical and cultural past that helped them deal with their own current social issues and also helped them generate art dealing with familiar modernist themes: the outsider’s sense of dislocation and alienation; rejection of conventional middle-class values; rejection of rationalization for “primitive” passion and living and improvising in the moment; and the need to find a new structure and language adequate for expressing these ideas.

It was no wonder that blues musicians seized the moment in 1920. Blues—with its roots in the oral tradition among the masses of African Americans and its welter of voices frequently lacking the inhibitions and pretensions of upwardly mobile middle-class African Americans—captivated a number of “new guard” African American writers who were anxious to declare themselves liberated from what they considered (at least in some cases) the smothering influence of the American literary tradition and of the “old guard” proponents of the Harlem Renaissance. W. E. B. Du Bois, for example, was known to prefer European classical music; in *The Crisis*, he gave the most prominent space to African Americans who worked in the classical tradition and European artists who drew on African American elements to enliven their classical compositions. Moreover, in *Dusk of Dawn* (1940) he referred to jazz as “caricature”—which no doubt some of it was, pandering as it occasionally did to white popular tastes—and throughout his career he seemed to wrestle with being proud of jazz and blues but not quite able to wholly accept them as worthy of artistic appreciation. James Weldon Johnson, who was somewhat more sympathetic, appreciated the contributions of African American secular folklore and called for someone to capture its “racial flavor”

(as John Millington Synge had done for the Irish); however, Johnson himself championed spirituals, not blues, as the great African American folk art. Clearly, Du Bois's and Johnson's middle-class orientation and their concentration on image as a bridge into mainstream American society prompted them to reject the earthy, even vulgar, blues in favor of genres that more definitively demonstrated that African Americans were capable of generating art just as good as (read "just like") that of white Europeans.

Among the writers of the Harlem Renaissance who were most influenced by blues were Langston Hughes, Sterling Brown, and Zora Neale Hurston. All three represented the younger generation of writers who had connections to middle- and upper-class society yet felt misgivings about allowing their work to be dominated by European aesthetics. In his famous manifesto "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1926), Hughes praised "the low down folks" for their unpretentiousness and their unself-conscious joy, hearing in their blues and religious songs a natural alternative to the restrictions of contemporary society. He had been profoundly affected by the blues singers he heard as a child on the appropriately named Independence Avenue in Chicago in 1918; in Washington, D.C., in 1924; and in the cabarets, theaters, and nightclubs of Harlem—his frequent use of the blues idiom in his works reflects that influence. Hughes used a variety of stanza patterns, earthy language, metaphors and other imagery, dramatic situations, and references to blues performers in his poetry, prose, fiction, and drama from his first volume, *The Weary Blues and Other Poems* (1926), to his last, *The Panther and the Lash* (1967). Inherent in the blues idiom, as Hughes applied it, were call-and-response elements and a philosophy of perseverance in the face of adversity. As a professed urban poet, Hughes most frequently mentioned and made use of the works of urban blues singers, particularly women such as Ma Rainey; Bessie, Clara, and Trixie Smith; Gladys Bentley; Victoria Spivey; and Georgia White, along with sophisticated male blues singers such as Lonnie Johnson. In a review of *The Weary Blues* in *Opportunity* (February 1926), Countee Cullen called Hughes's jazz poems "interlopers" that did not "belong to that dignified company, that select and austere circle of high literary expression which we call poetry." But while some people tried to discourage Hughes from using blues in his work, he was placing in the mouth of his unpretentious folk hero Simple the last word on his love of the blues and the people who made it, putting aside personal vanity and social

self-consciousness in the face of their enduring presence: "I will not deny Ma Rainey, even to hide my age. Yes, I heard her! I am proud of hearing her! To tell the truth, if I stop and listen, I can still hear her" ("Shadow of the Blues").

Sterling Brown and Zora Neale Hurston were more familiar with southern folk blues, and more adept at using it in their works. Brown, who described himself as an amateur folklorist, studied the roots of blues more systematically than Hughes; and although Brown was less likely than Hughes to incorporate blues stanza patterns in his work, he had an unsurpassed ability to evoke the nuances of the blues experience in his stark portraits of characters such as Big Boy Davis, John Henry, Ma Rainey, and old nameless couples giving it one more try. Hurston, who was an anthropologist, also made a systematic study of African American expressive culture. She was familiar with the vivacity of folklore from her earliest years in Eatonville, Florida, where front-porch "lying" sessions had given her an unquenchable passion for the powerful language of the "folk." Sometimes accompanied by Alan Lomax and Mary Elizabeth Barnicle, she made trips to collect folklore at the behest of Franz Boas and with financial support from Charlotte Mason; these trips produced some excellent blues recordings by Gabriel Brown (who is portrayed in Hurston's folklore collection *Mules and Men* of 1935), Booker T. Sapps, and others. Significantly, Hurston attempted to consider African American folklore in context, that is, in terms of its functions in the community (something no other folklorist at the time had been capable of doing). Thus, although some readers considered Hurston's portrait altogether too rosy or too artificial, it was still neither as artificial nor as stodgy as most written material that had been generated by white folklorists. More important, Hurston's masterpiece, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), has been called a blues novel because it uses a variety of elements related to blues: the color blue, blues songs, blues performers, creative and earthy language, sexual metaphors, a setting in the bottoms or the muck, call-and-response actions and situations, and a philosophy that can be summed up as "sun gonna shine in my back door someday." In the work of Hughes, Brown, and Hurston, as well as in that of Claude McKay, Rudolph Fisher, Wallace Thurman, and others, we can see blues as an important aesthetic element informing the literature of the Harlem Renaissance.

Of course, it was not only literature that drew on blues. The jazz and pop songs of the period, as

performed by such Harlem artists as Ethel Waters, Nina Mae McKinney, Duke Ellington, and Cab Calloway, frequently showed evidence of blues techniques and structures. Duke Ellington in particular worked wonders with the blues idiom; his brilliant three-minute vignettes, and some longer pieces, made him one of the most distinguished composers of the twentieth century. Performances of blues, pop-blues, and jazz were largely responsible for attracting “slumming” whites to Harlem, where they spent money in night spots, and thus for encouraging an interest in African American culture. Whether or not this interest was illusory, it helped finance a number of artists of the Harlem Renaissance.

In the visual arts, Aaron Douglas’s *I Needs a Dime for Beer* (1926), paired with Langston Hughes’s blues poem “Down an’ Out”; Winold Reiss’s *Hot Chocolates* (1929), and Archibald Motley’s *Blues* (1929) were inspired by the syncopated style of blues. In Motley’s *Blues*, one can almost feel the angular energy, shifting accents, and sensual pulse of performers such as Louis Armstrong, Bessie Smith, and Duke Ellington.

The Harlem Renaissance did not come to an abrupt end at the close of the 1920s; neither did blues—it continued to develop and thrive, and to adapt to and reflect its surroundings. Still, one can look back to the music and art of the Harlem Renaissance as a foundation for much African American art that followed. In the best of this later work, one can hear echoes of the rural and urban blues idiom of the renaissance era—shaped, of course, in the best blues tradition, by the genius of the individual creative artist and passed back to the community that inspired it.

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See also *Blues: An Anthology*; *Blues: Women Performers*; Boas, Franz; Brown, Sterling; Chesnutt, Charles Waddell; Crisis, The; Cullen, Countee; Douglas, Aaron; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Dunbar, Paul Laurence; Fisher, Rudolph; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; Jazz; Johnson, James Weldon; Mason, Charlotte Osgood; McKay, Claude; Motley, Archibald J. Jr.; Music; Musicians; Reiss, Winold; Singers; Thurman, Wallace; *specific musicians and singers*

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Blues: An Anthology

Blues: An Anthology (1926), edited by W. C. Handy, was one of the earliest studies of the influence of folk blues on American jazz, popular music, and classical music and remains one of the most famous published collections of commercial blues. It celebrated African American musical traditions and contributed to a growing interest in blues, and in black folk culture generally, during the Harlem Renaissance. Handy himself was among the first composers to write and publish commercial songs inspired by the newly emerging folk blues, which he heard in the Mississippi delta.

Blues: An Anthology resulted from interviews that the American music scholar Edward Abbe Niles (who was also a lawyer on Wall Street) held with Handy in 1925, about blues and black folk music. It consisted of 180 pages and contained the music and lyrics of fifty songs, selected by Handy and arranged for piano and voice. About half of the songs were Handy’s own compositions or arrangements, including several of his most famous titles: “Saint Louis Blues” (1914), “Joe Turner Blues” (1915), “The Hesitating Blues” (1915), “Aunt Hagar’s Children Blues” (1921, 1922), and “Harlem Blues” (1923)—though not “Memphis Blues” (1912), his earliest published commercial blues, because its publisher had refused to grant permission. Also included were songs by Spencer Williams, Will Nash,

Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, and John Alden Carpenter; excerpts from George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924), a work that was influenced by blues; and Gershwin's *Concerto in F* (1925), "no part of which," Handy said, "had been published elsewhere at that time." The anthology also had a critical introduction by Niles (which included a concise biography of Handy, music examples, and the first use of the term "folk blues"), notes on the origins of the songs, and eight full-page illustrations by the Mexican artist Miguel Covarrubias.

Blues: An Anthology was received warmly by critics such as Edmund Wilson, Sigmund Spaeth, and Carl Van Vechten. Langston Hughes, in his review for *Opportunity* magazine, said that the collection was "a much needed, beautiful book . . . filled with invaluable information for the student of Negro folk music and folk poetry." James Weldon Johnson, in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, praised the book as "a valuable contribution to the literature of American folk-lore and folk music." He added, "In this volume Mr. Handy has taken the first step to do [to] the Negro secular music what has been done quite fully for the Spirituals and the plantation stories."

During the 1920s, there was intense interest in African American folk music, and several important studies of black musical traditions, sacred and secular, were published. But Handy's anthology was the first devoted exclusively to blues, and except for James Weldon Johnson's *Book of American Negro Spirituals* (1925) and *Second Book of Negro Spirituals* (1926), it was the only one edited by an African American. Revised editions of *Blues: An Anthology* were published in 1949 and 1972. Since then, various editions have been reprinted under the original title by Da Capo Press (1985, 1990) and by Applewood Books (2001).

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See also Blues; Bontemps, Arna; Covarrubias, Miguel; Handy, W. C.; Johnson, James Weldon; Van Vechten, Carl

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Blues: Women Performers

African American women were among the first popularizers of recorded blues in the 1920s and 1930s, during the Harlem Renaissance. Mamie Smith's recording of Perry Bradford's "Crazy Blues" sold 75,000 copies (at a dollar apiece) in the first month after it was released on 10 August 1920, and its success opened doors for many other African American female artists. Recording companies established "race record" divisions to tap the African American market, and eventually mainstream consumers as well. Columbia, Okeh (which merged with Columbia), and Paramount searched rural and urban areas for women who could sing the blues. Black Swan began its own effort to record, not the guttural sounds of southern blues, but African American women whose voices would contribute to cultural uplift. (Accordingly, Black Swan rejected the great Bessie Smith.)

Gertrude "Ma" Rainey

The contralto Gertrude "Ma" Rainey (26 April 1886–22 December 1939) is called the "mother of the

blues." She was born in Columbus, Georgia, to the minstrel performers Ella Allen and Thomas Pridgett, who were her inspiration. She made her debut at age fourteen in a song-and-dance troupe, *A Bunch of Blackberries*, at Springer Opera House in Columbus. In 1902, she was intrigued by the haunting lyrics of a blues tune sung by a woman at a theater in St. Louis, Missouri, and incorporated the style into her own act. In 1904, she married a minstrel song-and-dance man and comedian, William Rainey; they billed themselves as Rainey and Rainey, or "Ma and Pa Rainey, Assassins of the Blues." (The Raineys separated in the 1920s.)

As head of the Rabbit Foot Minstrels, Ma Rainey established herself on the Moses Stokes Company circuit (managed by Cora and Lonnie Fisher), singing blues in the earthy male minstrel style. In 1912, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, the troupe hired Bessie Smith, who was eight years younger than Rainey. Rainey and Smith became friends (and possibly lovers), and Rainey taught Smith dance steps and the art of the stage entrance, prepared her for the rigors of the road, and introduced her to blues.

In 1923, Paramount Records promoted Rainey's indigenous southern blues sound. Rainey recorded with Paramount until 1928, releasing more than ninety songs and attracting fans in the urban North and the rural South. Her accompanists included the best musicians, such as Tommy Dorsey and Louis Armstrong. Rainey composed many of her songs but received no royalties—Paramount paid her a flat fee per recorded side. Rainey's style (for example, in her rendition of "See See Rider" and "Prove It on Me Blues") was characterized by rhythmic call-and-response improvisation, distinctive phrasing and timbre, and groans, moans, and shouts; it established the standard for classic blues. The impressive sales of Rainey's records caught the attention of the Theater Owners' Booking Association (TOBA), which provided steady concert tours for her.

Ma Rainey's eventual departure from the concert circuit and the recording industry was a result of competition from talking pictures, radio, swing music, and the Depression. Paramount canceled her contract in 1928, but she continued on the vaudeville circuit until 1935.

Bessie Smith

The "empress of the blues," Bessie Smith (15 April 1894–26 September 1937), was born in Chattanooga,

Tennessee. Her career in show business was started there by her brother Clarence, who encouraged her to sing and dance for coins from passersby (with another brother, Andrew, as guitar accompanist) on the sidewalk in front of the White Elephant Saloon. Smith gave girlish but rowdy renditions of "Bill Bailey, Won't You Please Come Home?" At age nine, she entered an amateur contest at the Ivory Theater.

In 1912, again influenced by Clarence, she joined the dance troupe (managed by Cora and Lonnie Fisher in the Moses Stokes Company) in which Ma Rainey was a blues artist. Smith's salary in this troupe was \$10 a week, plus money thrown onto the stage. Audiences loved her rendition of "Weary Blues" and tossed even more coins at her when she sang it.

In 1913, Smith made Charles Bailey's 81 Theater in Atlanta, Georgia, her home base; she also traveled with Pete Werley's Florida Blossoms and the Silas Green show. However, she was fired (at the suggestion of the African American producer Irvin Miller) because her complexion was too dark for a show called "Glorifying the Brownskin Girl." In 1921, Smith went to Philadelphia, where she performed at Moran's Cabaret. She also performed at the Dunbar and Standard theaters and Paradise Gardens in Atlantic City, New Jersey. She married the night watchman at Moran's, Jack Gee, on 7 June 1923.

A customer at Moran's, Charlie Carson, who owned a record shop, persuaded the pianist Clarence Williams to take Smith to Frank Walker, a manager at Columbia, for an audition. At Columbia's recording studio, Smith performed two songs on 15 February 1923. Smith also auditioned for Thomas Edison, Fred Hager at Okeh (who disliked her rural strain), and Harry Pace of Black Swan (who thought her sound too raw). She had her first recording session—three songs—at Columbia on 16 February 1923. Columbia released the hugely successful "Gulf Coast Blues" and "Down Hearted Blues" and gave Smith a one-year contract to record at least twelve usable sides. She was soon being called Columbia's "queen of the blues"; her fee increased to \$200 per usable side, and Fletcher Henderson became her studio accompanist.

Smith also continued touring. With Irvin Johns as her accompanist, she performed in 1923 at the 81 Theater in Atlanta (because of segregation, she gave a special midnight performance for whites). She broke attendance records at the Frolic Theater in Birmingham, where she sang "Nobody's Bizness If I Do" and "Gulf Coast Blues." A performance at the Beale Street Palace in Memphis was broadcast. Smith was so popular on

tour that she refused to share the stage with any other blues singer.

By 1924, Smith was earning \$2,000 a week and contracted for a twenty-week tour with the TOBA. She had a new musical director, Fred Longshaw. By 1925, she owned a custom-made railroad car; recorded with Louis Armstrong; and made her first appearance at the Liberty Theater in Chattanooga, including her brother Clarence in her show. She recorded (again) with Fletcher Henderson in 1926, and with James P. Johnson in 1928. By this time, nightlife in Harlem was at its zenith, and vaudeville and blues were declining, but Smith remained popular. She made her Broadway debut in *Pansy* (1929) and appeared in a film based on "Saint Louis Blues" (1932).

After the stock market crashed in 1929, audiences fell off, and so did Smith's income. Swing music and talking movies became the new sensation, but Smith, billed as the "queen of recording artists," made eight recordings for Columbia in 1930 (being paid \$125 per side); she made her final recording for Columbia on 20 November 1931. Although the demand was not high, she appeared at the Lafayette Theater in New York in 1932, taking second billing to Jules Bledsoe. In 1933, she recorded four sides for Okeh (at \$37.50 per side), including "Gimme a Pigfoot" and her last recording, "I'm Down in the Dumps." (As Smith left the studio, Billie Holiday, age seventeen, was in the waiting room preparing to make her recording debut.) Smith also performed at Connie's Inn in New York in 1936.

Mamie Smith

Mamie Gardener Smith (26 May 1883–16 September 1946) was born in Cincinnati, Ohio. At age ten she was a dancer with the Four Dancing Mitchells; by 1910, she was a member of the Smart Set Company, an African American minstrel troupe. In 1912, she married her first husband, the singer William "Smitty" Smith, and moved to New York, where she became a cabaret singer, pianist, and dancer. Perry Bradford, the African American entrepreneur and songwriter, discovered her in 1918 and chose her to break the color barrier in New York's recording industry. He cast her in his musical *Made in Harlem* and arranged auditions with Victor and Okeh. Smith recorded "That Thing Called Love" and "You Can't Keep a Good Man Down" for Okeh. Her recording of "Crazy Blues" (1920) made her a star, opened a new market for

vocal blues, and inspired the recording industry to go in search of other African American women blues singers. "Crazy Blues" featured Willie "the Lion" Smith on piano, Jimmy Dunn on cornet, and Dope Andrews on trombone; these musicians became known as the Jazz Hounds and established the sound of recorded blues. Smith recorded thirty more songs for Okeh and starred in vaudeville shows, including *Follow Me* (1922), *Struttin' Along* (1923), *Dixie Review* (1924), *Syncopated Revue* (1925), and *Frolicking Around* (1926).

By the end of the 1920s, blues recordings were losing momentum, but Smith recorded for Okeh through 1931. She also appeared in African American musicals such as *Sun Tan Frolics* (1929), *Fireworks of 1930*, *Rhumbaland Revue* (both 1931), and *Yelping Hounds Revue* (1932–1934), and in the films *Paradise in Heaven* (1939), *Mystery in Swing* (1940), *Sunday Sinners* (1941), *Murder on Lenox Avenue* (1941), and *Because I Love You* (1943).

Clara Smith

Clara Smith (c. 1894–2 February 1935), "queen of the moaners," was born in Spartanburg, South Carolina. She joined the vaudeville circuit in 1910, became a regular with the TOBA in 1918, and joined the Harlem club scene in 1923. She had a thinner voice than Bessie Smith (with whom she sometimes sang duets) but had a distinct comedic style, especially in double-entendre songs like "Whip It to a Jelly." Her biggest hit was "Every Woman's Blues" (1923). She also oversaw the business of the Clara Smith Theatrical Club.

Trixie Smith

Trixie Smith (1895–1943) was born in Atlanta, Georgia. In 1922, she made her first recording with Black Swan and won a blues singing contest at the Manhattan Casino, sponsored by the Fifteenth Regiment of the New York Infantry. Black Swan later merged with Paramount, and Smith recorded for the new company until 1926. Her popular recordings were her own compositions, including "Trixie's Blues," "Railroad Blues," and "Mining Camp Blues." She recorded for Decca in the 1930s. Smith worked with noted jazz musicians, including Louis Armstrong, Fletcher Henderson, and Sidney Bechet. She performed in African American musicals and appeared in one film, *The Black King* (1932).

Alberta Hunter

Alberta Hunter (Josephine Beatty, 1 April 1895–17 October 1984) was born in Memphis, Tennessee. She ran away to Chicago at age eleven and became an entertainer there in 1914, performing in cabarets and clubs. In 1921, in New York, she also appeared in clubs, and she recorded for the Gennett label, accompanied by Joe “King” Oliver, Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet, and Fletcher Henderson. She recorded for other labels as May Alix and Josephine Beatty. She had several musical styles and could adapt her voice to almost any musical situation. Hunter was the composer of “Downhearted Blues” (1922), made famous by Bessie Smith in 1923.

Hunter had one of the longest careers of the early African American women blues singers. From 1927 to 1953 she had lucrative engagements in the United States, as well as in Europe, where she was the first African American woman to perform blues. She made her film debut in *Radio Parade* in 1936. In London, she appeared opposite Paul Robeson in *Show Boat*. She performed in USO shows during World War II and the Korean War. Hunter was known as a shrewd businesswoman; she was also a nurse, from 1954 until 1977, when her performing career rebounded.

Ida Prather Cox

Ida Prather Cox (25 February 1896–10 November 1967), “queen of the blues,” was born in Toccoa, Georgia. Her early music was inspired by the church; but in 1911 she ran away from home and joined White and Clark’s Black and Tan Minstrels. She later performed with other vaudeville troupes, including the Rabbit Foot Minstrels, Florida Cotton Blossom Minstrels, and Silas Green from New Orleans. The first song she performed in public was “Put Your Arms Around Me.” During her vaudeville years, she married Adler Cox, the first of her three husbands.

Cox was known for her classic blues style. She was always a lady, always regal; her shows were sophisticated and glamorous, and her music was sultry and sensuous. Her accompanists included Lovie Austin, Jesse Crump (her third husband), Jelly Roll Morton, and Joe “King” Oliver. Her recording “Wild Women Don’t Have the Blues” became a feminist anthem. Between 1923 and 1929, she recorded more than forty records for Paramount. When the stock market crash depressed the blues music industry, Cox produced her

own road shows, *Raisin’ Cain* and *Darktown Scandals*. In 1934, she performed with Bessie Smith in *Fan Waves Revue* at the Apollo Theater in Harlem, billed as the “sepia Mae West.” Cox recorded again in 1939 for John Hammond on the Okeh and Vocalion labels, with her All-Star Orchestra. She toured until 1945, when she had a stroke; in 1961 she recorded *Blues for Rampart Street* for Riverside.

Edith Wilson

Edith Goodall Wilson (6 September 1896–March 1981) was born in Louisville, Kentucky. She began performing in church and school recitals. In 1910, at age thirteen, unbeknownst to her parents, she was in a show at White City Park, earning \$35 per week, more than twice her mother’s salary as a housekeeper. Wilson left home at a tender age to seek a stage career in Milwaukee.

Edith appeared on the same bill as, and became friends with, the young piano player Danny Wilson (whom she would marry) and his sister Lena. Danny Wilson, a graduate of a conservatory in Charleston, South Carolina, trained Lena and Edith for the competitive stage, encouraging them to sing all kinds of songs, not just blues. As a trio, Edith, Lena, and Danny Wilson worked in cabarets and clubs in Chicago. In 1921, they went to Thomas’s club in Washington, D.C.; eventually they came to New York City.

Perry “Mule” Bradford, a composer and talent scout for Columbia, had a disagreement with Mamie Smith, who was the lead singer in his musical *Put and Take*. After seeing one of Edith Wilson’s performances, he decided to replace Smith with Wilson. The musical opened at Town Hall, New York City, and Wilson made a sensational impression on other talent scouts for Columbia. She recorded sides for Columbia on September 13, 1921. Bradford gave her “Nervous Blues,” backed by Johnny Dunn and the Jazz Hounds, with her husband, Danny, on the piano. Wilson’s next recording, “Vampin’ Liza Jane,” marked Columbia’s entry into “race records” and the start of Wilson’s climb to the top.

Wilson cut most of the sides for Columbia in 1922, producing thirty-two recordings (twenty-six were released). She joined the TOBA, billed as “queen of the blues,” and performed Bradford’s songs at Connie’s Inn, the Lincoln Theater, and the Dixieland Plantation Room of the Winter Garden. In 1923, Wilson traveled to London with the revue, renamed *Dover Street to*

Dixie. She expanded her repertoire to include show tunes and comedy skits. In 1924, she joined *Club Alabam Revue* at the Lafayette Theater in New York City, teamed with Doc Straine in comedy skits, and returned to Columbia Records. She and Straine took their comedy routine on the road during 1924–1925. In 1926–1927, Wilson performed in *Blackbirds* in Paris and London.

Again in New York, she performed at Loew's State Theater and occasionally sang on CBS radio broadcasts, when Duke Ellington and his band were with Loew's. Her success continued into the late 1970s, when she appeared at blues festivals.

Wilson's audiences included monied Broadway patrons, affluent African Americans, and patrons of Harlem cabarets controlled by underworld figures. Wilson was a good businesswoman, and she had learned not just blues but vaudeville and cabaret style, ballads, ditties, and humorous songs. Her Creole-type yodel distinguished her sound from that of other women blues performers, and her beauty, light complexion, and charm appealed to her mixed audiences.

Ethel Waters

Ethel Waters (31 October 1896–1 September 1977) was born in Chester, Pennsylvania, and raised in Philadelphia by her grandmother. Waters married Buddy Purnsley when she was thirteen and he was twenty-three (the marriage failed). She supported herself as a domestic but performed in churches and other local venues. The producers of a vaudeville troupe discovered her at a Halloween party in 1917 (on her birthday) and billed her as "Sweet Mama Stringbean." Waters became a performer with the TOBA and in clubs in Harlem, where she arrived in 1919. She signed with Black Swan in 1921; her style, with its articulate melodic phrasing, was what the African American elite considered essential for an emerging culture. Her recordings and performances of the 1920s, under the direction of Fletcher Henderson, led to a contract with Columbia. Waters recorded many hits, notably "Down Home Blues" and "Oh Daddy."

As the blues era drew to an end, Waters embarked on a second career as an actress, making her debut in the Broadway musical *Africana* in 1927. She was a stage and screen star in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s and was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actress for her work in *Pinky* (1949).

Sippie Wallace

Beulah Belle Thomas Wallace ("Sippie," 1 November 1898–1 November 1986) was born in Houston, Texas, and became known as the "Texas nightingale." Her special sound was a mix of spirited, hard-edged, south-western rolling honky-tonk and Chicago shouting and moaning. She followed her musical brother George to the Storyville district of New Orleans, where she married her first husband, Frank Seals. Her second husband was a gambler, Matthew "Matt" Wallace. Sippie Wallace sang at local social gatherings and tent shows in Texas while working as a maid and stage assistant to a snake dancer with Philip's Reptile Show, Madam Dante.

In 1923, Wallace moved with her brother Hersal and her niece Hociel to Chicago, where George Wallace was influential in the music division of W. W. Kimball Company and directed his own orchestra. Sippie, Hersal, and George became a popular recording trio. George and Sippie also formed a songwriting partnership; they wrote "Shorty George" and "Underworld Blues." Sippie Wallace's initial recordings, "Shorty George" and "Up the Country Blues," were for Okeh. She became a regular on the TOBA circuit in 1923 and 1924. She released "Special Delivery Blues" and "Jack o' Diamond Blues" (a homage to Matt Wallace) in 1926 and performed "Dead Drunk Blues" with Louis Armstrong in 1927. She moved to Chicago in 1929 and contracted with Victor Records, recording four sides (two were released: "I'm a Mighty Tight Woman" and "You Gonna Need My Help").

The Depression hampered Wallace's career as a blues singer, and she retired, becoming the organist for Leland Baptist Church in Detroit. However, she continued to accept club bookings. Mercury Records reissued "Bedroom Blues" in 1945, Detroit's Fine Arts label reissued a recording in 1959, and Victoria Spivey encouraged Wallace to join the circuit of folk and blues festivals. In Europe in 1966, Wallace performed for a new generation of blues enthusiasts. She appeared at Lincoln Center in New York in 1977 and in Germany in 1986.

Victoria Spivey

Victoria Spivey (6 October 1906–3 October 1976) was born in Houston, Texas; performed in local clubs as a teenager; and recorded "Black Snake Blues" for Okeh and wrote songs for the St. Louis Publishing Company in 1926. Spivey popularized "TB Blues" and "Murder in the First Degree." She appeared in the

African American musical *Hallelujah!* in 1929, the touring show *Dallas Tan Town Topics* in 1933, and the touring Broadway show *Hellzapoppin'* in 1938–1939.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Spivey was a mainstay at blues festivals and college performances, recording for Bluesville and Folkways. Her voice had a Texas twang, a high nasal sound into which she incorporated a moan that she called her “tiger squall.”

Other Women Performers

There were other important figures, recording for Ajax, Black Swan/Paramount, Brunswick, Emerson, Gennett, Okeh/Columbia, Pathé, Perfect, RCA Victor, and Vocalion: Fae Barnes; Bessie Brown; Eliza Brown; Josephine Carter; Martha Copeland; Helen Gross; Ethel Hayes; Lucille Hegamin, the “Cameo Girl”; Rosa Henderson; Edna Hicks; Chippie Hill; Leitha Hill; Edith Johnson; Mary Johnson; Virginia Liston; Sara Martin, the “colored Sophie Tucker”; Viola McCoy; Josie Miles; Lizzie Miles, the “Creole songbird”; Nettie Potter; Susie Smith; Grace White; Lena Wilson—and still more. The cabarets, clubs, and theaters of the Harlem Renaissance were brightened by African American women blues singers, who were, according to Daphne Duval Harrison (1988), “black pearls.”

GERRI BATES

See also Black Swan Phonograph Company; Blackbirds; Blues; Columbia Phonograph Company; Hallelujah; Lafayette Theater; Lincoln Theater; Manhattan Casino; Miller, Irvin; Music; Musical Theater; Singers; Theater Owners' Booking Association; *specific musicians and performers*

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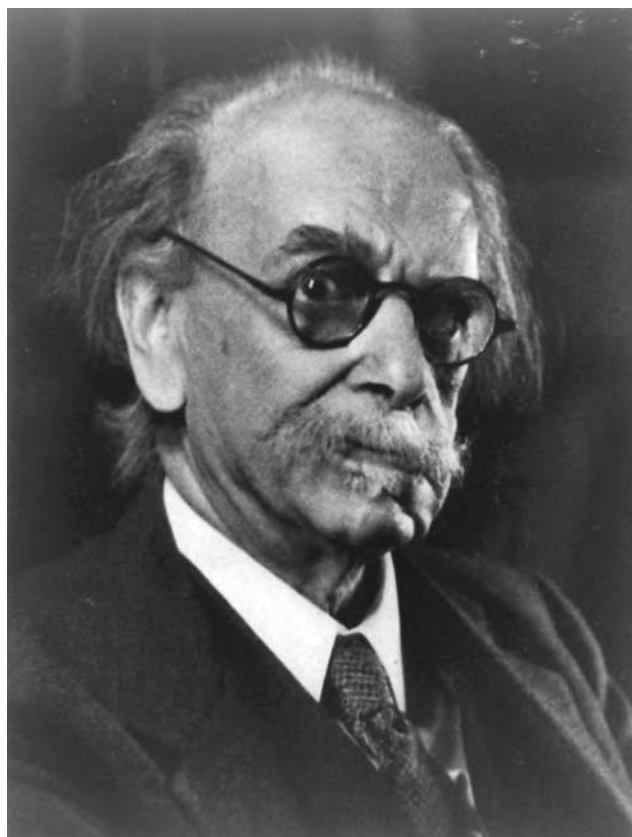
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Boas, Franz

Franz Uri Boas, a German-born Jewish immigrant who was chairman of the Department of Anthropology at Columbia University in New York City, was the leading

American anthropologist during the germination, maturation, and demise of the Harlem Renaissance. When the Harlem Renaissance was emerging, Boas had a considerable reputation as a result of his groundbreaking research and writing on race and culture, and his financial and institutional support of talented representatives of the “New Negro.” He significantly influenced the graphic artists, folklorists, writers, and critics of the renaissance in numerous and diverse ways, beginning with the publication of “Human Faculty as Determined by Race,” which was his vice-presidential address to Section H at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1894, and culminating with his monumental work *The Mind of Primitive Man*, which was brought out in 1911 and marked the zenith of his prowess as a researcher. Three aspects of his influence are especially important.

First, Boas offered a physical anthropological critique of racial formalism based on the overlapping sizes of the cranial cavities of blacks and whites. This critique convinced many people that biological racial differences were negligible, and it persuaded the leader of the “New Negro” movement, Alain Locke,



Franz Boas, c. 1930–1950. (Photo by R. H. Hoffman. Library of Congress.)

to argue in 1916 that racial inequalities were to be explained “in terms of historical, economic, and social factors,” not biological factors. W. E. B. Du Bois, one of the leading custodial figures, concurred in this argument, observing that not all blacks were intellectually inferior to all whites; Zora Neale Hurston and Melville Herskovits tested Boas’s conclusions by measuring the heads of black Harlemites; and Charles Spurgeon Johnson corresponded with “Papa Franz” in reference to the relative reliability of intelligence tests and drew directly on Boas’s advice. Furthermore, in this regard Boas opened the *Journal of American Folklore*, which he edited, to black amateur folklorists such as Locke, Hurston, Arthur A. Shomburg, Arthur Huff Fauset, and Carter G. Woodson. Eventually, though, Boas began to promote his own students instead of black writers who were attempting to promote “race consciousness.”

Second—and even more significantly—Boas revealed the achievements of the western African and central African ancestors of black Americans. In his investigations into the African background and culture, which were published in numerous journals of anthropology and popular magazines between 1904 and 1909, he paid particular attention to Africa’s peoples, their early successes in smelting iron, their artistic industries, and their agriculture, cultures, laws, and state building. These revelations convinced notable black thinkers such as Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, Monroe Nathan Work, and George Washington Ellis that blacks were not descended from inferior peoples. In addition, Boas introduced Americans to the disciplined, classical graphic and cultural traditions in black African art, profoundly influencing Locke, who in turn introduced black American painters and sculptors such as Richmond Barthé and Aaron Douglas to these works.

Third, Boas was instrumental in obtaining financial and institutional support for the “New Negroes.” Much of this support was made possible through the beneficence of Carter G. Woodson, founder and head of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. Boas was successful in securing funds from Woodson for Zora Neale Hurston and the future economist Abram L. Harris. When Locke was fired by the president of Howard University in 1925, Boas provided him with the institutional support of the American Association of University Professors. (In 1926, however, Boas blocked the funding of a project by Locke on African art.)

During the Harlem Renaissance, Boas maintained his huge reputation among both black and white

intellectuals, men and women. “Papa Franz” (an affectionate nickname given to him by Zora Neale Hurston) was the mentor of Herskovits, who was a major contributor to Locke’s manifesto anthology *The New Negro*, as well as of Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, and others who became noted cultural anthropologists. These scholars would contribute to Boas’s legacy as the father of Americanist anthropology, which was characterized by its revulsion against racism and its advocacy of cultural relativism.

However, since the 1980s Marshall Hyatt and the present author have raised issues in reference to the unevenness of Boas’s critique of racial formalism and to his hypothesis about “men of high genius,” that is, the belief that blacks would produce proportionally fewer male geniuses than whites. Also, there have been objections to Boas’s cultural relativism. Nathan Huggins (1971) implied that relativistic research on Africa and African cultures contributed to the primitivism and exoticism that pervaded much of the outpourings of the Harlem Renaissance. With regard to Boas’s withdrawal of his support from black amateur folklorists, Lee Baker (1998) has noted that Boas opposed these folklorists because he equated attempts to promote racial solidarity with nationalism.

Still, the controversies that have arisen about Boas’s contribution to the Harlem Renaissance should not detract from his stature. Although Boas was limited by the state of knowledge about blacks’ character and capabilities, his findings with respect to human differences were nevertheless far more forward-looking than those of the vast majority of his contemporaries, and the black intelligentsia seized on these findings as a means to demonstrate unequivocally that they were perfectly capable of producing great art and criticism. Although some of Boas’s findings that they appropriated were used to rationalize the creation of primitive, exotic, sensationalistic work, this was no fault of his. In short, a significant part of the success that the artists of Harlem enjoyed was no doubt directly related to Boas’s prodigious efforts.

Biography

Franz Uri Boas was born 9 July 1858 in Minden, Westphalia, Germany. He was educated at the *Bürger-schule* (an elementary school) and the *Gymnasium* (a secondary school) in Minden and the universities of Heidelberg (1877), Bonn (1877–1879), and Berlin (1879–1882, 1885–1886). He received his Ph.D. from

the University of Berlin in 1882. Boas was temporarily employed at the Royal Ethnological Museum in Berlin; was geographical editor of *Science* in New York (1887–1888); taught at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts (1888–1892); was chief assistant of anthropology at the World's Columbia Exposition in Chicago (1892–1894); was assistant curator at the American Museum of Natural History in New York (1896–1901) and then curator (1901–1906); taught at Columbia University (1896–1936); served as editor of *American Anthropologist* (1898–1920) and *Journal of American Folk-Lore* (1908–1924); and was president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (1931). He died in New York City 21 December 1942.

VERNON J. WILLIAMS

See also Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and *Journal of Negro History*; Barthé, Richmond; Douglas, Aaron; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Fauset, Arthur Huff; Herskovits, Melville; Hurston, Zora Neale; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Locke, Alain; *New Negro*; *New Negro Movement*; Schomburg, Arthur A.; Woodson, Carter G.; Work, Monroe Nathan

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Bojangles

See Robinson, Bill "Bojangles"

Boni and Liveright

Boni and Liveright, one of the most progressive publishing houses of the 1920s, played an important role in connecting the aspiring writers of the Harlem Renaissance to the bohemian, radical culture of white intellectuals in Greenwich Village. Under the direction of its cofounder, Horace Liveright, the firm was willing to risk publishing modern, experimental, and radical books by young, unknown writers. In publishing Jean Toomer's *Cane* and Eric Walrond's *Tropic Death*, Boni and Liveright helped to create a vogue for exotic and primitive black writers.

Boni and Liveright began in 1917 as publishers of Modern Library, a series of inexpensive reprints of modern classics, attractively bound and priced at only sixty cents. Modern Library offered hard-to-find and out-of-print titles by such authors as Nietzsche, Wilde, Gorky, Strindberg, and Dostoyevsky. With a backlist of steadily selling, profitable Modern Library titles, Boni and Liveright went about making publishing history, taking chances and fighting censorship to redefine American literature with the publication of Pound, Eliot, O'Neill, Anderson, Hemingway, Dreiser, Crane, and Faulkner. In addition, Boni and Liveright published Sigmund Freud, Bertrand Russell, Upton Sinclair, Leon Trotsky, and Jack Reed—writers who shaped the era's most progressive thought.

Given its history and reputation, Boni and Liveright was a logical choice to publish *Cane*, a highly experimental book by an unknown black author, dealing with racial themes. Jean Toomer had been introduced to the intellectual elite in Greenwich Village in 1921 by Waldo Frank, a modernist writer and critic whose

experimental prose Boni and Liveright had previously published. The firm published *Cane* in 1923, with an introduction by Frank. Heavily influenced by the modernist aesthetics of Frank, Hart Crane, and Sherwood Anderson (all Boni and Liveright writers), Toomer's masterpiece was praised by the critics but was financially unsuccessful, selling only 500 copies. Unhappy with the book's publicity, which touted him as a rising black author, Toomer soon sailed for Europe. He had contracted with Boni and Liveright for a second book, but it was never written.

Boni and Liveright also published two other works of fiction by blacks: Jessie Fauset's novel *There Is Confusion* and (as noted above) Eric Walrond's *Tropic Death*, a collection of short stories. Together, these books indicate that the publisher's commitment to black literature was more than a commitment to the primitive. Although *Tropic Death* is, like Toomer's *Cane*, modernist, exotic, and sensual, *There Is Confusion* is a more conventional treatment of the African American upper classes, reminiscent of Edith Wharton.

By 1927–1928, the heyday of Boni and Liveright was over. In 1925, Modern Library, the firm's most reliable source of profits, was sold to cover a series of poor investments in stocks and theatrical productions. By 1926, the Boni brothers, Albert and Charles, were operating parallel publishing ventures, including the landmark publication of Alain Locke's *The New Negro*. Liveright continued to publish important books, but the partnership ended in 1928, as the firm's financial situation worsened. Liveright, who had invested deeply in the stock market, never recovered from the crash of 1929; and by the time of his death in 1933, he had already lost control of the company to Arthur Pell, his onetime bookkeeper. After 1933, the firm continued under the name Liveright Publishing Company; it became a subsidiary of W. W. Norton and Company in 1974.

MICHAEL ZEITLER

See also Anderson, Sherwood; Boni and Liveright Prize; *Cane*; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Frank, Waldo; Greenwich Village; Liveright, Horace; Locke, Alain; *New Negro*, The; Primitivism; Publishers and Publishing Houses; *There Is Confusion*; Toomer, Jean; *Tropic Death*; Walrond, Eric

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Boni and Liveright Prize

Although the Boni Prize competition is often associated with the publishing house Boni and Liveright, the contest was actually the independent work of the Boni brothers, Albert and Charles. In addition to publishing with Horace Liveright under the name Boni and Liveright, the Boni brothers made significant contributions to the Harlem Renaissance in their own right. Their most important joint venture was surely the publication of Alain Locke's anthology *The New Negro*, but they also tried to discover and develop new talent through their patronage of a much heralded literary contest similar to the contests sponsored by *Opportunity* or the Harmon Foundation.

On 29 January 1926, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) held a press conference in New York announcing that the publishers Charles and Albert Boni were offering a prize of \$1,000 for the year's best novel "about Negro life and written by a Negro." The NAACP also announced a sterling committee to judge the entries: Henry Seidel Canby, editor of *Saturday Review*; W. E. B. Du Bois of *The Crisis*; Charles Spurgeon Johnson of *Opportunity*; James Weldon Johnson; Edna Kenton; Laurence Stallings; and Irita Van Doren. Taken individually, this panel of judges reflected the diversity of aesthetic opinion engendered by the novelists of the Harlem Renaissance.

By early 1926, such divergent viewpoints on the representation of the African American in art were subject to vigorous debate. That spring *The Crisis* ran a symposium on "The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed?" with responses from, among others, Alfred Knopf, Carl Van Vechten, Sherwood Anderson, and Vachel Lindsay. Du Bois himself wrote "Criteria for Negro Art," and Claude McKay wrote "Negro Life and

Negro Art." While Du Bois saw little value in promoting art that could not be used to better the conditions of the race, McKay saw such propagandistic motives as self-defeating for any serious artist.

Considering the diversity of opinion and the emotionally charged climate of debate, it is not surprising that any committee as representative as that of the Boni brothers would have difficulty in reaching a consensus. Thus, for reasons that are still unclear, although the contest was heavily advertised in early 1926, with announcements in the *New York Times*, *Publisher's Weekly*, and *The Crisis*, no novel was selected as worthy, and the prize was never awarded.

MICHAEL ZEITLER

See also Anderson, Sherwood; Boni and Liveright; *Crisis: The Negro in Art—How Shall He Be Portrayed? A Symposium*; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Harmon Foundation; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Johnson, James Weldon; Knopf, Alfred A.; Lindsay, Nicholas Vachel; McKay, Claude; *Opportunity Literary Contests*; Van Vechten, Carl

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Bonner, Marieta

Marieta Bonner (Marita Odette) was a significant contributor to the African American literary scene from the 1920s to the 1940s, producing short stories, essays, plays, and reviews. Bonner's writing first came to notice in 1925 with an essay in *The Crisis*, "On Being Young—A Woman—and Colored," which dealt with the prevailing sexism as well as racism of the times and presented a spirited critique of the assumptions of many of her "New Negro" compatriots regarding gender. (This essay is reprinted in *Frye Street and Environs*, 1987.) Bonner was awarded a literary prize from *Crisis* for the essay, and she received two more awards

in *Opportunity's* literary competitions in 1934 (for "A Possible Triad on Black Notes" and "Tin Can"). She published in *Opportunity* and *The Crisis* in the 1930s and 1940s, producing twenty short stories and three plays, including the acclaimed *The Purple Flower* (1928), although after 1941 she turned from writing to devote herself to teaching and motherhood. Bonner was also a regular attendee at Georgia Douglas Johnson's salon on S Street in Washington, D.C., an important meeting place for many writers of the Harlem Renaissance, including Angelina Weld Grimké, Clarissa Scott Delany, Jessie Fauset, Mary Burrill, and Alice Dunbar Nelson.

Bonner herself was middle class, but she wrote almost exclusively about working-class communities. Her writing combines sociological detail, allegory, and stream of consciousness to represent the experience of urban African Americans, avoiding the folk idiom that is so familiar from the work of the better-known Zora Neale Hurston. Bonner examines the experience of urban life, racism, and reproduction for women who have little or no desire to uplift the race but simply need to get by. In her "Frye Street" stories she presents a fictional urban neighborhood (based on Chicago's South Side) where migrants' aspirations for the expanding African American community nearly always go unrealized; their difficulties are manifested in anxiety related to motherhood and the black woman's responsibilities toward her race. Bonner's stories constitute a series of jeremiads on the impact of poverty, poor education, bad parenting, female-headed households, drugs, and violence on the inner city—which, in her works, holds little of the promise of Harlem during the jazz age. As noted by Cheryl Wall (1997) and Mary Helen Washington (1987), the brutality of Bonner's writing offers a sharp retort to those who stereotype women writers of the Harlem Renaissance as genteel and apolitical.

The limitations imposed on African American women preoccupied Bonner throughout her life as a writer. Stories such as "Drab Rambles" (*The Crisis*, 1927), "One Boy's Story" (*The Crisis*, 1927), and "Tin Can" (*Opportunity*, 1934) deal with the constrictions of the city, which is prejudiced against her protagonists, socially and economically, because they are black and female. Bonner's later stories become steadily more pessimistic; in these works, women and children find themselves trapped within, and victimized by, racialized socioeconomic structures. Bonner's "Frye Street" stories link the Harlem Renaissance with more explicitly politicized African American social protest writing of the 1930s and 1940s.

Biography

Marieta Bonner (also known as Marita Odette) was born in Boston in 1899. She studied at Brookline High School in Boston and at Radcliffe College in Cambridge, Massachusetts (1918–1922). She taught high school in Cambridge and later in Washington, D.C., and Chicago. Bonner was a member of the Krigwa Players in Washington, D.C. She died in Chicago in 1971.

MARIA BALSHAW

See also Crisis, The; Delany, Clarissa Scott; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Grimké, Angelina Weld; Johnson, Georgia Douglas; Krigwa Players; Nelson, Alice Dunbar; Opportunity Literary Contests; Salons

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Bontemps, Arna

Through his distinguished career and his contributions as a novelist, poet, and librarian, Arna Wendell Bontemps brought additional recognition to the

historical and literary movement known as the Harlem Renaissance.

Bontemps spent his early formative years in Los Angeles, where, despite his father's objections, he developed a love of literature. Inspired by his uncle Buddy's penchant for folk culture, Bontemps formally began his writing career in 1923, on his graduation from Pacific Union College; in 1924, he published a poem, "Hope," in *The Crisis*, one of the leading periodicals for aspiring writers of the Harlem Renaissance.

Shortly thereafter, Bontemps moved to New York City. There, he pursued a teaching career at the Harlem Academy; simultaneously, his writing career accelerated. In 1926 and 1927, he received *Opportunity* magazine's Alexander Pushkin Poetry Prize for his poems "Golgotha Is a Mountain" (1926) and "The Return" (1927). Bontemps's poetry, which addressed the themes of racial pride and love of African civilization, brought him into contact with notable writers of the Harlem Renaissance such as James Weldon Johnson, Claude McKay, and—most important—Langston Hughes. He and Hughes would later collaborate as



Arna Bontemps, photographed by Carl Van Vechten, 1939.
(Library of Congress.)

writers on projects such as *Popo and Fifina: Children of Haiti* (1932), a travel book for young readers.

In 1931, Bontemps published his first novel, *God Sends Sunday*, the story of the pioneering African American jockey Little Augie. A few years later, Bontemps collaborated with Countee Cullen to transform the book into the play, *St. Louis Woman* (1939). Although W. E. B. Du Bois criticized *God Sends Sunday* for its description of the seamy side of black life, the novel was recognized for its unique depiction of black people's interest in sporting life and of the usages of the Creole language. Most significantly, the publication of *God Sends Sunday* marked Bontemps's emergence as an important African American writer.

Bontemps's literary success continued after he relocated to Huntsville, Alabama, to teach at Oakwood Junior College in 1931. In 1932, he won a prize from *Opportunity* magazine for his short story "A Summer Tragedy," about an elderly couple whose victimization by the sharecropping system results in their double suicide. (This story has since appeared in many anthologies.) Bontemps also continued to write juvenile books; he believed that a younger reading audience was more accessible, and he wanted to offer young people a positive literary depiction of African Americans. His works of juvenile literature include *You Can't Pet a Possum* (1934); *We Have Tomorrow* (1945); *Frederick Douglass: Slave, Fighter, Freeman* (1959); and *Young Booker: Booker T. Washington's Early Days* (1972). Later, Bontemps became involved in the Illinois Writers' Project and developed a friendship with another participant, Jack Conroy; he and Conroy then collaborated on several children's books.

In 1936, Bontemps's most widely recognized novel—*Black Thunder: Gabriel's Revolt, Virginia 1800*—was published. This historical novel tells of a fictional slave revolt, led by Gabriel Prosser, that fails because of horrendous weather and an act of betrayal. Although the book was written during an unfavorable time for black people, *Black Thunder* was recognized as a powerful statement about the relevance of African American history. Bontemps's use of language was also praised, and this novel secured his place within the African American literary tradition.

Black Thunder was followed by a third novel, *Drums at Dusk* (1938); this too is a historical novel, about a slave revolution on the island of Santo Domingo. Around this time, Bontemps accepted a Rosenwald Fellowship for travel and research in the Caribbean. Additional achievements soon followed: the publication of *Father of the Blues* (1941), a commissioned biography of

W. C. Handy; two more Rosenwald grants; the publication of *Golden Slippers: An Anthology of Negro Poetry for Young Readers* (1941); and the completion of a master's degree in library science from the University of Chicago in 1943.

From 1943 until 1965, Bontemps was the head librarian at Fisk University. In this capacity, he significantly enhanced the university's holdings of materials on African American culture by establishing the Langston Hughes and George Gershwin collections and acquiring the papers of James Weldon Johnson, Jean Toomer, and Charles S. Johnson. Later (1969), Bontemps would serve as curator of the James Weldon Johnson Collection at the Beinecke Library at Yale University. (Bontemps's own letters and other memorabilia of his long friendship with Langston Hughes are also housed at this library.) Bontemps's posts at Fisk and Yale enabled him to establish important resources for the study of African American literature and culture.

Bontemps's work as an anthologist is also significant. In 1958, Bontemps and Hughes coedited *The Book of Negro Folklore*, a collection of folklore and essays. In 1963, Bontemps edited *American Negro Poetry*. Another anthology, *Hold Fast to Dreams: Poems Old and New* (1969), includes works by black and white poets. Perhaps the most important anthology of Bontemps's career is *The Harlem Renaissance Remembered* (1972), a collection of edited essays about notable figures of the period. This book also includes Bontemps's personal reflections about the movement. Another anthology, *Personals* (1963), is a collection of Bontemps's poetry and his thoughts on Harlem Renaissance writers. Finally, *The Old South: "A Summer Tragedy" and Other Stories of the Thirties* (1973) is a collection of short fiction.

After retiring from Fisk in 1964, Bontemps held other academic posts at the University of Illinois (Chicago Circle campus) and later at Yale University. He eventually returned to Nashville, Tennessee, as a writer-in-residence at Fisk. In 1971, Bontemps began work on an autobiography, but it was left unfinished.

Although Arna Bontemps did not receive the same recognition as many of his contemporaries, such as his close friend and idol Langston Hughes, his literary accomplishments—particularly his novels, his children's literature, his anthologies, and his work as a librarian—established him as an important chronicler of African American life and culture. His work also helped to preserve the history and vibrancy of the Harlem Renaissance movement.

Biography

Arnaud Wendell Bontemps was born 13 October 1902 in Alexandria, Louisiana, to parents of Creole origin. He studied at San Fernando Academy in Los Angeles; Pacific Union College in Angwin, California (A.B., 1923); and the Graduate School of Library Science, University of Chicago (M.L.S., 1943). Bontemps taught at Harlem Academy in New York City (1924–1931); Oakwood Junior College in Huntsville, Alabama (1931–1934); Shiloh Academy in Chicago (1935–1937); and the University of Illinois (1966–1969). He married Alberta Johnson in 1926; they would have six children. Bontemps was editorial supervisor for the Federal Writers Project of the Illinois Works Progress Administration (1938); head librarian at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee (1943–1965); director of university relations and acting head librarian at Fisk University (1964–1965); and lecturer and curator for the James Weldon Johnson Collection at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut (1969–1971). His awards included *Opportunity* magazine's Alexander Pushkin Poetry Prize (1926, 1927) and its short-story prize (for "A Summer Tragedy," 1932), and a Rosenwald Fellowship (1939). Bontemps died in Nashville 4 June 1973.

LARNELL DUNKLEY

See also Crisis, The; Cullen, Countee; Handy, W. C.; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Johnson, James Weldon; McKay, Claude; Opportunity; Opportunity Literary Contests; Rosenwald Fellowships; Toomer, Jean

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Booklovers Club

The Harlem Booklovers Club was founded in the early twentieth century and flourished from the years preceding World War I through the 1940s. It was composed of university-trained black women who were members of the black middle and upper classes or were connected through marriage and family to the black elite of Harlem. This organization was a regional outgrowth of the first Booklovers Club, which had been established in Washington, D.C., in 1894. According to Mary Church Terrell (1863–1954), a founding member of the Booklovers movement, the club was "organized for the purpose of reading, reviewing, and discussing books" (Terrell 1940). Ida Gibbs Hunt (1862–1957) reported that the Booklovers met to "pursue courses of reading and study for higher culture." Meetings and programs were often devoted to Shakespeare and Wagner, and to reports on the members' travels to Europe and elsewhere abroad. Some sessions also dealt with child-rearing practices and other family-related topics. All-black female Booklovers Clubs spread as far west as the twin cities of Kansas City, Kansas, and Kansas City, Missouri, where the Inner-City Booklovers Club flourished from the 1920s through the 1990s.

During the 1920s, the Harlem Booklovers met at the 135th Street Branch of the New York Public Library

on 135th Street and Lenox Avenue. (The club was one of many community organizations that used the 135th Street branch for meetings and cultural programs throughout the years of the Harlem Renaissance. This facility was a key institution for the central Harlem community, serving approximately 125,000 people in a twenty-block area.) In 1925, the Division of Negro Literature, History, and Prints was established through a community advisory committee of Harlem bibliophiles, with the assistance of the librarians Ernestine Rose and Catherine Latimer, the first black librarian hired by the New York Public Library. In 1926, the New York Public Library purchased the private library of Arthur Schomburg—Harlem's leading bibliophile, as well as a cofounder of the Negro Society for Historical Research—and integrated his materials into that special division.

The Booklovers sponsored lectures on African American history and culture, book collecting contests, book review sessions, discussions of children's literature, programs related to community concerns, family development and training sessions, and gatherings that gave individual members an opportunity to share their travel and vacation experiences. Some of Harlem's most prominent intellectuals and collectors of Africana participated in the weekly history lectures sponsored by the Booklovers. This group included Arthur Schomburg; John Edward Bruce, who was a prominent journalist, a self-trained historian, and president of the Negro Society for Historical Research; Hubert Harrison; William Ernest Braxton, a painter who was also a member of many literary societies; and Willis Nathaniel Huggins, who was the owner of the Blyden Bookstore, a leader of the Harlem History Club, the sixth black educator to be hired by the New York public school system, and eventually the first black student to finish a doctorate in history at Fordham University. Huggins was also a tireless advocate for including African history in the curriculum of New York's public schools.

Some members of the Booklovers Club were married to black men who not only were professionally accomplished but were also linked to a flourishing circle of black bibliophiles and collectors that had established regular communication between colleagues in New York City, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. Prominent black bibliophiles in all three cities were active in the American Negro Historical Society and the Black Opals Literary Society of Philadelphia; the American Negro Academy; the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History; the Negro Book

Collectors Exchange; the Bethel Historical and Literary Association, based in Washington, D.C.; and the Negro Society for Historical Research, the Negro Library Association, and the Phalanx Club, located in New York City. Mary Church Terrell and her husband, Judge Robert H. Terrell, were both active in the prestigious Bethel Historical and Literary Association, and she served as Bethel's first female president in 1892–1893.

RALPH L. CROWDER

See also Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and *Journal of Black History*; *Black History and Historiography*; Bruce, John Edward; Harrison, Hubert; 135th Street Library; Schomburg, Arthur A.

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Booklovers Magazine

Booklovers Magazine, founded in Philadelphia in January 1903 by the journalist Seymour Eaton, was a monthly publication offering articles on a variety of subjects for a general audience. It appeared under three separate titles during a relatively short span: *Booklovers Magazine* from January 1903 to June 1905, *Appleton's Booklovers Magazine* from July 1905 to June 1906, and *Appleton's Magazine* from July 1906 to June 1909. The magazine sold for twenty-five cents an issue, and at its peak had a circulation of about 100,000, making it a serious and respectable publication but not widely read enough to turn much of a profit. Still, it was lavishly illustrated and printed on glossy paper, and its contributors

included such notables as Theodore Roosevelt, Henry Cabot Lodge, Theodore Dreiser, Joseph Conrad, and John Philip Sousa. Its articles on contemporary issues and controversies were well regarded.

The July 1903 issue of the magazine included an article by W. E. B. Du Bois, "Possibilities of the Negro: The Advance Guard of the Race." Du Bois's "advance guard" comprised ten successful black men, each of whom was given a brief biographical treatment: Booker T. Washington, the writers Charles Chesnutt and Paul Laurence Dunbar, the Reverend Frances James Grimké, the painter Henry Ossawa Tanner, the legislator and attorney Edward H. Morris of Illinois, the inventor Granville T. Woods, the mathematician and teacher Kelly Miller, the surgeon Daniel H. Williams, and the businessman W. L. Taylor. Portraits of the men accompanied the biographies.

Du Bois concluded his article by discussing the issues of mixed races, pointing out that of the ten men he profiled "three are black, two are brown, two are half white, and three are three-fourths white." All represented the American Negro and his potential. In a magazine serving an overwhelmingly white readership, Du Bois's article made the simple point that blacks were capable of intellectual and artistic excellence. The editor, Seymour Eaton, included a brief profile of Du Bois, praising *The Souls of Black Folk* and Du Bois's contributions to addressing the "Negro problem."

CYNTHIA BILY

See also Chesnutt, Charles Waddell; Dreiser, Theodore; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Dunbar, Paul Laurence; Miller, Kelly; Tanner, Henry Ossawa; Washington, Booker T.

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Bradford, Perry

The songwriter, music publisher, entrepreneur, and entertainer Perry Bradford entered show business in 1906 and worked in Allen's New Orleans Minstrels in

1907. He worked as a pianist in Chicago in 1909 and played at the Grand Theatre with Alberta Perkins. He was part of a successful double act, Bradford and Jeanette, in black vaudeville from 1909 to 1918. He toured in the shows *The Chicken Trust* (c. 1913) and *Sgt. Ham, Darktown After Dark*, and *Made in Heaven* (1918).

Blues songs, beginning with those of W. C. Handy, became increasingly popular shortly before World War I. However, there were as yet no opportunities for African Americans to record this music. Bradford set out to change this situation, with great energy and determination. In 1920, he persuaded Fred Hager, recordings manager for Okeh, to record the blues singer Mamie Smith; her first recordings, featuring Bradford's own "Crazy Blues" and "That Thing Called Love," sold extremely well and precipitated a craze for blues records by African American women. During 1921–1922 Bradford was the most prominent black entrepreneur on Broadway, making money with ease and spending it with abandon. He made several recordings as both singer and pianist from 1923 to 1929, but his skill in these areas was limited; he was much more important, from 1920 to 1944, as a producer of recordings by many of the greatest musicians of the era, including Louis Armstrong, Johnny Dunn, Buster Bailey, Willie "the Lion" Smith, and James P. Johnson.

Bradford sold most of his early songs to other publishers, such as Pace and Handy, but he went into business for himself as a publisher in 1920, joining Handy and other black entrepreneurs in the Gaiety Theater building on Times Square. During the 1920s he was incorporated under several names, of which the most important was Perry Bradford Music Publishing Company. He published songs for the show *Put and Take* (1921), including several by the prolific songwriter Spencer Williams, as well as a few of his own originals. Bradford is most important for publishing numerous works by James P. Johnson, including a version of the extended concert work *Yamekraw*. He and Johnson contributed songs to more shows in the 1920s, including *Keep Shufflin'* (1928) and *Messin' Around* (1929). Bradford held frequent wild parties at his office in the Gaiety building; these meetings of the "Joy Club" included Johnson, Fats Waller, and the lyricist Andy Razaf.

Unlike Handy and Clarence Williams, Bradford experienced a boom-and-bust cycle in his business affairs: he was an erratic, undisciplined businessman, so he realized only a small percentage of the profits that his pieces generated, and he spent those profits rather

than investing them. He got into considerable trouble by double-dealing other publishers on certain songs; and he was sentenced to prison in 1923 for suborning a witness (Spencer Williams) to commit perjury, in a dispute over Lemuel Fowler's hit song "He May Be Your Man, but He Comes to See Me Sometimes." Bradford wasted considerable energy from the 1920s to the 1940s on fruitless lawsuits against more powerful entities such as the publisher Southern Music and the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP).

A famously stubborn man, Bradford early on was nicknamed "Mule." Although he was a prolific songwriter, none of his compositions can be considered standards. However, his pugnacious autobiography, *Born With the Blues*, is one of the great primary documents in the history of African American music.

Biography

Perry Bradford (John Henry Perry Bradford) was born in Montgomery, Alabama, 14 February 1893; his family moved to Atlanta in 1901. He began his career in show business in 1906 and performed as a minstrel, pianist, and vaudevillian (1907–1918). He married Marion Dickerson in 1918; for a time she was in the music business with him, but the marriage ended in divorce. In 1920, Mamie Smith very successfully recorded some of Bradford's blues songs for Okeh. In 1921–1922, Bradford was a leading black entrepreneur on Broadway. From 1920 to 1944 he was a producer of recordings by many great musicians; however, he experienced economic and legal difficulties during this time. He took a day job at the Belmont Park race track in the 1940s. His autobiography was published in 1965. Bradford died in New York 20 April 1970.

ELLIOTT S. HURWITT

See also Armstrong, Louis; Handy, W. C.; Johnson, James P.; Razaf, Andy; Smith, Mamie; Smith, Willie "the Lion"; Waller, Thomas "Fats"; Williams, Clarence

Selected Songs

"Lonesome Blues." c. 1916. (All dates are approximate.)
 "Broken Hearted Blues." 1918.
 "Harlem Blues." 1918. (Retitled "Crazy Blues" in 1920.)
 "That Thing Called Love." 1919.
 "You Can't Keep a Good Man Down." 1920.

"Nervous Blues." 1921.

"I Ain't Gonna Play No Second Fiddle." 1925.

"My Home Ain't Here, It's Further Down the Road." 1925. (Retitled "Dixie Flyer Blues" by Bessie Smith.)

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Braithwaite, William Stanley

"Negro poetic expression hovers for the moment, pardonably perhaps, over the race problem, but its highest allegiance is to Poetry; it must soar." William Stanley Beaumont Braithwaite published these words in *The Crisis* in 1924. He believed strongly in poetic purity, without reference to skin color; the issue of race, he felt, placed an unnecessary burden on the poet, hindering poetic rhythm and leading to self-destructiveness. (Braithwaite once advised Claude McKay not to identify his race in his writings.) The generation of poets in Harlem in the 1920s did not share his view (they wanted to write about their triumphs and struggles, and they could do that only if they acknowledged their race), but they nevertheless respected Braithwaite as a literary leader.

Braithwaite was born in Boston, but his father, William Smith Braithwaite, was a native of British Guiana who had studied in England and then immigrated to New England. The elder Braithwaite preferred all things British, disdained the struggling African Americans, and therefore limited his children's association with the descendants of slaves. The younger Braithwaite was at first tutored at home; after his father's death he went to public school, but he left

school at age twelve (in 1890) to help support the family by working as a porter and errand boy. His sisters Eva and Rosie, who were musically inclined, formed a duet and toured the United States and Europe as "Sadie and Rosie"; by the turn of the twentieth century, they were members of Sam T. Jack's Creole Show.

Eventually, Braithwaite found employment as an apprentice in the pressroom of the publisher Ginn and Company. Here he read galley proofs of poets, developing an interest in poetry and books that would lead to a career path as an anthologist, editor, educator, biographer, critic, novelist, poet, and publisher. He was later promoted to compositor. His contact with the publishing industry and his exposure to creative works inspired him to write poetry himself, in the style of the British romantics.

In 1904, after covering the printing costs, Braithwaite published his first volume of poetry. Edited collections and another volume of lyrics followed, along with occasional poems and critical essays. His work appeared in periodicals such as *Atlantic Review*, *North American Review*, and *Scribner's*. Braithwaite's critical and poetic insight caught the attention of people at a newspaper, the *Boston Evening Transcript*, where he became a literary critic, a position he held for twenty-five years. He continued to compile anthologies of Elizabethan, Georgian, and Restoration poetry and to compose his own works. Soon he acquired a reputation for his scholarly approach to criticism and poetry. (He would continue to be recognized more for his critical commentary than his poetry.)

Braithwaite's annual *Anthology of Magazine Verse* made him very influential in the world of arts and letters. To be included in this anthology became a mark of recognition. Braithwaite did not focus exclusively on African American poets or themes; he published the work of black and white poets from the American North and South and from abroad: Sterling Brown, Countee Cullen, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Robert Frost, Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson, Vachel Lindsay, Edgar Lee Masters, Claude McKay, Amy Powell, Carl Sandburg, and Anne Spencer, to name a few. His anthologies were so successful that they were published for more than a quarter of a century: from 1913 to 1939. Moreover, he wrote critical essays on African American poetry, and he was a contributor to Alain Locke's anthology *The New Negro* (1925). In 1921, Braithwaite headed his own publishing company, B. J. Brimmer, which issued the works of Lucius Beebe, James Gould Cozzens, and Georgia Douglas Johnson. Thus Braithwaite was a contributor to the arts during

the Harlem Renaissance, was instrumental in exposing the poetry of African Americans of that period, and encouraged the literary movement of the renaissance.

In 1935, Braithwaite joined the faculty of Atlanta University as a professor of creative literature. In this position he gained greater exposure to the day-to-day experiences of educated African Americans and to African American writers and poets; until then, his contacts had been occasional and sometimes limited. He published little during this time, however, and he retired from the university in 1945.

Braithwaite studied the poetic patterns of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British poets, concentrating on the forms, meters, and themes of the romantics. His poetry, criticism, and compilations are not centered on race or color and do not reflect an identifiable cultural context. Because he circumvented the issue of racial identity, he himself fell into obscurity, and he has tended to be excluded from recently published anthologies that focus on African American writers. Nevertheless, he was among the first to develop the canon of African American poetry and prose.

Biography

William Stanley Beaumont Braithwaite was born in Boston, Massachusetts, 6 December 1878. He was home-schooled for a while and was later an apprentice typesetter at Ginn and Company. Braithwaite was an editor at *Colored American Magazine* in Boston (1901–1902); literary editor and columnist at the *Boston Evening Transcript* (1905); professor of creative literature at Atlanta University, Georgia (1935–1945); publisher, *Poetic Journal* in Boston (1912–1914); editor, *Poetry Review* (1916–1917); and founder and editor of B. J. Brimmer Publishing Company (1921–1927). He and Emma Kelly were married in 1903; they had four sons and three daughters. Braithwaite's awards and honors included the NAACP Arthur B. Spingarn Award for Outstanding Achievement in Literature (1918); A.M., Atlanta University, Georgia (1918); and Litt.D., Talladega College (1918). Braithwaite was a member of the Poetry Society of America, the New England Poetry Society, the Boston Authors' Club, and the editorial board of *Phylon*. He moved to 409 Edgecombe Avenue in Harlem in 1941, and died there on 8 June 1962.

GERRI BATES

See also Brimmer, B. J., Publishing House; Brown, Sterling; Cullen, Countee; Dunbar, Paul Laurence;

Hughes, Langston; Johnson, Georgia Douglas; Johnson, James Weldon; Lindsay, Vachel; Locke, Alain; McKay, Claude; New Negro, The; Spencer, Anne

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Brawley, Benjamin

Benjamin Griffith Brawley (1882–1939) was an author, a minister, and a college professor and administrator. He was born in Columbia, South Carolina, to parents who would have a profound impact on his career aspirations. In particular, his father, Edward McKnight Brawley, was a Baptist preacher and an instructor at Benedict College in South Carolina who served as president of a number of Baptist-affiliated colleges and was also a noted speaker and a proficient writer.



Benjamin Brawley, c. 1910. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

Throughout his early years, Brawley traveled a great deal, as the family moved several times; he attended a number of elementary schools but also received home schooling. He earned bachelor's degrees from Atlanta Baptist College (later Morehouse College) and the University of Chicago and a master's degree from Harvard. As a young adult, Brawley was aware of the importance of cultural institutions such as the church and school in the African American community and began to dedicate his own professional life to preserving and promoting African American culture through the appreciation and celebration of literature. As a classroom teacher, he also tried to inspire his students with a similar hunger for African American culture. Brawley taught at Howard University, Atlanta Baptist College, and Shaw University (at Shaw, one of the oldest African American Baptist-affiliated colleges in North Carolina, he and his father were colleagues). In 1911, at Howard, he became a member of the faculty

committee for the College of Liberal Arts, supervising the work of masters' candidates. In this capacity, he could instill in his students, and help them extract, ideas that would be critical to the next generation of African American scholars.

In 1920, Brawley had an opportunity to travel to Liberia, in western Africa, for six months. On this journey, he was able to explore his own religious beliefs and spread Baptist doctrine. When he returned to the United States, he was ordained as a Baptist minister. During a yearlong absence from the classroom, he served as a minister to the Messiah Baptist Church in Brockton, Massachusetts; however, an ideological conflict developed between him and the Baptist polity, and he resigned this post. The dispute had to do with the assimilationist thesis, which stressed faith over race as true patriotism; adherents of this thesis held that African Americans should develop into American citizens through American Christianity. With regard to this conflict, there was also a disagreement between Brawley and his father, who had taken a radical position but remained an active minister in the Baptist church. Still, despite their differences, Brawley esteemed his father's faith, articulate intelligence, and professionalism.

When Brawley returned to teaching, he was afforded time for scholarship and writing; this resulted in many works that captured African American cultural themes through literature, the arts, and history. Over the course of his career, Brawley produced seventeen books and more than twenty articles, including the following: *History of Morehouse College*, 1917; *Africa and the War*, 1918; *Women of Achievement Written for the Fireside Schools under the Auspices of the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society*, 1919; *A Short Social History of the American Negro*, 1921; *The Negro in Literature and Art in the United States*, 1921; *Doctor Dillard of the Jeanes Fund*, 1930; *Early Negro American Writers: Selections With Biographical and Critical Introductions*, 1935; *Paul Laurence Dunbar*, 1936; and *Negro Builders and Heroes*, 1937. One particularly notable work of Brawley's was *A Short History of the American Negro* (1913), a collection of essays examining social, cultural, and historical issues relevant to African Americans; it received broad attention in both African American and mainstream news media. Another popular work of Brawley's was *Paul Laurence Dunbar: Poet of His People*, which has been reprinted numerous times.

In 1927, Brawley was nominated for an award from the Harmon Foundation, a philanthropic organization

that sought out African American artists and intellectuals in order to support their creative efforts. He won second place, but he rejected the award because he and many of his colleagues believed that he had deserved first place.

As part of his work in preserving and promoting African American culture, Brawley concerned himself with the education and enlightenment of white Americans. He worked hard to explain the unique position of African Americans in American society to his white audiences, and in his essays and books of poems, he sought to provide a shared educational experience for white and African American readers. He was also a collector of materials documenting African American history and culture. His personal library contained a number of books on African American literature and history, including many signed first and limited editions. He also acquired one of the largest collections of manuscripts by and about the journalist and critic Richard Le Gallienne. Brawley bequeathed his manuscript and literary collections to Howard University's Moorland Spingarn Research Center in Washington, D.C. A collection of materials pertaining to Brawley himself is housed at the Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Manuscript Division.

Biography

Benjamin Griffith Brawley was born 22 April 1882, in Columbia, South Carolina; his parents were Edward M. and Margaret Saphronia (Dickerson) Brawley. In 1898–1901, he attended Atlanta Baptist College (Morehouse College) in Georgia, receiving a B.S. degree. He received an A.B. from the University of Chicago (1906) and an A.M. from Harvard University (1908). Brawley taught in Georgetown, Florida (1901); at Morehouse College as an instructor in English (1902) and then a professor of English (1906–1910); at Howard University as a professor of English (1910–1912, 1931); and at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, as a professor of English (1923–1931). He also served as dean of Morehouse College (1912). He married Hilda Damaris Prowd, of Kingston, Jamaica, in 1912 (they had no children). In 1920, Brawley went to Liberia to do a study of the republic. On 2 June 1921, he was ordained as a Baptist minister in Boston. Brawley died 1 February 1939.

IDA JONES

See also Dunbar, Paul Laurence; Harmon Foundation

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Briggs, Cyril

Although Cyril Valentine Briggs was born with a speech impediment that made it almost impossible to hold a conversation with him, he more than compensated for this disability with his deft organizational skills and his prolific pen. Briggs was at the forefront of black radical politics of the 1920s. The militant organization he founded, the African Black Brotherhood (ABB), helped advance the cause of black nationalism and advocated racial solidarity of the working classes. Briggs was also important as the author of numerous articles espousing black rights and communism, and for establishing several highly influential black radical periodicals, including the *Crusader*.

Briggs was born in Nevis, in the British West Indies. He was the illegitimate child of Mary M. Huggins, a woman of color, and Louis E. Briggs, a white plantation manager. Briggs himself was light-complexioned enough that he was later described as an “angry, blond Negro.” After graduating from grade school in 1904, he worked at a newspaper on Saint Kitts.

In 1905, Briggs immigrated to New York City, where he became part of a growing West Indian population. Between 1912 and 1915 he worked in a variety of positions for the *Amsterdam News*. In 1915, he became the editor of the *Colored American Review*, a black business magazine in Harlem; however, his work with this magazine ended after only two issues, perhaps

because of his militant tone. He then returned to the *Amsterdam News*, writing pieces in which he urged self-determination for blacks and argued against the United States' involvement in World War I. Perhaps his most significant piece was a two-part editorial (5 and 19 September 1917) advocating an independent black nation within the United States. The publishers' growing censorship of his articles caused his break with the *Amsterdam News* in 1919.

Briggs established the *Crusader* in September 1918. In its early years, this periodical was the organ of the Hamitic League of the World, a group espousing "race patriotism." Briggs' stance is perhaps best summed up in an editorial, "Race Catechism," published in the inaugural issue of the *Crusader*. In it, he stressed that blacks should be proud of their race and be prepared to make any sacrifice for it.

The *Crusader* continued to emphasize race patriotism, but after the "red summer" of 1919 (a season marked by several bloody race riots) it became increasingly anticapitalist and anti-imperialist, as is evidenced in the editorial "The Salvation of the Negro" (April 1921). This editorial encapsulates Briggs's beliefs about saving the race by creating an autonomous black state "in Africa or elsewhere" and by establishing "a Universal Socialist Co-Operative Commonwealth."

The *Crusader* also became the voice of the African Blood Brotherhood, a semisecret paramilitary organization attempting to blend black nationalism with an interracial working-class program. The group, never numbering more than a few thousand, consisted largely of anglophone West Indians, including Claude McKay, W. A. Domingo, and Richard B. Moore. There was a close link between the ABB and the Communist (Workers') Party, and Briggs and most of the other ABB leaders would join the communists by 1921 (ABB would be dissolved in 1924).

Briggs and other members of the ABB became increasingly convinced that black liberation worldwide would necessitate bloodshed, particularly after the riot of 1921 in Tulsa, in which more than 50 whites and 150 blacks died. Although Briggs denied that the ABB had been involved in this riot, he praised the use of force by blacks. Accusations in the *New York Times* (June 1921) that the ABB was involved gave the organization much-needed publicity, which increased its numbers.

Briggs's increasingly communistic stance put him in conflict with Marcus Garvey. Initially, Briggs had been supportive of Garvey and Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). But he had made an unsuccessful overture to Garvey in an attempt

to work with the UNIA at its convention in 1921; after this rebuff, Briggs became one of Garvey's sharpest critics, using the *Crusader* to wage a harsh campaign against him.

The *Crusader*—unlike Garvey's newspaper, the *Negro World*—was never able to reach a mass audience. Because of increasing government pressure and dwindling financial support, the *Crusader* ceased publication in 1922. Subsequently, Briggs headed the Crusader News Agency, which disseminated radical news items to some 200 newspapers. Briggs also published pieces in various forums for Marxist thought, including the *Daily Worker* and *The Communist*, on many of his long-term concerns.

Briggs went on to edit the *Negro Champion*, the house organ of the communist-backed American Negro Labor Congress (ANLC); and the *Negro Liberator* of the League of Struggle for Negro Rights (LSNR). Both the ANLC and the LSNR were attempts by the Communist Party to appeal to black nationalists. In these organizations, for the first time, the party began to emphasize the importance of race, not just class, in the effort to improve blacks' living conditions. The most radical proposal of the communists regarding the "Negro question" came at the Sixth World Congress, held in Moscow in 1928, when the Comintern (the international arm of the Socialist Party of Soviet Russia), declared that blacks in the American South had the right of self-determination as a "subject nation." Briggs was at the forefront of this controversial movement toward black self-determination.

By 1939, Briggs was expelled from the party because of his support of black nationalism over class issues, but he rejoined it soon after moving to Los Angeles in 1944. During the late 1950s, he worked as an editor with the *Los Angeles Herald-Dispatch* and the *People's World*. Briggs also became involved with younger black radicals in the 1960s, continuing his lifelong dedication to the cause of black nationalism until his death in 1966.

During much of his life, and during the years immediately after he died, Briggs was relegated to relative obscurity. However, a recent resurgence of interest in radical black politics and the reprinting of a full run of the *Crusader* have belatedly brought Briggs the attention he has long deserved.

Biography

Cyril Valentine Briggs was born 28 May 1888, on Nevis (or possibly, according to some sources, Saint Kitts),

British West Indies. He graduated from the Ebenezer Wesleyan grade school on Saint Kitts in 1904. He immigrated to the United States on 4 July 1905 and became a naturalized U.S. citizen on 6 August 1918. He was the founder of the African Blood Brotherhood and editor of the *Amsterdam News* (1912–1915, 1916–1919), *Colored American Review* (1915), *Crusader* (1918–1922), *Negro Champion*, *Negro Liberator*, *Los Angeles Herald-Dispatch*, and *People's World*. Briggs died in Los Angeles 18 October 1966.

LOUIS PARASCANDOLA

See also African Blood Brotherhood; American Negro Labor Congress; Amsterdam News; Communist Party; Domingo, Wilfred Adolphus; Garvey, Marcus; McKay, Claude; Moore, Richard B.; Riots: 2—Red Summer of 1919; Riots: 3—Tulsa, 1921; Universal Negro Improvement Association

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Brimmer, B. J., Publishing House

B. J. Brimmer Publishing House was a short-lived company, based in Boston. It was founded in 1921 under the direction of the well-known African American

poet and literary critic William Stanley Braithwaite, who was also editor in chief. Braithwaite was also editor of the annual *Anthology of Magazine Verse*; he previously had been with Cornhill, but he left when Brookes More gained control and stopped publishing the works of African American poets.

Brimmer primarily published poetry, nonfiction, and drama; it issued very few novels. Along with trade printings, the firm published titles in limited, signed editions, which were printed on handmade paper. Brimmer's list (which included Benjamin Rosenbaum's and Celia MacKinnon's first books of poems) reflected Braithwaite's interest in new poetry, as well as his desire to promote the work of new black poets. Among the company's publications were *Bronze: A Book of Verse* by Georgia Douglas Johnson (1922); *The Poems of Seumus O'Sullivan* by James Starkey (1923); and *The Hills Give Promise, a Volume of Lyrics, Together With Carmus: A Symphonic Poem* by Robert Sillman. The firm also published one nonfiction book by an African American, about black soldiers during World War II; and its list for spring 1924 included a novel by Joshua Henry Jones about the "race problem."

Despite Braithwaite's desire to help African American authors, and despite his influence with poets such as James Weldon Johnson, Countee Cullen, and Claude McKay, his primary interest was in white authors from New England. The names on his list of the best contemporary American poets in 1927 (at the height of the Harlem Renaissance) included Edwin Arlington Robinson, Robert Frost, Carl Sandburg, Vachel Lindsay, Edgar Lee Masters, Amy Lowell, Conrad Aiken, and Sara Teasdale (Hutchinson 1995, 355). Braithwaite's Anglocentric position was influenced by his assimilationist political stance and his view that American culture was a whole. In terms of his literary preferences, Braithwaite also held rather old-fashioned ideas about what literature should be, and he often balked at the writings of many black authors of the time, which were overtly racial and politically charged. As a result of his literary preferences and his sometimes questionable publishing practices—which included helping to create primarily vanity presses like Brimmer to promote the works of authors for whom he acted as a kind of agent—he lost influence as a critic throughout the 1920s. In fact, Braithwaite was criticized by Claude McKay in the latter's letters to Langston Hughes during this period.

At a time when new publishing companies like Alfred A. Knopf Inc., Harcourt Brace, and Boni and

Liveright were on the rise in New York and were embracing new “modern” authors, Brimmer’s list of little-known and now hardly memorable writers such as Lucias Beebe, Mary Esther Cobb, Bella Flaccus, and Zoe Patricia Hobbs, combined with his unwillingness to join current trends in literature, proved fatal to the company’s financial success. B. J. Brimmer Publishing Company went bankrupt in 1927 and was ultimately of little importance to the publishing of the Harlem Renaissance, despite Braithwaite’s personal hope of contributing to the success of African American poetry.

APRIL CONLEY KILINSKI

See also Braithwaite, William Stanley; Cornhill; Cullen, Countee; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, Georgia Douglas; Johnson, James Weldon; McKay, Claude; Publishers and Publishing Houses

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Brooks, Clarence

Clarence Brooks was a pioneer in African American cinema, both in front of and behind the camera. Brooks was born in Texas but moved to Los Angeles after graduating from high school. In 1915, he met the brothers George P. and Noble Johnson, who would soon (in 1916) form the country’s first black-owned and -operated film production firm, the Lincoln Motion Picture Company. Brooks was part of a group of blacks who wanted to make films to counter the demeaning stereotypes that were so frequently in mass culture. Their aim was to portray African Americans realistically and seriously, and in particular to show the concerns and aspirations of a budding black middle class. These same sentiments characterized African American art and culture during the Harlem Renaissance.

Brooks served as secretary of the Lincoln company and was an actor in most of its films. He had a featured role in Lincoln’s first release, *The Realization of a Negro’s Ambition* (1916), the story of a graduate of Tuskegee Institute who leaves the farm to find his fortune out west. This was the first black film to offer a serious depiction—with no burlesque or buffoonery—of middle-class blacks, and it was well received in black communities throughout the United States. Lincoln quickly followed with *Trooper of Company K* (1916), a film about the massacre of black troops in the U.S. Army’s Tenth Cavalry. These films were a source not only of entertainment but of racial pride; for actors like Brooks, they provided an opportunity to play fully conceived characters that were in stark contrast to the unflattering stereotypes pervasive in mainstream studio films.

Brooks went into semiretirement after Lincoln went out of business in 1921. He was lured back to films, however, in 1928, when he played the part of a wounded veteran of World War I in *Absent* (produced by the Rosebud Film Corporation). Brooks would eventually become one of the most popular stars in black films. He also appeared in some big studio productions, most notably as the heroic Dr. Oliver Marchand in John Ford’s *Arrowsmith* (1931). Brooks’s role in *Arrowsmith* was one of the rare cases in which black actors were able to portray characters other than the standard racial stereotypes. Brooks earned strong reviews for his performance, but he was never to get another role of that caliber. Nevertheless, Brooks managed to put together a strong body of work, and he continued to appear in mostly black films, including a series of black cowboy westerns, throughout the 1930s and 1940s.

Biography

Clarence Brooks was born around 1895 in San Antonio, Texas; he moved to Los Angeles after graduating from high school. He studied dentistry for a short while at the University of Southern California before opening his own drugstore. In 1916–1921, he was the secretary of the Lincoln Motion Picture Company and appeared in most of its films. After Lincoln went out of business, Brooks returned to films in 1928 and remained a popular actor through the 1940s. The date of his death is unknown.

DWANDALYN R. REECE

See also Film: Actors; Johnson, Noble; Lincoln Motion Picture Company

Select Filmography

The Realization of a Negro's Ambition. 1916.
Trooper of Company K. 1916.
The Law of Nature. 1917.
A Man's Duty. 1919.
By Right of Birth. 1921.
Absent. 1928.
Georgia Rose. 1930.
Arrowsmith. 1931.
Murder in Harlem. 1935.
The Brand of Cain. 1935.
Lem Hawkins's Confession. 1935.

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Brooks, Gwendolyn

Gwendolyn Elizabeth Brooks was born in 1917, at the very beginning of the Harlem Renaissance, was barely a teenager at its close, and spent most of her life in Chicago. While she thus cannot properly be called a participant in the renaissance, she is certainly one of its most distinguished students and heirs, receiving encouragement from such Harlem notables as Langston Hughes and James Weldon Johnson. Brooks was known for her astute blend of realism and romanticism, her striking ability with language, and her dedication to African American culture and to children; and she was the first African American to win a Pulitzer Prize.

Brooks was born in Topeka, Kansas, but grew up in Chicago. She began writing poetry in elementary school. Her mother, Keziah Wims Brooks, took her to public poetry readings and asserted that her daughter would one day be the “*lady Paul Laurence Dunbar.*” In 1930, Brooks’s first poem, “*Eventide,*” was published in *American Childhood Magazine.* While in high school she became a regular contributor to the column “*Light and Shadows*” in the *Chicago Defender,* with more than one hundred poems in print. She met and corresponded



Gwendolyn Brooks. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

with Langston Hughes and James Weldon Johnson during this period (Hughes, especially, would be a lifelong supporter of her writing). They urged her to read modern poetry, especially such figures as T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and e. e. cummings. Brooks developed her own distinctive voice and message, always reflecting a concern for issues of oppression but with more of a turn toward the political in the 1960s. However, the attention to craft urged and modeled by Hughes and other modernists is a hallmark of her entire body of work.

Brooks’s first book of poetry, *A Street in Bronzeville,* was published in 1945 by Harper and Row. It was praised by the critics and helped earn her a place on *Mademoiselle* magazine’s list of “*Ten Young Women of the Year.*” Focusing on the daily lives of urban blacks, *A Street in Bronzeville* is marked by strong individualized voices, concern for issues of racial and intraracial discrimination and the lives of women, and compassion

for all the lives represented. Three of the poems from this volume that have been most frequently anthologized and quoted are "The Sundays of Satin-Legs Smith," a day in the life of an urban zoot-suiter; "Gay Chaps at the Bar," about war veterans; and "The Mother," about abortion.

Annie Allen (which won the Pulitzer Prize) appeared in 1949. Divided into sections called "Notes From the Childhood and the Girlhood," "The Anniad," "Appendix to the Anniad," and "The Womanhood," the volume traces the experiences of an inner-city girl growing into womanhood. In "The Anniad," Brooks uses a variety of poetic techniques, including what she herself called the "sonnet-ballad," with the protagonist achieving an epic heroism in her daily struggles. *Annie Allen* juxtaposes a realistic approach to life with hopes and dreams for something better, demonstrating the complexities of ordinary human lives.

Brooks's one novel, *Maud Martha*, appeared in 1953; it consists of very short chapters—practically vignettes—and was drawn in part on her experiences as a maid. *Maud Martha* was greeted with some interest but also some confusion when it was published. It has been a subject of increasing interest in recent years, especially among feminist critics.

Throughout her life, Brooks advocated for and wrote about the needs of children. Her *Bronzeville Boys and Girls* (1956), a collection of thirty-four poems with traditional rhyme schemes, explores processes of self-discovery; these boys and girls could be children of any race or region. Another example is her *Children Coming Home* (1991). Twenty children living in poverty each have a poem describing the pains, joys, and challenges they find as they come home from school. In addition, Brooks passed along the mentoring and encouragement she had received from such Harlem figures as Hughes and Johnson, becoming very active in the poetry workshop movement—and perhaps more notably in poetry classes and contests for inner-city children, to which she devoted tremendous energy and gave both financial and personal sponsorship.

In 1967, Brooks attended the historic Fisk University Second Black Writers' Conference. She was both honored and influenced by such outspoken figures as Amiri Baraka and Ron Milner. She took an active role in the "black arts movement" from that time forward and began to host a poetry workshop in Chicago for such young poets as Sonia Sanchez, Nikki Giovanni, and Don L. Lee.

According to Cook (1993), Brooks's earlier poetry follows an "integrationist ideology," but she "turns from the image of the meek, suffering victim so well loved in earlier poetry to that of the raging, threatening avenger." But Williams (1997), among others, argues that elements of protest and an awareness of oppression were always present in Brooks's poetry, and that her radicalization in the 1960s and 1970s led rather to a shift in balance.

Brooks's more open attention to social and political issues can be seen in *The Bean Eaters* (1960), which includes such famous poems as "We Real Cool" and "A Bronzeville Mother Loiters in Mississippi. Meanwhile, a Mississippi Mother Burns Bacon," a response to the murder of Emmett Till. Notably, these poems were written before the conference at Fisk University, lending support to Williams's position. Brooks's *In the Mecca* (1968) shifts to more free verse and more black vernacular speech. The title poem traces a woman's search through a tenement for her murdered daughter. *In the Mecca* received a nomination for the National Book Award.

After many years with Harper and Row, in the 1970s Brooks switched to African American publishers, especially Broadside Press, out of Detroit. In the 1980s, Brooks established her own publishing house, the David Company of Chicago.

Brooks continued to write until the end of her life, publishing several more volumes of poetry and two autobiographies, *Report from Part One* (1972) and *Report from Part Two* (1996). Brooks received more than fifty honorary degrees, as well as two Guggenheim fellowships, the Frost Medal, and the title of poet laureate of Illinois (1968), among many other awards. In 1976, she became the first black woman elected to the 250-member National Institute of Arts and Letters. In 1985, she became a poetry consultant to the Library of Congress. The Gwendolyn Brooks Chair in Black Literature and Creative Writing was established at Chicago State University in 1990. In what she has described as her highest honor, she was named the Jefferson Lecturer by the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1994, and in 1995, she received a National Medal of Arts award. She considered the Gwendolyn Brooks Junior High School, just South of Chicago, equally important.

Through her poetry and the example of her life, Brooks carried on the legacy she herself inherited from the Harlem Renaissance and provided a bridge between it and the "black arts movement." Her

influence seems likely to continue well into the future.

Biography

Gwendolyn Elizabeth Brooks was born in Topeka, Kansas, 7 June 1917. She graduated from Wilson Junior College in 1937. She worked as a maid, then as a secretary; she taught poetry workshops and creative writing at Columbia College beginning in 1963, and later at institutions including Northeastern Illinois University, Elmhurst College, Columbia University, Clay College of New York, and the University of Wisconsin. She married Henry Lowington Blakely Sr. in 1939; they had two children. Blakely and Brooks divorced in 1969, but they remarried in 1973. Brooks's awards included the following: Midwestern Writers' Conference Poetry Award, 1943, 1944, 1945; Eunice Tietjens Prize from *Poetry* (for *Annie Allen*), 1949; more than fifty honorary degrees; two Guggenheim fellowships; American Academy of Arts and Letters Grant, 1946–1947; Shelley Memorial Award; Frost Medal; the first Kuumba Award; a Senior Fellowship in Literature; Pulitzer Prize, 1950; appointment as poet laureate of Illinois, 1968; election to the National Institute of Arts and Letters, 1976; consultancy in poetry to the Library of Congress, 1985–1986; Lifetime Achievement Award, National Endowment for the Arts, 1989; Lifetime Achievement Award, National Book Foundation, 1994; Jefferson lectureship, 1994; and National Medal of Arts award, 1995. Brooks died in Chicago 3 December 2000.

KATHRYN WEST

See also Chicago Defender; Dunbar, Paul Laurence; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, James Weldon; Literature: 7—Poetry; Modernism

Selected Works

A Street in Bronzeville. 1945.
Annie Allen. 1949.
Maud Martha. 1953.
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The Bean Eaters. 1960.
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Brooks, Shelton

Shelton Brooks was a well-known vaudeville entertainer who sang, danced, acted, performed comedy, and played the piano. He is best remembered as the composer of several hit songs between 1910 and 1918—songs that helped set off America's dance craze, furthered the careers of several popular singers, and became part of the standard repertoire of early jazz. Brooks was exposed to church music at an early age and taught himself to play the organ and then the piano. By age fifteen he was playing professionally in Detroit; in 1905, he moved to Chicago, where he became active as a vaudeville performer and an imitator of the comedian Bert Williams. Over the next sixteen years he starred in several plays and composed most of the songs for which he became famous.

Brooks began to establish a reputation as a songwriter in 1910, when the popular white vaudeville singer Sophie Tucker adopted his "Some of These Days" as her theme song. It was an overnight hit, sold more than 2 million copies as sheet music, and became a popular vehicle for jazz improvisation. Tucker herself recorded the tune several times and continued to sing it for the rest of her life. Brooks then wrote a string of hits that captured the spirit of the era: dancing, drinking, and good times. In 1911, Brooks wrote "All Night Long," which expressed the mood of drinking parties. The double-entendre song "I Wonder Where My Easy Rider's Gone" (1913) was popularized in performances and recordings by both Sophie Tucker and Mae West.

Brooks wrote three tunes that inspired nationally renowned dances when they were taken up by white dance troupes and shows: "Walking the Dog" (1916), "Darktown Strutters' Ball" (1917), and "I Want to Shimmie" (1918). "Darktown Strutters' Ball" became an instant dance (shimmy) favorite and was Brooks's biggest hit, eventually selling more than 3 million copies as sheet music. Despite its irresistible lyrics, "Darktown Strutters' Ball" received most attention as an all-instrumental version (1917) by the white Original Dixieland Jazz Band, which made it one of the earliest recorded jazz hits and a traditional jazz standard.

In 1922, Brooks moved to New York. He then worked mainly as a vaudeville actor on Broadway and in Europe, in popular shows such as the *Plantation Revue* and *Blackbirds* (in both of these, he played opposite Florence Mills). He also recorded during the "race records" boom of the 1920s. The majority of his nearly two dozen recordings are comedy skits. In 1923, he provided piano accompaniment for two vocal duets that he recorded on the Okeh label with singer Sarah Martin. Brooks was also Ethel Waters's piano accompanist on two Columbia recordings in 1926. In 1928, he produced and starred in the show *Nifties*. In 1927, he appeared in the short comedy film *Gaiety*.

In 1930, Brooks was the costar of a popular biweekly CBS radio show, *Egg and Shell*, and also performed on Broadway in the revue *Brown Buddies*, for which he cowrote the song "Don't Leave Your Little Blackbird Blue." Brooks also acted in and wrote two songs for the film *Double Deal* (1939). His last major appearance in New York was at Harlem's Apollo Theater in 1940. That same year, he was honored by the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) as a composer. In the early 1940s, Brooks moved to Los Angeles, where he would perform in the burlesque tribute *Blackouts* for seven years. He continued performing into the 1960s and 1970s with other legends of his era, such as Eubie Blake and Ethel Waters.

Although Shelton Brooks spent much of his career as an entertainer on the musical stage, he wrote several of the century's best popular songs before 1920. His true legacy is that he was a member of a generation of multitalented, successful black entertainers and songwriters who pushed beyond the standard genre of minstrel and coon songs after 1910 and produced new material that inspired, influenced, and helped to shape trends in dance, show music, jazz, and twentieth-century American popular culture.

Biography

The composer, vaudevillian, and pianist Shelton Brooks was born 4 May 1886 in Amesburg, Ontario, Canada. By age fifteen he was playing professionally in Detroit; he moved to Chicago in 1905. From then until about 1920 he starred in plays and composed most of his famous songs. Brooks moved to New York in 1922 and continued to perform onstage, in recordings, and in films; he also costarred in a radio show in 1930. He moved to Los Angeles, California, in the 1940s and continued performing into the 1960s

and 1970s. Brooks died 6 September 1975 in Los Angeles.

MICHAEL WHITE

See also Jazz; Mills, Florence; Singers; Waters, Ethel; Williams, Egbert Austin "Bert"

Selected Works

- "All Night Long." 1921.
- "Darktown Strutters' Ball." 1917.
- "Don't Leave Your Little Backbird Blue." 1930.
- "I Want to Shimmie." 1918.
- "I Wonder Where My Easy Rider's Gone." 1913.
- "Some of These Days." 1910.

Recordings

- "After All These Years." 1926. (As piano accompanist to Ethel Waters.)
- "I've Got What It Takes to Bring You Back." 1923. (Piano accompaniment and vocal duet with Sara Martin.)
- "Lost Your Mind." 1921. (Comedy skit with cast and orchestra.)
- "Original Blues." 1923. (Piano accompaniment and vocal duet with Sarah Martin.)
- "Throw Dirt in Your Face." 1926. (As piano accompanist to Ethel Waters.)

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Broom

Broom: An International Magazine of the Arts, an important literary publication of the 1920s, was intended as a showcase for the best work by living writers and

artists. A cartoon on the back cover of the first issue (November 1921) depicts a character with a broom, suggesting an intention to sweep things clean; later, Gordon Craig's cover drawing for the fourth issue, of a figure thumbing its nose, implies an even stronger sense of defying the norm. However, *Broom* was not solely a magazine of the avant-garde or of experimental work. Rather, its content was eclectic: The first three issues included photographs of art by Pablo Picasso, Jacques Lipschitz, Fernand Léger, and Henri Matisse, among others, as well as poems, short stories, and criticism by writers such as Conrad Aiken, Amy Lowell, Sherwood Anderson, Wallace Stevens, Malcolm Cowley, Marianne Moore, and Gertrude Stein.

Broom was first published in Rome. Its founding editor was Harold Loeb, assisted by Alfred Kreymborg, but the two became divided over questions of finances and editorial policy, and Loeb announced Kreymborg's resignation in only the fourth issue. Edward Storer became the new associate editor, and Lola Ridge became the American editor, based in New York City. In the October 1922 issue, Loeb announced that the magazine was moving to Berlin; he also announced the appointment of another new associate editor, Matthew Josephson. Loeb continued to edit *Broom* from Berlin until March 1923, when lack of funding caused him to cease publication. *Broom* was later revived in New York City, in August 1923, under Josephson's editorship (though Loeb was still listed on the masthead), but it again ceased publication—this time permanently—in January 1924.

In the May 1922 issue, Loeb published an essay, "Foreign Exchange," in which he praised American expatriate writers, claiming that they could view the United States more objectively, and he began to publish poems and prose by writers such as John Dos Passos, e. e. cummings, and Robert Coates. In an essay for the September 1922 issue, "The Mysticism of Money," Loeb argued that the objects of industrialism such as "engines, forges, . . . motors, . . . automobiles, ships, aeroplanes," can be works of art that achieve "simplification, elimination of inessentials, balance and beauty." He also argued that materialism and the pursuit of money can be as great an inspiration for art as religion.

Several new American writers were published in *Broom* before its demise, including Kay Boyle, Hart Crane, and Jean Toomer—the latter an important figure in the Harlem Renaissance. *Broom* was one of the first English-language reviews of the arts in Europe, was representative of the post–World War I

“lost generation,” and did much to expand artistic form and scope in the 1920s. It was judged by Kenneth Rexroth to have been the best literary magazine of the period.

J. P. STEED

See also Anderson, Sherwood; Toomer, Jean

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Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) was a labor union formed in 1925 to represent the African American porters and maids who worked on the sleeping and dining cars of the Pullman railroad company. These workers were paid very little and had to rely on tips from the predominantly white passengers; moreover, their work hours were long and irregular, and their working conditions were deplorable—a situation that grew even worse after the federal government’s control of the railroads ended in 1920. The increasingly discontented workers began to organize to present their demands in common. In August 1925, they gathered at the Elks Club in Harlem to form their union, choosing A. (Asa) Philip Randolph as their leader. Randolph was a brilliant speaker, a cofounder and coeditor of the socialist newspaper *The Messenger*, and a committed advocate of equality for all African Americans; he did not work for Pullman, and so he was in no danger of recriminations from the company.

However, the BSCP grew very slowly. Pullman fought vehemently against it; used spies, threats, and indiscriminate firings to try and break it; used yellow-dog contracts, which were agreements whereby employees promised not to join it; and created a rival company-sponsored union. Pullman also induced conservative members of the black community, particularly ministers and preachers, to denounce the BSCP as socialist or communist and as interfering with a

benevolent company that provided good jobs for loyal people. Moreover, while Randolph struggled for an agreement with Pullman, the BSCP also faced a battle for recognition from the American Federation of Labor (AFL), an umbrella organization that coordinated the activities of its member unions. The AFL had a long tradition of organizing only the most highly skilled workers in elite craft unions, and it had long ignored the needs of black workers. In 1928, although the federal Railway Labor Board had granted the BSCP the right to organize Pullman porters and maids, the AFL refused to grant the BSCP a charter, insisting that the right to organize porters had already been granted to the Hotel and Restaurant Employees (HRE), an AFL union. In 1934, Randolph was again rebuffed in his attempt to win an AFL charter, when the AFL’s executive council awarded jurisdiction over the Pullman porters to yet another union, the Order of Sleeping Car Conductors (OSCC), a white union that excluded blacks but nonetheless planned to accept African Americans into “auxiliary” locals. Eventually, though, the AFL did embrace the BSCP, because the brotherhood, which was led by socialists, took a strong stance against communist labor organizations (such as the American Negro Labor Congress) and seemed to the conservative AFL to be a bulwark against radical communists.

The ten-year struggle for recognition of the BSCP ended in 1935, when the Pullman company began negotiations. In addition to the BSCP’s own efforts and the solidarity of its members and leaders, other events helped coerce the company into cooperating. This was the Depression era, and President Franklin Roosevelt’s



BSCP at the Elks' Club. (Brown Brothers.)

New Deal legislation had outlawed company unions and yellow-dog contracts, and had guaranteed workers the right to bargain collectively. Thus, in 1935, the National Mediation Board awarded the BSCP sole jurisdiction over Pullman porters; and in 1936, the AFL finally welcomed the BSCP into the federation with an international charter. In 1937, the BSCP concluded its first labor contract with Pullman—the first agreement in American history between a major corporation and a black union.

Later History

By 1940, the BSCP was the most powerful black labor organization in the United States, and A. Philip Randolph was one of the nation's most powerful labor leaders. This enabled the BSCP to expand its activities beyond the workplace concerns of Pullman porters and maids. Beginning in the 1930s, the BSCP became a major force in the civil rights movement. There were several factors in this evolution. For one thing, the union had been so successful that many members were at an economic and social peak in black America, and they used their advantages and power to contribute to their communities. Another factor was Randolph's intelligence, energy, and connections, which helped the BSCP to become a major political force. Thus the BSCP could seek civil rights by mobilizing African Americans nationwide, with solid financial backing and increasing political influence.

As World War II began in China in 1937 and in Europe in 1939, white Americans rushed to fill lucrative new jobs in war industries, but African Americans remained relegated to the lowest-paying occupations. The BSCP intervened, and in 1941 Randolph organized the March on Washington (D.C.) movement. The African American community supported him, and the scope of the planned march grew, although President Roosevelt and other leaders, who worried that such obvious internal racial divisions would weaken the United States, tried to prevent it. Roosevelt and Randolph negotiated a settlement that included Roosevelt's signing of Executive Order 8802 in June 1941—an order banning discrimination in government employment or in any private business that had contracts with the federal government. Also, Roosevelt established the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC), to ensure equal access to jobs. In exchange, Randolph canceled the march. He was criticized for this by many radical blacks, who argued that black

Americans had never before organized a mass protest so successfully and that the march should proceed as planned. Randolph, for his part, argued that the government had made unprecedented concessions and that there might be a backlash among whites if blacks were seen as unpatriotic.

In 1947, Randolph again clashed with a president over civil rights. The beginning of the cold war and the expansion of the peacetime armed forces drew attention to segregation in the military. Randolph called on African Americans to refuse military service and refuse to register for the draft; he also founded the Committee against Jim Crow in Military Service and Training, which became the League for Non-Violent Civil Disobedience against Military Segregation; and he continued to lobby President Harry Truman and the Senate Armed Services Committee. On 26 July 1948, Truman signed Executive Order 9981, barring discrimination in the armed forces; in addition, he signed Executive Order 9980, establishing a new FEPC, which significantly improved on Roosevelt's earlier commission. (However, Jim Crow did not end in the military until 1953, during the Korean War, when a manpower shortage led many reluctant commanders to integrate their units.)

The BSCP continued to make its mark during the 1950s. When Rosa Parks was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, on 1 December 1955, it was a member of the BSCP—E. (Edgar) D. Nixon—who organized a boycott of the city's public transportation. The bus boycott, which lasted for more than a year, first brought the young minister Martin Luther King Jr. into the national spotlight; this boycott also illustrates the significance of the BSCP in the civil rights movement. E. D. Nixon strongly believed that, although the civil rights movement could ensure that African Americans would have the legal right to ride on buses and Pullman cars, the labor movement was needed to ensure that they would have the money to pay the fare.

Still, the BSCP continued to encounter resistance from some longtime opponents. In 1955, the AFL and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) merged to form the AFL-CIO. Of its 15 million members, 1.5 million were black, and of twenty-nine vice presidents, Randolph was one of only two who were black. The BSCP objected to the constitution of the new AFL-CIO because, although it imposed punishments on member unions engaging in corrupt or communist activities, it provided no sanctions against unions violating workers' civil rights. During the AFL-CIO convention of 1959, Randolph and AFL-CIO president

George Meany engaged in an angry debate over the place of civil rights and desegregation in the labor movement. Meany wanted to let black local unions remain segregated and to give white unions more time to change their individual constitutions, whereas Randolph wanted all unions, black and white, ordered to desegregate within the year. (Meany made newspaper headlines when he shouted at Randolph, “Who the hell appointed you as the guardian of all the Negroes in America?”)

The BSCP’s efforts toward social advancement through economic security were threatened by economic downturns in the late 1950s, and during this time white unions were reluctant to admit black members. Randolph now called for a “March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom” that would highlight the interdependence of civil rights and economic self-sufficiency. The BSCP and other unions, notably the United Auto Workers (UAW), provided organizational and financial support, although Meany and the AFL-CIO refused to endorse the demonstration. The resulting march owed much to numerous groups and individuals, black and white, but the BSCP and A. Philip Randolph were the central force. More than 250,000 people took part in the demonstration, on 28 August 1963; this was the event at which Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. In response to objections from President John Kennedy’s administration, Randolph, King, and other leaders met with Kennedy to air their grievances; the march helped to ensure passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The march of 1963 was one of the BSCP’s last great victories. As fast, economical air travel and a new national highway system developed after World War II, the luxury train business declined steadily. The membership of the BSCP also dropped steadily; furthermore, its remaining members grew older, and their political influence and their ability to finance civil rights reform eroded. A. Philip Randolph retired from the BSCP in 1968, after forty-three years of service. In 1978, the BSCP merged with a larger union, the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks, and ceased to exist as an independent organization. Randolph died in 1979 at age ninety; his funeral was attended by numerous labor leaders, social activists, celebrities, and politicians, and by President Jimmy Carter.

JOHN CASHMAN

See also American Negro Labor Congress; Jim Crow; Labor; Messenger, The; Randolph, A. Philip

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Brown, Ada

Ada Brown, with her full, rich, mellow voice, earned a reputation as a talented vocalist during the Harlem Renaissance era, and she toured extensively on the vaudeville circuit throughout her career. She was born to a musical family in Kansas City, Kansas; her cousin James Scott was a noted ragtime composer and performer. Brown was said to have sung in clubs in Paris and Berlin as a teenager, and by 1910 she was singing

at the Pekin Theater in Chicago. She had an active career singing the blues during the 1920s and 1930s, playing theater dates steadily on both coasts, recording in Chicago and St. Louis, and performing internationally as well. She toured with Flournoy Miller and Aubrey Lyles's *Step on It* in 1922, and with *Struttin' Time* in 1924. In September 1923, she recorded one of her most popular songs, "Evil Mama Blues," for the Okeh label. She performed at the Lafayette Theater in *Plantation Days* in 1927, *Bandana Land* in 1928, and *Tan Town Tamales* in 1930. After *Jangleland* in 1931 and *Going to Town* in 1932, she appeared at the Apollo Theater in *Hawaiian Moon* and *Jungle Drums* in 1934. Brown was also one of the incorporators of the Negro Actors Guild of America in 1936. In the late 1930s, she sang with the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra in Chicago and at the London Palladium. In 1938, Brown appeared in the culturally diverse production *International Rhythms* with the Cecil Mack Choir, the Chinese dancer Princess Chiyo, and Mogiloff's Balalaika Orchestra.

Brown appeared with Thomas "Fats" Waller in the film *Stormy Weather* (Twentieth Century Fox, 1943), singing "That Ain't Right," along with such acclaimed performers as the legendary Lena Horne and Bill Robinson (both of whom played leading roles in this film), Cab Calloway and his band, Emmett "Babe" Wallace, Katherine Dunham and Dunham's dancers, Mae Johnson, and Flournoy Miller, among others. *Stormy Weather* was based on the story of Bill Robinson and his rise to the top of the show world. The film attracted significant attention from reviewers and audiences because, although its plot structure and content were simple, it was generously endowed with musical numbers.

In 1945, Brown returned to her hometown, Kansas City, where she died in 1950.

Biography

Ada Brown was born 1 May 1890 in Kansas City, Kansas. She toured with Flournoy Miller and Aubrey Lyles's *Step on It* (1922) and *Struttin' Time* (1924). Brown also performed in *Plantation Days* (1927), *Bandana Land* (1928), *Tan Town Tamales* (1930), *Jangleland* (1931), *Going to Town* (1932), *Hawaiian Moon* (1934), *Jungle Drums* (1934), and *Stormy Weather* (1943). She was a cofounder of the Negro Actors Guild of America (1936). Brown died in Kansas City, Kansas, 31 March 1950.

CARMEN PHELPS

See also Apollo Theater; Blues; Calloway, Cabell "Cab"; Henderson, Fletcher; Lafayette Theater; Lyles, Aubrey; Mack, Cecil; Miller, Flournoy; Robinson, Bill "Bojangles"; Singers

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"Evil Woman Blues." 1932.

"That Ain't Right." 1943.

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Brown, Hallie Quinn

Educator, author, temperance advocate, and renowned public lecturer Hallie Quinn Brown was born in Pittsburgh in 1850, the child of former slaves. She attended school in Pittsburgh and later in the African American expatriate community of Chatham, Ontario, where her family moved in the early 1860s. The family returned to the United States after the Civil War, and Brown received her bachelor of science degree from Wilberforce University in 1873, becoming one of the nation's first black female college graduates.

After graduation, Brown joined the caravan of teachers going South to minister to the freedpeople. She taught first at a plantation school in Mississippi, and later in public schools in Dayton, Ohio; and Columbia, South Carolina. She served as dean of Allen University, a college of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Columbia; and in 1892, she accepted a position as woman principal of Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute. A year later, she returned to Wilberforce, her alma mater, as a professor of elocution.

Brown epitomized the late nineteenth-century ideology of "racial uplift." She was a prime mover in the formation of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), an organization whose interwoven class, racial, and gender politics were neatly knotted in its memorable motto, "Lifting as we climb." She led the campaign against African American women's initial exclusion from the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, and spoke at the World's Congress of Representative Women that later convened at the fair. In her speech, Brown focused on black women's education, stressing the unparalleled progress of southern freedwomen and the need for a balanced training of head, hands, and heart. Invoking the domestic assumptions of her era and social class, she reminded her audience that mothers shaped the character of their sons, and that no race could progress beyond the attainments of its women.

The high-water mark of Brown's career came in the 1890s, but she remained active in the 1920s, when she was over seventy. She served as president of the NACW from 1920 to 1924, after which she was appointed lifetime honorary president. In 1924, she spoke at the Republican National Convention, pointedly reminding the delegates of their party's historical commitment to civil rights. In 1925, she organized a black boycott of the International Council of Women's All-American Musical Festival, in protest against Jim Crow seating in the theater.

Brown made her most important contribution to the decade of the 1920s as an author, publishing five books—collections of biographies and stories intended to edify and enlighten black readers. With their emphasis on respectability, domesticity, and proper elocution, the books were distinctly out of step with the aesthetic and political temper of the Harlem Renaissance, but they rang with their author's conviction and commitment to racial service. The most widely read was *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction*, a collection of sixty short, inspirational biographies of African American women, from the poet Phillis

Wheatley to the cosmetics mogul Madam C. J. Walker. In a passage as applicable to herself as to her subjects, Brown declared: "Regarded in the light of heroism, many Americans, bound and free, have passed on unhonored and unsung who yet were worthy of the olive crown and the victor's palm for their constancy, their courage and their firm belief in the ultimate triumph of justice."

Hallie Q. Brown died in Wilberforce, Ohio, in 1949.

Biography

Hallie Quinn Brown was born in 1850 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She attended public schools in Pittsburgh and Chatham, Ontario; and Wilberforce University in Wilberforce, Ohio, (B.S., 1873). Brown taught in black schools in Mississippi, Ohio, and South Carolina; was a dean of Allen University in Columbia, South Carolina (1885–1892); was woman principal at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama (1892–1893); and was a professor of elocution at Wilberforce University (1893–1903). She was also a founder of the National Association of Colored Women (1893) and its president (1920–1924), and the president of the Ohio Federation of Colored Women's Clubs (1905–1912). Brown was a delegate to the World's Congress of Representative Women, Chicago (1893); the World's Women's Christian Temperance Union, London (1895); International Congress of Women, London (1899); and the World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh, Scotland (1910). She died in 1949 in Wilberforce, Ohio.

JAMES CAMPBELL

See also Higher Education; Walker, Madame C. J.

Selected Works

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First Lessons in Public Speaking. 1920.

The Beautiful: A True Story of Slavery. 1924.

Our Women, Past, Present, and Future. 1925.

Tales My Father Told. 1925.

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Brown, Sterling

The literary scholar, university professor, poet, and folklorist Sterling Allen Brown was a major figure in twentieth-century African American letters. His scholarly essays, anthologies, and reviews were crucial to the development of African American literature as an academic discipline. Brown was also a highly esteemed teacher and curator of African American life and culture; one former student described him as a "repository of information and inspiration" (Baraka 1976). Furthermore, Brown's poems, evoking black folk expression, have become part of the canon and appear in numerous anthologies; and his experience as folklorist helped to shape his literary and academic career. As an editor of *Negro Affairs* for the Federal Writers'



Sterling Brown, second from left, in the 1940s. The others are the author Chester Himes (second from right), his wife, and Backlin Moore. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

Project of the Works Progress Administration, as a Rosenwald Fellow, and as a staff member of the Carnegie-Myrdal Study, Brown was able to document various aspects of African American folk life as part of systematic studies of American culture.

Sterling A. Brown was born in 1901. His father, Sterling Nelson Brown, a professor of theology at Howard University and pastor of Lincoln Temple Congregational Church, was prominent in black society in Washington, D.C.; much of the younger Brown's early education was influenced by his father's associations. The son was virtually reared on the campus of Howard University, which had a faculty of African American intellectuals, and his father's acquaintances included African American leaders such as Frederick Douglass. Joanne Gabbin (1985/1994) notes that the father's church was the site of several debates between Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois and that it sponsored a major conference, "How to Solve the Race Problem," in 1903. Brown's mother, Adelaide Allen Brown, a graduate of Fisk University, was also an important influence, encouraging his literary interests.

Brown graduated in 1918 (as valedictorian) from Dunbar High School, then widely regarded as the premier secondary school for blacks in the United States. At Williams College—where he was on the debating team and the Common Club tennis team, was a member of Omega Psi Phi fraternity, and was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa—he was introduced to contemporary trends in literature such as realism and modernism, and began studying contemporary American literature, especially poetry. By the time he left Williams in 1922, he had begun to write poetry. In 1923, he earned his master's degree at Harvard University; later, he returned to Harvard for further graduate study toward a doctorate.

Brown taught English at Virginia Seminary in Lynchburg from 1923 to 1926; at Lincoln University in Missouri from 1926 to 1928; at Fisk University in Nashville in 1929; and ultimately for forty years, 1929 to 1969, at Howard University. Brown was a legendary figure at Howard during his tenure there—at one point in the 1960s, students supported an effort to rename the school after him—and many of his students became writers and literary scholars and consider him a major influence, not just as a teacher but also, in the words of one of them, as a "poet and anthologist and writer [who] gave us a great deal of inspiration" (Baraka 1976). Brown was offered posts at other institutions, such as Vassar College, but although he lectured and taught during summer sessions at Vassar and elsewhere, he remained at his beloved

Howard. He also maintained his teaching post at Howard while serving as an editor on the Federal Writers' Project and as a staff member of the Carnegie-Myrdal research project, and while writing creatively as a Guggenheim fellow. Indeed, the combination of all these duties and experiences probably enabled Brown to mine the richness of African American life and culture and infuse his poetry with it.

Undoubtedly, Brown's experience of African American folk culture—his extended stay in the rural South as a young professor, his work preserving folklore as part of the Federal Writers' Project, and his study of southern Negro life as a Rosenwald fellow—informed his creative and critical output. In particular, African Americans of the rural South would dominate his poetry as folk characters. Brown realized that this segment of American society was underrepresented or stereotyped in most American art and literature. Through his own experiences among "the folk," he developed a high regard for the vernacular tradition. He believed that folk forms such as blues, spirituals, and boasts were authentic and laudable forms of artistic expression, and he would immortalize them in his poetry. His "Southern Road," for example, uses the oral tradition of the work song:

Swing dat hammer—hunh—
Steady, bo';
Swing dat hammer—hunh—
Steady, bo';
Ain't no rush, bebbly,
Long ways to go. . . .

This verse also illustrates a common feature in Brown's poetry: dialect. James Weldon Johnson, in his preface to *God's Trombones*, had said that dialect was "absolutely dead"; but Brown revived the tradition, filling his own dialect poems with dignified and heroic figures and forcing Johnson to reevaluate the function of dialect in African American poetry. Later, Johnson acknowledged that although dialect grounded in the minstrel and plantation traditions could evoke only pathos or humor, authentic dialect treated with fidelity—as it was treated in Brown's ballads and folk epics—could be used to great effect.

Brown himself insisted on authentic documentation of folk life in folklore studies such as the Federal Writers' Project. He and the officials of the Federal Writers' Project developed detailed guidelines for interviewing

and recording, so as to avoid intrusion and distortion by the writers and interviewers. Brown was especially concerned about presenting black dialect accurately in narratives of slavery; he recommended that "the stories be told in the language of the ex-slave, without excessive editorializing and 'artistic' introduction on the part of the interviewer" (Gabbin 1985/1994, 72–73). As a scholar, Brown also objected to inauthentic representations of black life in art and literature. His essays "A Century of Negro Portraiture" and "The American Race Problem as Reflected in American Literature" as well as his book-length text *The Negro in American Fiction* contrast stereotyped representations of African Americans by white authors with more accurate portrayals by blacks. Brown's insistence on realistic depictions of African American life was a profound contribution not only to the African American literary tradition, but to documenting black life in American history and consequently to creating a greater understanding of the African American experience.

Biography

Sterling Allen Brown was born 1 May 1901 in Washington, D.C. He attended public schools in the District of Columbia, including Dunbar High School; Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts (A.B., 1922); and Harvard University (A.M., 1923). He was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in 1921 and did additional graduate study at Harvard in 1931–1932. Brown taught at Virginia Seminary in Lynchburg, Virginia (1923–1926); Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri (1926–1928); Fisk University (1928–1929); and Howard University (1929–1969). He was also a visiting professor at Vassar College (1942–1944), the University of Minnesota (1945), New York University (1949 and 1950), and the University of Illinois (Chicago Circle Campus, 1967 and 1968). Brown was an editor of *Negro Affairs*, Federal Writers' Project (1936–1940); a Guggenheim Fellow (1937–1938); a Julius Rosenwald Fellow (1942); and a staff member of the Carnegie-Myrdal research project. His awards included honorary doctorates from Boston, Brown, Harvard, Howard, Lincoln, Northwestern, and Yale universities; Lewis and Clark and Williams colleges; and the universities of Maryland (Baltimore County), Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. He was poet laureate of the District of Columbia (1984). Brown died in Takoma Park, Maryland, 13 January 1989.

NATASHA COLE-LEONARD

See also Authors: 5—Poets; Federal Writers' Project; Guggenheim Fellowships; Johnson, James Weldon; Literature: 7—Poetry; Rosenwald Fellowships; Works Progress Administration

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Brownies' Book, The

The Brownies' Book, the nation's first magazine for African American children and young adults, was created by three people from the publication *The Crisis*: W. E. B. Du Bois, editor; Jessie Redmon Fauset, literary editor; and Augustus G. Dill, business manager. The debut issue of *The Brownies' Book* appeared in January 1920, with this description: "A monthly magazine for the children of the sun, designed for all children but especially for ours." This first issue also included a dedicatory poem by Fauset, expressing the importance of providing black children with a history and literature of their own.

While other children's magazines and schoolbooks perpetuated grotesque stereotypes of the "dark continent," *The Brownies' Book* highlighted the honor, integrity, and beauty of African and African American life. The first issue, for instance, included a photograph of African American children in the South protesting violence against blacks. In the June 1920 issue, the article "A Little Talk About West Africa" was accompanied by a full-page photograph of West African children posing in front of their school. Summer issues published the names, pictures, accomplishments, and plans of graduates of African American boys' and girls' high schools.

For fifteen cents a copy or \$1.50 per year (twelve issues), readers of *The Brownies' Book* were offered an array of materials, including African, West Indian, Native American, and European legends, fables, and tales, as well as photographs, riddles, puzzles, and songs from around the globe. Each issue contained biographical profiles of historical figures, such as Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Toussaint-Louverture, Crispus Attucks, and Phillis Wheatley. Regular columns included "Little People of the Month," featuring news about individual children, particularly their academic and artistic achievements. In "The Judge," conversations between an adult and children offered lessons of

love, kindness, and friendship. "As the Crow Flies" provided international news updates. "The Jury" comprised letters from young readers, while "The Grown-Ups' Corner" provided a forum for their parents' concerns, such as the lack of positive role models for African American youth and the imposition of white values on them. *The Brownies' Book* became renowned for its race consciousness, high educational standards, and mature presentation to children of complex information. The magazine's few advertisements were mainly suggestions for books and educational programs and activities.

The Brownies' Book featured work by numerous notable and up-and-coming artists and writers. Langston Hughes, who was then a recent high school graduate, published several plays, poems, and short stories in 1921; these brought him to Jessie Fauset's attention and so launched his career. Nella Larsen's first publications, articles on Scandinavian children's games, appeared in June and July 1921 under the byline Nella Larsen Imes. *The Brownies' Book* also published pieces by Georgia Douglas Johnson, James Weldon Johnson, and Arthur Huff Fauset, among others. Jessie Fauset, who was a tireless promoter of women, chose poems and stories by Mary Effie Lee and Mary White Ovington, and illustrations by Laura Wheeler, Hilda Wilkinson, and Louise Latimer. Almost all the artwork in *The Brownies' Book* was by African Americans, as were the many contributions by children of all ages. Along with selecting and editing the content of each issue, Jessie Fauset herself contributed dozens of articles, poems, and stories.

The Brownies' Book ran for two years, publishing twenty-four issues. The last issue, in December 1921, ran a full-page message to readers explaining regretfully that because it had too few subscribers, the magazine could no longer sustain itself. *The Brownies' Book* continues to stand virtually alone as a venue devoted to promoting self-respect, hope, and pride in African American children.

KRISTIN KOMMERS CZARNECKI

See also Du Bois, W. E. B.; Fauset, Arthur Huff; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, Georgia Douglas; Johnson, James Weldon; Larsen, Nella; Ovington, Mary White

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Bruce, John Edward

John Edward Bruce was a journalist, historian, writer, orator, and pan-African nationalist. He was born in 1856 in Piscataway, Maryland, to enslaved parents: Robert Bruce and Martha Allen Clark. When Bruce was three years old, his father was sold, never to be heard from again. Bruce and his mother joined a regiment of Union soldiers passing through Maryland in 1860, and so escaped to freedom in Washington, D.C. In 1864, they moved to New York state; later they moved to Stratford, Connecticut, where they remained for two years and where, at an integrated school, Bruce received his first formal education. Although he was largely self-educated, Bruce did receive private instruction in Washington, D.C., and enrolled in a three-month course at Howard University.

After leaving Connecticut, Bruce, then eighteen years old, found a job as a helper in the office of the Washington correspondent for the *New York Times* in 1874. Around the same time he became the special correspondent for the *Progressive American*. Thus began a fifty-year career in journalism, during which Bruce would write for more than forty newspapers and other periodicals in the United States and around the world. Between 1877 and 1880 he wrote for or sent letters to the *Richmond Star* of Virginia; the *Freeman's Journal* of St. Louis, Missouri; the *World* of Indianapolis; and the *St. Louis Tribune*. He then became a Washington correspondent for the *Chicago Conservator*; *North Carolina Republican*; *Enterprise* of Fayetteville, North Carolina; *New York Freeman*; *Reed City Clarion*; *Detroit Plaindealer*; *Christian Index*; and *Cherokee Advocate*. Many of his articles also appeared in European-American

publications such as the *Boston Transcript* and the *New York Times*.

Bruce also founded and edited several newspapers. In 1879, at age twenty-three, he founded the *Argus* of Washington, D.C., which he managed for two years. In 1880, he established the *Sunday Item*, the first Sunday newspaper ever founded and run by an African American. In 1882, he became editor of the *Republican* of Norfolk, Virginia; in 1884, he was the assistant editor and business manager of the *Commonwealth* of Baltimore; from 1896 to 1901 he was the associate editor of *Howard's American Magazine* of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; and in 1903, he was editor of a monthly, *The Impending Conflict* of New York City. In 1884, he founded the *Washington Grit* as a campaign sheet, dedicated to Republican Party politics and African advancement. In that year he also began writing regular columns under the pen name "Bruce Grit" in the *Gazette* of Cleveland and in *New York Age*, the journal of the fiery civil rights activist T. Thomas Fortune. Grit—implying courage and resoluteness—was the name Bruce would be known by throughout his long career. In 1887, he became a special correspondent for *New York Age*. Three years later he joined Fortune's Afro-American League; in 1898, he joined its successor, the Afro-American Council. Both groups advocated African solidarity and aggressiveness in combating abuses of human rights.

Bruce was independent-minded, despite his close collaboration with Fortune, who was a fierce opponent of Booker T. Washington (Bruce would attend the conference that founded the anti-Washington Niagara movement in 1905). In 1897, Bruce cofounded the *Chronicle* in New York City with Charles Anderson, Washington's lieutenant in the city's Republican Party. In 1908, Bruce cofounded, again with Anderson, the *Weekly Standard* in Yonkers, New York. Bruce also edited the *Masonic Quarterly* in New York City. His articles and editorials appeared not only in newspapers across the United States, but also in parts of Africa, the Caribbean, and Europe, including Duse Mohamed Ali's *African Times and Orient Review*, which was based in London. Bruce also wrote essays, short stories, plays, poems, and the music and lyrics to songs.

Bruce worked Washington, D.C., until around 1900, when he moved to New York State—first to Albany, then to New York City and Yonkers. He was married twice: first to an opera singer, the contralto Lucy Pinkwood of Washington, D.C., who presumably died before his second marriage, on 10 September 1895, to Florence A. Bishop of Cleveland. He and

his second wife had one child, a daughter named Olive.

Bruce was a powerful and popular orator with a strong interest in African history. Many of his speeches and articles focused on the achievements of the African past and the importance of history to counteract white supremacy and its effects on the African psyche. He wrote several pamphlets dealing with African history, as well as two books—*Short Biographical Sketches of Eminent Negro Men and Women in Europe and the United States* (1910) and a fictional work, *The Awakening of Hezekiah Jones* (1916). In 1911, in Yonkers, Bruce and the Afro–Puerto Rican bibliophile Arthur A. Schomburg founded the Negro Society for Historical Research. In 1908, Bruce was made a member of the Africa Society of England. President Arthur Barclay of Liberia also made him a Knight of the Order of African Redemption. In 1913, Bruce founded the Loyal Order of the Sons of Africa, which intended to establish its headquarters in Africa and to achieve global pan-African unity.

Bruce was not only an independent but also a fiercely nationalistic thinker. Throughout his life, he refused to join any organization run or supported by Europeans, and in his work as a journalist and activist he largely ignored them. Much of his work excoriated European-American society, and he directed his attention chiefly to the struggle for human rights of Africans in the United States and later to fostering their political and economic ties with Africa. He stood outside the mainstream thought of elite and middle-class African Americans of his day. His views combined nationalist goals—economic independence, cultural pride and solidarity, and self-directed group initiatives—with an unrelenting agitation for political, civil, and human rights. Among other things, he urged that Africans in the United States use merciless armed retaliation to combat pogroms and lynching by European mobs. He insisted that although Africans were to remain politically a part of the United States, they should resist assimilation into European-American culture and society. After World War I, when pogroms intensified, he preferred the objective of national independence on the African continent, maintaining that European-American oppression would remain inflexible. His belief in an independent national destiny led him, in the period around 1919, to embrace Marcus Garvey's pan-African nationalism. As a member of Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, Bruce wrote columns for the movement's *Negro World* and the *Daily Negro Times*.

Despite his enormous productivity, Bruce found that for most of his adult life, he needed to earn a living by working for the Port Authority of New York. After he retired in 1922, he received a small pension until his death in New York City two years later.

Biography

John Edward Bruce was born in Piscataway, Maryland, 22 February 1856. He escaped with his mother to Washington, D.C., in 1860; they moved to New York state in 1864. Bruce attended school in Stratford, Connecticut. He was a helper in the office of the Washington correspondent for the *New York Times* and special correspondent for the *Progressive American* (1874) and wrote for the *Richmond Star* of Virginia; the *Freeman's Journal* of St. Louis, Missouri; the *World* of Indianapolis; and the *St. Louis Tribune* (1877–1880). He was a Washington correspondent for the *Chicago Conservator*; *North Carolina Republican*; *Enterprise* of Fayetteville, North Carolina; *New York Freeman*; *Reed City Clarion*; *Detroit Plaindealer*; *Christian Index*; and *Cherokee Advocate*. He also wrote articles for the *Boston Transcript*, *Washington Evening Star*, *New York Times*, *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, *Buffalo Express*, *Albany Journal*, *Times Union*, *Press Knickerbocker*, the Sunday edition of the *Albany Argus*, and *Sunday Republican* of Washington, D.C. Bruce founded the *Argus* of Washington, D.C. (1879); *Sunday Item* (1880); and *Washington Grit* (1884). He was editor of the *Republican* of Norfolk, Virginia (1882); assistant editor and business manager of the *Commonwealth* of Baltimore (1884); associate editor of *Howard's American Magazine* (1896–1901); and editor of the monthly *The Impending Conflict* (1903). Bruce was also a columnist for the *Gazette* of Cleveland and *New York Age* (1884) and a special correspondent for *New York Age* (1887). He joined the Afro-American League in 1890 and the Afro-American Council in 1898, and cofounded the *Chronicle* in New York City (1897) and the *Weekly Standard* in Yonkers (1908). He published *Short Biographical Sketches of Eminent Negro Men and Women in Europe and the United States* (1910) and *The Awakening of Hezekiah Jones* (1916). He cofounded the Negro Society for Historical Research (1911) and founded the Loyal Order of the Sons of Africa (1913). He was made a member of the Africa Society, England (1908), and a Knight of the Order of African Redemption by Liberia's President Barclay. Bruce joined the United Negro Improvement Association around 1919. He was married twice (his second

marriage was in 1895). He retired from the Port Authority of New York in 1922 and died in New York City 7 August 1924.

AHATI N. N. TOURE

See also Ali, Duse Mohamed; Anderson, Charles; Black History and Historiography; Black Press; Fortune, Timothy Thomas; Garvey, Marcus; Journalists; Negro World; New York Age; Niagara Movement; Pan-Africanism; Schomburg, Arthur A.; United Negro Improvement Association

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Bubbles, John

John William Sublett, better known as John Bubbles, was born in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1902. In 1919, he teamed with Ford Lee "Buck" Washington. While working at various odd jobs in carnivals and at a racetrack, they developed a theatrical act, Buck and Bubbles. It featured Bubbles' superfast rhythmic tap dancing and Buck's piano accompaniment, as well as Buck's artfully lackadaisical parody of Bubbles's dance style, all peppered with laconic dialogue.

Buck and Bubbles moved to New York in 1921 and soon broke into white vaudeville at the Palace Theatre, bypassing the black Theater Owners' Booking Association (TOBA) circuit. They were headliners on the prestigious Keith Circuit and in shows by the white producer Nat Nazarro (*Hot Chops* in 1922 and *Raisin' Cain* in 1923).

Criticism of his dancing style from the tap experts of the legendary Hoofers' Club angered Bubbles. Touring west in vaudeville, he rehearsed endlessly; and on his return he silenced his critics, establishing himself as one of the all-time greats of tap, on a par with Bill "Bojangles" Robinson—in fact, many people considered him technically superior to Bojangles. Bubbles is credited with being the originator of a style known as rhythm-tap or jazz-tap, with innovative use of the heel through the "cramp roll" step, and four-to-the-bar rhythm phrases, rather than the traditional two-to-the-bar. His creative approach to tempo was a forerunner of later developments in bebop.

Throughout the 1920s, Buck and Bubbles were popular on stage and in films. They were featured



Buck and Bubbles, c. 1937. (Photofest.)

performers in Lew Leslie's *Blackbirds of 1930* and the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1931*. In 1935, Bubbles reached the peak of his career when he created the role of Sportin' Life in the original Broadway production of *Porgy and Bess*. His status as a dancer was already assured, and this performance also showed him to be a talented dramatic actor and a singer of considerable appeal. His Sportin' Life is still considered by many to be the definitive portrayal.

In 1936, Buck and Bubbles performed in London, where they starred in a revue, *Transatlantic Rhythm*; made records; and were featured performers in the inaugural broadcast of BBC's television service. They continued to perform in films and onstage throughout the 1930s, although the film roles available to them reflected the usual stereotypical pattern for blacks in Hollywood. A notable exception was Bubbles's memorable stick-and-stair dance in the all-black movie *Cabin in the Sky* (1943).

The duo continued successfully until Buck's death in 1955. Bubbles then dropped out of the limelight for a time, but he later resumed an active career in television, as a guest on celebrity shows with stars like Lucille Ball, Bing Crosby, and Perry Como. In 1964, he formed a nightclub act with the singer Anna Maria Alberghetti and toured in Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, Guam, and Korea with Bob Hope's show. In 1967, Bubbles revisited his old vaudeville haunt, the Palace, as a supporting act in a comeback performance by Judy Garland; but shortly thereafter he suffered a stroke that effectively ended his career.

In 1980, Bubbles appeared, in a wheelchair, in an all-black commemorative show, *Black Broadway*; also in 1980, he received a Certificate of Approval from the

mayor of New York City and a lifetime achievement award from the American Guild of Variety Artists. Bubbles died in 1986.

Bubbles' singing style can be heard on an available CD recording of *Porgy and Bess* and also in occasional compilations, including a Vee-Jay vinyl LP of 1964, "Bubbles, John W. That Is"; this LP recording has not been issued on CD but can still be found secondhand.

Biography

John William Sublett, also known as John Bubbles, was born in Louisville, Kentucky, on 19 February 1902 and attended grammar and high school there. In 1919, he formed a partnership, Buck and Bubbles, with Ford Lee "Buck" Washington. Bubbles' stage appearances included *Hot Chops* (1922), *Raisin' Cain* (1923), *Weather Clear* (1927), *Track Fast* (1927), *Blackbirds of 1930*, *Ziegfeld Follies of 1931*, *Harlem on Parade* (1935), *Porgy and Bess* (1935), *Transatlantic Rhythm* (London, 1936), *Virginia* (1937), *Frolics of 1938*, *Laugh Time* (1943), *Carmen Jones* (1944), *At Home at the Palace* (with Judy Garland, 1967), and *Black Broadway* (1980). In 1964, he toured in Asia with Bob Hope. He also had many nightclub engagements. Bubbles's films included *Foul Play*, *In and Out*, *Honest Crooks*, *High Toned*, and *Dark Town Follies* (all shorts made in 1929–1930); *Calling All Stars* (Britain, 1937); *Varsity Show* (1937); *Cabin in the Sky* (1943); *I Dood It* (1943); *Atlantic City* (1944); *Buck and Bubbles Laugh Jamboree* (1945); *Mantan Messes Up* (1946); *A Song Is Born* (1948); and *No Maps on My Taps* (1978). He appeared in the inaugural BBC television broadcast in 1936 and made many guest appearances on television. In 1980, he received the American Guild of Variety Artists Lifetime Achievement award and a Certificate of Approval from Mayor Edward Koch of New York City. Bubbles died 18 May 1986 in Baldwin, California.

BILL EGAN

See also Blackbirds; Blacks in Theater; Dance; Europe and the Harlem Renaissance: 3—London; Film; Film: Actors; Gershwin, George; Heyward, DuBose; Jazz; Musical Theater; Porgy and Bess; Robinson, Bill "Bojangles"; Vaudeville

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Burleigh, Harry Thacker

Harry (Henry) Thacker Burleigh was the earliest African American to compose American art songs and to arrange African American choral spirituals and the so-called concert solo spiritual for solo voice with piano accompaniment. His art songs amount to some 265 vocal compositions, including three song cycles. He arranged about 187 choral spirituals, scoring them for unaccompanied mixed chorus; some of these he had heard from the grandfather who helped raise him in his hometown, Erie, Pennsylvania—his grandfather called these spirituals plantation songs. Harry T. Burleigh was also a singer of great repute. He was a baritone soloist at the wealthy and prestigious Saint George Episcopal Church in New York City for fifty years, and at Temple Emanu-El, also in New York City, for twenty-five years. He became an institution at Saint George's, where he established an annual concert of African American music and began a tradition of singing Fauré's "The Palms" at every Palm Sunday service.

Burleigh became the first American person of color to make his living through music as a composer, arranger, and singer. His first professional studies were with the Czech composer Antonín Dvořák at the

National Conservatory of Music in New York. Burleigh initially made a reputation through this association with Dvořák, who said that Burleigh had given him an understanding of the music of African Americans and had inspired him to encourage American composers to develop an indigenous music and style rather than rehashing the European tradition.

Burleigh was a pioneer in the development of the concert version of African American spirituals and was the catalyst for the use of spirituals arranged for solo voice in recitals by most of the major performing artists of color, including Roland Hayes and Marion Anderson, as well as a number of prominent white artists during this period and later. Of great interest is Burleigh's setting (1917) of "Deep River" for solo voice, which helped establish him as an arranger of spirituals for solo voice and piano. However, a better-known work is his earlier arrangement (1913) of "Deep River" for a cappella mixed chorus (SATB). Burleigh's choral and solo arrangements of spirituals are considered a valuable contribution to the American choral and art song repertoire. However, his freely composed secular art songs have not been widely recognized since the early years of the twentieth century.

Whether or not it has been adequately acknowledged—and although he received some adverse criticism from African American and white colleagues—Burleigh's creative output has undeniably enriched the African American as well as the American musical tradition. He concertized extensively and was the first artist of color to demonstrate that African Americans could perform the operatic and art-song literature that was at the heart of the serious recital program.

During his last year at the National Conservatory, Burleigh had been engaged to teach voice. From 1913 until his death, he worked as a music editor for Ricordi Music Publishers. As a result, a great deal of his music was published—a reward that many composers would relish.

Biography

Harry (Henry) Thacker Burleigh was born in Erie, Pennsylvania, 2 December 1866. He attended the National Conservatory of Music in New York City; was a baritone soloist at Saint George, 1894–1946, and at Temple Emanu-El, 1900–1925; and made extensive tours as a soloist in the United States and abroad (including a recital tour in England in 1908). He also appeared with Booker T. Washington on fund-raising

tours. Burleigh was an editor with G. Ricordi Music Publishers, 1911–1946. His awards included honorary degrees, a Spingarn Medal in 1917, and a Harmon Foundation award in 1929. Burleigh died 12 September 1949.

MALCOLM BREDA

See also Anderson, Marian; Hayes, Roland; Singers

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Bush, Anita

The theater entrepreneur and actress Anita Bush was born in 1883 in Washington, D.C.; she moved to Brooklyn, New York, with her parents by the age of two. Her father was a tailor for people in show business, and Bush, who made deliveries for him, soon became fascinated with the theater. As a child, she appeared onstage at the Bijou and Columbia theaters in Brooklyn and the Park Theater in Manhattan, playing bit parts in *Fatal Wedding* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. In 1903, at age thirteen, with her father's consent, she began her career with the Williams and Walker traveling show as a chorus girl in *In Dahomey*, *In Abyssinia*, and *Mr. Lode of Koal*. Her love of drama—and of greasepaint, costumes, and backstage life—led to a

"marriage" with the theater that would take her to Cincinnati, Chicago, and Phoenix, and on a tour of *In Dahomey* in London and Scotland. In 1909, George Walker's illness forced the Williams and Walker company to close; but soon thereafter Bush became the head of her own professional drama company. She wanted to prove to blacks and whites alike that black performers could succeed in doing what white performers were doing on Broadway, and her company disdained stereotypical comic song and dance.

The Anita Bush Stock Players, or Anita Bush Theater Company, first played at the Lincoln Theater on 135th Street in Harlem, in November 1915. When the white proprietor of the theater, Maria C. Downs, insisted that the company should be called the Lincoln Stock Players, Bush refused and moved her players to a rival theater on 132nd Street: the Lafayette, which was managed by two blacks, Lester Walton and Eugene Elmore. On 2 March 1916, the company assumed the name Lafayette Players.

Bush, who became known as the "mother of Negro drama," remained an active member of the company until 1920 and received critical acclaim as a star in *The Girl at the Fort*, *Across the Footlights*, *The Gambler's Sweetheart*, *The Octoroon*, *New York After Dark*, *Wanted—A Family*, *When the Wife's Away*, *For His Daughter's Honor*, *The Lure*, and *Within the Law*. Her own talent and the sophistication of the company brought an invitation for her to start up touring Lafayette Players in major cities. These tours gave many actors across the country their start.

In 1921, Anita Bush appeared in the silent movie *The Crimson Skull*, an all-black western mystery; in 1923, she appeared in *The Bull-Dogger* and a black cowboy film, *Girl of the Golden West* (1923). The *Exhibitor's Herald* said that these films "prove conclusively that the Black cowboy is capable of doing anything the white cowboy does."

During the 1930s and 1940s, Bush appeared in a production by the Works Progress Administration, *Swing It* (1938), taught acting at the Harlem YMCA (then an important theatrical venue), and served as executive secretary for the Negro Actors Guild. She retired from the theater in 1943. Bush died in 1974, at age ninety-one.

Biography

Anita Bush was born in 1883 in Washington, D.C.; her family moved to Brooklyn, New York, in 1885. Bush was a stage and screen actress from 1903 to the 1930s

and the founder of the Anita Bush Stock Players, which later became the Lafayette Players. She was also executive secretary for the Negro Actors Guild. Plays in which she was involved included *Fatal Wedding*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *In Dahomey*, *Abyssinia*, *Mr. Lode of Koal*, *Across the Footlights*, *The Gambler's Sweetheart*, *The Octoroon*, *New York After Dark*, *Wanted—A Family*, *When the Wife's Away*, *Roanoke*, *Southern Life*, *For His Daughter's Honor*, *The World Against Him*, *Within the Law*, *Paid in Full*, and *Swing It*. His films included *The Crimson Skull* (1921), *The Bulldoggers* (1923), and *Girl of the Golden West* (1923). Bush died 19 February 1974 in the Bronx, New York.

SHIRLEY BASFIELD DUNLAP

See also Anita Bush Theater Company; Lafayette Players; Lafayette Theater; Lincoln Theater

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Buttitta, Anthony J.

Anthony J. Buttitta contributed to the Harlem Renaissance primarily through the literary magazine *Contempo*, which he and Milton Abernathy launched in 1931 when they were both students at the University of North Carolina. Buttitta and Abernathy envisioned

Contempo as a forum in which to explore new ideas and encourage literary controversy. In an effort to broaden the magazine's content and establish it as a southern mouthpiece for the Harlem Renaissance, Buttitta recruited black writers to submit poetry, essays, and short fiction and also reviewed texts by black authors. Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson, Walter White, and Wallace Thurman were among those asked to submit work. Buttitta did not see himself solely as a patron of black writers, however. He also asked James Weldon Johnson and Langston Hughes to read a manuscript that he himself was working on and to help promote his own career.

Hughes visited Buttitta for several days in November 1931, and the two became close friends and colleagues. As a result, Hughes published four poems and one article in Buttitta's magazine, including the poem "Christ in Alabama," which was on the front page of a special issue on the Scottsboro case. The issue drew heavy criticism from outraged journalists, faculty members, and local advertisers (many of whom withdrew their support from the magazine), but Buttitta and Abernathy did not abandon their mission or their relationship with Hughes. Hughes became a contributing editor for December 1931 issue and was supposed to edit a "Negro Arts Edition" of *Contempo*, although that edition never materialized.

The idea of a southern publication of black literature appealed to many, including White and Cullen, but Buttitta had difficulty finding contributors for the "Negro Arts Edition," because some of the writers he approached were already overcommitted and were unable to write new pieces. Buttitta's special issue of *Contempo* was also beleaguered by poor timing relative to other anthologies that were already being produced. He might have succeeded a decade earlier, but by 1932, there was little room for his collection in the literary marketplace; similar issues of *Vanity Fair* and *Palms* were out, in addition to anthologies by Alain Locke, Charles S. Johnson, Countee Cullen, and James Weldon Johnson. Finally, internal struggles between Buttitta and the other editors at *Contempo* made the completion of the special issue impossible. Buttitta separated from the failing magazine by October 1932, and the division ultimately led to its end in 1934. After he left *Contempo*, Buttitta's interest shifted from African American literature to F. Scott Fitzgerald, whom he met in 1935, and to the Federal Theater Project.

Buttitta, Anthony J.

Although he made an important contribution to the Harlem Renaissance through his publication of Hughes's poetry, Buttitta was never a major figure in the movement. Indeed, his failure to complete the "Negro Arts Edition" of *Contempo* suggests that the Harlem Renaissance was, to a considerable extent, a northern, urban movement, and that it had already peaked by the time he sought to bring it to the South.

Biography

Anthony J. Buttitta was born 26 July 1907, in Chicago. His parents were Giacomo Buttitta, a businessman, and Nina Buttitta, a teacher. He attended Normal College in Natchitoches, Louisiana (1926–1928), received his B.A. from the University of Texas (1929), and pursued graduate study at the University of North Carolina. He was married to Remy Horton in 1932 (they were divorced in 1941), and later to Monica Hannasch. Buttitta was the founder and editor of *Contempo* (1931–1933); a freelance newspaper correspondent (1932–1935); a press representative for the North Carolina Symphony Orchestra in Chapel Hill (1935); a staff member of the Federal Theater Project (1936–1938); a press representative for Roanoke Island, North Carolina (1938–1940); a press agent on Broadway (1939–1945); a public relations staffer in the U.S. Army (1943–1944); a press representative for the San Francisco Civic Light Opera (1931–1962); and a freelance writer (from 1962 on). His publications (as Tony Buttitta) include *Singing Piedmont* (1937); "Scott: One More Emotion" (1974); *After the Good Gay Times: Asheville, Summer of 1935: A Season With Scott Fitzgerald* (Viking, 1974, reprinted in 1987 as *The Lost Summer: A Personal Memoir of F. Scott Fitzgerald*); *Uncle Sam*

Presents: A Memoir of the Federal Theatre, 1935–1939 (with Barry Witham, 1982); "Contempo Caravan: Kites in a Windstorm" (1985); "Thank You, Malcolm!" (1989); *The Singing Tree* (1990); "A Memoir of Faulkner in the Early Days of His Fame" (1999); and "William Faulkner: That Writin' Man of Oxford" (1999). His other works include an unpublished novel, *No Resurrection*; a one-act play first produced in Natchitoches at State Normal College, *Barataria* (1927); a three-act play first produced in Chapel Hill at the University of North Carolina, *Playthings* (1931); and a memoir, *Never a Stranger* (forthcoming at the time of the present writing).

AMANDA M. LAWRENCE

See also *Contempo*; Cullen, Countee; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Johnson, James Weldon; Locke, Alain; Palms; Scottsboro; Thurman, Wallace; Vanity Fair; White, Walter

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Calloway, Cabell “Cab”

Cab Calloway was born into a middle-class family in Rochester, New York, and moved to Baltimore when he was eleven. A rebellious youth, he spent almost as much time at the racetrack as in school, but he did manage two years of classical voice training during his teens. He was more attracted to ragtime and jazz, and the glamour of entertainment in general, than to his studies, and picked up work as a jazz singer and drummer at speakeasies in Baltimore. He often encountered his teachers at these illegal clubs, but he and they maintained their respective silence, and Calloway continued to perform.

Calloway's sister Blanche, who had already ventured into show business in New York and sung in *Shuffle Along*, returned to Baltimore in 1927 with a touring company of *Plantation Days*. Calloway begged his reluctant sister to get him an audition with the company; she did, and it was successful. Against his mother's wishes, he traveled with the show on the Theater Owners' Booking Association (TOBA) circuit, until it closed in Chicago in 1928. A brief and insincere stint at Crane College notwithstanding, Calloway spent most of his time in Chicago hustling singing work in local clubs, until steady work at the Dreamland Café and the Sunset Club came along. Here he met Louis Armstrong, who suggested that he develop freer, scat-style singing. This accorded well with Calloway's flamboyant personality, and Calloway became as much of a showman as a singer, often serving as master of ceremonies for the night's entertainment. The highlight of an evening's show with the Alabamians at the Sunset Club, for example, was a

wild call-and-response song with Calloway and the orchestra all shouting into megaphones.

In 1929, Calloway and the Alabamians made their debut in Harlem at the Savoy Ballroom, but they bombed after the first song—their Chicago sound was not hot enough for the Harlem crowd. Desperate to salvage the two-week contract, the booking agent set up a battle of the bands between the Alabamians and the Savoy's house band, the Missourians. The Alabamians were cut to pieces, but Calloway's flamboyant stage presence stole the show. Now unemployed, Calloway, on Louis Armstrong's recommendation, was hired for the Broadway and Boston runs of *Hot Chocolates*. After it closed in early 1930, the Savoy's agent, remembering Calloway's triumph, hired him to front the Missourians, but got them a better job: opening the new Plantation Club on 126th Street. What should have been a milestone event for Calloway crumbled when the club was ransacked by mobsters affiliated with the rival Cotton Club hours before opening night. Fortunately, Calloway and the Missourians secured work at the Crazy Cat, which was frequented by an upscale clientele and broadcast on radio every night.

This brief stint drew attention to the band, particularly from the mobsters running the Cotton Club. Through implied threats, they persuaded Calloway to break the Missourians' contract with the Crazy Cat and substitute at the Cotton Club while the house band, the Duke Ellington Orchestra, toured the West Coast. The Calloway band and its flashy leader were a hit, and they filled in for Ellington during his frequent absences until they themselves became the house band in 1931. Calloway's performances at the Cotton

Club guaranteed him a national radio contract and the attention of the star-studded crowd at this prestigious Harlem venue. George Gershwin saw him there and based the character Sportin' Life in *Porgy and Bess* on Calloway. Gershwin even offered Calloway the role in the first production, in 1935, but Calloway, who was becoming increasingly popular, declined, citing scheduling conflicts. It was at the Cotton Club that Calloway adopted "Minnie the Moocher" as his theme song. After the addition of the "hi-de-hi-de-hi-de-ho" call-and-response between Calloway and the audience, it was an instant hit nationally, and it became his life-long signature piece. The Cotton Club meant stardom, national and international tours, and movie contracts, which all came between 1931 and 1936. Responses to Calloway ranged from the respect and enthusiasm of European audiences to frenzied adulation among many college students and African American fans to occasional threats and violence at segregated dances during several trips in the South.

Although Calloway was now immersed in the Harlem entertainment scene, he had had little contact with the leaders or ideas of the Harlem Renaissance. Harlem was certainly "the place for a Negro to be," according to Calloway, but he never felt connected to the literary movement. He observed that "the two worlds, literature and entertainment, rarely crossed. We were working hard on our thing and they were working hard on theirs." Also, Calloway's flamboyant stage show was hardly suitable for the great concert halls to which most renaissance leaders aspired for African American musicians.

During the mid-1930s, Calloway's tours and radio show helped bring both white and black swing bands, most notably those from New York, to national prominence. But though his orchestra, early in the decade, was serviceable for a Cotton Club revue, it did not approach the caliber of Ellington's or Fletcher Henderson's units. This began to change as Calloway increased the size of the band from ten to sixteen pieces, the standard complement for a swing orchestra, and added a number of hot young players to replace the Missourians. The tenor saxophonist Chu Berry, hired away from Henderson, and the legendary bassist Milt Hinton were added in 1936; the fiery (and troublesome) young trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and drummer Cozy Cole joined the band in 1939; and the tenor sax player Ben Webster and the trumpeters Jonah Jones and Mario Bauza also played under Calloway. By 1941, Calloway had one of the great ensembles of the era, and he rode



Cab Calloway. (Brown Brothers.)

the wave of swing's popularity until after World War II. Economic problems caused the breakup of virtually all the big bands between 1946 and 1948, the year Cab Calloway's orchestra folded permanently.

Calloway performed infrequently after 1948. Between 1952 and 1954, he finally played Sportin' Life in a famous revival of *Porgy and Bess*. That plus a tour as Horace Vandergelder in *Hello, Dolly!* from 1967 to 1971 and record royalties guaranteed financial security for him and his family.

Biography

Cabell "Cab" Calloway was born in Rochester, New York, 25 December 1907. He was educated in public schools in Baltimore and at the Downingtown Industrial and Agricultural School; pursued vocal studies with Llewelyn Wilson and Ruth Macabee in Baltimore; and attended Crane College in Chicago (1928), though he did not graduate. Calloway sang in the touring company of *Plantation*

Days (1927–1928); at the Dreamland Café and the Sunset Club in Chicago (1928); with the Alabamians at the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem (1929); in *Hot Chocolates* (1929–1930); and with the Missouriians, substituting for the Ellington Orchestra at the Cotton Club (1930–1931). Cab Calloway and His Cotton Club Orchestra were the house band at the Cotton Club in 1931–1934 and made occasional appearances there in 1934–1940. Calloway's first record contract was with Brunswick; he recorded his first hit, "Minnie the Moocher," in 1931. He went on national tours in 1931–1948 and a European tour in 1935. He was on the radio show *Quizzicale* (NBC Blue Network), a black version of Kay Keyser's Kollege of Musical Knowledge, in 1942. Calloway's orchestra disbanded in 1948. Calloway played Sportin' Life in *Porgy and Bess* on Broadway (1952–1954) and Horace Vandergelder in *Hello, Dolly!* (1967–1971). He died in Hockessen, Delaware, 19 November 1994.

WILLIAM J. NANCARROW

See also Armstrong, Louis; Cotton Club; Hot Chocolates; Jazz; Music: Bands and Orchestras; Musicians; Porgy and Bess; Savoy Ballroom; Singers

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Calverton, V. F.

The socialist V. F. Calverton was one of the most significant figures of the American intellectual left during the first half of the twentieth century. "V. F. Calverton" was a pseudonym, adopted by George Goetz so that his involvement in socialist politics would not compromise his position as a public school teacher. As Calverton, he founded, with others, *Modern Quarterly*, an influential magazine of intellectual debate with a Marxist point of view. The magazine published essays of literary criticism, book reviews, and articles exploring economics, politics, and race relations in the United States. As editor, Calverton controlled the content of the magazine, and he wrote essays and book reviews for virtually every issue. During the mid- to late 1920s, *Modern Quarterly* dealt frequently with issues of race, with both black and white writers participating. The issue of October–December 1925 included an article by W. E. B. Du Bois on the significance of the Harlem Renaissance. Other black intellectuals, including Alain Locke, the composer Clarence Cameron White, the sociologist E. Franklin Frazier, and the musicologist Carl E. Gehring also wrote articles for the magazine. Besides providing a forum for black writers, *Modern Quarterly* reviewed many books coming out of the Harlem Renaissance. Calverton's positive review of Langston Hughes's *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927), for example, helped ensure the book's success.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Calverton and his wife opened their home at 2110 East Pratt Street in Baltimore as a sort of a salon, a place to discuss politics and the arts. These weekly gatherings quickly became known as

Calverton, V. F.

one of the few—and one of the most stimulating—opportunities for black and white intellectuals to mingle freely. Although Baltimore was not the intellectual center that New York and Washington, D.C., were, important leftists of the day made it a point to stop at “2110” on their way between those two major cities. Guests included the educator Charles S. Johnson, the novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald, Alain Locke, and Langston Hughes, who gave a lecture on the blues.

In 1929, Calverton published *Anthology of American Negro Literature*, which included poetry, fiction, drama, music, criticism, and historical essays, as well as an introduction in which he argued for the uniqueness and importance of black culture. Later, he published books on sexual liberation and psychology.

Biography

V. F. Calverton (whose real name was George Goetz) was born in Baltimore, Maryland, 25 June 1900. He studied engineering at the Baltimore Polytechnic High School (1914–1916) and liberal arts at City College, an academic high school in Baltimore (1918); he then studied at Johns Hopkins University (B.A., 1918–1921). He taught at Baltimore Public School 40 (1920–1929), Baltimore Labor College (beginning in 1926), and the Rand School of Social Science in New York (summers, beginning in 1926). He was the founder and editor of *Horizon* magazine (one issue, 1922) and *Modern Quarterly* (1923–1940). He died 20 November 1940 in Baltimore.

CYNTHIA BILY

See also Du Bois, W. E. B.; Fine Clothes to the Jew; Frazier, E. Franklin; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Locke, Alain; *Modern Quarterly*; White, Clarence Cameron

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Campbell, Dick

As a director, producer, and manager, Dick Campbell (Cornelius Coleridge Campbell) was instrumental in the development and promotion of black theater during the Harlem Renaissance. He himself was a singer, dancer, and former vaudevillian, and he was dedicated to training black playwrights, directing black actors, and producing plays that reflected the vitality of black life. He helped establish a community theater in Harlem that exemplified the artistic integrity of black theater professionals.

Dick Campbell was born in Beaumont, Texas. As a boy, he shined shoes, worked as a high school janitor, and took odd jobs. His involvement in high school plays inspired his early interest in theater; and in 1926, after attending Paul Quinn College, he moved to Los Angeles, California, where he began performing at local speakeasies. Campbell joined the Theatrical Owners’ Booking Association (TOBA) vaudeville circuit as part of the Whitman Sisters’ Show, and he arrived in Harlem in 1928 while touring with that group. He remained in New York and often performed alongside Ethel Waters, Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, Louis Armstrong, and others in theaters in Harlem and on Broadway. His credits include *Connie’s Hot Chocolates* (1929), *Hot Rhythm* (1930), and *Singing the Blues* (1931). After George Gershwin did not cast him in *Porgy and Bess*, Campbell recognized the difficulty black actors faced in acquiring credible roles on Broadway. In an effort to combat racial discrimination in the theater and offer black actors more roles that were not stereotypical servants, Campbell turned his attention to producing.

Campbell spent the 1930s organizing theater companies in Harlem. In 1935, he cofounded the Negro

People's Theater with Rose McClendon, and they successfully staged an all-black production of Clifford Odet's *Waiting for Lefty*. Following McClendon's death in 1936, Campbell continued their shared vision of creating a theater in Harlem that was intrinsically connected to the community; presented plays by, about, and for blacks; promoted a dignified image of blacks; and gave black theater artists professional training and a reasonable income. Thus he founded and directed the Rose McClendon Players, a "little theater" in Harlem that was funded by audience subscriptions. The Rose McClendon Players furthered the black community's interest in and support of black drama, and, under Campbell's personal guidance, the company helped establish the careers of several black theater artists, including Abram Hill, Loftin Mitchell, Frederick O'Neal, and Ossie Davis.

Campbell's unswerving commitment to black artists and the black community was lifelong. As founder of the Harlem Workshop Theater and chairman of the Coordinating Council for Negro Performers, Campbell opened doors for black artists where white institutions would not. He managed the concert career of the singer Muriel Rahn, his wife, and showcased black performers such as Alvin Ailey and Duke Ellington in more than sixty-five shows overseas while working as the producer of black USO camp shows during World War II. After working for the U.S. State Department, Campbell spent his later years raising awareness in the black community about sickle-cell anemia. Campbell died in 1994 at age ninety-one.

Biography

Dick Campbell (Cornelius Coleridge Campbell) was born in Beaumont, Texas. He was orphaned at age six and was reared by his maternal grandmother, Pauline Snow. He worked as the janitor at his high school (1918–1922) and attended Paul Quinn College in Waco, Texas (1922–1926). Campbell began his theatrical career in Los Angeles as a singer and straight man in vaudeville comedy shows (1926–1928). He then joined the Whitman Sisters' Show and traveled to New York (1928). From 1929 to 1942, he was a cast member in various shows in Harlem and on Broadway, including *Connie's Hot Chocolates*, *Hot Rhythm*, and *Singing the Blues*. In 1930–1931, he costarred with Eddie Green on radio in the comedy show "Green and Campbell" as part of the *Fleischmann Yeast Hour*. In 1932, he met and married the concert singer Muriel

Rahn. In 1935, he and Rose McClendon founded the Negro People's Theater in Harlem. He founded and directed the Rose McClendon Players (1937–1942). Campbell was appointed director of the Harlem unit of the Federal Theater Project (1939). He was a producer of the black USO camp shows (1942–1946). He was an African representative for the American National Theater Association, the administrative branch of the U.S. State Department's International Cultural Exchange Program for which he was the field consultant on African affairs (1956–1964); assistant director of public affairs for New York City Human Resources Administration (1967–1972); and executive director of the Sickle Cell Foundation of Greater New York (1972–1994). Campbell died in New York 20 December 1994.

MELINDA D. WILSON

See also Hot Chocolates; Federal Programs; McClendon, Rose

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Campbell, Elmer Simms

E. (Elmer) Simms Campbell was one of the preeminent cartoonists and illustrators of his day; his supple black-and-white drawings and lush watercolors were a regular feature in the pages of *Opportunity*, the *New Yorker*, *Life*, *Collier's*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Redbook*, and *Playboy*. Through William Randolph Hearst's King Features Syndicate, Campbell's "Cuties" appeared in 145 newspapers nationwide. With his tenure as a staff illustrator for *Esquire*, beginning with its debut issue in January 1934 and lasting until 1957, Campbell became the first black artist to break into the "major"

magazines. Campbell is credited with creating “Esky,” the well-dressed, pop-eyed ladies’ man with the white walrus mustache who appeared on most *Esquire* covers; and the parodic odalisques of his sultan-and-harem series perfectly embodied the urbane, leering men’s magazine aesthetic that *Esquire* was busy defining at mid-century. Although Campbell sometimes complained that drawing was a little like ditch digging, but without the benefit of fresh air, he managed to turn out anywhere between 300 and 500 pieces a year.

Campbell’s work rarely concerned itself with specifically black subject matter, and rarely featured black characters, largely sticking to the befuddled tuxedoed gents and redheaded “cuties” that assured him a mass audience. An *Esquire* cartoon of October 1934 (ostensibly making reference to the bandleader Cab Calloway, who considered Campbell his closest friend) struck a self-referential note in this respect. It depicted a white choirmaster eyeing the single black choirboy in his chorus; the caption read: “And none of that hi-de-ho stuff!” Yet his harem series had a certain critical edge to its leer: It featured a disturbingly matter-of-fact approach to the sexual economics of slavery, while at the same time, with its all-in-a-day’s-work punchlines, it poked fun at his mainstream audience’s fascination with exotic otherness.

In a more direct contribution to the Harlem Renaissance, Campbell illustrated a number of books by black writers: most notably Sterling Brown’s collection of poems, *Southern Road* (1932); a children’s book by Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps, *Popo and Fifina: Children of Haiti* (1932); and Binga Dismond’s *We Who Die and Other Poems, Including Haitian Vignettes* (1943). Campbell was also an astute observer of jazz and the Harlem scene: His jivey, idiosyncratic “Night-Club Map of Harlem” (1932) is a classic of its kind; its cat’s-eye-view guide to hot spots off Lenox or Seventh Avenue (“or heaven”) is full of knowing asides (“You’ve never heard a piano really played until you hear Garland Wilson”) yet still manages to find room for the “nice new POLICE STATION” and the “Harlem Moon.” And in 1936, Campbell revealed to *Esquire*’s readers what its editors described as “a happy combination of sympathetic insight and critical detachment” (“Homeland” 1936, 101) as he began to write sharply personal, beautifully illustrated articles on such topics as dancing at Harlem’s Savoy Ballroom, the plight of Haitian sugarcane workers, and the history of jazz.

When *Esquire* changed its format in 1957, Campbell moved to Switzerland, but he remained an active contributor to American periodicals through the 1960s.

Biography

Elmer Simms Campbell was born in St. Louis, Missouri, 2 January 1906. He attended Englewood High School in Chicago, studied at the Lewis Institute of Chicago and the University of Chicago, and graduated from the Art Institute of Chicago (1927). He was an illustrator at the Triad Studios advertising agency in St. Louis (1927–1928). In 1928, he moved to New York, where he worked in advertising, attended the Academy of Design, studied under George Grosz at the Art Students League, and began to contribute to periodicals. Campbell was a staff illustrator and cartoonist at *Esquire* magazine (1933–1957). He moved to Neerach, Switzerland, and was a cartoonist for *Playboy* magazine (1957–1970). He won the St. Louis *Dispatch* Award for black-and-white illustration (1928) and the William Randolph Hearst Art Prize (1936), as well as an honorable mention for watercolor at the American Negro Exposition (1940). He also received honorary degrees from Lincoln, Pennsylvania (M.F.A. in art), and Wilberforce universities and from the University of Ohio (doctor of humane letters). He was a member of the Society of Illustrators, Society of Artists, and National Society of Cartoonists. Campbell died in White Plains, New York, 27 January 1971.

RYAN JERVING

See also Bontemps, Arna; Brown, Sterling; Calloway, Cabell “Cab”; Hughes, Langston; Opportunity; Pittsburgh Courier; Savoy Ballroom

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Cane

Jean Toomer's *Cane* was first published in 1923 by Boni and Liveright, a publishing firm in New York, with a foreword by the pluralist and cultural critic Waldo Frank. From the start, the book appealed to two very different audiences—not surprisingly, given that parts of it had been previously published in magazines as different as *Crisis* and *S 4 N*. At the time, the book earned a reputation as the first modernist work of fiction by a "Negro writer," securing Toomer's place in the radical cosmopolitan set of Greenwich Village and the New Negro artists of the burgeoning Harlem Renaissance. The book itself is not so much a novel as a collection of brief literary portraits and one longer prose play.

Growing up in Washington, D.C., in the household of his grandfather, a venerable "blue veiner" and a racial chameleon of sorts, Toomer struggled for some time to discover just who and what he was. He briefly attended the University of Wisconsin, took up exercise, and tried his hand at writing poems and short dramatic pieces. In 1921, Toomer—discontented and struggling as a writer to define himself and his subject matter—was offered a job as the head of an African American school in Sparta, Georgia. He took it and

mined what he found there for the fugitive pieces that would become the first section and last story of *Cane*. As was typical of this extraordinarily autobiographical writer, for the middle and the last sections he also drew deeply from his own life and from his own sense of self.

The form of the novel was confusing enough to "irritate" W. E. B. Du Bois, the editor of *The Crisis*. Indeed, to sum up the combination of writing styles that is *Cane*, Arna Bontemps once remarked that in this work "poetry and prose were whipped together in a kind of frappé." The book has three parts, the first of which is a series of sensitive, lyrical vignettes of African American womanhood in the South. The women Jean Toomer wrote about in this section were not classic Victorian matriarchs, but compromised, even fallen, and certainly sexually complicated and alive. In breathing life into Fern, Karintha, and others, Toomer painted with words, as Du Bois put it, in the impressionist style, using a "sweep of color" to liberate black women from the restrictive confines of middle-class prudery.

The second section of *Cane* is set in the North, specifically in Washington, D.C., and Chicago. Once again, Toomer emphasized the contradictions between the modern and the primitive, the superego and the id, in Afro-America. But in contrast to the portraiture of the first section, the characters in his northern stories seem awkwardly out of place and lost. Men are given a significant role here, and they seem to suffer from an excess of self-consciousness and Victorian self-control, afflictions of the cold, prim, whitened North—not of the black South, where emotions were unbridled and human beings whole.

The third section contains the longest single piece of writing in *Cane*, an apocryphal story titled "Kabnis," in which a northern African American man named Ralph Kabnis heads to the South to find himself, only to be lost forever. His life in the North, it seems, has left him weak and incapable of balance and unity, and so he drifts into moral chaos and impoverishment. His very "northernness"—his psychological hesitation, his heady intellectualism, his emphasis on the mind over the body—renders him unable to enjoy the lives, loves, and labors of the South. As a balance to Ralph Kabnis, Toomer included another, more successfully integrated northerner, Lewis: "He is," the book suggests, "what a stronger Kabnis might have been." The ever-confident Toomer admitted to his friends and confidants that he himself was a combination of the very best of Kabnis and the very best of Lewis.

Many of Jean Toomer's contemporaries claimed that *Cane* was an "essential" text of some sort, but very few of them seem to have fully understood the book. The bibliophile William Stanley Braithwaite would claim in the pages of Alain Locke's *The New Negro* that Jean Toomer was "the very first artist of the race," an aesthete and folklorist creatively capturing the essence of proletarian black America in the deep South before it was ground away by modernity. Waldo Frank's original preface to the book, written after numerous conversations with Toomer, presented the author of *Cane* as "a poet": "The book is the South," Frank concluded; "[a] poet has arisen among our American youth who has known how to turn the essences and materials of his Southland into essences and materials of literature." "No previous writer," Montgomery Gregory (chair of the drama department at Howard University) suggested, "has been able in any such degree to catch the sensuous beauty of the land or of its people or fathom the deeper spiritual stirrings of the mass-life of the Negro. . . . [I]t IS the South, it IS the Negro."

It is also clear, in hindsight, that *Cane* captured the essence of Jean Toomer himself. Inspired by Waldo Frank's book *Our America*, with its cultural pluralism, Toomer hoped that *Cane* would reveal what "the Negro" had to offer to America, envisioning the work as part of the missionary radicalism led by the literary avant-garde. But, given his complicated upbringing and racial background, he also envisioned himself as more than a "Negro," and he saw *Cane* as a reflection of just one part of his personality. When, in the wake of its publication, few could understand his complicated racial position, he struggled to make that position understood, and then, finally, turned to the writing and rewriting of his numerous unpublished autobiographies.

MATTHEW PRATT GUTERL

See also Authors: 2—Fiction; Boni and Liveright; Bontemps, Arna; Braithwaite, William Stanley; Crisis, The; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Frank, Waldo; Literature: 4—Fiction; New Negro, The; Toomer, Jean

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Carolina Magazine

Founded in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, in March 1844, the *North Carolina University Magazine* was the official literary publication of the students of the University of North Carolina. It was designed to give the student body an "opportunity of perfecting ourselves in an equally important Department of Letters" tradition and as "a token of our devotion to Literature." Within this context, *Carolina Magazine*, as it was known in the late 1920s, linked itself with the New Negro movement, also referred to as the Harlem Renaissance and the Negro Renaissance—the artistic and cultural renaissance in Harlem that focused on "race consciousness and racial cooperation" among African Americans.

From 1927 to 1930, *Carolina Magazine* compiled a yearly issue for April or May called the "Negro Number," presenting a theme representative of black life and art. For example, John Mebane, the editor of the Negro Number of 4 May 1930, explained that the editorial staff of the magazine was happy to give the students "some idea" of what New Negroes were "doing in the field of literature." Mebane recognized that "the Negro," during the 1920s, retained in "his" literature, poetry, music, and art "a certain tint of beauty that is unrestrained by artificial limits, a beauty and an intensity of feeling that are genuine and intimate."

The first of four issues of the Negro Number was published in May 1927. Lewis Grandison Alexander (1900–1945), a New Negro writer whose works were published in the *Messenger*, *Opportunity*, and *Fire!!*, served as the honorary editor for this and the subsequent issues. Alexander, whose work for the magazine was deemed "indispensable," and Charles S. Johnson, the editor of *Opportunity* and a shaper of the New Negro movement, were acknowledged as the "key to this issue" and as having provided an identification for New Negro writers. Indeed, the article "The Negro Enters Literature," written by Johnson, set the tone for the entire series. This first issue contained drawings by Aaron Douglas for *The Emperor Jones* and poetry by Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and Angelina W. Grimké, to name a few.

The second issue, in May 1928, was dedicated to Alexander “in appreciation of his friendship and service.” The editorial staff explained that the magazine would not have made its appearance without Alexander, who had given “his time unstintingly in the assembling of the material” and his “tireless assistance” in calling on his New Negro friends for contributions. This issue was noted for a pen-and-ink sketch of the “New Negro” by Allan R. Freelon and for the article “The Message of the Negro Poets” by Alain Locke, author of the anthology *The New Negro* (1925).

The third issue, “The Negro Play Number,” in April 1929, is noted for having featured four playwrights, Willis Richardson among them, who all won prizes in contests run by *Crisis* and *Opportunity*.

The fourth and final issue, in May 1930, was noted for acknowledging the “rich and ancient tradition” of Negro art and literature. With these four issues, *Carolina Magazine* shed a bright light on its role as an active participant in the New Negro movement.

GLEN ANTHONY HARRIS

See also *Crisis*, *The*; Cullen, Countee; Emperor Jones, *The*; Douglas, Aaron; Fire!!; Grimké, Angelina Weld; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Locke, Alain; *Messenger*, *The*; *New Negro*; *New Negro Movement*; *Opportunity*

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Césaire, Aimé

Aimé Césaire was among the most illustrious Caribbean writers and statesmen of the twentieth century. In his youth he was both an acute observer of France’s colonial legacy in his native Martinique, and the beneficiary of an extensive education, there and later in Paris, in the French and classical humanities. These experiences enabled him to become an active

participant in French literary and civic traditions and at the same time a powerful spokesman for those traditionally excluded from such traditions. He is best known for his French lyric and dramatic poetry, although he also wrote influential essays on literary, historical, and political subjects. He played an important role in the electoral politics of Martinique for almost fifty years, before retiring from public service in 1993.

In 1939, Césaire published the first version of what would become his most famous work, the extended poem *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* (*Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*), revisions of which were later published in book form. In this poem, Césaire brings vividly to life his narrator’s complex experience of being black in French-controlled Martinique and also expounds the broader concept of *négritude*. This elusive term, which Césaire himself coined, would take on disparate meanings among those who came to be associated with the *négritude* movement instigated by Césaire and his fellow poets Léopold Senghor and Léon Damas. The three had met during their student days and had helped launch two short-lived pan-Africanist magazines: *Légitime Défense* and *L’Etudiant Noir*. The proponents of *négritude* wanted to revolutionize widespread concepts of black identity; they asserted the beauty of their African heritage and the creative potential of blacks united by ancestry and shared suffering. Senghor and Césaire were particularly influenced in the late 1930s by the German ethnographer Leo Frobenius’s *Histoire de la civilisation africaine*. Frobenius celebrated African artistry and attributed it to an “African essence” in all black culture. Frobenius’s Africanism broke away from widespread European assumptions that Africa was a cultural void; but his ascription of a shared essence to a diverse black population, along with the *négritude* poets’ glorification of that concept, has since led many African and African American critics to reject *négritude* in favor of a multicultural approach.

In 1941, Césaire cofounded *Tropiques*, a journal of poetry and criticism, largely surrealist and directed at promoting *négritude* (as opposed to assimilation into white French culture) among black and mulatto Martinicans. The journal initially focused on the arts but then became increasingly political. In an early issue, Césaire wrote an homage to the poets of the Harlem Renaissance, who had inspired him as he developed his concept of *négritude*. In this essay, “Introduction à la poésie nègre américaine” (“Introduction to Negro-American Poetry”), Césaire introduced French versions of poetry by James Weldon Johnson, Jean

Toomer, and Claude McKay and praised what he took to be its revelation and celebration of the innate imagination, emotionalism, and spirituality of all blacks, and of their racial and historical bonds. Césaire had admired the writers of the Harlem Renaissance at least since his second year as a student at the École Normale Supérieure, where he earned his diploma by writing a thesis (no longer extant), “Le thème du sud dans la poésie négro-américaine des États-Unis” (“The Theme of the South in the Negro-American Poetry of the United States”). Césaire especially admired McKay’s novel *Banjo*, which urged blacks to resist assimilation, reclaim their lost folk traditions, and preserve their “primitive” kinship with nature.

Despite his affinity with the Harlem Renaissance writers’ notions of black identity, Césaire had a strong European orientation and wrote poetry in a style very different from theirs. He inherited the French modernist poetics of Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Lautréamont, Rimbaud, and the symbolists and surrealists but extended these poets’ formal and thematic innovations to new subjects. Césaire’s poetry—skeptical of realism and rationality—is densely, often esoterically figurative and allusive; it frequently violates standard French syntax and is full of outlandish, logically irreconcilable juxtapositions of images and meanings. Césaire also shares the modernist concern with alienation, social and cultural upheaval, anticolonialism, and primitivism, but he transforms these themes by introducing the perspective of those who are socially and culturally repressed. In Césaire’s view, this perspective is unique to the disempowered African diaspora. Another European thinker who influenced Césaire was Nietzsche. Césaire’s repeated representation of a hero’s voluntary self-sacrifice on behalf of the community is reminiscent of Dionysus’s sacrifice in Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*, and Césaire’s mythic images and allusions suggest Nietzsche’s vision of history as cyclical. Arnold (1981) argues that Césaire often depicts heroes, fictional and historical, who surrender their personal well-being for the benefit of the group. For instance, Césaire was impressed by a seven-month lecture tour in Haiti in 1945, and he later wrote works inspired by the Haitian heroes Henri Christophe and Toussaint Louverture.

In 1945, Césaire unexpectedly won the mayoralty of Fort-de-France on the Communist Party ticket. Later that year he was elected to represent Martinique as a *député* in the French Assemblée Nationale. Despite his change of party affiliation thirteen years later, he retained these positions until he retired from politics just before his

eightieth birthday. In 1946, his draft of a proposal to the French government to make Martinique a *département* of France (the equivalent of a U.S. state), was passed into law. Césaire received bitter criticism from the next generation of Martinican activists, who believed that he should have sought independence for the island.

With *Les armes miraculeuses* (*Miraculous Weapons*, 1946) and *Soleil cou coupé* (*Sun Cut Throat*, 1948), Césaire established his reputation in francophone avant-garde circles as a foremost surrealist poet; moreover, he was supported by leading francophone intellectuals, including the founder of surrealism, André Breton, whom he had met in Fort-de-France in 1941 and who wrote a laudatory essay about him, “Un grand poète noir” (“A Great Black Poet”). In 1949, Césaire collaborated with Pablo Picasso on a limited edition of *Corps perdu* (*Lost Body*). Earlier, in 1947, Césaire and Jean-Paul Sartre had helped found the publishing house *Présence Africaine*, which ever since has distributed a periodical of the same name as well as books pertinent to black studies, and has printed many of Césaire’s writings. In 1956, Césaire attended the First International Congress of Negro Artists and Writers in Paris and delivered a paper—“Culture et colonisation” (“Culture and Colonization”)—that was more measured in tone than his well-known earlier polemic *Discours sur le colonialisme* (*Discourse on Colonialism*) but nevertheless controversial. For years Césaire’s concept of *négritude* had been evolving differently from Senghor’s, and in this paper he attempted to give it a historical grounding so as to challenge Senghor’s essentialist vision. In the 1960s, Césaire continued his critique of colonial repression and exploitation in the more broadly accessible form of biography (*Toussaint Louverture*) and drama: *La tragédie du Roi Christophe* (*The Tragedy of King Christophe*), *Une saison au Congo* (*A Season in the Congo*), and *Une tempête* (*A Tempest*, a reworking of Shakespeare’s play.) In the 1970s, he returned to lyric poetry. In 1983, after France created regional councils in overseas departments, he became president of his local *conseil régional*.

Biography

Aimé Césaire was born 26 June 1913 in Basse-Pointe, Martinique. He studied on a scholarship at the Lycée Schoelcher in Fort-de-France and was awarded his baccalaureate with distinction in 1932; in 1931, he had won another scholarship to continue his studies at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand in Paris, and in 1935, he was

admitted to the École Normale Supérieure. In 1932, he cofounded the magazine *Légitime Défense*; in 1934, he cofounded another magazine, *L'Étudiant Noir*. Césaire returned to Martinique in 1939. In 1940, he began teaching at the Lycée Schoelcher; in 1941, he cofounded *Tropiques*. In 1944, he spent seven months on a lecture tour in Haiti. He returned to Martinique, and in 1945, he was elected mayor of Fort-de-France and a deputy to the French national assembly. In 1947, Césaire helped launch the publishing house and magazine *Présence Africaine*. In 1956, he resigned from the French Communist Party; two years later, he founded the Parti Progressiste Martiniquais. In 1966, he attended a production of his already widely performed play *La tragédie du Roi Christophe* at the first Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres in Dakar, Senegal. In 1972, he gave a series of lectures at the Université Laval in Quebec. He became president of his local regional council in 1983. In 1991, *La tragédie du Roi Christophe* was performed at the Comédie-Française in Paris. Césaire remained in political office until his retirement in 1993. His awards included the Prix René Laporte for his collection of poems *Ferrements* in 1960 and the Grand Prix National de la Poésie in 1982.

MARA DE GENNARO

See also Damas, Léon; Francophone Caribbean and the Harlem Renaissance; Johnson, James Weldon; McKay, Claude; Negritude; Senghor, Léopold; Toomer, Jean

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Challenge

Challenge was a literary magazine devoted to publishing high-quality literature primarily written by African Americans during the 1930s, the Depression era.

Dorothy West, its founding editor and publisher, originally intended it as a monthly, but its revenues were insufficient (owing to sparse subscriptions and advertisements), and it evolved into a literary quarterly from 1934 until its demise in 1937. West nurtured *Challenge* through six issues: Volume 1, comprising issues released in March and September 1934, May 1935, and January and June 1936; and Volume 2, the issue of April 1937. Harold Jackmann served as associate editor from May 1935 until April 1937.

From its inception, West financed and edited the magazine to "challenge" the young, relatively unknown African American voices that emerged during and after the Harlem Renaissance. She had designed it for the "New Negro Voice, which is an explanation of its title, *Challenge*." She was aware that support from educators would be valuable to her attempt to edit a literary journal during the Depression, when patronage of black literature had declined or ended, and so she anticipated that *Challenge* would be established at high schools and universities across black America, where could be found "maybe much of the talent we want to challenge." In a letter of 18 December 1933, mailed to a broad group of teachers of English nationwide who she hoped would become subscribers, West explained the significance of the magazine for new, emerging writers:

We, who are their literary elders, challenge these unknown writers to clean competition in poetry and prose. For I do not think that we, who were the lauded New Negroes of the late nineteen-twenties, quite lived up to our promise. We can in part make up our lack of lighting the literary way of the new singers and their songs may be lustier and lovelier.

Just as *Opportunity* and *The Messenger* had been beacons of hope for the "talented tenth" during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, West thought that with sufficient financial support from black educators and students, *Challenge* could represent the artistic promise of the 1930s and 1940s.

Challenge included guest editorials; short stories; special articles; book reviews; poetry; and a column, "Dear Reader," in which West restated the quarterly's intention to accept and publish only high-quality literature, pleaded for the public's continued financial support, and stressed that excellent submissions had come from notable writers whose creativity exemplified an artistic synthesis of the Harlem Renaissance and the Depression. The contributing writers included Arna

Bontemps, Frank Yerby, James Weldon Johnson, West herself (she used the pen name Mary Christopher), Harry Thacker Burleigh, Zora Neale Hurston, Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, William Attaway, Paul Robeson, Richard Bruce Nugent, and others. This is an impressive list, but *Challenge* succumbed to the economic hardships of the time, publishing its last issue in April 1937.

PEARLIE PETERS

See also Messenger, The; Opportunity; Talented Tenth; West, Dorothy; *specific writers*

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Chenault, Lawrence

Lawrence Chenault, who is frequently called the "dean of black film actors," appeared in twenty-four films during the Harlem Renaissance. Chenault was born in Mount Sterling, Kentucky, in 1877, but was raised in Cincinnati, Ohio. The young Chenault developed his singing voice as a soloist at Allen Temple Church, before becoming a professional stage and screen actor in Chicago, New York, and other American cities. He had established his career by the 1910s, and was a major figure in the dynamic early years of African American performance.

Chenault began his acting career in the late nineteenth century at the Pekin Theater in Chicago, and he had steady work for six or seven seasons in the long-running play *Darkest America*, staged by A. G. Fields Company. He then joined the renowned Black Patti Troubadours. With the M. B. Curtis Minstrels, Chenault toured the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and

Hawaii, before settling in San Francisco for several years. In San Francisco, he evidently sang and acted in various venues, most notably with the comedian Ernest Hogan in the Smart Set Company. Chenault next joined the Williams and Walker company and performed in its staging of *Abyssinia*. When Anita Bush organized the Lafayette Players in 1915, Chenault was among her first leading men.

The leading stage actors—comic and dramatic—of the Harlem Renaissance, who had performed or continued to perform with the Lafayette Players, also



Poster for *The Crimson Skull*, with Lawrence Chenault. (Library of Congress.)

worked as actors in race films. Chenault was already a veteran of the stage when he made his screen debut as Herbert Lanyon in Oscar Micheaux's *The Brute* in 1920. A reviewer for the *Chicago Defender* wrote that Chenault and his costars "demonstrated that we do not have to go beyond our own Race for screen artists of ability" (Sampson 1995, 243). Later in 1920, Chenault performed in Micheaux's *Symbol of the Unconquered*. Chenault went on to a challenging triple role in a popular cowboy film, *The Crimson Skull* (Richard E. Norman, 1921). The fair-skinned Chenault played the villain in many films, notably in Micheaux's *Body and Soul* (1925), in which he was a former jail mate of a crooked preacher (played by Paul Robeson). Chenault also appeared in a race film with a temperance theme, *Ten Nights in a Bar Room* (1926), a famous collaboration with Charles Gilpin. This film enjoyed the longest continuous run of any race film of the silent era: four weeks at the Grant Theater in New York.

Race films, which were made for African American audiences, included a wide range of genres: melodramas, thrillers, musicals, comedies, and westerns. They offered black viewers images of the African American experience—including romance, urban migration, social uplift, racial violence, alcoholism, and color prejudice within the black community—that were conspicuously absent from Hollywood films. Many companies were formed to produce these films, including the Colored Players Company and Robert Levy's Reol Productions, which each financed four of Chenault's films. Chenault's association with the race film industry helped make him a leading figure of the Harlem Renaissance.

Biography

Lawrence Chenault was born in 1877 in Mount Sterling, Kentucky. He received his primary education at public schools in Cincinnati, Ohio. His credits as a performer included A. G. Fields Company, *Darkest America*; Black Patti Troubadours; M. B. Curtis Minstrels; Smart Set Company, 1905; Williams and Walker Company, *Abyssinia*, 1908; three years as a member of the Pekin Stock Company, Chicago; appearances in vaudeville as a member of the teams Allen and Chenault and Martin and Chenault; and a play, *His Honor the Barber*. He was also a member of the Lafayette Players. Chenault married Evelyn Preer in 1924.

TERRI FRANCIS

See also Bush, Anita; Chicago Defender; Gilpin, Charles; Lafayette Players; Micheaux, Oscar; Preer, Evelyn; Race Films; Robeson, Paul

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- The Crimson Skull*. 1921. (Norman Film Manufacturing Company; nonextant print.)
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- Birthright*. 1924. (Directed by Oscar Micheaux; nonextant print.)
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Chesnutt, Charles Waddell

Charles Chesnutt (1858–1932) was one of the first successful African American writers of fiction. Beginning in 1887, when he published his dialect tale "The Goophered Grapevine" in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Chesnutt had a thriving career as a writer of short stories and novels. Chesnutt's stories and novels (of which three were published in his lifetime and two very recently) deal with a variety of times, places, and circumstances, but they all address the tragically absurd ideology of race prevalent in American history, law, culture, and custom. In 1905, Chesnutt completed his final published book-length project, the novel *The Colonel's Dream* (1905), but he did not stop writing. Even as he remained engaged in African American causes, he continued to write essays, to speak out on issues of the day, to write short stories, and, during the 1920s, to complete two novels, *Paul Marchand, F.M.C.* (i.e., *Free Man of Color*; 1998) and *The Quarry* (1999), both of which were published for the first time in the late 1990s. With these two novels in print and the general critical attention devoted to Chesnutt since the early 1990s, his reputation has grown as a figure engaged with the issues of the Harlem Renaissance, not just as one of its important forefathers.

Chesnutt was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1858, the son of two free light-skinned African Americans from Fayetteville, North Carolina. Chesnutt's father, Andrew Jackson Chesnutt, was the son of Waddell Cade, a white slaveholder who left some of his property and land to the free mulatto children whom he fathered with his mistress, Ann Chesnutt. Charles Chesnutt was of an appearance that allowed him to "pass," and many of his characters, as they struggle with the puzzling status implied by a mixed-race background, serve to raise questions about the American system of racial classification.

After the Civil War, Chesnutt's family moved back to Fayetteville, where he went to school and then became first a teacher and later a principal. In 1878, he married Susan Perry, and they soon started a family. Chesnutt and his family moved to Cleveland in 1884 after he had tried a brief stint writing for various newspapers in New York. Chesnutt studied law in Cleveland, passed the Ohio bar in 1887, and at the same time published "The Goophered Grapevine" in the *Atlantic Monthly*, probably the most prestigious literary magazine in the United States at the time. Throughout the rest of the 1880s and 1890s, Chesnutt continued publishing stories while he also opened and ran a prosperous business as a court reporter and stenographer. In 1899, he published two collections of short stories, *The Conjure Woman* (1899) and *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line* (1899). Both were well received at the time, but *The Conjure Woman*, as Brodhead (1993) writes in his introduction to the reissue of these stories, "has recently been recognized as a literary creation of remarkable interest and power. In the African American tradition this book stands out as a major literary production . . . and it helped pioneer a literary use of black vernacular culture important to many later writers." "Conjure" is a term for the African magical arts that appear in many of the stories, which are set in the South after the Civil War and feature the complex figure of Uncle Julius, an enigmatic former slave who serves as guide and servant to a carpetbagging northern couple come to cultivate grapes on a desolate former plantation. During this period Chesnutt rose to the very top echelon of elite publishing, befriending the likes of William Dean Howells, the reigning tastemaker of the day, but also writing genuinely complex and what have now proved to be lasting works of serious fiction. Between 1900 and 1905, Chesnutt published three novels; but after this effort to make a serious go of writing fiction exclusively (he closed his legal business from 1899 to 1902), he became dissatisfied with limited sales and disillusioned with the book-buying public and entered a creative hiatus. Until recently, 1905 was considered the end of Chesnutt's writing career.

Remarkably, though, beginning in 1920, Chesnutt experienced a personal creative renaissance that coincided with the Harlem Renaissance. Encouraged by the sale of two of his novels to film production companies in 1920—*The House Behind the Cedars* (1900) was actually produced by Oscar Micheaux in 1923—Chesnutt began writing again. He wrote two novels, both of which have only now been published: *Paul*

Marchand, F.M.C.; and *The Quarry*. He also wrote essays that reflect his engagement with the issues of the day.

Paul Marchand is a historical novel set in antebellum New Orleans, where its hero, Marchand, is raised as an octoroon but learns that he is actually white, the son of a prominent New Orleans family. He chooses to move to France and maintain his status for the sake of his octoroon wife and children, whom he would probably have to forsake if he stayed in New Orleans as a white man. Matthew Wilson, in his introduction to the 1998 edition, suggests a reading of *Paul Marchand* as politically meaningful even within the rapidly changing world of the 1920s: “[Chesnutt] insisted that the experiences of mixed-race people break us out of the trap of the American racial binary, and that to ignore those experiences is a damaging oversimplification of our collective history.” The book was rejected by a number of publishers. Chesnutt continued his involvement in local civic causes and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). He also wrote essays and lectured, as a representative of a previous but still important generation.

Chesnutt’s final novel, *The Quarry*, written after he won the prestigious Spingarn Medal from the NAACP in 1928, also failed to find a publisher. In this novel, the hero, Donald Glover, raised as a light-skinned African American, learns as a young adult that he in fact is white, but he chooses to continue serving his adopted people. Dean McWilliams, in his introduction to the 1999 edition, points out that Chesnutt’s novel, in contrast to James Weldon Johnson’s influential *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1927), “might well be subtitled ‘The Biography of an Ex-White Man’” because *The Quarry* “turns the novel of passing on its head by recounting the story of a white man who decides to be colored.” Chesnutt takes Donald Glover on a tour of the Harlem Renaissance as Glover attends Columbia University, cavorts in bars, hangs out with a Jewish socialist, and discusses the teachings of W. E. B. Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, and Marcus Garvey. In 1930, when Chesnutt futilely submitted the novel to Houghton Mifflin, he did show some dismay and even resentment over what he saw as the general trend in the Harlem Renaissance: “I have not dredged the sewers of the Negro underworld to find my characters and my scenes” (Chesnutt to Houghton Mifflin, 29 December 1930, quoted in Andrews 1980). Chesnutt died in 1932, but his stature as a figure of the Harlem Renaissance is only now undergoing a full exploration.

Biography

Charles Waddell Chesnutt was born 20 June 1858 in Cleveland, Ohio. He studied in a Freedman’s Bureau school in Fayetteville, North Carolina, 1866–1873, and began teaching in Charlotte, North Carolina, 1873–1876. He was assistant principal and later principal of the State Colored Normal School, Fayetteville, 1877–1883. Chesnutt passed the Ohio bar examination in 1887 and opened his own business as attorney, stenographer, and court reporter in Cleveland in 1888. He wrote short stories for the *Atlantic Monthly*, 1887–1904. His first novel, *The House Behind the Cedars*, was published in 1900. He was chairman of the Committee on Colored Troops, Thirty-Fifth National Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic, 1901; president of the Cleveland Council of Sociology, 1910; a member of the Rowfant Club, 1910; a member of the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce, 1912; and a member of the National Arts Club, 1917. Chesnutt’s awards included an honorary degree from Wilberforce University, Xenia, Ohio, 1913; and the Spingarn Medal, 1928. Chesnutt died in Cleveland 15 November 1932.

JOSHUA BOAZ KOTZIN

See also Authors: 2—Fiction; Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man, The; Micheaux, Oscar

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- The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line*. 1899.
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Chicago Defender

Robert S. Abbott began the *Chicago Defender* in a rented room on State Street, furnished with a card table and a borrowed chair. Abbott was a graduate of Kent College of Law in Chicago and had wanted to practice law, but he was denied admittance by the state bars of Illinois, Indiana, and Kansas. Inspired by the speeches of two militant black journalists of the time, Ida B. Wells and Frederick Douglass, Abbott switched his interest to newspapers. With twenty-five cents from his financial backers he bought paper and pencils. He arranged for the newspaper to be printed on credit. On 5 May 1905, Abbott delivered door to door in Chicago 300 papers of handbill size, which became the *Defender's* first issue.

Abbott distributed the newspaper throughout the compact ghetto in which he lived and on which he relied for his advertising. Some 44,000 people resided within a few blocks of this part of Chicago, so his delivery route was very short. Abbott remained the newspaper's sole reporter until 1910, when he hired J. Hockley Smiley, who helped boost the *Defender's* circulation with his own brand of sensational news coverage, resembling the "yellow journalism" of

William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer. (In the late 1890s, Hearst and Pulitzer were competing against each other for circulation size; their battleground was the front pages of the newspapers they owned, and they tried to outdo each other in terms of lurid stories, bold headlines, and graphics.)

Abbott's *Defender* also adopted another journalistic approach, called "muckraking"—a term coined by President Theodore Roosevelt to describe investigative reporting that dug into the backgrounds of people and organizations to expose corruption. Abbott and Smiley investigated problems in their neighborhood, such as prostitution; but when investigative articles fell from prominence, they often made up "wild stories." "I tell the truth if I can get it, but if I can't get the facts, I read between the lines and tell what I know to be facts even though the reports say differently" (Hogan 1984, 49). The *Defender* became known for its detailed and salacious accounts of violent crimes and its use of large headlines printed in red; it was the first African American newspaper to depart from the more traditional journalism that simply reported accurate, straightforward news and offered editorial opinions.

Abbott's penchant for sensationalism increased sales enormously: The *Defender's* circulation rose to a height that had never been attained by a black newspaper. "In little more than a decade, the weekly *Chicago Defender* emerged as the most important black newspaper in the nation. Its unprecedented success was such [that], with the exception of the Bible, no publication was more influential among the Negro masses" (Ottley 1955, 8). The *Defender* increased sales not only in the North but also in the South, becoming a nationally known black newspaper. African Americans who had moved North sent the *Defender* to their families and friends in the South; train conductors were asked to drop copies off at certain southern crossroads.

Moreover, the *Defender* strategically targeted southern readers—for example, by printing help-wanted ads for jobs located in the North. Job opportunities abounded in the North as a result of World War I: The government closed off European immigration, and many factory workers joined the armed forces, so large numbers of new workers were needed in northern factories. At the same time, the South was facing a boll weevil infestation of its cotton crops that made work scarce there; in addition, in order to urge southern blacks to move north, Abbott reported sensationalized stories of lynchings and violence in the South. Abbott's strategy succeeded in two ways: By the end

of World War I in 1918, the sales of his newspaper were higher in the South than anywhere else; and Abbott is sometimes credited with having started a “great northern drive” in which thousands of southern blacks resettled in the North. He himself set the date as 15 May 1917. Other newspapers—the *Christian Recorder*, *New York News*, *Dallas Express*, and *New York Age*—also urged blacks to migrate North. However, as the South faced a shortage of blacks to work in the fields, southern states such as Mississippi and Arkansas enacted laws against the *Defender* particularly, suppressing its printing and distribution. The Ku Klux Klan threatened harm to anyone seen with the *Defender*; two distributors of the newspaper were killed, and many others were run out of town. But as more and more southern leaders tried to stop the *Defender*, its circulation in the South kept growing.

The *Defender*'s large profits in the North and the South gave it financial stability; it also had editorial clout that was unprecedented for a black newspaper: During World War I, the *Defender* continued its activist reporting and editorials and criticized the federal government for giving substandard treatment to black

military personnel. Furthermore, its success led African Americans to consider journalism as a possible, even lucrative, career. The *Defender* nurtured a number of writers, such as Langston Hughes, who wrote a column called “Simple and Me,” which discussed the general attitudes of black people.

In 1919, Abbott became the first African American to build a newspaper plant. The circulation of the *Defender* remained strong: During most of the 1920s, it was about 150,000; and according to Henri (1975), at one point it climbed to 283, 571. The actual number of people who read the *Defender* was much higher than its subscription rate, because copies of the newspaper were passed on many times.

When Abbott died in 1940, his nephew John Sengstacke became the new owner and publisher of the *Defender*. Sengstacke extended the influence of the *Defender* by building it into a group of newspapers, which grew to five editions (one was the *Indiana Defender* in Gary); the group also had two subsidiaries.

GERI ALUMIT

See also Abbott, Robert Sengstacke; Barnett, Ida B. Wells; Black Press; Great Migration and the Harlem Renaissance; Hughes, Langston; Journalists; *New York Age*



Masthead of the *Chicago Defender*, 18 August 1917.

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Chocolate Dandies, The

Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake's collaboration *The Chocolate Dandies* (1923–1924, originally called *In Bamville*) helped establish black musical comedy as a force on Broadway. The show was a result of a songwriting partnership between Sissle and Blake dating back to 1916, when Sophie Tucker performed their first song, "It's All Your Fault." That same year, Sissle joined James Reese Europe's Society Dance Orchestra; he then joined Europe's 369th Infantry Regiment Band as a drum major during World War I. Sissle toured with Reese's band in France and the United States in the year after the war. After Reese was murdered by a band member, Sissle rejoined Blake, and they toured as the Dixie Duo.

Before Sissle and Blake created *The Chocolate Dandies*, they had had a smash success, *Shuffle Along* (1921). Lew Payton cowrote the book for *The Chocolate Dandies* (mainly contributing additional dialogue), and the star-studded cast included Josephine Baker, Lottie Gee, Inez Clough, Valaida Snow, and Payton himself.

Although this production was far more extravagant and expensive than its predecessor (at one point, three live horses ran a race onstage), it was not as economically successful as *Shuffle Along*. It had only six profitable weeks and closed after a much shorter run of only ninety-six performances.

The Chocolate Dandies received mixed reviews. Some critics praised it as highly as *Shuffle Along*, but others said that it pandered too much to the stale ideas and expectations of white audiences. Drove of white patrons certainly did come uptown to see *The Chocolate Dandies* and many other black shows, and Harlem sent its hits downtown to Broadway. The factors in this phenomenon are complex: White patronage increased the economic and emotional support for black musical theater, but it also contributed to a situation in which black performers were limited to stereotypical roles. Scholars have sometimes wondered what types of performance might have developed if white Americans had not been watching so closely.

The African American theater critic Theophilus Lewis thought that *The Chocolate Dandies* had a high level of sophistication and an aristocratic tone, and that it could be compared to the best of white American theater. Perhaps confirming this, some white reviewers considered the show too "ambitious" and high-minded; they evidently deplored its attempt to abandon the confining notions of what black musicals could do. In other words, they raised questions about "blackness" (a controversial term) and argued that *The Chocolate Dandies* resembled white productions too closely and lacked the expected black style. (This problem was to persist: Many comedies and revues similar in style to *Shuffle Along* succeeded, whereas nonconforming productions like *The Chocolate Dandies* were doomed.) On the other hand, certain reviewers thought that *The Chocolate Dandies* was not innovative enough. Eric Walrond, reviewing the show for *Opportunity*, said that it added nothing new to the line of black shows on Broadway since *Shuffle Along*. He found *The Chocolate Dandies* neither bad nor good but dull, tiresome, and formulaic: "For a Negro show to make a bid for Broadway all that is required, it seems, is a bevy of dancing girls, a 'harmony four,' a riot of color, and a slender plot (which is unimportant), built usually around the swindling of some poor, old, illiterate 'darky.'" Walrond concurred with those who questioned the "blackness" of the show; he thought that the play was trying to cater to the desires of jaded whites who loved black musical comedies: "Sissle and Blake doubtless forgot that there are colored people who like to see their shows. . . . It didn't

seem like a colored show at all." Besides the cut-out and Charleston dance numbers, "there isn't a thing in it that cannot be duplicated by any group of white actors and actresses on the road. . . . The life of the Negro as [it] is sketchily presented in a show like this is false." According to Walrond, *The Chocolate Dandies* had omitted all the particulars of race, and he considered this omission undesirable. He noted that there was ample talent in Harlem, as well as ample material, but that it was not used in *The Chocolate Dandies*.

Despite these issues of aesthetics and style, *The Chocolate Dandies* was still an important production. For one thing, it was Josephine Baker's first major show, and Baker impressed the critics with the slapstick comedy that she had begun earlier, in her embellished role in *Shuffle Along*. This work had helped her get a leading role in *The Chocolate Dandies*, and in 1924, she was billed as "that comedy chorus girl." (However, she soon abandoned her comic style for the exotic, erotic image that made her an international sensation.)

The tenor and actor Ivan Harold Browning was the romantic lead in *The Chocolate Dandies*. Alfred "Slick" Chester performed as an actor, singer, and dancer. Inez Clough played Mrs. Hez Brown, wife of the president of the Bamville Fair. Lottie Gee played Angeline Brown from 1923 to 1924, before the show went to Broadway, when it was still titled *In Bamville*. Valaida Snow played Manda. Noble Sissle played Dobbie Hicks.

According to Eubie Blake, when the production was headed to Broadway, the producers brought in Julian Mitchell, a white dance director, to give it a "Broadway touch." Mitchell received more money and credit than Charlie Davis, the black choreographer, who did more work. This was a common story at the time; the enthusiasm for blacks' contributions to musical theater often did not translate into economic gains for the artists.

NADINE GEORGE-GRAVES

See also Baker, Josephine; Blake, Eubie; Clough, Inez; Europe, James Reese; Lewis, Theophilus; Musical Theater; Sissle, Noble; *Shuffle Along*; Snow, Valaida; Walrond, Eric

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Civic Club Dinner, 1924

The Civic Club dinner, a gathering of writers and editors held in Manhattan on 21 March 1924, was the first of a number of interracial promotional events organized by Charles S. Johnson to draw attention to the young writers and artists of the Harlem Renaissance. The idea for the dinner first came up among the members of a group that called itself the Writers' Guild; it met in Harlem and included Johnson and a number of other writers. The dinner originally was conceived of as a "coming-out party" that would raise awareness of the work of African American writers; the publication of Jessie Fauset's novel *There Is Confusion* was selected as the occasion. But as Johnson began to make the arrangements, he made it clear in a letter to Alain Locke that he wanted to include as many writers as possible rather than having an event focused exclusively on Fauset.

The site of the dinner, the Civic Club, had been established in 1917 by, among others, founding members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); it was one of the few places in New York City that welcomed both black and white members. The guest list was carefully interracial: It included scores of African American writers, many of the most influential white editors and publishers of the time, and key figures in a number of important organizations, such as the NAACP, the National Urban League, and the YMCA. In total, about 110 people attended.

The attendees heard a number of speeches by editors and publishers, including Charles Johnson; Locke; Horace Liveright, whose company had published Jean Toomer's book *Cane* in 1923, as well as *There Is Confusion*; W. E. B. Du Bois, the editor of the NAACP's magazine, *Crisis*; James Weldon Johnson, who had just edited the *Book of American Negro Poetry*; and Carl Van Doren, the editor of *Century* magazine. Albert Barnes also spoke, about his collection of African art. Fauset did speak, but so did Walter White, whose novel *Fire in the Flint* had recently been accepted for publication; Countee Cullen and Gwendolyn Bennett read poems. Montgomery Gregory, the chair of the drama department at Howard University, and

the poet Georgia Douglas Johnson were also recognized. Fauset ended up feeling slighted because she and her book had not received more attention.

Charles Johnson, as editor of *Opportunity* magazine, was already familiar with these writers' work, and he clearly hoped that the dinner would encourage white publishers and editors to be more welcoming of this material. That seems to have been the result. Frederick Allen, the editor of *Harper's* magazine, read Countee Cullen's poems at the dinner and promptly asked to publish them. More important, immediately after the dinner Paul Kellogg, the editor of *Survey Graphic* magazine, began plans for a special issue on Harlem. Locke, who served as master of ceremonies for the dinner, became the editor of that issue, which was published in March 1925. It proved remarkably popular, and Locke expanded its contents into the anthology *The New Negro*. The Civic Club dinner, then, was the event that led to one of the most important books of the Harlem Renaissance.

The optimism of the event and the enthusiasm of the participants for the work of African American writers contributed to the energy of the Harlem Renaissance. Furthermore, a number of the speakers articulated points that became themes of the movement. Many of them offered suggestions to the young writers or made arguments about how their work should be understood. Locke, for example, argued that the quality and content of the new literature might spark reappraisals of African Americans; Liveright encouraged writers to provide well-rounded portraits of the race; White heralded the passing of stereotypes of African Americans; and Gregory emphasized the potential for African Americans in drama. Van Doren's comments seem to have been particularly well received, for they were reprinted—along with an account of the evening and a partial list of guests—in *Opportunity's* May 1924 issue. Van Doren praised the potential of young writers and their work, asserting that they were contributing important characteristics to American literature: emotional power, as well as “color, music, gusto, the free expression of gay or desperate moods.” He also offered advice to young writers, encouraging them to strike a balance between rage and complacency, passion and humor. He acknowledged that black writers had to continue to be “propagandists,” but he also argued that their work must rise above the limits of propaganda.

Reprinting Van Doren's comments in *Opportunity* brought them to a wider audience. His comments

are also echoed by arguments made and advice given elsewhere by other participants in the Harlem Renaissance. His tendency to emphasize the emotional characteristics of African American literature runs through a good deal of the literary criticism of the period—but so, too, does his argument that African Americans were making important contributions to American culture. Other writers and editors also offered advice to aspiring writers and artists. Du Bois and Charles Johnson, for example, laid out artistic criteria each year as they encouraged writers and artists to submit work to the annual contests sponsored by *Crisis* and *Opportunity*.

Charles Johnson also continued the tradition of the Civic Club dinner with increasingly elaborate events to celebrate the work of *Opportunity's* contest winners in 1925, 1926, and 1927. He used both black and white writers and editors as judges for the contests. The judging and celebrations, then, followed the pattern established for the Civic Club dinner of bringing black and white Americans together, in the interest of advancing African American literature and arts. The Civic Club dinner, in short, is one event that reveals many of the issues, criteria, and strategies that characterized the work of the following years.

ANNE CARROLL

See also Barnes, Albert C.; Bennett, Gwendolyn; *Crisis*, *The: Literary Prizes*; Cullen, Countee; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Johnson, Georgia Douglas; Johnson, James Weldon; Kellogg, Paul U.; Liveright, Horace; Locke, Alain; *New Negro, The*; *Opportunity Literary Contests*; *Survey Graphic*; Van Doren, Carl; White, Walter

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Civil Rights and Law

The Harlem Renaissance coincided with the push among blacks, and sympathetic whites, to reverse the downward spiral of civil rights that had been taking place since the end of Reconstruction. Civil rights during the renaissance must be understood in the context of the preceding decades.

From Reconstruction to the Renaissance

The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1875 marked the high point of the legal protection of black people's rights until the 1960s. Between 1875 and 1915, the rights of African Americans, at the national level, steadily declined. The Harlem Renaissance would coincide with new initiatives in civil rights but would come after four decades of backtracking at the national level. With a few exceptions, blacks lost case after case in the U.S. Supreme Court during this period.

In *United States v. Reese* (1876), the Supreme Court refused to allow the prosecution of whites who prevented blacks from voting, and in so doing struck down a major portion of the Enforcement Act of 1870, which had been designed to protect the right of blacks to vote. Later that term the Court refused to allow the prosecution of whites who had murdered blacks in Louisiana, in what is known as the "Colfax massacre." This case ended any hope that the Court would uphold the Enforcement Act and other statutes designed to protect blacks from violence by whites. Two years later, in *Hull v. DeCuir* (1878), the Court struck down a Louisiana statute that had required integration in steamboats, trains, and other common carriers passing through the state. The Court found that these regulations promoting integration violated the federal commerce power. Ironically, of course, less than

twenty years later, in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the Court would find that state regulations requiring segregation did not violate the commerce clause.

In a series of cases involving blacks and juries the courts held, in *Strauder v. West Virginia* (1880), that states could not specifically prohibit blacks from serving on juries. In *Neal v. Delaware* (1881), the Supreme Court further held that the states could not indirectly prohibit blacks from serving on juries by tying jury service to some other right that was denied to blacks. However, these rare victories were undercut by the decision in *Virginia v. Rives* (1880). Here the court refused to interfere in the prosecution of two black teenagers for murder, even though no blacks had ever served on grand or petit juries in the county.

Perhaps the worst year for blacks' civil rights was 1883. In January, the Supreme Court held in *United States v. Harris* (1883) that the federal government had no jurisdiction to prosecute members of a white mob who had broken into a jail and attacked three black prisoners, murdering one of them. A few days later, in *Pace v. Alabama* (1883), the Court upheld a state prosecution of a black man for marrying a white woman, on the theory that the law punished blacks and whites equally for the crime of interracial marriage. Later that fall, in *The Civil Rights Cases* (1883), the Supreme Court struck down the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which had been designed to give blacks equal access to public accommodations such as hotels, restaurants, and theaters. The Court concluded that the Fourteenth Amendment was applicable only to "state action," and thus private individuals were free to discriminate if they wished to. In a bitter dissent Justice John Marshall Harlan noted that the business involved in the case were all state-regulated and were "affected with a public interest," and thus there was a great deal of "state action" if the Court chose to see it.

By the mid-1890s, blacks faced discrimination in almost every aspect of life. More than 90 percent of all African Americans lived in the fifteen former slave states, where segregation had become a way of life. Lynching was common enough so that all blacks feared the possibility. More than 500 blacks were lynched in the 1880s, and more than 1,000 in the 1890s. Blacks voted in substantial numbers through the 1880s, but in the two decades between 1890 and 1910 they were effectively disenfranchised in most of the South. Between 1890 and 1892, the number of black voters in Mississippi declined from more than 190,000 to about 8,000. In 1898, whites rioted in Wilmington,

North Carolina, undermining the political power base of black voters in that state. Legally elected black officials in that city were forced to flee their homes and resign their positions. In 1906, bloody riots in Atlanta preceded the virtual complete disenfranchisement of blacks in Georgia. Meanwhile, in 1896, the Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson* held that state laws requiring segregation did not violate the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment as long as the separate facilities were “equal.” The age of Jim Crow not only had arrived but had been sanctified by the nation’s highest court.

Between 1890 and 1910, about 200,000 blacks fled the impoverished South looking for better jobs. They also left the South because it was increasingly repressive and dangerous. Tied to economic opportunity was the chance that their children would have a better education in the North. But this migration was tiny, as some 10 million more blacks—just under 90 percent of the nation’s African American population—remained segregated, brutalized, and mostly impoverished in the South.

Those few blacks who made it to the North did not find nirvana but did find somewhat better conditions. In the 1880s, most of the northeastern states, including New York, passed civil rights laws that at least on their face prohibited racial discrimination in many aspects of life. Except in a few places schools were not formally segregated. In most of the North segregated schools resulted from housing patterns, but in an age before massive ghettoization, many blacks in the North lived near whites and attended schools with them. And in the period before World War I, even where the schools were formally segregated in the North, they were a vast improvement over the South, where often there were no high schools at all for blacks. In 1897, for example, the city of Augusta, Georgia, simply closed its only black high school, claiming that it could not afford the luxury of providing such advanced education for blacks. In *Cumming v. Richmond County Board of Education* (1899), the Supreme Court refused to intervene on behalf of black parents in that city. Indeed, even where private citizens wanted to provide education for southern blacks, they faced an uphill battle. Berea College, in Kentucky, was integrated after the Civil War. But in 1904, the Kentucky legislature prohibited integrated education, and in *Berea College v. Kentucky* (1908), the Supreme Court upheld the state law. During this period the Supreme Court usually protected private property from state legislation, but when it

came to the rights of blacks, the Court had no problem allowing the state to impose its racial theories on a private college.

Changing Civil Rights: 1915–1937

In 1909, black and white advocates of civil rights organized the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to fight segregation and discrimination. The organization was led by a new generation of black intellectuals and activists, most notably W. E. B. Du Bois and Ida B. Wells; white reformers, such as the socialist William English Walling and Mary White Ovington; and establishment whites with ties to the abolitionist movement. These included Oswald Garrison Villard, the grandson of William Lloyd Garrison, and Moorfield Storey, a leading attorney and former president of the American Bar Association, who had once been the secretary to Senator Charles Sumner, the author of the Civil Rights Act of 1875. The NAACP investigated lynching and lobbied—though unsuccessfully—for federal antilynching legislation. The organization also initiated legal action on a variety of fronts, with Storey acting as legal counsel.

The first success came in a voting rights case from Oklahoma. In 1910, Oklahoma adopted a literacy test for voters, but under a “grandfather clause” the law exempted from the test anyone who would have been able to vote in 1867, the year before the Fourteenth Amendment was adopted. This meant that whites did not have to take the literacy test, because any white man who had been an adult in 1867 would have been able to vote; but because blacks could not vote in 1867, they had to take the test. Black voters in Oklahoma brought suit, and in 1912, President William Howard Taft instructed the Department of Justice to intervene. When the case reached the Supreme Court, as *Guinn v. United States* (1915), Moorfield Storey argued on behalf of the NAACP, but in a huge victory for the civil rights organization, the main argument was made by Solicitor General John W. Davis. The Court unanimously struck down the Oklahoma statute as violating the civil rights of blacks. For the first time in living memory civil rights advocates had won a case in the U.S. Supreme Court.

Two years later, in *Buchanan v. Warley*, Storey persuaded the Supreme Court to strike down a Kentucky law prohibiting blacks from buying houses on streets that had a majority of white residents, and also prohibiting whites from buying houses on streets that

had a majority of black residents. The goal of the statute was to gradually create fully segregated neighborhoods. The Court rejected the idea that this was “separate but equal” under the precedent in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, and instead saw it as an unconstitutional infringement on the right of property owners to sell their property to whomever they wished. This was the first time that the Court had struck down a law mandating racial segregation. But what the state could not do, private parties could do. In *Corrigan v. Buckley* (1926), the Court upheld a restriction in deeds that prohibited the sale of land to blacks. In one area of Washington, D.C., some thirty parcels of land had restrictive covenants, prohibiting anyone in the area from selling land to blacks for twenty-one years. When Corrigan sold her house to a black, Buckley sued under the covenants, which he claimed were contracts binding on all landowners in the area. The Court rejected arguments that the covenants violated the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments, and as it had in the *Civil Rights Cases*, concluded that private discrimination was constitutionally permissible.

In *Nixon v. Herndon* (1927), the Supreme Court struck down a Texas law that prohibited blacks from voting in primary elections. Because at the time winners of the Democratic primary were virtually assured of winning the state offices they sought, the “white primary” effectively barred blacks from meaningful political participation in the state. Texas responded by passing legislation allowing the parties to set their own rules for participation in the primary, and not surprisingly, the Democratic Party barred blacks. In *Nixon v. Condon* (1932), the Supreme Court struck down this scheme, noting that the state could not delegate to the party what it could not do itself. Texas then withdrew entirely from the process of running primary elections and left the parties free to choose candidates however they wished. In *Grovey v. Townsend* (1935), the Court concluded that the parties were “private” and that no “state action” was involved. Thus once again the primary became an all-white affair. Finally, in *Smith v. Allwright* (1944), the Court ruled that the parties were not “private” for purposes of running primaries, and that any discrimination in voting was unconstitutional.

Civil rights were also tied to criminal justice. In *Moore v. Dempsey* (1923), Storey and the NAACP persuaded the Supreme Court to reverse the convictions of blacks charged with murder for defending themselves during a race riot in Arkansas in 1919. In 1925, the NAACP teamed up with Clarence Darrow and

Arthur Garfield Hayes to successfully defend Ossian Sweet, a black physician charged with murder after he shot at a mob that attacked his home in Detroit, Michigan. These cases gave blacks some sense of fair justice. In the famous Scottsboro case, nine black boys were accused of raping two white girls. The story was entirely fabricated—there had been no rape or even consensual sex between the black youths and the two girls. But the accusations led to trials and convictions for all the defendants. In *Powell v. Alabama* (1932), the Supreme Court reversed a conviction in the case on the ground that the defendant was not properly represented by counsel. In *Norris v. Alabama* (1935), the Court reversed another conviction because no blacks had ever been in the jury pool in the county where the trial took place. These cases were brought to the Court by the International Labor Defense (ILD), which was affiliated with the Communist Party. The *Norris* case was a victory for civil rights because a unanimous court recognized that de facto discrimination—simply not putting blacks in the jury pool—violated the Fourteenth Amendment as much as a statute banning blacks from juries. After both cases the defendants were retried and convicted; officials in Alabama put blacks in the jury pool, but then never called them. Ultimately, however, all the defendants either were pardoned or escaped to the North, where they remained free. In *Brown v. Mississippi* (1936), the Court overturned the conviction of blacks based on confessions they made after they had been tortured and threatened with being lynched. This was another small step in the recognition that civil rights should be tied to a fair administration of justice.

During the 1920s and 1930s, there were no successful civil right initiatives at the national level. Antilynching legislation regularly died in committees or with the threat of filibusters in the Senate. Even without legislation during this period, however, the number of actual lynchings began to decline. The investigations of lynching by the NAACP put some public pressure on communities to try to avoid it. The fact that there was no lynching after the alleged rapes in the Scottsboro incident suggests that the NAACP and other civil rights organizations had won a cultural, if not a legal, victory in this area. However, a spate of race riots during and after World War I in the North and the South reminded blacks and their white allies that race and racial discrimination were not solely a southern problem. Hundreds of blacks died across the country in riots in Chicago, East St. Louis, Knoxville, Omaha, Houston, and Tulsa. Justice was rarely served in the

aftermath of these attacks on black communities. Perhaps the best blacks could hope for was what happened after the riots in Elaine (Arkansas) and Tulsa (Oklahoma). In Arkansas, twelve blacks were sentenced to death and more than sixty to prison terms, but the convictions were all reversed after the decision in *Moore v. Dempsey* (1923). After the riot in Tulsa, the city attempted to use new zoning regulations to prevent blacks from rebuilding on the land they owned in the burned-out North side of the city. A local attorney, Buck C. Franklin, prevented this by convincing a trial court that it would effectively take property away without just compensation. During World War II the executive branch would initiate some fair employment practices as executive orders, but by and large, the era was one that offered little for blacks at the national level. The victories in the Supreme Court pointed toward the future but did little at the time except offer hope to blacks struggling against legalized inequality.

Illustrative of this is *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada* (1938). Lloyd Gaines, a black citizen of Missouri, applied to attend law school at the University of Missouri. The state offered to pay his tuition at state law schools in neighboring Illinois or Iowa, which were not segregated, but Gaines insisted on his right to attend a state-supported law school in his home state. The Supreme Court agreed and ordered Missouri to admit Gaines. However, Gaines disappeared shortly after the decision and was never found. Some scholars believe he was murdered by the Ku Klux Klan or other white terrorists; others suggest that he was too afraid to attend the law school and simply moved out of state. In the 1950s, this precedent would help lead to the desegregation of southern graduate and professional schools, but in the age of the Harlem Renaissance, it did little to change the circumstances of blacks living in the South.

Black leaders and organizations never ceased their demands for equal rights, even in the face of so few victories. A. Philip Randolph used the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters—the only black-dominated union in the country—to push for greater rights and to threaten a mass march on Washington, D.C., in the 1930s and early 1940s. The Urban League (unlike the NAACP) did not have a litigation arm but nevertheless pushed for equality. The Socialist Party and the Communist Party also agitated for civil rights, and although these organizations were unsuccessful at the polls, they helped keep the issue on the table.

At the state level, particularly in the North, there were some more substantive victories. After 1915, blacks began to exert significant political power. In

1915, Oscar De Priest was elected to the board of aldermen in Chicago, and in 1928, he became the first black Congressman in the North. In 1934, he was succeeded by Arthur Mitchell. Similarly, in New York, Charles Roberts was elected to the board of aldermen in 1919. In 1941, Adam Clayton Powell Jr. began his long career with a seat on the New York City council, and three years later he went to Congress. Thus in the North voting rights and civil rights began to have a substantive meaning. By the end of the Harlem Renaissance, blacks held office in Ohio, Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania, and other northeastern and midwestern states. Blacks in these states fought for fair housing laws and other antidiscrimination laws. In 1935, for example, Assemblyman James E. Stephens, the only black in the New York state legislature, successfully sponsored a bill to prohibit any “life insurance corporation doing business within” New York state from making “any distinction or discrimination between white persons and colored persons, wholly or partially of African descent, as to the premiums or rates charged for policies” and further prohibited “a greater premium from such colored persons.” Meanwhile, some blacks in Harlem and elsewhere in the North took advantage of state laws to attend public colleges and universities and participate in professional and civil life. By the eve of World War II, a significant number of blacks in the North had obtained education and skills to lead the postwar civil rights movement. The NAACP and its powerful Legal Defense and Educational division—which would successfully challenge the legality of racial segregation after World War II—had headquarters in New York City throughout this period.

PAUL FINKELMAN

See also Antilynching Crusade; Barnett, Ida B. Wells; Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; Communist Party; De Priest, Oscar; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Great Migration; Great Migration and the Harlem Renaissance; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; National Urban League; Ovington, Mary White; Riots: 1–Overview; Riots: 3–Tulsa; Scottsboro; Villard, Oswald Garrison; *other specific individuals*

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Clef Club

The Clef Club was an organization dedicated to presenting concerts of music featuring African American performers and composers in a disciplined manner; it was most active between 1910 and the late 1920s.

The Clef Club evolved from informal meetings at the Marshall Hotel, a gathering place on West 53rd Street for musicians of the ragtime era. The club held its first meeting on 11 April 1910, gave its first concert on 11 May, and was incorporated on 21 June. Its first president, music director, and guiding light was the bandmaster James Reese Europe. Other musical luminaries connected with the club at its inception included the bandleader Dan Kildare, vice president; the composer William H. Tyers, assistant music director; the show composer Henry S. Creamer; and the bandleader and impresario C. Arthur (“Happy”) Rhone. The composer Will Marion Cook was soon named second assistant conductor. At the initial concert, the songwriter Joe Jordan made the biggest impression, conducting his “That Teasing Rag.”

At an early gala concert at Harlem’s Manhattan Casino (20 October 1910), Europe led an orchestra of about one hundred musicians, most playing plucked string instruments. These included mandolins and banjos, plus hybrid instruments that were once common but are no longer in use today, such as bandolins (banjo-mandolins) and harp-guitars. There were also seven violins, nine cellos, and two basses. Three percussionists played trap sets and timpani. Of thirty-three pianists

then listed on the roster of the Clef Club, eleven played, conducted, and entertained on this program, sometimes en masse. Several were prominent composers who had works on the program, including Creamer, Tyers, Ford Dabney, and Al Johns. The veteran minstrel Sam Lucas was on the entertainment committee for this concert, which was followed by a dance. The concert itself, which lasted three hours, was broken up into segments conducted by different composer-performers, interspersed with specialty acts. This pattern was followed for a number of later events of the Clef Club.

Old-fashioned minstrel numbers were an important component of the Clef Club’s early concerts but were definitively dropped late in 1911, in favor of a more up-to-date cabaret and show repertoire. The performances also included light classics, waltzes, marches, and some ragtime. The instrumentation of the orchestra evolved during its first years under Europe’s direction: Flutes, clarinets, and a pipe organ were added in 1911, and a brass section was added by the end of that year.

The Clef Club reached its apogee with a concert at Carnegie Hall on 2 May 1912, the first event of its kind held there. This concert was a benefit for the Music Settlement School for Colored People in Harlem; it had been organized by Europe with the white musician David Mannes and was enormously successful, raising almost \$5,000. A second concert was held at Carnegie Hall on 12 February 1913. This time, spirituals were added to the program, in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. The biggest hit of both concerts was Cook’s lovely song “Swing Along.” In November 1913, the entire 125-man orchestra went on an extensive tour of the East Coast.

Remarkably, fewer than a quarter of the Clef Club’s musicians were able to read music. Instead, in rehearsals small groups would form, each around a reading musician as a nucleus, with the others catching the tune from him. Some players improvised their own approximations of the written melody. This gave the Clef Club Orchestra a unique sound, synchronized but uncommonly rich in texture.

At the end of 1913, Europe had a falling-out with some other officials of the Clef Club and left to found new organizations. Other luminaries of the Clef Club, including Ford Dabney and Will Tyers, went with Europe to found the Tempo Club. These men soon dominated social dance music in the New York area—particularly Europe, through his association with the dance team of Vernon and Irene Castle. The craze for

black musicians in this era benefited the Clef Club long after Europe's departure. Nevertheless, he was asked to resume leadership when he returned to New York from France in 1919—now as bandleader of the 369th New York Regiment, the "Harlem Hellfighters"—but he declined.

Following Europe's departure, the Clef Club was led at various times by most of the prominent African American musicians of the day. Europe was initially succeeded as president by Dan Kildare, who in turn was forced out in March 1915, to be succeeded by J. Wesley ("Deacon") Johnson. The songwriter J. Tim Brymn took charge of the club's orchestra in 1914. Will Marion Cook was briefly the conductor of its orchestra and chorus in 1918, but he quit before a planned tour. On 22 April 1918, the Clef Club presented the debut of the contralto Marian Anderson at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia. Also in 1918, a Clef Club orchestra, organized by Cook and renamed the New York Syncopated Orchestra, toured the United States. In 1919, Cook went to London with this band, where they met with great acclaim. In February 1919, a gala honoring the return of the 369th Regiment featured three guest conductors: Europe, W. C. Handy, and Lieutenant Eugene Mikell. Lieutenant Tim Brymn was briefly conductor in 1919; later in that year E. Gilbert Anderson was conductor. In the early 1920s, the composer Will Tyers took the Clef Club's musicians on vaudeville tours. During the same period Eugene Mikell—who, like Europe and Tim Brymn, had been a respected bandmaster in World War I—occasionally conducted Clef Club orchestras.

In the 1920s, the Clef Club was a more loosely organized outfit, with frequent shifts in its leadership and personnel. Over the years its presidents included S. S. Weeks, Alexander Fenner, Sam Patterson, and Aubrey Brooks. Under the leadership of its third president, Deacon Johnson, it became more like an ordinary booking agency for black entertainers. Johnson was the most important figure in the club's fortunes in the 1920s; by 1927, his Apex Musical Bureau was the parent body and controlling factor in the Clef Club. For a time the Apex Bureau was headed by the ragtime pianist Hughie Woolford. In 1927, Deacon Johnson was forced out as head of the Clef Club—an awkward situation, because he still controlled such named entities as the Clef Club Singers and Players.

As the jazz age evolved, the Clef Club's associations with earlier styles made it less relevant to the more forward-looking musicians in Harlem. Nevertheless, it

continued to attract the best young artists of the 1920s, including the bass-baritone Paul Robeson. The noted baritone Jules Bledsoe appeared with a small Clef Club unit in upstate New York at the end of 1925. Fletcher Henderson and his Roseland Orchestra appeared at the club's sixteenth-anniversary reception in 1926. The violinist Allie Ross conducted the club's string orchestra at a memorial service for Florence Mills in 1927.

Although the Clef Club was already in decline in the late 1920s, by then it owned its headquarters at 137 West 53rd Street. This ensured its continued existence for another three decades. Eventually, however, the building had to be sold, and the last fifteen years of the Clef Club's decline were spent at 334 West 53rd Street. The club finally folded in 1957.

Although the Clef Club as an organization never moved its headquarters to Harlem from the older black district of west midtown, as a musical institution it was of the utmost importance in the years leading up to the Harlem Renaissance.

ELLIOTT S. HURWITT

See also Bledsoe, Jules; Cook, Will Marion; Europe, James Reese; Henderson, Fletcher; Jordan, Joe; Manhattan Casino; Music; Music: Bands and Orchestras; Robeson, Paul

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Clough, Inez

The singer and actress Inez Clough joined John W. Isham's *Oriental America* company in 1896 and toured with the show in the United States. In April 1897, Clough and the company sailed for Great Britain to participate in Queen Victoria's jubilee; over the next twelve months, they performed in many of

Clough, Inez

the cities and towns of the British Midlands, in Scotland and Wales, and on the Isle of Man. When the company disbanded in the spring of 1898, Clough settled in London; as a solo act, she was seen in all the major British music halls. In addition to those appearances, she appeared in English pantomimes, including *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Dick Whittington*, and *Robinson Crusoe*.

In 1902, Clough returned to New York, where she joined the Williams and Walker company. She appeared with the troupe in *In Dahomey* (1902–1904), *Abyssinia* (1906–1907), *Bandanna Land* (1908–1909), and *Mr. Lode of Koal* (1909). Clough also was a member of the Cole and Johnson Brothers company for *The Shoo-Fly Regiment* in 1907. During this time, she also appeared in concerts in New York, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and other eastern cities. In 1913, Clough became a charter member of the original Lafayette Players in Harlem. She appeared in many of their productions, both dramatic and musical. In 1922, she joined a road company of *Shuffle Along*; two years later, she appeared in *The Chocolate Dandies* on Broadway. In 1925, she became a member of Ida Anderson's company of players, which presented dramatic plays at the Lincoln Theater in Harlem for ten weeks. Clough retired from show business in the late 1920s.

Biography

Inez Clough was born in the 1860s or 1870s, probably in Massachusetts, where she was given voice and piano lessons. It is possible that she studied voice in Europe during the late 1880s. She lived in London from 1898 until 1902, when she returned to New York and joined the Williams and Walker company. She also appeared in concerts, was one of the original members of the Lafayette Players, and performed in dramas at the Lincoln Theater. Clough died in December 1933.

JOHN GRAZIANO

See also *Chocolate Dandies*, *The Lafayette Players*; *Lincoln Theater*; *Shuffle Along*; *Singers*

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Cohen, Octavus Roy

Octavus Roy Cohen was a journalist, lawyer, novelist, short-story writer, and script writer for radio and film. He wrote more than fifty novels and collections of short stories published originally in the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Red Book*, and *Colliers*, among other magazines. He received writing credits for more than fifteen films and several radio programs, including *Amos 'n' Andy*. Cohen was also a playwright, best known for *Come Seven*, starring Earle Foxe, who in seventy-two performances brought the character Florian Slappey to life on Broadway in 1920. Slappey, a “sepia gentleman,” leaves Alabama to make his mark in Harlem; sartorially elegant, the “Beau Brummell” of Birmingham, he survives humorous adventures in Birmingham and then in Harlem.

Cohen's stories—in which Slappey is often featured—demonstrate his handling of southern black dialect and chronicle the fast-paced Harlem night scene in the 1920s and 1930s, with its con men, rent parties, fancy women, and just plain decent folk. *Highly Colored* (1920), *Bigger and Blacker* (1925), *Florian Slappey Goes Abroad* (1928), *Lilies of the Alley* (1931), and *Florian Slappey* (1938) record Slappey's major experiences.

Epic Peters Pullman Porter (1930) is a collection of short stories exploring the comic misadventures of another character, a train car porter on the Birmingham to New York run. The stories about Epic Peters are told with dialect humor highlighting class, race, and the personal relationships an African American sleeping car porter had with train officials, fellow porters, and whites in the 1920s. *Carbon Copies* (1932), a collection of short stories set in Birmingham, features the lawyer Evans Chew, “attorney at law and orator extraordinary,” and his comic interactions with Slappey and Peters, among other denizens of Darktown. These caricatures reflect an ethnic humor common during the period but considered offensive today.

Among Cohen's work with black characters is a series of short films produced by Christy Studios in Hollywood in 1929: *Melancholy Dame*, *Oft in the Silly Night*, *The Lady Fare*, *Music Hath Harms*, and *The Framing of the Shrew*. These films, which had a black cast, were adapted from Cohen's short stories and often starred

Spencer Williams, who also cowrote many of the scripts. The films are characterized by broad satire and stereotyped, often uncouth figures who are meant to portray African American life.

Cohen's "rogue school" mystery fiction is marked by the creation of the detective Jim Hanvey, a white "good ol' boy," who constantly plays with a gold toothpick worn on a chain around his neck and who smokes pungent, cheap little black cigars. Hanvey's ill-kept raiment and slovenly manner conceal his shrewd intelligence. Hanvey made his first appearance in the *Saturday Evening Post*, and many of these stories were collected and published: *Jim Hanvey, Detective* (1923), *Detours* (1927), and *Scrambled Yeggs* (1934). Novels featuring Hanley include *The May Day Mystery* (1929), *The Backstage Mystery* (1930), and *Star of the Earth* (1932). *The Townsend Murder Mystery* (1933) is the dialogue of a radio serial about Hanvey, essentially as broadcast on NBC, published in book form.

Cohen's hard-boiled detective fiction, exploring the tawdry underside of the South, New York, and California, includes a number of novels: *There's Always Time to Die* (also published as *I Love You Again*, 1937), *Romance in Crimson* (also published as *Murder in Season*, 1940), *Strange Honeymoon* (1939), *More Beautiful Than Murder* (1948), *A Bullet for My Love* (1950), and *Love Can Be Dangerous* (also published as: *The Intruder*, 1955). These novels rely on traditional techniques of the detective story to create a sense of realism, especially concerning civic corruption, love triangles, the nightclub crowd, and murder.

Biography

Octavus Roy Cohen, a journalist, lawyer, and writer, was born 26 June 1891 of Jewish parents in Charleston, South Carolina. He graduated in 1911 from Clemson College; he married Inez Lopez on 6 October 1914 in Bessemer, Alabama. Cohen worked as a newspaperman—for the *Birmingham Ledger* and the *Charleston News and Courier* in the south, and for the *Bayonne Times* and the *Newark Morning Star* in New Jersey—before he was admitted to the bar in South Carolina in 1913. He abandoned the practice of law in 1915 to devote himself to writing. As a writer, he produced some fifty novels and collections of short stories and worked on films and in radio. He was also a playwright; his Broadway play *Come Seven* (1920) was notable for its presentation of his

character Florian Slappey. Cohen died in Los Angeles on 6 January 1959.

JAMES E. REIBMAN

See also Amos 'n' Andy

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Cole, Bob

Although Bob Cole (Robert Allen Cole) died before the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance, many of his innovations paved the way for the renaissance with regard to theater. According to his cocreator, long-time partner, and friend James Weldon Johnson, "Bob was one of the most talented and versatile Negroes ever connected with the stage. He could write a play, stage it, and play a part." Cole was committed to artistic excellence and aimed to prove that blacks were capable of competing with whites in artistic creation.

Cole, a lyricist, songwriter, vaudeville entertainer, playwright, director, producer, and stage manager, was involved in a number of historical "firsts" related to the stage. As part of Sam T. Jack's *Creole Show*, Cole took part in the first black show to break from the minstrel tradition of an all-male cast. Cole served as the show's writer and stage manager and as a member of the cast. In 1894, Cole organized the first all-black stock company, the All-Star Stock Company. In 1898, Cole and Billy Johnson's show *A Trip to Coontown* opened. This was the first all-black musical comedy: It was written, performed, administrated, and owned by blacks. For this reason, and as a very early example of the genre, it changed the nature of theater.

Cole's first big hits were products of his partnership with William "Billy" Johnson. After the success of *At Jolly Coon-ey Island*, for which they received no additional remuneration from the management, Cole and Johnson set out to use an all-black troupe and management for their next show. The result, *A Trip to Coontown*, was a turning point for Cole. After the tour of this show, Cole departed from the popular coon songs and tried to elevate the image and creativity of blacks through song lyrics. He and Johnson went their separate ways, but Cole entered a successful partnership with the brothers James Weldon Johnson and John Rosamond Johnson (who were not related Billy Johnson) that would last the remainder of his life. Under the name Cole and Johnson and later Cole and Johnson Brothers, the partnership introduced elegance and an air of sophistication to the personae of black artists, as well as to the stage. Cole and John Rosamond Johnson often traveled as a performing duo; they wore fine suits and presented a diverse repertoire, including German selections and many originals. The partnership amassed more than 150 songs composed for both blacks and whites.

Cole continued to be a trailblazer in theater as he and John Rosamond Johnson introduced a love scene in the stage show *The Shoo-Fly Regiment* (1905). Before this, there were no romantic scenes involving blacks onstage. The team's next success, *The Red Moon*, used the talented Joe Jordan, and many observers at the time considered it the best black show ever.

Cole committed himself to self-empowerment and the uplift of the black race; but episodes of mental illness forced him to retire from the stage in 1910. He died in 1911.

Biography

Robert Allen "Bob" Cole Jr. was born 1 July 1868 in Athens, Georgia. He studied piano, banjo, guitar, and cello as a child and attended public schools in Atlanta. Cole is often said to have studied at Atlanta University, but research by Thomas Riis (1985) has revealed that although Cole was an employee of the university, he never enrolled there. Cole was the organizer and manager of the All-Star Stock Company, 1894; a coorganizer of the Colored Actors Beneficial Association, 1903; and a founding member of Frogs, Inc., 1908. Cole died in New York City 2 August 1911.

EMMETT G. PRICE III

See also Johnson, James Weldon; Johnson, John Rosamond; Jordan, Joe; Musical Theater

Selected Songs

"Colored Aristocracy." 1896.

"Dem Golden Clouds." 1896.

"4-11-44." 1897. (Composed with William "Billy" Johnson.)

"My Castle on the Nile." 1901. (Composed with J. Rosamond Johnson.)

"Oh, Didn't He Ramble?" 1902. (Under the pseudonym Will Handy.)

"Under the Bamboo Tree." 1902.

The Evolution of Ragtime: A Musical Suite of Six Songs Tracing and Illustrating Negro Music. New York: Edward B. Marks, 1903. (Composed with J. Rosamond Johnson.)

Musical Theater

At Jolly Coon-ey Island: A Merry Musical Farce. 1896-1897. (Written and produced with William "Billy" Johnson.)

A Trip to Coontown. 1897-1901. (Written and produced with William "Billy" Johnson.)

The Shoo-Fly Regiment. 1905-1907. (Written and produced with J. Rosamond Johnson.)

The Red Moon. 1908-1909. (Written and produced with J. Rosamond Johnson and Joe Jordan.)

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Color

The publication by Harper and Row of *Color*, Countee Cullen's first volume of poetry, in 1925 marked the emergence of one of the most promising young writers of the Harlem Renaissance. The same year that *Color* was published, Cullen—who was then twenty-two—graduated Phi Beta Kappa from New York University and began graduate school at Harvard. At the time, Cullen "was the most celebrated and probably the most famous black writer in America" (Early 1991, 3–4). *Color* was the first volume of poetry by an African American born in the United States to appear under the imprint of a major American publishing house since Paul Laurence Dunbar's success early in the century. Many of the poems in *Color* had previously appeared in African American magazines and in magazines edited by whites; and Cullen—a talented, educated, young author from a prominent family (he was the adopted son of an influential pastor in Harlem)—was showered with awards. *Color* was in all regards a literary event.

After an opening invocation, "To You Who Read My Books," the poems in *Color* are organized in four sections: "Color," which includes the book's most widely anthologized pieces on racial matters; "Epitaphs"; "For Love's Sake," the shortest section; and "Varia"—some of which Cullen would reuse in his later volumes. "Color" begins with the sonnet "Yet Do I Marvel," originally published in *Century*; its concluding couplet is a well-known example of Cullen's pithy writing: "Yet do I marvel at this curious thing:/To

make a poet black and bid him sing!" The poems in "Epitaphs," mostly single quatrains, reflect on death, among other subjects. The eight poems in "For Love's Sake" vary in length but are composed mostly of ballad stanzas, a verse form that Cullen liked. As its title indicates, "Varia" is eclectic in subject and form, although it includes works on many themes that characterize *Color* and Cullen's oeuvre as a whole: race, alienation, sexuality, Christianity, religious faith, suicide, and death.

The section "Color" includes several poems that were printed in the March 1925 issue of *Survey Graphic* and the expanded *New Negro* (which was published less than a year after *Color*). One of these is "Tableau," which describes two boys, one black and one white, walking unself-consciously through a hostile world. This poem counterbalances its vision of interracial camaraderie with the negative attention that the two friends attract. In contrast to the companionship depicted in "Tableau," another poem, "Incident," recounts the effect on the narrator when a white boy hurls a racist epithet at him. "Tableau" and "Incident" use different rhyme patterns, but each consists of three ballad stanzas and has added syllables to effect double rhymes in select trimeters. The concluding stanza of "Incident" has a triple rhyme. Cullen masterfully uses traditional lyric forms whose poetic order suggests a somewhat ironic relationship to the racial world he is describing.

The longest poem in *Color* is "The Shroud of Color," which was first published, to much acclaim, in H. L. Mencken's *American Mercury* in 1924; it is an extended dialogue with God. This poem is followed by "Heritage," which concludes the section "Color" and is considered by many to be Cullen's finest work. *Survey Graphic* and *The New Negro* both printed another version of "Heritage," differing from the poem in *Color* in organization, length, and dedication. The version in *Color*, however, is the standard text. It is twenty-six lines longer than the alternative version and is dedicated to Harold Jackman. This poem turns on the repeated query "What is Africa to me?"—a question that resonated with writers such as Nella Larsen, who used lines from "Heritage" as the epigraph for her novel *Passing* (1929), and W. E. B. Du Bois, who used it as a point of departure in *Dusk of Dawn* (1940).

There has been some scholarly debate over "Heritage," illustrating the uncertainty that surrounds Cullen's legacy. Huggins (1971) considers Cullen's imaginary Africa "romantic and exotic, no more or no less real for him as a black poet than it would have

been for a white one" (81). Davis (1953), on the other hand, describes this Africa as a "means of escape . . . a dream world if you will, of past loveliness," in the face of the actual world of Jim Crow (393). Redding (1939/1988), whose title *To Make a Poet Black* was taken from "Yet Do I Marvel," like Huggins, is unimpressed by Cullen's poems about Africa, concluding that Cullen's "gifts are delicate, better suited to *bons mots*, epigrams, and the delightfully personal love lyrics for which a large circle admire him" (111).

The section "Epitaphs" certainly includes the epigrams that Redding (1939/1988) notes, but it also incorporates Cullen's social commentary. For example, "For a Lady I Know," which appeared in *Poetry* in May 1924, describes a woman who imagines that the racial order of domestic service in the United States is consistent with heaven's design. This section also contains a series of literary tributes to Joseph Conrad, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and John Keats, all of which first appeared in *Harper's*, in February 1925.

"Varia" includes a second piece for Keats, "To John Keats, Poet. At Spring Time," which Cullen uses to reflect on his own relationship to the craft of poetry. Writers are not the only figures honored in Cullen's poetry. For instance, the poem "In Memory of Col. Charles Young," also in "Varia," remembers an African American in World War I who was discharged to prevent his imminent promotion to general.

Color stands out among Cullen's oeuvre and contains many of his most popular poems: for instance, seven of the eight poems in the *Norton Anthology of African American Literature* appeared in *Color*. Still, many critics find in *Color* evidence of the potential that was left unfulfilled in Cullen's later work.

At the time of this writing, *Color* was out of print—as was *My Soul's High Song: The Collected Writings of Countee Cullen, Voice of the Harlem Renaissance*, an anthology edited and with a substantial introduction by Early, which included most but not all of the poems in *Color*. Like its author, *Color* continues to be represented primarily by a handful of widely anthologized poems; the volume remains an underappreciated achievement by one of the most heralded poets of the Harlem Renaissance.

IRA DWORKIN

See also American Mercury; Authors: 5—Poets; Cullen, Countee; Cullen, Frederick Asbury; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Jackman, Harold; Larsen, Nella; Literature: 7—Poetry; New Negro, The; Survey Graphic

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Colored Players Film Corporation

The Colored Players Film Corporation (CPFC), which was organized in Philadelphia in 1926, complicates the issue of racial categorization. It had white founders and a predominantly white staff and technical crew, and its financing was firmly in the hands of white investors. However, it used all-black casts; it competed with the better-known film productions of Oscar Micheaux for the attention of black audiences; and its objective was to produce more "authentic," more uplifting representations of black life and to counter minstrelsy and the debasing stereotypes that were endemic in American culture. Also, during its four years of operation, CPFC produced four films that coincided with a burst of black artistic production

in New York City. Thus, if the criteria for categorizing a company as “black” were social and racial content, along with significant participation by blacks in various phases of the enterprise, CPFC would indeed qualify. However, CPFC might more accurately be described as a vehicle for interracial cooperation in the arts during a period when racial animus and rigid segregation were the norm in the United States.

The white founders of CPFC—David Starkman, Louis Groner, and Roy Calnek—were joined in 1927 by Sherman Dudley, a black businessman who was a former vaudevillian. Dudley is thought to have given the fledgling company a needed infusion of cash. The films CPFC produced were *A Prince of His Race* (1926), *Ten Nights in a Barroom* (1926), *Children of Fate* (1927), and *The Scar of Shame* (1929). Only *Ten Nights in a Barroom* and *The Scar of Shame*, which lists Dudley as producer, still survive. Dudley had a grand vision of a “black Hollywood” that may have been his original motivation in joining CPFC. Nevertheless, in 1975, in an interview with the film historian Thomas Cripps, Lucia Lynn Moses, who starred in *The Scar of Shame*, said that she always took direction “from the two white fellas.” She may have been referring to the director Frank Perugina and the screenwriter David Starkman, who worked together on the project.

Although it was neither written nor directed by blacks, *The Scar of Shame* has been called the most important independent black film of the silent era. In this film, as in the other films by CPFC, the plot involves the aspiring black middle class, with its lofty idealism and its hierarchy of castes based on color. *The Scar of Shame* is the story of an ill-fated marriage between a young composer and a lower-class laundress. The film suggests that the relationship between these lovers is doomed because of class differences. After a series of disastrous events befall the laundress, suicide is her only recourse. The action thus gives rise to several questions. Is the “scar of shame” lower-class origins? Is it dark skin? In the film, lower-class, dark-skinned characters are prone to drunkenness and other moral failings, an idea that most of society accepted at that time. The film therefore conveys a version of racial uplift with a hint of biological determinism.

A Prince of His Race proposes a similar division between good and bad characters, who represent types that will either lift up or tear down the race. The plot involves a man from an upstanding family who is tricked and ultimately disgraced by unscrupulous associates. After a series of episodes, including a love triangle, the story builds to a surprising climax. In *Ten Nights in a*

Barroom, the renowned actor Charles Gilpin plays a man who loses his money to, and whose daughter is killed by, a gangster. Gilpin’s character pursues the perpetrator but during the pursuit undergoes an awakening that leads him to a productive life as a public servant.

With such heavily moralistic melodramas, and also with technically innovative filmmaking, CPFC offered an alternative view of black life, gave black actors an opportunity to stretch their talents, and offered black audiences entertainment that would not make them feel ashamed.

AUDREY THOMAS MCCCLUSKEY

See also Dudley, Sherman H.; Film; Gilpin, Charles; Micheaux, Oscar

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Columbia Phonograph Company

Columbia was founded in Washington, D.C., in 1887 as the American Graphophone Company. The Columbia label, originally a regional subsidiary, began recording African American artists early in the twentieth century. Bert Williams, the leading black entertainer from about 1900 until his death in 1922, made most of his recordings for Columbia (although he and his partner George Walker recorded for Victor at the beginning of the twentieth century); he was featured in Columbia’s promotional materials and the in-house leaflets printed for its salesmen.

As the jazz age dawned, Columbia competed with Victor records, which had the wildly popular white New Orleans quintet, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band; Columbia had let this band slip through its

fingers after waxing the band's first record in January 1917. By mid-1917, during the fad for vaudeville "jazz," Columbia joined a search for other jazz bands to record the frenetic new dance music. This led to a boom for black bands on records. Columbia recorded ten sides by W. C. Handy's Memphis Blues Band (actually a pickup band consisting of Chicagoans) in September 1917. These sold moderately well, as did Columbia's recordings (1918–1920) by Wilbur Sweatman, a "novelty" musician (his tricks included playing three clarinets at once).

With the success of Mamie Smith's recording of "Crazy Blues" for Okeh in 1920, there was a sudden interest in blues records by black women. Columbia made Edith Wilson's first records in 1921, and in 1923, it signed the great Bessie Smith. Smith's recordings sold well; she recorded exclusively for Columbia for a decade. Her popularity was crucial in keeping Columbia solvent during the 1920s, when the advent of broadcast radio sank many smaller record companies. Smith's rival Ethel Waters, the blues and pop singer, recorded successfully for Columbia from 1924 until well into the 1930s. Columbia's other important commercial blues singers in the 1920s included Alberta Hunter, Clara Smith, Edith Wilson, Lena Wilson, Gertrude Saunders, and Monette Moore.

Midway through the 1920s, Columbia acquired the important "race record" label Okeh. Louis Armstrong made some of the most important small-band recordings in jazz history for Okeh, including those of the legendary "Hot Five" and "Hot Seven" (1925–1927) and the extraordinary sessions with the pianist Earl Hines (1928). The fully developed jazz solo mainly began with Armstrong's records from these sessions, such as "West End Blues." Armstrong's mentor King Oliver had already recorded for Okeh in 1923; after becoming Okeh's parent in 1926, Columbia acquired Armstrong's and Oliver's earlier records and many other important recordings. Okeh continued to issue records by black artists, including the Kansas City big band of Bennie Moten, the New Orleans guitarist Lonnie Johnson, and the classic sessions (1928) of the singer Mississippi John Hurt.

Small combos of the 1920s that recorded for the Columbia label itself included Johnny Dunn's Jazz Hounds, the Get Happy Band (including Sidney Bechet), the Gulf Coast Seven, Leroy Tibbs and His Connie's Inn Orchestra, and numerous others. By the end of the 1920s, Columbia was perhaps the leading label of New Orleans jazz, with numerous recordings of Clarence Williams in New York and field recordings of Oscar

"Papa" Celestin and Sam Morgan in New Orleans, in addition to Armstrong's and Oliver's sides on Okeh.

Columbia was also important in recording big bands. Fletcher Henderson, first of the great black orchestra leaders, was with Columbia between 1924 and 1932, when his arrangers included Don Redman and Benny Carter, and his soloists included Louis Armstrong, Coleman Hawkins, and Buster Bailey. Solo pianists on Columbia included Eubie Blake and Fats Waller (more commonly a Victor artist).

Many leading black artists of the big band era recorded for Columbia, the most important being Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington. Other groups Columbia recorded during the 1930s included Harlan Lattimore and His Connie's Inn Orchestra, Claude Hopkins and His Orchestra, Dicky Wells' Shim Shammers, Chick Webb's Savoy Orchestra, and Teddy Wilson and His Orchestra. Columbia also recorded early integrated bands, such as the Benny Goodman Sextet with Lionel Hampton and Charlie Christian.

ELLIOTT S. HURWITT

See also Blues: Women Performers; *individual recording artists*

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Come Along Mandy

Come Along Mandy (1924) was a musical farce and touring show from the collaboration of the brothers Salem Tutt Whitney and J. Homer Tutt and Donald

Heywood. Tutt and Whitney wrote the book and lyrics, and Heywood composed the music. The show played at the famous Lafayette Theater in Harlem from December 1923 until 1924, during a time when vaudeville, musical comedy, and movies were the most popular fare among African American theatergoers in Harlem.

Come Along Mandy is set in Hopeville, Georgia, and centers on a dispute over land between two of the characters, Zack and Sudds (played by Whitney and Tutt, respectively). As these two characters argue, Al LaBabor steals the deeds to the property. A chase ensues, and the title character, Mandy, is invited to join the others in the hunt for the thief. Other characters include Lovey Joe, a peacemaker; and Lucinda and Krispy, detectives on the trail of the thief. The comedy ends with Al LaBabor's capture in New York and the reconciliation of Zack and Sudds.

In an article in *The Messenger* magazine in February 1924, the noted African American theater critic Theophilus Lewis marveled at the presence of brown-skinned women in the chorus of *Come Along Mandy*; most chorus girls in musicals of the time were light-skinned. Lewis considered the first part of the show the most interesting and found the rest repetitious.

Whitney and Tutt were writers, producers, and performers of musical comedies, farces, and sketches. From 1908 to 1923, they managed one of the most successful black touring groups in the United States—the Smart Set Company, also known as the Southern Smart Set Company, the Smarter Set Company, and the Tutt-Whitney Musical Comedy Company. The brothers produced more than thirty musical shows. They included blackface and slapstick in their productions. Whitney was the main writer, and Tutt worked primarily as an actor. Whitney was also a columnist for two newspapers: the *Indianapolis Freeman* and the *Chicago Defender*. Later in his life, he was in the cast of Marc Connelly's play *The Green Pastures*.

Donald Heywood also wrote music for other Tutt-Whitney shows, including *Ginger Snaps* (1929), a Broadway production. He had studied music at Fisk University and had begun his career as a performer. Heywood was also a playwright, but he was most successful as a composer and lyricist, particularly in *Africana* (1927). This production had a long run and starred Ethel Waters. Heywood later wrote for all-black films.

HEATHER MARTIN

See also *Chicago Defender*; *Green Pastures, The*; *Lafayette Theater*; Lewis, Theophilus; *Messenger, The*; *Musical Theater*; Waters, Ethel

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Communist Party

Of the complex political and ideological currents that swirled around the Harlem Renaissance, or New Negro Renaissance, communism—by which is signified the official Communist Party of the Third International—constituted an important body of thought and practice, one that influenced not only the lives of the individuals drawn into its immediate orbit, but also those of countless other workers, activists, intellectuals, writers, and artists.

In the early twentieth century, Harlem had become the magnet for "an impressive group of young African American and West Indian radicals . . . who were enthusiastic about socialism and committed to the struggle for African American liberation" (Kuykendall 2002). In the heady and contentious sociopolitical climate of World War I and postwar era, these "New Negroes" were at the forefront of the sharp debates

about race, class, justice, and the future of blacks in the United States that characterized the public mood of the black community. Many “New Negroes” opposed the United States’ entry into the war, arguing that it was hypocritical to fight abroad for freedoms that blacks were routinely denied at home. They cast a sharp and critical eye on anticolonial struggles in the international arena, taking particular note, for example, of the Irish rebellion. With the triumph of the Russian revolution in 1917, an earlier social and political tradition of socialism in Harlem took on new life and dimensions. The debates among socialists of many stripes over whether or not to support the Russian revolution led to sharp divisions within the Socialist Party and comparable splits among radical “New Negroes.” African American socialists, led by A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, rejected the appeal of the communists and remained with the socialists of the Second International; others, many of them West Indians, gravitated toward the Third International. Out of this politically fluid moment emerged the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB), “the first independent socialist/communist organization composed exclusively of persons of African descent in the United States” (Kuykendall 2002). Organized sometime between 1917 and 1919 by Cyril Briggs, publisher of the magazine *Crusader*, ABB announced itself as a revolutionary secret society for people of African descent, committed to armed self-defense and the “liberation of people of African descent all over the world.” Initially setting its sights on Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), ABB sought to influence the Garveyites toward its own brand of revolutionary black nationalism, but in 1921, the UNIA expelled the ABB for its political extremism. During that same year, the ABB came to public attention in the aftermath of the rioting in Tulsa, Oklahoma, when it claimed to have played a leading role in the defense of Tulsa’s black community. Around this time, also, the ABB established close working relationships with the American Communist Party. By 1925, a number of the leaders of the ABB—Cyril Briggs, Richard B. Moore, Grace Campbell, Frank Crosswaith, and Otto Huiswood, among others—had joined the Communist Party, providing the party with its first leadership cadre from the black Community.

The leadership of the ABB was generally not directly involved with literary or cultural production during the New Negro or Harlem Renaissance, but like many organizations of the period—the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

(NAACP), the National Urban League, and Garveyism—the ABB devoted considerable space to literature and culture in its publication, the *Crusader*. Furthermore, it could claim as one of its own a literary light of the renaissance: Claude McKay, one of the first black writers in the United States to be associated with the Communist Party. The publication of his best-known poem, “If We Must Die,” in the left-wing magazine *Liberator* in July 1919 was a direct response to the racial upheavals of the summer of 1919, effectively capturing the angry, defiant mood of the black community. The poem won the praise of the African American cultural elite as well as the admiration of the Garveyites, and it also gained McKay entrance into the radical bohemian community of Greenwich Village. At the same time, McKay was extending his relationships with other prominent black radicals in Harlem—first developed through his close relationship with a pioneering black socialist and street-corner orator, Hubert H. Harrison—most of whom were associated with the ABB. Like his politically committed friends, McKay played a central role in interpreting the outlook of the Communist Party to the black community, and vice versa. In addition to writing radical poems about American racial injustice, such as “Baptism” and “The White House,” McKay sojourned in England in 1919–1920, writing numerous essays, reviews, and letters for Sylvia Pankhurst’s *Workers’ Dreadnought*—in effect warning his white allies that the revolutionary movement in the United States and abroad was doomed to failure unless it honestly and directly confronted the legacy of racism. McKay’s general outlook during this period seemed to conform to the broad goals of the ABB. After McKay returned to the United States in 1921, he joined the editorial staff of *Liberator*; and when Max Eastman resigned as editor, McKay and Mike Gold—who became known as the cultural commissar of the Communist Party through his editorship of *New Masses* beginning in the late 1920s—were appointed as coeditors. There was personal and political tension between McKay and Gold, exacerbated by McKay’s racial militancy and sharpened by Gold’s alarm when he discovered that McKay was holding meetings with the African Blood Brotherhood and other Harlem radicals at the offices of *Liberator*. McKay resigned as coeditor of *Liberator* in June 1922, but his tension and squabbles with white leftists did not prevent him from traveling to the Soviet Union later that year to attend the Fourth Congress of the Third International; the high point of his journey occurred on 22 November 1922, when he

joined Grigory Yevseyevich Zinoviev, the executive director of the Communist International (Comintern), and other leaders of the party on the platform of the Bolshoi Auditorium to address the congress about racial issues in the United States. McKay remained in the Soviet Union after the conclusion of the Fourth Congress and was treated as a celebrity. He traveled extensively, met and corresponded with Leon Trotsky, and wrote poems and articles for the Soviet press. In his autobiography, he wrote of this experience as a pinnacle in his life. After his visit to the Soviet Union, McKay spent the next decade, from 1923 to 1934, living and working abroad; he returned to the United States during the worst period of the Great Depression. Politically disillusioned, socially and culturally isolated, often poverty-stricken, McKay had become a relentless critic of the American Communist Party, embracing Catholicism before his death in 1948. Nevertheless, the potent fusion of radical political sentiment and traditional poetic forms that constituted the hallmark of McKay's creativity during the period of his most intense political involvement with communism provided an example, a model that was not overlooked by some of his contemporaries during the renaissance.

Twelve years younger than Claude McKay, and more open and experimental in his use of poetic forms, Langston Hughes—by virtue of his travels, temperament, and social outlook—gave strong indications, early in his career, of receptivity to radical politics. Hughes first came to public attention when he won a prize in a literary contest sponsored by *Crisis*, the journal of the NAACP, and his work was published often in its pages, as well as in *Opportunity*, the journal of the National Urban League. However,



James W. Ford (*right*) in 1932, at the time he was nominated as the vice-presidential candidate of the Communist Party, shown with the presidential candidate, William Z. Foster. (© Bettmann/Corbis.)

he sought a venue for his more politically radical poetry in the socialist magazine *The Messenger*, edited by A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, which published early poems such as “Gods,” “Grant Park,” “Prayer for a Winter Night,” “Johannesburg Mines,” “To Certain Intellectuals,” and “Steel Mills.” Hughes would continue to contribute poems to *The Messenger* when his friend Wallace Thurman worked on the staff in 1927. In March and April 1925, Hughes published a number of politically stinging poems in *Workers Monthly*, a communist publication: “Drama for Winter Night (Fifth Avenue),” “God to Hungry Child,” “Rising Waters,” “Poem to a Dead Soldier,” and “Park Benching.” This vein of Hughes’s poetry was so pronounced that when he published his second volume of poems, *Fine Clothes to the Jew*, in 1927, George Schuyler praised him as “the poet of the modern Negro proletariat.” Although Hughes never joined the Communist Party, by late 1931 he had thrown himself wholeheartedly into the struggle to save the Scottsboro Boys, nine young southern black men falsely accused of rape in Alabama and sentenced to death. In 1932, Hughes joined a group of African Americans—among them Louise Thompson, Loren Miller, Henry Lee Moon, and Ted Poston—who traveled to the Soviet Union to make a film called *Black and White* about race relations in the United States. The film project turned into a public relations fiasco, but from that point on Hughes’s work would be firmly rooted in the cultural politics of the Communist Party for the rest of the decade.

Claude McKay and Langston Hughes were the two writers whose political views sometimes converged with the outlook of the Communist Party during the heyday of the 1920s. Others were also attracted to the political left, if not to the party per se. Jean Toomer flirted with socialism early in his career; and the still neglected but highly talented Eric Walrond, whose striking collection of short stories *Tropic Death* reveals a sharply developed class consciousness, routinely contributed to Randolph and Owens’s *Messenger*. As the optimistic mood of the Harlem Renaissance darkened with the onset of the Great Depression in 1929—the stock market crash that, in Langston Hughes’s words, “sent Negroes, white folks, and all rolling down the hill towards the Works Progress Administration”—many of the writers associated with the period began to reassess their cultural and political views. Countee Cullen, the most celebrated poet of the New Negro movement, announced his support for the presidential ticket of the American Communist Party, William Z. Foster and James Ford, in the election of 1932.

Gwendolyn Bennett, who had contributed poetry and short fiction to *Opportunity*, *The Crisis*, and *The Messenger* during the 1920s, became increasingly prominent in communist circles in New York City during the mid-1930s. Sterling Brown, whose poems had been celebrated in communist literary circles since the publication of *Southern Road* in 1932, seemed sympathetic to the party's outlook during the 1930s but never became a member. Most notably, Alain Locke, an architect of the New Negro movement, was clearly affected by the general drift toward the left of many black writers. Throughout the 1930s, Locke's annual review, "Literature of the Negro," written for *Opportunity*, revealed a distinct preference for "proletarian fiction" and literature shaped by social realism. He took an active role in the League of American Writers and the National Negro Congress, and he turned to the *New Masses* as an important venue for his writing.

If the publication of Richard Wright's manifesto "Blueprint for Negro Writing" in 1937 can be seen as signaling the emergence of another generation of "New Negroes," it can also be said that the ideas Wright explored, and the synthesis of black nationalism and Marxism he sought, had their historical antecedents in the encounter between communism and an earlier generation of black activists, intellectuals, and writers. In this encounter with Marxist orthodoxy, African American writers sometimes contested it, sometimes reworked it, and sometimes embraced it; but there is no doubt that, as a significant body of contemporary scholarship makes clear, this encounter played a central role in shaping African American literature, from the Harlem Renaissance until well into the twentieth century.

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See also African Blood Brotherhood; Black and White; Briggs, Cyril; Eastman, Max; Europe and the Harlem Renaissance: 5—Soviet Union; Fine Clothes to the Jew; Harrison, Hubert; Hughes, Langston; Locke, Alain; McKay, Claude; Moore, Richard B.; Owen, Chandler; Randolph, A. Philip; Riots: 2—Red Summer of 1919; Riots: 3—Tulsa, 1921; Thurman, Wallace; Toomer, Jean; Tropic Death; Universal Negro Improvement Association; Walrond, Eric; Workers' Drednought; Wright, Richard; *other specific individuals*

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Community Theater

By the mid-1920s, there were small theaters in New York, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Cleveland, and many other major American cities. The growth of these theaters, which came to be known as the “little theater” movement, can be attributed to a great extent to the larger black community theater that already existed. As Hurston (1994) noted, community theater was not restricted to the makeshift playhouses of this period; it also appeared in the form of the “jook” (a house where men and women could dance, drink, and gamble), on street corners, and in churches. Community theater, therefore, encompasses any public artistic performance; and “little theater” encompasses professional activities—including financing and the creation of infrastructure—emanating from community theater. In other words, “little theater” is not the totality of community theater but can be considered a microcosm of it.

The genealogy of little theater is important because the movement served as an idealized model for the larger community theater. During the Harlem Renaissance, theater was transformed from something that was used to mock African Americans into an endeavor in which African Americans could claim historical agency. Throughout this period, artists, thinkers, and producers tried to transform stories about black people into communal narratives: stories by and for black people. Thus theater became innovative and experimental, not just a form of resistance.

The little theater movement was part of the aesthetics of the Harlem Renaissance, was a model for

communal practice, and helped define the ethos of the “New Negro” by refuting the depictions of blacks as inferior and by exposing the mechanisms that facilitated stereotypical images in minstrelsy. The movement drew attention to the fact that degrading images of black people were a source of pleasure, and to the fact that challenging such images entailed an economic struggle. Drama, unlike prose or poetry, is necessarily experienced in performance before an audience; the little theater movement illuminates the dependence of the “New Negro” ethos not only on voices willing to speak but also on ears willing to listen. This movement shifted black theatrical production from the community to a professional realm in which theater was a commodity as well as an art, and so the movement drew attention to both the product and the modes of production. Each theater company that emerged during this movement had conflicting desires: On the one hand, it wanted to define itself and control its own art; on the other hand, it wanted to attract audiences. To explore the struggle that developed when community theater adopted a public persona, this article will focus on some distinctive movements within little theater, particularly the production of *The Star of Ethiopia* (1913–1923), the Lafayette Players (1914–1928), and the Krigwa Players (1926–1927).

The little theater movement, as the professional component of community theater, suggests the material difficulties underlying the making of the Harlem Renaissance. However, these professional activities within community theater go beyond the widely accepted span of the Harlem Renaissance—from the end of World War I until the beginning of the Great Depression—because community theater includes performances and related activities, leading up to the plays, poems, and novels that usually mark the renaissance. Frequently, the term “Harlem Renaissance” refers to artistic production during the 1920s, but a study of community theater as it relates to the renaissance must consider earlier activities, both professional and nonprofessional, that resulted in the concept of the New Negro as an identity and a community.

The Star of Ethiopia

Accounts of the black little theater movement typically begin in 1912, with the Anita Bush Stock Company, later renamed the Lafayette Players. However, in 1911, W. E. B. Du Bois had already begun work on a pageant, *The Star of Ethiopia*, that would contribute to the new African

American image. This pageant was performed only four times—in New York, 1913; in Washington, D.C., 1915; in Philadelphia, 1916; and in Los Angeles, 1923—but no preceding professional performance had better expressed the ideological desire for self-definition and communal autonomy. In *The Star of Ethiopia*, Du Bois depicts the reality of the black experience in America and the contributions of African Americans to the nation; his vision of community stems from a historical narrative in which the transatlantic slave trade is part of a much longer story of the Negro race.

Du Bois's vision countered the images that then permeated the national imagination, and the stage offered him a perfect medium for conveying it. Although Du Bois praised Bert Williams's and George Walker's accomplishments on Broadway, he himself wanted to present a historical narrative that would transcend limited images such as their performances in *The Two Real Coons*. However, *The Star of Ethiopia* had 350 people in the original cast and a script that covered 10,000 years of history in six scenes; because of the sheer grandeur of the pageant, Du Bois had to cope with unusual material realities. The vastness of the staging focused the spectators' attention on the community as a whole rather than on individual actors, and the production required coordinating a community of performers.

The pageant emerged as an art form that could set American drama apart from other traditions. At the turn of the twentieth century, African Americans were trying to distance themselves from the images of minstrelsy, and American drama was trying to distinguish itself from the English tradition. *The Star of Ethiopia* contributed to both of these goals because its narrative was situated within an American narrative and because it staged and restaged communal negotiations. On 22 October 1913, at the Twelfth Regiment Armory in New York City, Du Bois presented a performance unparalleled in African American drama. He was entirely aware of the aesthetic and social possibilities involved: His pageant was an attempt to rewrite black people's role in American history, through an idealized version of the modes of aesthetic resistance that New Negroes were practicing daily in the jook, on the street corner, and in the church. As such, *The Star of Ethiopia* marked the birth of the little theater movement.

This lofty objective was attained at a considerable price. As Diamond (1997) notes, the economics of the pageant over its twelve-year history mirrored the financial struggle experienced by the black community

at that time. Unlike many of the more established commercial American theaters, the little theater movement found it difficult to balance aesthetics with the material realities of the community. *The Star of Ethiopia*—a text that demanded staging—was seriously affected by a lack of material resources. At the inception of the project, Du Bois, who was the editor of *The Crisis*, the magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), asked the NAACP for help but was turned down. (The NAACP was unwilling to make such a large investment in an unprecedented venture.) Instead, he had to wait for an act of Congress (Senate Bill 180, passed by the Sixty-Second Congress, Second Session, 2 April 1912) to finance the pageant. This act launched Du Bois's limited career as a playwright; and the production of *The Star of Ethiopia* was a turning point for the black community because it demonstrated the economic negotiations blacks would have to undertake in order to participate in professional theater.

Anita Bush's Lafayette Players

Around 1914, a tenacious young woman named Anita Bush shifted the emphasis of the little theater movement: As the founder of what would become the Lafayette Players, she focused on finding adequate space in the black community and training members of the community to establish a commercial theater. During this period, the little theater movement faced three main issues: It needed to develop (1) finances (including paying audiences) and an infrastructure (spaces to perform), (2) professionally trained actors, and (3) scripts that would reflect the reality of the black experience in the United States. Under Bush's guidance, the Lafayette Players tackled the first two issues; the third issue was addressed by *The Crisis*, which took an interest in the development of drama.

After achieving some success as an actress, Bush had decided to create an African American theater company. In the autumn of 1914, she needed to find a rehearsal and performance space for her troupe of black players. At that time, two theaters in Harlem catered to African Americans—the Lincoln on West 135th Street and the Lafayette on 132nd Street and Seventh Avenue—but neither of these had experienced much financial success. Bush convinced the manager of the Lincoln, Eugene "Frenchy" Elmore,

that she could help him get out of a slump and persuaded him to give her players a chance. He agreed, and in November 1915, the Anita Bush Stock Company (as it was then still named) opened at the Lincoln, to enthusiastic reviews; it included Bush, Charles Gilpin, Dooley Wilson, Carlotta Freeman, and Andrew Bishop. After a few weeks, the company moved to the Lafayette Theater, where it made its debut on 27 December 1915. (This change was partly because of the company's success at the Lincoln, which had induced the manager of the Lafayette, Lester Walton, to approach Bush about making the move, and partly because of a dispute between Bush and the manager who had succeeded Elmore at the Lincoln.)

The players were as successful at the Lafayette as they had been at the Lincoln, if not more so, although they also received some criticism. The criticism arose because for the most part they presented well-known, popular Broadway shows that did not focus on the black experience; but, to repeat, it did not seem to harm the players' public image. In fact, at one point the company had to perform two shows a day of *Within the Law*, a recent Broadway hit by Bayard Veiller, to accommodate the growing crowds. Thompson (1972) notes, "According to manager Elmore, the fame of the Lafayette Players at this time had spread so far that on a certain Saturday night some 1,500 people had to be turned away, many of them having come from Philadelphia to attend a performance" (218). (Elmore had followed the players when they relocated from the Lincoln to the Lafayette.) Their popularity gave the Lafayette Players scope to develop their skills; despite the complaints that they were imitating white performers rather than reflecting the black experience, they did achieve a degree of liberation and did break away from the tradition of the minstrel show to give dignified performances for large audiences. Moreover, even though they charged only five or ten cents for matinees and only ten, fifteen, or twenty-five cents for evening performances, the Lafayette Players achieved a financial success unmatched by that of any other theater company during the Harlem Renaissance; indeed, the Lafayette group demonstrated that such success was possible for African American theater.

It should be noted, though, that the Lafayette Players had to make some ideological sacrifices for the sake of their financial success. For example, in March 1916, they presented *For His Daughter's Honor*, a four-act

"race play" with Gilpin as the star, but it was not nearly as successful as some of their other productions. Under financial pressure, the players could not both produce and perform scripts; as a result, they could not really serve as an ideal model of a successful community theater for, near, and about black people—they served mainly as a model of material success.

Players' Guild, Harlem YMCA, and Krigwa Players

Many of the theater companies that developed during the Harlem Renaissance proper (between 1919 and 1928) were responding to the accusations that the Lafayette Players, in rehashing Broadway productions, failed to present theater about black life. In October 1917, the Circle for Negro War Relief was established; its New York branch was reorganized into the Players' Guild in 1919. The Players' Guild gave several performances during the 1920s at the Harlem YMCA, including one that helped Paul Robeson rise to stardom. The guild was praised for "creating an alternative to the 'cheap melodrama and the cheaper musical comedy' which dominated Harlem theatres" (Monroe 1983, 64); as a result of its success, the YMCA became a new venue for black drama. In May 1923, under the direction of a white woman named Anne Wolter, the Acme Players gave a performance at the YMCA of Frank Wilson's two short plays *A Train North* and *The Heartbreaker*. The Acme Players had developed out of a performance given in 1922 by the National Urban League at the Lafayette Theater; because of these players' success, Wolter developed the National Ethiopian Art Theater, which later became a school. Her objectives for the school included instruction in dramatic arts, dancing, music, direction, and public speaking, and—eventually—the erection of a theater building in Harlem. The Players' Guild, the Acme Players, and the school furthered the three goals of creating a black theater, cultivating black actors, and performing black drama.

Writing contests sponsored by two magazines—the NAACP's *Crisis* and *Opportunity*, a publication of the National Urban League—gave what was perhaps the strongest push in the effort to realize the ideal of a professional community theater. These contests encouraged black drama because the winning plays would at least be published and at best be produced.

After the contests by *The Crisis* and *Opportunity*, the Krigwa Players emerged as a body affiliated with the NAACP and dedicated to performing the prizewinning plays. By the summer of 1926, the Krigwa Players Little Negro Theater was organized in Harlem. Du Bois served as the chairman of the group, although he did not participate in its productions. In July 1926, he wrote: "The movement which has begun this year in Harlem, New York City, lays down four fundamental principles. The plays of a real Negro theatre must be: *About us . . . By us . . . For us . . . Near us*. Only in this way can a real folk-play movement of American Negroes be built up" (134). Because Du Bois's principles concerned the "real Negro theater," they transcended the little theater movement. Still, little theater attracted considerable attention from the black political leaders and black political and social organizations because it provided an opportunity for the world to see the potential of the New Negro community; and the Krigwa Players used these principles as their foundation.

The Krigwa Players had a performance space in the lecture room in the basement of the 135th Street Library in Harlem. (After the group became inactive in 1930, this room was used by successive companies of players; it was later renamed the Krigwa Playhouse.) The Krigwa Players' first season opened with three one-act plays by prizewinning authors of the contest sponsored by *The Crisis*: Willis Richardson's *Compromise* and *The Broken Banjo* and Ruth Gaines-Shelton's *The Church Fight*. The performances, repeated twice, attracted capacity audiences totaling approximately 600 people. Eight months later, in January 1927, the Krigwa Players opened their second season with two critically acclaimed plays by Eulalie Spence, *Her* and *Foreign Mail*. The Krigwa Players were criticized for the long gaps between their productions, but as a practical matter they could not earn a living as full-time actors—they had to work at other jobs, and so they could not commit themselves to the rigorous performance schedules of the Lafayette Players. Although ideologically they were perhaps the most powerful players' group of the Harlem Renaissance, a financial dispute would mark their end.

After a production of Spence's *Fool's Errand* in the national Little Theater Tournament in May 1927, the company won the Samuel French Prize of \$200 for original playwriting. In an interview in 1973, Spence would say that Du Bois had resented *Fool's Errand*

because it was not a propaganda play and had insisted that the prize money be used to offset the expense of the production (Monroe 1983, 67). The Krigwa Players were angry about his decision and, as a result, dissociated themselves from the organization. After the Krigwa Players disbanded for a time, the space in the 135th Street Library was occupied by other groups, including the Sekondi Players, who later became known as the New Negro Art Theater. Thus other organizations were able to profit from the theatrical infrastructure that the Krigwa Players established.

The little theater movement reflected the ideals of its participants only in glimpses and spurts, if at all, but the efforts to achieve these goals suggest the difficulty of achieving the New Negroes' communal identity in the context of a resistant audience and a resistant country. The little theater movement served as a testing ground for a social struggle that would persist in Harlem's community theaters even after many of the playhouses had shut their doors.

SOYICA S. DIGGS

See also Anita Bush Theater Company; Blacks in Theater; Bush, Anita; Crisis, The: Literary Prizes; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Gilpin, Charles; Krigwa Players; Lafayette Players; Lafayette Theater; Lincoln Theater; Literature: 3—Drama; Little Theater Tournament; National Ethiopian Art Theater; New Negro; 135th Street Library; Opportunity Literary Contests; Richardson, Willis; Theater; Walton, Lester; Williams, Egbert Austin "Bert"; Wilson, Frank

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Conjure Man Dies, The

Rudolph Fisher's *The Conjure Man Dies: A Mystery Tale of Dark Harlem* (1932) was not the first detective novel by a black author, but it was the first "black-identified" detective novel, focused entirely on African American characters and set in Harlem during the Depression era. This novel relies on elements of classic detective stories such as the locked-room mystery and the police procedural, yet it also infuses these elements with the African American vernacular, urban rituals, and contemporary social issues. The influence of the naturalist novel of the 1930s is also apparent in Fisher's use of documentary-style exposition and in the recurring topic of social determinism. Fisher, who was a popular intellectual, scientist, and artist, bestowed his own attributes as a "renaissance man" on his multitalented, complicated protagonists.

The novel opens as Bubber Brown, a former street cleaner turned detective, rushes across 130th Street to the office of Dr. John Archer and asks Archer to examine the body of N'Gana Frimbo, "Psychist." Brown explains that he had accompanied his friend

Jinx Jenkins to see Frimbo for a consultation when Frimbo suddenly fell to the floor dead; Jenkins soon becomes implicated in the murder as his fingerprints are found on the weapon. On the case is Detective Perry Dart, who is described as a street-smart product of the public schools and as one of only ten black police officers in Harlem to be promoted to detective. Dart is a friend of the more intellectual Archer, and he asks Archer to assist in the investigation. The investigators find that Frimbo was an African king, a Harvard-educated philosophy student, a laboratory scientist, and a victim of American racism. While Archer occasionally questions Frimbo's sanity, the text never entirely challenges Frimbo's belief system—a provocative combination of western science and eastern mysticism.

Fisher's characters provide him with an opportunity for comic dialogue and slapstick humor even as he complicates stereotypes and educates readers unfamiliar with the ways of mysterious "dark Harlem." At Dart's request, the seemingly inept Brown efficiently locates two of Frimbo's recent visitors, a numbers runner who intended to collect Frimbo's bet and a drug addict who wanted to kill Frimbo. Others in Frimbo's office that night are also Harlem "types": a railroad porter, the attractive wife of an undertaker, and a desperate churchgoing wife. At a crucial moment, Frimbo himself turns up alive, claiming that he has indeed been dead and asking to join the investigation of his own murder, so he becomes the fourth detective on the case. But Frimbo's walleyed African butler is later found dead by Brown, who catches Frimbo in the act of disposing of the remains, and so Frimbo is also a suspect as well as a victim and an investigator. Fisher manipulates the preconceptions of his protagonists and his readers to plant several red herrings and disguise the killer's identity until the last minute, when Frimbo stages an unmasking in the style of Hercule Poirot that results in an act of violence in the style of Chester Himes.

The Conjure Man Dies was intended to be the first in a series. It was very favorably reviewed on publication, and a dramatized version was presented by the Federal Players at the Lafayette Theater in New York on 11 March 1936, starring Arthur "Dooley" Wilson as a "song-and-dance" detective. However, as of the present writing, this novel had not received the critical attention it deserves.

KIMBERLY DRAKE

See also Authors: 2—Fiction; Fisher, Rudolph; Literature: 4—Fiction; Wilson, Arthur “Dooley”

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Contempo

Contempo: A Review of Books and Personalities was a literary journal, or so-called little magazine, published between 1931 and 1934 in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. It was founded by a group of five young men; Milton Abernathy and Anthony J. Buttitta were the primary forces behind it. Although both Abernathy and Buttitta were students at the University of North Carolina during part of the lifetime of *Contempo*, the magazine was not officially associated with the university—a fact that university officials were quick to point out, owing to the radical positions the editors took. During its three years and forty-one issues of publication, *Contempo* developed a reputation for leftist politics and for being a first-rate little magazine that published significant writers of the era, including James Joyce, William Faulkner, Langston Hughes, Kay Boyle, Wallace Stevens, and William Carlos Williams.

The importance of *Contempo* to the Harlem Renaissance is primarily its relationship with Langston Hughes, who published four poems and one article in the magazine during 1931–1932. The article and one

of the poems—“Christ in Alabama”—were published on the front page of a special issue devoted to the Scottsboro case; this issue also contained a poem by Countee Cullen. The issue had been timed to correspond with a visit by Hughes to the University of North Carolina during his speaking tour of the South in 1931. Abernathy and Buttitta were instrumental in bringing Hughes to Chapel Hill and planned to be his hosts in the apartment they shared. A scandal ensued when their landlord discovered their plans and evicted them; they had to find other accommodations for Hughes, and they themselves had to sleep on the floor in a bookshop they ran. Hughes’s visit and “Christ in Alabama”—with its opening line, “Christ is a Nigger”—attracted a great deal of hostile attention to the poet, the editors, and the magazine. One official of the University of North Carolina called the editors “half-baked, uneducated, and wholly reprehensible adolescents.” During the visit, Abernathy and Buttitta took Hughes to a popular local restaurant and broke the color line there.

Contempo was published sporadically in its final years and finally ceased publication after a split between Abernathy and Buttitta.

ERIK BLEDSOE

See also Buttitta, Anthony J.; Cullen, Countee; Hughes, Langston

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Cook, Will Marion

One of the most important questions confronting black intellectuals at the turn of the twentieth century

was how to raise the image of the Negro as a writer, composer, and performer. A number of distinguished black composers, writers, and performers—including Harry T. Burleigh, Bob Cole, Will Marion Cook, Paul Laurence Dunbar, James Weldon Johnson, and J. Rosamond Johnson—held serious discussions about this at Marshall’s Hotel on West 53rd Street in Manhattan, where they would gather for an evening of southern food, syncopated music, and stimulating dialogue. In effect, they were pondering how to elevate the old Negro minstrel show to the “New Negro” musical.

Even in this stellar group, the composer Will Marion Cook was considered an especially original genius. He was respected for his pioneering achievements in popular songwriting, black musical comedies, and syncopated orchestral music—genres that he dramatically transformed. After matriculating at the Oberlin Conservatory and at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin (where Joseph Joachim taught him violin), Cook studied at New York’s National Conservatory with the Bohemian Antonín Dvořák, who urged American composers to stop copying European models and take a new path, using the indigenous music of America. Cook accepted the challenge and wrote pioneering black musical comedies under the tutelage of Bob Cole at Worth’s Museum (a theater in New York) at the corner of Sixth Avenue and Thirteenth Street.

In the summer of 1898, the musical production *Clorindy: The Origin of the Cakewalk*, by Cook and the poet Paul Laurence Dunbar, opened at the Casino Roof Garden. A story in song and dance, it helped bring syncopated African American music to Broadway and helped introduce the high-stepping cakewalk dance to the stage. Cook declared that blacks had finally arrived on Broadway and were there to stay.

The success of this venture led Cook to write a stream of other musicals, notably *In Dahomey*, which featured “back to Africa” as a theme. This work made theatrical history in 1903 as the first full-length musical written and performed by blacks to be presented at a major Broadway theater—the New York Theater in Times Square. It was also given more than 250 times in London; these presentations included a command performance in Buckingham Palace. Other musicals followed, including *In Abyssinia* (1906), *Bandanna Land* (1908), and *Darkydom* (1915).

During the years when Cook was involved in theatrical work, he was also intermittently conducting

various ensembles. He became active with a group known as the Memphis Students, who were neither students nor from Memphis. This playing-singing-dancing orchestra was organized by Ernest Hogan; however, in 1905, Cook took the members on tour to Europe for several months. An outgrowth of this ensemble was the Clef Club Orchestra, led by James Reese Europe and assisted by Cook. The historic debut of the Clef Club Orchestra at Carnegie Hall on 12 May 1912 featured Cook’s compositions “Swing Along,” “The Rain Song,” and “Exhortation.”

In 1918, Cook established the New York Syncopated Orchestra (better known as the Southern Syncopated Orchestra), an all-black group of fifty formally attired men and a few women, who played and sang a diverse repertoire of light classics, popular songs, ragtime, spirituals, and waltzes. They toured the United States and abroad, featuring the clarinetist Sidney Bechet, who introduced characteristic blues.

In the 1920s, Cook freelanced with his orchestra, assisted Abbie Mitchell at the piano in performances at the Lafayette Theater, and presented a series of programs devoted to “all-Negro” music in Manhattan. In 1929, he trained the chorus for Vincent Youmans’s “Great Day”



Will Marion Cook. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

and assisted with Miller and Lyles's *Runnin' Wild*. He furthered the careers of many musicians, most notably Josephine Baker, Duke Ellington, Hall Johnson, Eva Jessye, and Clarence White.

Cook's life and music suggest a prototype of the New Negro, a generation before Alain Locke's volume on this subject in 1925. His background as a member of the black middle class, his international exposure, and his musical education in the European and African American idioms well prepared him for the role of uplifting African Americans' lives and music. His means were identification with Africa; the use of more realistic, more positive images of blacks in song lyrics; and his willingness to use aggression, assertiveness, and agitation for the sake of racial equality. Cook revealed in his memoirs that his ultimate challenge was to try to redress social injustices, and at the same time write beautiful music.

Biography

William Mercer Cook was born 27 January 1869 in Washington, D.C. He studied at public schools in Oberlin, Ohio; at Oberlin Conservatory (violin, 1884–1888); in Berlin, Germany (violin, 1888–c. 1889); and at the National Conservatory of Music, New York (under director Antonín Dvořák, 1895). Cook made his debut as concert violinist in 1889 in Washington, D.C. In 1890, Cook was the director of a new orchestra with Frederick Douglass as president. Cook's *Clorindy, or The Origin of the Cakewalk*, the first major black show at a major theater, was performed at the Casino Roof Garden in New York City in 1898. Cook was musical director and composer for George Walker and Bert Williams's company, which produced *In Dahomey*, *In Abyssinia*, and *Bandanna Land* (1899–1908). He performed at Buckingham Palace for the birthday celebration of Prince Edward of Wales in 1903 and in the musical *The Southerners*, with a white cast and black chorus, on Broadway in 1903. He took the Memphis Students to Europe in 1905. Cook collaborated on many musicals, including *The Traitors* and *Darkydom*, from 1912 to 1915; in 1912, at Carnegie Hall, he participated as performer and composer in a concert by the Clef Club. In 1918–1922 he organized and toured widely with the New York Syncopated Orchestra (also called the Southern Syncopated Orchestra, American Syncopated Orchestra, and Will Marion Cook Syncopated Orchestra), which included Sidney Bechet, Tom

Fletcher, Abbie Mitchell, and Arthur Briggs. In 1929, he collaborated with Will Vodery on the musical *Swing Along*. Cook was an adviser, teacher, coach, and patron of many musicians in New York, and a founding member of the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP), 1914. He died in New York City 20 July 1944.

MARVA CARTER

See also Burleigh, Harry Thacker; Clef Club; Cole, Bob; Dunbar, Paul Laurence; Ellington, Duke; Europe, James Reese; Jessye, Eva; Johnson, Hall; Johnson, James Weldon; Johnson, John Rosamond; Locke, Alain; Music; Music: Bands and Orchestras; Musical Theater; New Negro, The; White, Clarence; *other specific musicians*

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- "Bon Bon Buddy." 1907. (From *Bandanna Land*.)
- "Brown-Skin Baby Mine." 1902. (From *In Dahomey*.)
- "Darktown Is Out Tonight." 1898. (From *Clorindy, or The Origin of the Cakewalk*.)
- "Down de Lover's Lane." 1900. (From *The Traitor; Jes Lak' White Fok's; The Sons of Ham; The Casino Girl*.)
- "Exhortation: A Negro Sermon." 1912. (From *Bandanna Land*.)
- "Jump Back, Honey, Jump Back." 1898. (From *Clorindy, or The Origin of the Cakewalk*.)
- "A Little Bit of Heaven Called Home." 1933.
- "The Little Gypsy Maid." 1902. (From *The Wild Rose*.)
- "Mammy." 1916. (From *Darkydom*.)
- "Molly Green." 1902. (From *In Dahomey*.)
- "My Lady's Lips Am Like de Honey." 1915. (From *Darkydom*.)
- "On Emancipation Day." 1902. (From *Clorindy, or The Origin of the Cakewalk; In Dahomey*.)
- "Rain Song." 1912. (Also arranged for men's chorus.)
- "Red, Red Rose." 1908. (From *Bandanna Land; The Man from 'Bam*.)
- "Society." 1903. (From *The Sons of Ham; In Dahomey*.)
- "Swing Along." 1902. (Also arranged for men's chorus; from *The Southerners; In Dahomey*.)
- "Wid de Moon, Moon, Moon." 1907. (From *In Zululand*.)

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Copper Sun

Countee Cullen’s *Copper Sun* was published in 1927 by Harper Brothers, two years after his first volume of poems, *Color* (1925). Most critics had found *Color* promising, if perhaps occasionally trite or flawed; but they felt that in *Copper Sun*—with its lofty diction, excessively neat rhyme and meter, and uncritical borrowings from older masters—Cullen had failed to develop a personal style. Another perceived shortcoming was Cullen’s tendency to focus on traditional apolitical, metaphysical topics rather than on social problems related to race; many readers believed that this leaning had intensified in *Copper Sun*. Most critical studies of Cullen therefore center on poems from *Color* and from his well-received third volume, *The Black Christ* (1929); as a result, there is something of a gap in the scholarship on Cullen, despite periodic references to various poems from *Copper Sun*, most notably “From the Dark Tower,” “Uncle Jim,” and “Threnody for a Brown Girl.”

For some time after Cullen’s death in 1946, critics perceived a conflict between his interest in racial problems and folk idioms on the one hand, and his interest in the genteel romanticism of poets like John Keats on

the other. *Copper Sun* is most often faulted for Cullen’s tendency to muse abstractly on love and death rather than address race relations and racial inequality. Scholars, for their part, have tended to focus on Cullen’s celebrated race poems and to read his poetry as a clue to various facets of his enigmatic identity; in particular, they have been interested in the relationship between Cullen’s poetic “investment” and what was considered his duty to write about race.

Davis (1953) examined the role of Africa in Cullen’s poetic imagination as a set of characteristics against which the poet plots his own identity. Reimherr (1963) looked at Cullen’s relationship with Christianity. Cullen was the adopted son of a Methodist minister, and like many black artists whose work had social protest as its *raison d’être*, he was known for finding or devising biblical parallels in order to expose the hypocrisy and tyranny of racist philosophies. Reimherr notes that Cullen often identified heroic black characters with biblical figures, casting the suffering of blacks so as to appeal to white audiences. Some readers have seen a link between Cullen’s desire to appeal to whites and his preference for western literary forms and traditions. Baker (1974), however, observes that Cullen’s preference for traditional “white” forms would not necessarily have attracted whites in an era when white patrons sought authentic “blackness” expressed in exotic folk forms. Baker himself sees *Copper Sun* as a work characterized by tension between stasis and change, in which the poet never reconciles his taste for voluptuous sentiment with his concern for sociopolitical racial equality. Lomax (1974) suggests that the demand for an authentic black “folk voice” actually prevented Cullen from developing a more personal style. Primeau (1976) believes that Cullen’s attraction to romanticism was a way to explore feelings of alienation stemming from racism.

During the 1990s, critics often examined how race overlaps with other categories of identity, and some began to analyze Cullen’s poetry in light of his homosexuality. Kelley (1997) noted that Cullen’s attraction to primitivist imagery (especially in poems from *Color* such as “Heritage”) might be understood as a homoerotic attraction to idealized decadence and might also be related to a consideration of urbanity and savagery as categories invoked in support of racial supremacy. Powers (2000) has theorized that in Cullen’s psyche and poetry there was a profound split between private, forbidden homoerotic desires and the demand for a normative heterosexual lifestyle—that

is, for a public persona aligned with Christian uprightness and institutional academic credentials and validation. According to Powers, Cullen's own culture made no allowance for the possibility that these two realms might coincide in the persona of an emblematic black artist and public role model; therefore, Cullen had to live and write on both sides of the divide. Although *Copper Sun* was a somewhat anomalous critical failure, and although it has had only a minor role in the changing considerations of Cullen's life and art, it may suggest interesting problems in the political climate of the arts during the Harlem Renaissance.

VICTORIA A. ELMWOOD

See also Authors: 5—Poets; Color; Cullen, Countee; Homosexuality; Literature: 7—Poetry

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Cornhill

The Cornhill Company was a small vanity press based in Boston, owned by Walter Reid and William Stanley Braithwaite during the early Harlem Renaissance. In

1918, the poet Brookes More made the acquaintance of the owners when Cornhill published his work *The Lover's Rosary*. In 1919, More decided to retire and concentrate on writing. To facilitate publication of his own works, he acquired control of Cornhill in 1921 from Reid and renamed the firm the Cornhill Publishing Company. Reid initially stayed on as manager, but his policies landed the company in serious financial difficulties, and in 1922, More had to dismiss him.

Before More acquired it, Cornhill had been important in making known to larger publishers, and to the reading public, the work of some talented African American poets who would have an impact on black American literature. In the years after World War I, the publishing industry was still controlled by major white publishing houses; African American writers and poets might submit their work to small black magazines and newspapers, which were sometimes affiliated with the black church, but they could not achieve real success unless they published with a major white firm. Although the leading black writers tended to have little or no difficulty finding a white publisher, lesser black writers had to struggle to prove themselves to white companies. Cornhill, as a vanity press, was open to publishing African American literature, and it became a local center of black publication, together with a number of other small presses in the Boston area. However, these local companies had limited resources; very often the writers had to subsidize the printing as well as the promotion of their own work, and both distribution and promotion were rather poor. Nevertheless, for struggling black writers these almost self-financed publications did serve to open the door to white publishing companies.

During the early years of the Harlem Renaissance, Cornhill published a number of works by black writers who later became significant figures in the artistic movement. These included James Weldon Johnson's first volume of poetry, *Fifty Years and Other Poems* (1917); Angelina Weld Grimké's play *Rachel* (1917); Joseph S. Cotter's *The Band of Gideon and Other Lyrics* (1918); and Joshua Jones's *Poems of the Four Seas* (1921). Other works of African Americans published by Cornhill during this period were Maud Cuney-Hare's *The Message of the Trees*, Charles Bertram Johnson's *Songs of My People*, and Georgia Douglas Johnson's *The Heart of a Woman and Other Poems*.

This list of publications suggests the significance of Cornhill as a stepping-stone for African American writers during the early period of the Harlem Renaissance: Their work did attract attention from major

white publishing houses. After 1922, however, under More's management, Cornhill no longer specialized in black literature. More reduced the size of the company; gave particular attention to binding, paper and other technical details; and produced popular works of literature for the general public.

AMY LEE

See also Braithwaite, William Stanley; Cotter, Joseph Seamon; Cuney-Hare, Maud; Grimké, Angelina Weld; Johnson, Georgia Douglas; Johnson, James Weldon; Publishers and Publishing Houses

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Corrothers, James D.

The career of James D. Corrothers predated the Harlem Renaissance; however, themes in his writing and struggles in his life prefigured the spirit and strivings of the renaissance. W. E. B. Du Bois remarked that Corrothers's death in 1917 was "a serious loss to the race and to literature."

After receiving the best education available to an impoverished black youth in a rural area (in the public schools of South Haven, Michigan), Corrothers became an itinerant laborer in western Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio, and in Chicago and Springfield, Illinois. While he was working in Springfield as a coachman, his poem "The Deserted Schoolhouse" was published in Springfield's *Champion City Times*. The general reaction among whites was disbelief that Corrothers had actually composed the poem—an ominous sign of the difficulties Corrothers would later face in trying to pursue a writing career. Nevertheless,

Springfield was important to Corrothers's development as a writer.

In Springfield, Corrothers met Albery A. Whitman, then known as the "colored poet of America"; attended a lecture by Frederick Douglass; and joined the Young Men's Republican Club, where he met several of Booker T. Washington's associates and where, although he was not yet old enough to vote, he became immersed in politics and was encouraged to write and make speeches. Corrothers then headed back to Chicago, hoping to publish his work; but he was unable to find a publisher for the patriotic songs he had written, and he took a series of menial jobs, eventually working as a porter and bootblack in a white barbershop. One distinguished-looking customer happened to be Henry Demarest Lloyd, part-owner of the *Chicago Tribune*; Lloyd had one of Corrothers's poems published in the *Tribune* and gave Corrothers a job in the newspaper's counting room.

From his menial but secure job at the *Tribune*, Corrothers wrote poetry, studied the paper's writing style, and waited for a chance to break into journalism—though he soon learned that the editor would not give an African American a permanent position as a reporter. Repeatedly, Corrothers's career as a journalist was stymied by newspaper editors who refused to give him permanent work while at the same time publishing his articles and dialect poetry at space rates.

At the time—the 1890s—black dialect in speech and writing was generally used to demean African Americans. Consequently, Corrothers had an aversion to it; but audiences and readers relished it and were accustomed to finding it in minstrel skits, local-color writing, and plantation nostalgia. After meeting Paul Laurence Dunbar and reading Dunbar's works, Corrothers gained a different perspective on black dialect; ultimately, to appeal to readers and support his family, he began to use it. Corrothers contributed dialect poetry to leading magazines and published a series of complex yet minstrel-like character sketches in dialect, which were later collected in his first book, *The Black Cat Club* (1902). However, as Corrothers's career was gaining momentum, the heyday of dialect writing was coming to an end: James Weldon Johnson defined a new agenda for poets in *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1921) and assailed black dialect.

Corrothers was never able to support himself and his family as a full-time writer, and he finally had to retire from writing. His disappearance from the literary scene left a gap in African American literary

Corrothers, James D.

history that current scholarship on Corrothers and on African American writing preceding the Harlem Renaissance has begun to fill.

Biography

James D. Corrothers was born 2 July 1869 in Chain Lake Settlement, Cass County, Michigan. He attended public schools in South Haven; a Northwestern University preparatory school in Evanston, Illinois; and Bennett College in Greensboro, North Carolina. Corrothers contributed news and poetry to the *Bee*, *Tribune*, *Times-Herald*, *Journal*, *Daily Record*, and *Daily News* in Chicago; to the *Mail*, *Express*, *Herald*, and *Sunday Herald* in New York; to the *Inquirer* in Philadelphia; and to the *Globe-Democrat* in St. Louis. He also contributed to magazines: *Truth*, *Criterion*, *Southern Workman*, *Century*, *American*, *Colored American*, and *The Crisis*. He entered the ministry and was a pastor of Methodist congregations in Rochester (New York) and Red Bank and Hackensack (New Jersey); of Baptist congregations in Jersey City (New Jersey), South Haven (Michigan), and Lexington (Virginia); and of a Presbyterian congregation in West Chester (Pennsylvania). Corrothers died 2 February 1917 in West Chester, Pennsylvania.

VETA TUCKER

See also Dunbar, Paul Laurence; Johnson, James Weldon

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Cotter, Joseph Seamon Jr.

The poetic range of Joseph Seamon Cotter Jr. extended from well-crafted sonnets to poems grounded in the biblical allusions of the time-honored African American

sermonic tradition. His poems also addressed the pressing social and political issues of his time. Considering his skillful use of free verse, some critics have seen Cotter as a transitional figure who, like Fenton Johnson, established a pattern for African American poets of the 1920s.

Cotter was an avid reader before he began first grade. A fine student, intelligent and athletic, he received a good academic foundation at Central Colored High School in Louisville, Kentucky, where he excelled in Latin, English, history, and mathematics. He graduated at age fifteen, second in his class. In 1911, Cotter followed his older sister Florence to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. There he worked on the staff of the student magazine, the *Fisk Herald*. In his sophomore year, however, Cotter contracted tuberculosis and was forced to return to Louisville. Florence also contracted the disease; she died in December 1914, shortly after graduating from Fisk and beginning a teaching career.

Under close medical supervision, Cotter worked as an essayist for the weekly *Louisville Leader* and began writing poems that were collected as *The Band of Gideon and Other Lyrics*, published in June 1918 by the Cornhill Company in Boston. Reviewing the book in *New York Age*, James Weldon Johnson declared, "Cotter is free and bold. He has imagination and fine poetic sense," coupled with "a splendid mastery of the tools that every poet must know how to use." Years later, Sterling Brown praised Cotter's "concern for social themes, done with quiet persuasiveness," and noted that Cotter shared this focus with younger poets of the Harlem Renaissance.

Cotter's most widely known poem, "Sonnet to Negro Soldiers," dedicated to the all-black Ninety-second Division of the United States Army, was reprinted in *The Crisis*, the journal of the National Association of Colored People where it had the force of an editorial. African American soldiers, facing enemy fire in France in World War I, "walk unafraid within that Living Hell,/Nor heed the driving rain of shot and shell." Their willing sacrifice, says the poet, serves as "a glorious sign,/A glimmer of that resurrection morn," when racial prejudice and second-class citizenship will be a thing of the past. Other poems, such as "Moloch" and "O Little, David, Play On Your Harp," sound an angrier, less optimistic tone. "The Mulatto to His Critics" and "Is It Because I Am Black?" are eloquent free-verse expressions of racial pride.

Cotter was terminally ill in the autumn of 1918 when he wrote his final poems. Impressive in technique

though adhering to syncope and archaic verb forms, "Out of the Shadows: An Unfinished Sonnet-Sequence" appeared posthumously in the *AME Zion Quarterly Review* in 1920 and 1921.

In his poem "A Prayer," Cotter described his own fragile condition and ended with the pathetic supplication "O God, give me words to make my dream-children live." For about a year that prayer was answered. The sixty-five poems that make up his collected works are testimony to Cotter's talent. Some are good enough to suggest that his early death was, indeed, a loss for literature.

Biography

The poet and journalist Joseph Seamon Cotter Jr. was born in Louisville, Kentucky, on 2 September 1895. He was the second of three children; the third, Leonidas, died in infancy in January 1900. His father was a school principal and a published poet; his mother, Maria Cox Cotter, was a schoolteacher. The Cotters, who were respected community leaders, admired Booker T. Washington and were acquaintances of luminaries such as Paul Laurence Dunbar. Cotter briefly attended college and worked as a journalist. He died of tuberculosis 3 February 1919, but his father saw to it that his poems continued to be published and anthologized.

LORENZO THOMAS

See also Authors: 5-Poets; Brown, Sterling; Cornhill; Johnson, Fenton; Johnson, James Weldon

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Cotton Club

The Harlem cabaret is perhaps the most fabled intersection of the jazz age and the Harlem Renaissance, and no cabaret was more fabled than the Cotton Club—the “aristocrat of Harlem”—at the northeast corner of Lenox Avenue and 142nd Street: Between its opening in September 1923 and its relocation downtown in February 1936, the Cotton Club would boost the early careers of Edith Wilson, Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, Aida Ward, Adelaide Hall, Earl “Snakehips” Tucker, Mantan Moreland, Ethel Waters, Lena Horne, the Nicholas Brothers, and the bands of Duke Ellington (in 1927–1931 and 1933), Cab Calloway (in 1930–1933), and Jimmie Lunceford (in 1934–1936). As famous for its exclusionary racial policies as for its fast-stepping revues, the Cotton Club embodied many of the contradictions of the popular Harlem Renaissance; its cultural meaning was shaped by the combined forces of Prohibition economics, postwar trends in musical theater, black performance traditions and innovations, white patronage, and the mass media.

The Douglas Casino—a large, underused dance hall space over a movie house—had been built at 644 Lenox Avenue in 1918. It was sold in 1920 to the former heavyweight champion Jack Johnson, refurbished as an intimate supper club seating 400, and renamed the Club Deluxe. In 1923, the struggling club was resold to Manhattan’s most powerful underworld figure, Owen “Owney” Madden, who was then in prison, having been convicted of manslaughter. Madden had made his fortune on sales of Madden’s No. 1 beer during the national experiment with enforced sobriety; he also owned a number of other nightclubs in Manhattan, including the Stork Club and the Silver Slipper. Initially, most of the personnel of the Cotton Club, including cooks, waiters, busboys, the management, and entertainers, were imported from Chicago. George “Big Frenchy” DeMange managed the club, while Walter Brooks, who had brought *Shuffle Along* to Broadway in 1921, served as front. Lew Leslie produced the first floor shows; and Andy Preer’s Missourians, renamed the Cotton Club Syncopators, provided music. Madden himself rarely visited the newly baptized Cotton Club, and although

federal authorities padlocked the club’s doors for three months in 1925 for forty-four violations of the Volstead Act, he faced little trouble from the police before his voluntary return to Sing Sing prison and semiretirement in July 1932.

Madden spared little expense in creating an exclusive, titillating uptown destination for a well-heeled downtown crowd. The club was renovated to fit 700, with seating surrounding the dance and show floor that extended from the horseshoe-shaped stage. Joseph Urban, Florenz Ziegfeld’s celebrated set and costume designer, redesigned the interior in what Singer (1992) describes as “a brazen riot of African jungle motifs, Southern stereotypology, and lurid eroticism” (100). The gangsters themselves were an attraction; DeMange was expected to be present and visible. Admission to the club cost \$2.50, and, except for Madden’s beer, drinks were expensive. Strict decorum and studied elegance were expected of both staff and customers. Shows (generally three per night) were scheduled to allow performers at other locations to drop in after work; Sunday night became “Celebrity Night,” with everyone from Jimmy Durante to New York’s mayor Jimmy Walker asked to take a bow and perhaps do a number. New floor shows opened twice each year and were budgeted to rival Ziegfeld’s *Follies* (indeed, some—such as Lew Leslie’s long-running *Blackbirds of 1928*—would eventually find their way to Broadway). Following the closing in 1925, Harry Block replaced Brooks as front, Herman Stark began a fifteen-year run as stage manager, Dan Healey replaced Leslie as floor-show producer, and Jimmy McHugh composed the music (McHugh was joined in 1927 by the lyricist Dorothy Fields). Healey established the formula: a top-billed singer or comedian; specialty acts in eccentric dances and “adult” songs; a chorus line attired in elaborate, or elaborately brief, costumes; and behind it all top-notch jazz—particularly once Duke Ellington’s Washingtonians became the house band in December 1927 (some commentators remember it as an offer the band couldn’t refuse). At the Cotton Club, where he had to write not only dance tunes but also overtures, transitions, accompaniments, and “jungle” effects, Ellington developed much of his distinctive orchestral composition style.

A key innovation in creating the Cotton Club’s exclusive atmosphere was Madden’s seemingly paradoxical introduction of a strict color line into the heart of Harlem. In establishing a whites-only policy regarding customers, Madden was following the practice at Connie’s Inn, a rival Harlem club favored

by moneyed whites. At the Cotton Club, the concept was extended to the division of labor, creating a strict divide between the whites who ran the club and produced, wrote, and choreographed its shows, and the blacks who cooked, waited and bussed tables, and entertained. Women in the chorus line faced their own color bar; they were essentially conceived as part of the club's decor, and they were expected to be "tall, tan, and terrific": at least 5 feet 6 inches, no darker than a light olive tone, and under twenty-one. Then, in 1927, the Columbia Broadcasting System, one of the emerging radio networks, began to broadcast from the Cotton Club. By 1930, half-hour programs might be broadcast over several stations and networks five or six nights a week, giving bandleaders a chance to build a national—and mixed—audience and greatly increasing their opportunities to tour and record. In deference to Ellington's new clout and his expressed regret that friends and family of the performers were unable to see them play, the club relaxed its whites-only policy for customers, at least for light-skinned celebrities willing to sit near the kitchen.

Though the Cotton Club experienced a number of changes in the early 1930s, the Depression had trouble catching up with it. For the revue of spring 1930, *Brown Sugar—Sweet but Unrefined*, Cab Calloway's orchestra replaced Ellington's, and the composer Harold Arlen and the lyricist Ted Koehler replaced McHugh and Fields, who were then (like Ellington) leaving for Hollywood. However, the repeal of Prohibition and the increasingly visible poverty of Harlem eventually created insurmountable problems for many mob-run uptown clubs. The Cotton Club pulled up stakes after the close of its show for spring 1936



Cotton Club, c. 1920s. (© Underwood and Underwood/Corbis.)

and reopened in September at 200 West 48th Street and Broadway, the former site of the Palais Royale and the future site of the Latin Quarter. After four years of high midtown rents, the rising cost of mounting elaborate floor shows, changing tastes in jazz, and renewed federal attention to income tax evasion among New York's nightclubs, the Cotton Club closed its doors permanently on 10 June 1940.

RYAN JERVING

See also Blackbirds; Fields, Dorothy; Harlem: 3–Entertainment; Johnson, John Arthur "Jack"; Leslie, Lew; Madden, Owen Vincent "Owney"; Nightclubs; Nightlife; Organized Crime; *specific entertainers*

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Covarrubias, Miguel

Miguel Covarrubias (1904–1957) was never formally trained as an artist; he began drawing as a boy and perfected his technique through constant work. During his youth, he became well acquainted with artistic circles in Mexico City and began to do caricatures of their members. His images of well-known artists such as Diego Rivera, Dr. Atl, and Carlos Mérida, as well as of politicians and intellectuals, were frequently seen in Mexican publications such as *La Falange*, *Fantoche*, *El Heraldo*, *El Mundo*, and *El Universal Ilustrado*. He was equally adept at caricaturing the signature styles of other visual artists, something he first did in the art

journal *Zig-Zag* in 1921, when he incorporated Aubrey Beardsley's style into a caricature of the work of the Mexican painter Roberto Montenegro.

In 1923, Covarrubias arrived in New York City, through the sponsorship of the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations. This move would have tremendous significance for his artistic career, and his period in New York (lasting until 1936) was his most prolific. In September 1923, he made the acquaintance of the photographer, writer, and socialite Carl Van Vechten, who introduced him to Frank Crowninshield, editor of *Vanity Fair*. At Van Vechten's suggestion, Covarrubias began to contribute illustrations featuring black figures; these illustrations aroused interest in Harlem, which had already come to the attention of the white intelligentsia, and were later (1925) exhibited at the New Gallery in New York. By 1924, Covarrubias was the head caricaturist at *Vanity Fair*, sometimes contributing as many as eight illustrations per issue; he continued to work with this magazine even after it merged with *Vogue* in 1936. Covarrubias's friendship with Van Vechten also led to close connections with others who were significant in the Harlem Renaissance. In 1926, he illustrated the cover of Langston Hughes's *The Weary Blues* and the pages of W. C. Handy's *Blues: An Anthology*. Later, he illustrated books such as René Maran's *Batouala* (1932), Herman Melville's *Typee* (1935), Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1938), and numerous ethnographic studies.

Covarrubias had a distinctive style that combined a sense of design with simplicity of line, and his work was much in demand; in fact, he, Ralph Barton (1892–1932), and Al Hirshfeld (1903–2003) defined American caricature in the 1920s. He relied on integrity of line to create his caricatures, and his manipulation of abstract patterning gave them a decidedly modernist appeal; in his attention to line, careful geometry, and exaggeration of particular features he was inspired by cubism. In addition to *Vanity Fair*, he published caricatures in other prominent publications such as *World* and the *New Yorker*. He worked in theater as well; in 1925, he designed the set for the musical number "Rancho Mexicano" in the *Garrick Gaities*, the set and costumes for George Bernard Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion*, and the set for Josephine Baker's *Revue nègre*. Also in 1925, the publisher Alfred Knopf issued Covarrubias's first book of caricatures, *The Prince of Wales and Other Famous Americans*.

In 1927, Covarrubias published what may be his most significant book, *Negro Drawings*. These works grew from his direct experience of Harlem; they

depict a broad variety of "types" found in Harlem—flappers, musicians, dancers, street preachers, socialites, blues singers, mothers and children, waiters, and others—and convey the feel of the neighborhood. Some of the drawings are of single figures; others are scenes with entertainers, parties, and fashions in appropriate settings. The figures are weighty, nearly monumental, although they are created from a few linear forms. Covarrubias would start a portrait with two circles for eyes and then add a few curved lines or angles, instantly creating the syncopated rhythm of a dancer or the movement of a dandy through Harlem's streets.

Covarrubias's images serve as complete narratives even when they show only one figure. This is particularly true when the single figure, like someone sitting for a photograph, seems aware of the viewer. Unlike his other illustrations, which were intended particularly to entertain, these portrait images present a careful, profound consideration of various facets of Harlem's cultural life, as seen through a modernist's eyes. Stylistically, the works have been described as postcubist by some art historians; Covarrubias always remains interested in depicting the movement of the human figure.

Negro Drawings foreshadowed Covarrubias's interest in examining marginalized cultures throughout the world. Later, he would turn to Bali and his native Mexico for inspiration, taking an anthropological approach to doing research for his images. Once he left New York, Covarrubias abandoned the style of his caricatures in favor of a more documentary style that would inform the work of his later years, beginning with a yearlong trip to Bali in 1933, funded by a Guggenheim fellowship.

Covarrubias's interest in material culture continued to manifest itself in his love of crafts and the indigenous arts of Mexico. He organized an exhibition of Mexican applied arts at the Art Center in New York in 1928. His impressive collection of books, photographs, and other documents of Mexican art and craft allowed him to study these objects closely and illustrate them meticulously. It would seem that Covarrubias's interest in Harlem was part of a larger commitment to studying and depicting a variety of cultural "others." The fascination of the white majority with the culture of Harlem might have given him the idea of bringing Mexican, African American, and Balinese culture to wider audiences.

Along with his caricatures, Covarrubias did numerous paintings. These were large, colorful canvases



Miguel Covarrubias with two Balinese men, c. 1930–1935.

(Library of Congress.)

that featured Mexican peasants as well as portraits of patrons and acquaintances. Created with the same sense of monumentality as his caricatures, the figures in his paintings have a quiet dignity that is suggested by their posture, their clothing, and their surroundings. His images of Mexican women vendors are particularly heroic and seem to reflect something of the *costumbrista* paintings—featuring vendors of wares and foodstuffs in colorful landscapes—that were popular in Mexico at the turn of the twentieth century. Other images, such as his portraits of women, put the sensuality of his drawn lines at the service of the nude female body.

Biography

Miguel Covarrubias was born in Mexico City in 1904 to a wealthy family. Both his father and his uncle held prominent positions in the Mexican government. Covarrubias began drawing in his boyhood and started his artistic career doing caricatures. He came to New York in 1923 and soon became a caricaturist for *Vanity Fair*. Covarrubias was also an illustrator and cover artist for books by a number of writers of the Harlem Renaissance, a designer for theatrical productions, and a painter on canvas. He died in 1957.

ROCIO ARANDA-ALVARADO

See also *Batouala*; *Blues: An Anthology*; Guggenheim Fellowships; *Modernism*; Van Vechten, Carl; *Vanity Fair*; *Weary Blues*, The

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Cowdery, Mae Virginia

Mae Virginia Cowdery (1909–1953) was part of an artistic and literary milieu, based in Philadelphia during the early twentieth century, that also included many of her contemporaries who were, then and later, better-known figures of the Harlem Renaissance. Cowdery was born into an upwardly mobile middle-class family, the only child of a social worker and a caterer, and she benefited from an environment of racial uplift that valued talent in the arts and in letters as a means of promoting equality and opportunity for black Americans. In 1927, while still a student at the prestigious Philadelphia High School for Girls, Cowdery published writing and poems in *Black Opals*, a briefly successful black intellectual journal that had been founded by “older New Negroes to encourage younger members of the group who demonstrate talent and ambitions.” In writing for *Black Opals*, Cowdery was in good company: The journal also printed work by Langston Hughes, Jessie Fauset, Alain Locke, and other notables. Also in 1927, Cowdery won first prize in a poetry contest run by *The Crisis*, for her poem “Longings”; and another of her poems, “Lamps,” won a Krigwa Prize for poetry.

As a winner of its poetry contest, Cowdery had her picture printed in *The Crisis*; her biographers all note her unique style, which today might be described as gender bending. In this picture, she wears a tailored suit and a bow tie, and her hair is slicked back, perhaps suggesting her integration into Harlem’s bohemian circle. Actually, though, very little is known of Cowdery’s personal life, and her artistic life is only somewhat less obscure. It appears from her three-part work “Three Poems for My Daughter” that Cowdery may have had a daughter; but there are no other

known records of this child, and other poems—such as “Spring Lament”—may indicate that the child was not born alive. For unknown reasons, Cowdery committed suicide in 1953, at the age of forty-four.

Cowdery was one of the few African American women poets in the first half of the twentieth century to publish her own volume of poetry: This was *We Lift Our Voices and Other Poems* (1936). This work, a visually stunning limited edition (350 copies) of delicate yet intensely powerful verse, had an introduction by the literary editor William Stanley Braithwaite and a frontispiece by the artist Allan Freelon, and it was critically well received. Its date is well after the period that many scholars consider the height of the Harlem Renaissance, the 1920s; however, Cowdery had published a substantial amount of poetry during the late 1920s, in journals, magazines, and collected anthologies. Cowdery’s history of publication in black journals is similar to that of other women writers of the Harlem Renaissance; her older contemporaries Jessie Fauset and Zora Neale Hurston, for example, also built a reputation by publishing their work in black journals.

Despite the obscurity surrounding her personal life and her participation in the Harlem Renaissance, Cowdery clearly arose out of and was intimately connected with an artistic and literary upsurge articulated by a northern, black, middle-class, urban sensibility.

Biography

Mae V. Cowdery was born in 1904 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She studied at Philadelphia High School for Girls and the Pratt Institute, New York. Her awards included first prize in *The Crisis* poetry contest and the Krigwa Poetry Prize, both in 1927. She published *We Lift Our Voices and Other Poems* in 1936. Cowdery committed suicide in 1953.

LAURA ALEXANDRA HARRIS

See also Black Opals; Braithwaite, William Stanley; Crisis, The: Literary Prizes; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Hughes, Langston; Literature: 7—Poetry; Locke, Alain

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Cox, Ida Prather

The blues singer Ida Prather Cox (1896–1967) started her career in vaudeville at age fourteen. Before she began recording with Paramount in 1923, she sang with Jelly Roll Morton, and she was occasionally accompanied by Louis Armstrong and King Oliver when she sang in clubs in Chicago for a time in her late teens. She had a longtime musical partnership with the woman pianist Lovie Austin and recorded several songs with Austin and Tommy Ladnier on trumpet. Although the music that Cox recorded was blues in its lyrical form, her musical arrangements did not rely on the classic blues instrument, the guitar. In the early years she sang with a band that usually consisted of a piano; trumpet, clarinet, or cornet; and occasionally percussion, drums, or a banjo.

Ida Cox was a unique woman blues singer—for one reason, because she wrote most of her own songs, including the classic “Wild Women Don’t Have the Blues” (1924). In addition, she had a strong sense of the music business. She produced all her own stage shows through her touring company, which she named Raising Cane. She also hired her own musicians.

During the 1930s Cox toured extensively but did not record much in the studios. In 1939, at the height of her career, she appeared in John Hammond’s revue *From Spirituals to Swing* at Carnegie Hall. In 1945, on-stage at the Moonglow Nightclub in Buffalo, New York, she suffered a stroke that would halt her singing career for fifteen years. In 1961, she recorded her final session, “Blues for Rampart Street,” with the legendary jazz musicians Coleman Hawkins, Milt Hinton, Roy Eldridge, and Jo Jones.

Biography

Ida Prather Cox was born on or around 25 February 1896 in Toccoa, Georgia. The precise date of her birth is disputed, as are details of her early childhood; but it is known that she left home and began singing in vaudeville shows at age fourteen. Cox recorded at least sixty-five records and hundreds of songs between 1923 and 1940 on various labels; she was called the “uncrowned queen of the blues” by Paramount Records when she sang for its label for six years in the early 1920s. In addition to the many songs she recorded under her own name, she recorded under pseudonyms such as Kate Lewis, Julia Powers, Velma Bradley, and Jane Smith. Throughout her thirty-five-year musical career, Cox she was also popular as a live performer. She died of cancer on 10 November 1967 in Knoxville, Tennessee, where she lived with her daughter and sang in the church choir.

ASALE ANGEL-AJANI

See also Armstrong, Louis; Blues; Blues: Women Performers; Morton, Jelly Roll; Oliver, Joseph “King”; Singers

Selected Works

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- “Lawdy, Lawdy Blues.” Paramount, 1923.
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- “Wild Women Don’t Have the Blues.” Rosetta, 1924.
- “Coffin Blues.” Paramount, 1925.
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Crescent Theater

The Crescent Theater, at 36–38 West 135th Street and Lenox Avenue, was built in 1909, slightly later than its rival, the Lincoln Theater. Because the Lincoln was considered a movie house with live entertainment added, the Crescent is generally acknowledged as the first black theater in Harlem. The Crescent was also considered more middle class, as opposed to the working-class Lincoln.

The creation of new venues for theater in Harlem was a major advance for black performers. In the words of James Weldon Johnson (1939/1991):

The Negro performer in New York, who had always been playing to white or predominantly white audiences, found himself in an entirely different psychological atmosphere. He found himself freed from a great many restraints and taboos that had cramped him for forty years. . . . Colored performers in New York experienced for the first time release from the restraining fears of what a white audience would stand for. (171)

The Crescent’s original white managers, Flugelman and Johnson, followed a policy of light entertainment featuring top-drawer black vaudeville acts from established groups or companies like Smart Set and Mr. Load of Kole. These were sometimes supported by promising local talent, such as the fourteen-year old Florence Mills with her sisters in the Mills Trio in 1910.

The middle-class orientation of the Crescent was demonstrated by the production, in 1911, of *The Tryst*, an opera by the black composer H. Lawrence Freeman. *The Tryst* dealt with a tragic theme and starred Freeman’s wife Carlotta, who later became prominent with the Lafayette Players.

Sometime in late 1911 or early 1912, the Crescent passed into the hands of two white liquor dealers, Martinson and Nibus. To compete with the Lincoln, they called on the talents of the comedian Eddie Hunter. He appeared regularly during 1912 and 1913 in sketches that involved commentary intercut with moving pictures—“talking pictures before they talked,” according to Hunter. His presentations “Goin’ to the Races” and “The Battle of Who Run” were highly successful.

The Crescent had also acquired a drama company, the Crescent Players. Their “Twenty Minutes in Hell,” featuring the comedian Emmett Anthony, shared the bill with Hunter’s “Battle of Who Run” in March 1913. Sometime in 1914, Clarence Muse and his wife, Ophelia, merged their own stock company with the Crescent

Players. They starred in several plays, including *Another Man's Wife*.

In 1912, when the Lafayette Theater was built in Harlem, Martinson and Nibus leased it also. Though they used black acts, they sought to operate the Lafayette on a segregated basis; however, they soon found this impractical, and they relinquished the lease in 1914. The new operator appointed Lester Walton as manager, ending segregation. Before they left, Martinson and Nibus switched many acts, including Eddie Hunter's, away from the Crescent. The Muses also switched from the Crescent Players, initially to the short-lived Lincoln Players and ultimately to Anita Bush's new Lafayette Players. The Crescent now found itself squeezed between the Lincoln and the Lafayette. By 1915, the Crescent was out of business, and the Lafayette had become the vanguard of black drama. Nevertheless, in its brief tenure the Crescent had created vital opportunities for many developing black performers.

BILL EGAN

See also Black Manhattan; Blacks in Theater; Bush, Anita; Harlem: 3: Entertainment; Hunter, Eddie; Lafayette Players; Lafayette Theater; Lincoln Theater; Mills, Florence; Muse, Clarence; Musical Theater; Theater; Vaudeville; Walton, Lester

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Crisis, The

The Crisis—the monthly publication of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)—was the leading vehicle for bringing the

grand ideas of the Harlem Renaissance to the provinces, and also for generating and reflecting those ideas. It occupied a central position in setting the agenda of the renaissance: social uplift, promoting literature and the arts, ensuring voting rights and equal funding for education, ending lynching, ending legalized segregation, and seeking equal treatment in the courts. *The Crisis*, situated at the center of the renaissance, served as a gathering place and a central distribution point for ideas; it printed news coming in from the provinces and then—through its nationwide distribution—spread that news throughout the country. Many observers considered its activities "agitation."

W. E. B. Du Bois served as the editor of *The Crisis* from its first issue, which appeared in November 1910, until he was forced to resign in 1934. In that first issue, he set the tone of the journal. *The Crisis* cataloged recent triumphs and defeats in regard to racial discrimination. It printed pages of news, broken down under headings such as political, education, social uplift, judicial decisions, science, and art. Du Bois told his readers in the first issue that the journal sought to alert the nation to the crying evil of racial prejudice. In its early years it printed articles by leading social reformers like Professor Franz Boas of Columbia University's anthropology department and Jane Addams of Chicago's Hull House. Other key contributors included Oswald Garrison Villard, Charles Edward Russell, Arthur Schomburg, and M. D. Maclean. In later years, mostly after 1915, the journal continued to include commentary by social scientists, but it also included more work on literature and the fine arts. With guidance from its literary editor, Jessie Fauset, it published work by Langston Hughes, Charles Chesnutt, Countee Cullen, and Claude McKay, and extensive excerpts from W. D. Howells and Mary White Ovington.

The Crisis provided a systematic critique of mainstream racial attitudes. Some articles articulated grievances; and in an editorial in April 1911, Du Bois identified five key problems: lack of opportunity to save money, local discrimination, discrimination in wages, mob violence, and legal violence. Much of the power of *The Crisis* came from its monthly catalog of injustices. An example is the case of Pink Franklin, who was serving a life sentence in a prison in South Carolina for killing a white man who had invaded Pink's house to try to enforce an arrest warrant; Franklin had violated South Carolina's "debt peonage" statute, which was subsequently struck down. *The Crisis* asked in February 1911: If a white man had



Cover of the first issue of *The Crisis*. (Corbis.)

committed a similar offense, would he ever have been convicted? In June 1916, an article entitled “Progressive Oklahoma” compared the rape of a black girl by a white man with a burglary committed by a black man in the same town on the same day: The rapist was free on bond, whereas the burglar was being severely punished.

Other articles exposed the hypocrisy of white Americans’ attitudes. In November 1917, for instance, *The Crisis* pointed out contradictory statements in southern newspapers, such as a statement that blacks in Alabama were safe juxtaposed with a threat to punish any “Negro in any community who dares raise his hand against white men, no matter what the cause.” Such statements showed that newspapers often exaggerated stories, making blacks who defended themselves against attack appear to be criminals, and exonerating whites from culpability for crimes. In one article, *The Crisis* cataloged how newspapers called attention to crimes by black people but failed to note the race of criminals when no blacks were involved.

According to a story in *The Crisis* in April 1911, these tendencies of the white press manufactured prejudice.

Often, *The Crisis* provided sophisticated social science critiques of inequality. In a series of long articles in the 1920s, it explored differences in quality between white and black schools in the southern states. Through meticulous analysis of such issues as expenditures per pupil, these articles demonstrated the shameful lack of educational opportunity for black students. Side-by-side pictures of schools for blacks and whites, along with graphs and tables, brought home the reality of separate educational systems. Baltimore, where segregated housing was required by zoning laws, received extended treatment, such as an article in November 1911, “A Year of Segregation in Baltimore.”

Over the years, through close analysis of problems with voting rights, lynching, and legalized (or required) discrimination, Du Bois articulated a philosophy of equal treatment. This philosophy was captured in his statement in an article of April 1915: “The American negro demands equality—political equality, industrial equality, and social equality; and his is never going to rest satisfied with anything less.” *The Crisis* built many of its arguments around the idea of equal treatment. That idea was central to American jurisprudence and had extraordinary power; thus there were frequent articles summarizing discrimination in voting rights, discrimination by police officers and prosecutors, and the persistence of lynching. One particularly contentious issue was legislation preventing marriage between blacks and whites; an editorial in February 1913 urged that such laws stamped blacks as inferior to whites and left black women subject to exploitation by white men.

The campaign against lynching was one of the most important throughout Du Bois’s leadership of *The Crisis*. Lynching represented the worst breakdown of law; it also represented, according to a statement by James Weldon Johnson to the NAACP’s annual meeting (reported in the September 1927 issue), “the seizing of black America’s body and of white America’s soul.” Du Bois focused special attention on lynching, citing statistics, giving accounts of individual lynchings, and highlighting the complete failure of law enforcement agencies and prosecutors to punish lynchings. He also used photographs to attack lynching: These were a particularly compelling way to depict the gruesome details. White participants often took photos in order to celebrate lynchings (and then made postcards of these photos); Du Bois turned those same pictures to a

different purpose. As he said in “Lynchers Triumphant” in December 1911, printing the photographs would show the world “what semi-barbarous America is doing.” Similarly, in July 1916, the article “The Waco Horror” combined sociological inquiry with appalling photographs. “Jesus Christ in Georgia,” published in December 1911, was a short story about a Christlike victim of a lynching.

As Congress was considering antilynching legislation, *The Crisis* printed legal analyses supporting such legislation. Lynching was the centerpiece of Du Bois’s campaign for a new understanding of the equal protection of the law; he asked that blacks as well as whites be given the protection of laws against lynching. Moreover, equal treatment under the law promised to improve the lives of blacks in general: It promised economic opportunities and opportunities in housing, business, and education.

The rhetoric of democracy that prevailed during World War I was a key component of Du Bois’s campaign for equal protection; he emphasized the differences in treatment that blacks received at home. However, under pressure from the NAACP and the war department, which had temporarily banned *The Crisis* from soldiers’ reading rooms, Du Bois published a brief editorial in July 1918, entitled “Close Ranks.” This editorial pointed out the benefits blacks could expect from defeating Germany and urged them to “close ranks” with whites and fight for democracy.

Still, Du Bois did not retreat from his demand for equal treatment; and after the war, his agitation landed him in trouble again. The post office delayed delivery of the May 1919 issue, which contained controversial material, including the article “Essay Toward a History of the Black Man in the Great War,” describing the heroism of black soldiers during the war and exposing their mistreatment. The editorial “Returning Soldiers” promised that, although blacks had closed ranks during the war, they were now ready to demand equal treatment. It contained the ominous statement “We return. We return from fighting. We return fighting.” A report to the U.S. Senate, “Radicalism and Sedition Among Negroes as Reflected in Their Publications,” prepared by J. Edgar Hoover, who was then a young lawyer, quoted this editorial as an example of the objectionable material in *The Crisis*. Hoover paid *The Crisis* and other black periodicals—such as A. Philip Randolph’s *Messenger*—the compliment of warning the Senate that “the influence of the Negro press” should not be “reckoned with lightly.”

In February 1919, Du Bois went to Paris for the Pan-African Conference, which he had largely coordinated and which he reported on in the issues of April and May. This conference laid out a broad agenda for self-determination for African nations and opportunities for educational and economic advancement, as well as basic protections such as public health and decent working conditions. Du Bois’s coverage of the conference marked a widening of focus for *The Crisis*, which now looked to Africa and the rest of the world, including Russia, Japan, and India.

The Crisis also celebrated the many triumphs of African Americans. Frequently, articles in *The Crisis* discussed legal victories: the United States Supreme Court’s invalidation of debt peonage in 1911, of the “grandfather provision” in Oklahoma in 1915, and of zoning that segregated cities in 1917; the Interstate Commerce Commission’s requirement of integration on certain railroad cars; and lower courts’ decisions invalidating other racially restrictive covenants and punishing police officers who turned prisoners over to lynch mobs. Some articles noted economic successes; there were accounts, with pictures, of successful black professionals, educational achievements, college and professional athletes, and advances in art and music. The record label Black Swan received attention, as did Josephine Baker. Even the advertisements in *The Crisis* emphasized opportunities for economic advancement. Insurance companies, banks, real estate companies, and clothiers appealed for customers; colleges and technical schools sought students. One can see how, through the pages of *The Crisis*, the Harlem Renaissance was pushing back many frontiers.

By the end of World War I, the circulation of *The Crisis* reached approximately 80,000 copies per month; in 1919, circulation peaked at just over 100,000. *The Crisis* resumed its radical stance, examining, for instance, mob violence against African Americans and the unequal treatment that they received at the hands of the police. The issue of October 1919—a particularly radical edition—gave an account of how the black community in Longview, Texas, had armed to protect itself against lynching after one black man was lynched there. A riot in which several whites died had ensued, but the article described the black community’s resort to “self help” in terms of admiration and concluded with a somber warning that “Negroes are not planning anything, but will defend themselves if attacked.”

Throughout the 1920s, *The Crisis* increased its coverage of literature, art, and African culture; modern

art, portraits, and scenes of Egypt and other African civilizations often appeared on its covers. At the same time it continued its efforts against lynching, focusing on the vicious riots that took place from 1917 through 1921. *The Crisis* campaigned relentlessly to free black tenant farmers who had been sentenced to death following a particularly heinous attack on the black community around Elaine, Arkansas, in 1919. The campaign culminated with Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes's landmark decision in *Moore v. Dempsey* in 1923; in the issue of April of that year, Walter White wrote an article entitled "The Defeat of Arkansas Mob Law."

Du Bois' socialist attitudes had often caused problems with the board of the NAACP, and he angered the board further with two editorials in 1934: "Segregation" in January and an elaboration, "Segregation in the North," in April, which seemed to oppose integration. As a result, Du Bois tendered his resignation and was replaced by Roy Wilkins. Thereafter, *The Crisis* continued to be published, but without the intellectual leadership that had made it so important to the Harlem Renaissance. Du Bois had crisply described the hypocrisy of whites with regard to race and had identified inconsistencies in the nation's treatment of blacks and whites. His theme of equal treatment, developed persistently for twenty-four years, bore extraordinary fruit. It was ultimately adopted and extended by courts and legislatures, so that ideas expressed in *The Crisis* became central parts of American law and culture. Ralph Ellison, in his essay "What Would America Be Like Without Blacks," listed contributions by African Americans to American culture; one is tempted to add to that list "the idea of equal protection under law." When Du Bois resigned, the board of the NAACP said that his ideas, particularly as expressed in *The Crisis*, had "transformed the Negro world as well as a large portion of the liberal white world, so that the whole problem of the relation of black and white races has ever since had a completely new orientation."

ALFRED L. BROPHY

See also Antilynching Crusade; Baker, Josephine; Black Swan Phonograph Company; Boas, Franz; Crisis, The: Literary Prizes; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Messenger, The; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Pan-African Congresses; Schomburg, Arthur A.; Villard, Oswald Garrison; *specific writers*

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Crisis, The: Literary Prizes

The Crisis, the monthly magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), was first published in 1910. Its first editor was W. E. B. Du Bois, who was director of publicity and research when the NAACP was established, also in 1910, and who would remain the editor until 1934. Du Bois used the magazine to champion the rights of American blacks and people of color worldwide, but he also emphasized the promotion of African American arts—literature, music, fine art, and drama. His efforts with regard to the arts helped launch the careers of many figures who are now considered leaders of the Harlem Renaissance, including Zora Neale Hurston, Jean Toomer, Gwendolyn Bennett, and Anne Spencer.

The Crisis promoted the arts in various ways. First, through the arts it presented issues having to do with politics and social and civil rights. Second, it encouraged its readers to participate in and celebrate the arts. Third, it offered discussions of various aspects of the arts: art as propaganda, appropriate subjects for writing, appropriate styles of writing, and ways of

portraying blacks in art. All these issues were debated between the covers of the magazine during the early decades of the twentieth century. Fourth, the well-known novelist, poet, and essayist Jessie Fauset was the literary editor of *The Crisis* from 1919 to 1926, and under her leadership many writers of the Harlem Renaissance were introduced to American audiences. Fifth—and of particular importance—*The Crisis* showcased the arts by sponsoring literary contests.

The Amy Spingarn Contest in Literature and Art was named for its benefactor, the poet Amy E. Spingarn, who was the wife of Joel Spingarn, the literary critic and chair of the NAACP from 1914 to 1919. The Spingarns were responsible for funding the first two literary contests. Amy Spingarn donated \$600 in 1925 and 1926 for first-, second-, and third-place winners in fiction, drama, poetry, essays, and artwork. In 1927, she provided \$350 for the literary prizes, while women's and commercial groups donated more than \$1,600 for further literary awards. These additional patrons wanted the entries to have more themes related to finances and insurance, and to offer examples of financial industriousness among American blacks.

Judges of the contests included respected black and white writers such as Charles Chesnutt, Sinclair Lewis, H. G. Wells, James Weldon Johnson, William Stanley Braithwaite, Eugene O'Neill, and Du Bois himself. Winners included Arna Bontemps, Countee Cullen, Aaron Douglas, Rudolph Fisher, and Langston Hughes. In the poetry contest of 1926, for example, Arna Bontemps won the first prize of \$100 for "A Nocturne at Bethesda," and Countee Cullen won second prize for "Thoughts in a Zoo."

The entries and judges declined in stature in 1927, and the annual contests were ended in 1928. Thereafter, Amy Spingarn and the business groups awarded the Charles Waddell Chesnutt Honoraria of \$50 each for the best poetry and short story published each month. They also planned to have monthly economic prizes, but these were never actually awarded, owing to the small number of participants.

Another prominent editor, Charles S. Johnson of the National Urban League's magazine, *Opportunity*, also encouraged young black writers by offering cash prizes for literature. In addition, both *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* were very generous about publishing the work of aspiring writers; Du Bois also included in *The Crisis* the judges' remarks about the winning entries. Thus, although the contests sponsored by these magazines

were of relatively short duration initially—about three years—they were important vehicles for talented figures of the Harlem Renaissance.

At *The Crisis*, literary prizes returned in the 1930s, funded by Louise Mathews, the mother-in-law of Oliver La Farge, the trustee of the awards, who wanted them to be called the Du Bois Literary Prizes. Each year, \$1,000 was to be awarded; the rotating categories were prose fiction, prose nonfiction, and poetry. In 1932, no prize was given for prose fiction, because no entry was considered suitable. In 1933, the award for prose nonfiction was given to James Weldon Johnson's *Black Manhattan* (1930). In 1934, no award was given for poetry, because Du Bois resigned from *The Crisis* that year, and the awards were closely associated with him. When Roy Wilkins became the editor of *The Crisis* in 1934, the NAACP asserted its editorial control and insisted on reducing the magazine's literary content. Thereafter, *The Crisis* was never as essential an outlet for literary talent as it had been during the Harlem Renaissance.

LOU-ANN CROUTHER

See also Bennett, Gwendolyn; Crisis, The; Douglas, Aaron; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Hurston, Zora Neale; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Opportunity Literary Contests; Spencer, Anne; Spingarn, Joel; Toomer, Jean; *other specific writers*

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Crisis, The: The Negro In Art—How Shall He Be Portrayed? A Symposium

W. E. B. Du Bois did not set out to transform *The Crisis* into the premier African American literary journal, but under his editorial leadership it became one of the most important showcases for the early work of many young writers of the Harlem Renaissance. Du Bois viewed this new literature in terms of its potential for improving race relations. An extended example of his view of literature as a tool for racial progress begins with his editorial in February 1926 issue of *The Crisis*, in which he calls for a symposium, "The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed?," and lists seven questions. These questions were reprinted with each of the seven installments of the symposium appearing in the journal in the months that followed:

1. When the artist, black or white, portrays Negro characters, is he under any obligations or limitations as to the sort of character he will portray?
2. Can any author be criticized for painting the worst or the best characters of a group?
3. Can publishers be criticized for refusing to handle novels that portray Negroes of education and accomplishment, on the ground that these characters are no different from white folk and therefore not interesting?
4. What are Negroes to do when they are continually painted at their worst and judged by the public as they are painted?
5. Does the situation of the educated Negro in America with its pathos, humiliation, and tragedy call for artistic treatment at least as sincere and sympathetic as "Porgy" received?
6. Is not the continual portrayal of the sordid, foolish, and criminal among Negroes convincing the world that this and this alone is really and essentially Negroid, and preventing white artists from knowing any other types and preventing black artists from daring to paint them?

7. Is there not a real danger that young colored writers will be tempted to follow the popular trend in portraying Negro characters in the underworld rather than seeking to paint the truth about themselves and their own social class?

These questions reflected Du Bois's legitimate concerns about the effect of white patronage on African American art and about the reinforcement of negative images of black people in the white popular imagination, but what begins in this symposium as a call to dialogue ends in rhetorical posturing. The first three, open-ended questions are followed by two that assume a particular stance toward recent literature and its impact on public opinion (question 4, for instance, implies that African Americans indeed were being "continually painted at their worst" and that they were viewed accordingly by a large number of readers). The list then ends with two closed-ended questions. Several participants in the symposium openly criticized the formulation of the questions. H. L. Mencken replied that the fifth question was "simply rhetorical"; Alfred A. Knopf found the third one "to be senseless" and the others rarely to deserve more than a one-word reply.

The symposium included an impressive list of names, and many of the responses deserve closer attention. As the first contributor to the first installment, Carl Van Vechten did not address the questions directly, but his reply anticipated the speech of the white editor in his novel *Nigger Heaven*; he argues that the "wealth of novel, exotic, picturesque material" found in lower-class African American life will be used to the point of exhaustion by the white artist unless the African American succeeds in representing it in art first. Other white intellectuals and artists, addressing Du Bois's questions more systematically, agreed with Van Vechten that the black artist should be free to choose any subject matter. Mencken stated that the artist should be "under no obligations or limitations whatsoever." Vachel Lindsay rejected the idea of obligations and maintained that the artist must only be "honest." DuBose Heyward also held that the "sincere artist" is not obligated in any way and that art "destroys itself as soon as it is made a vehicle for propaganda." Julia Peterkin agreed: "The minute anyone becomes an advocate he ceases to be an artist." The "true artist, black or white," Peterkin continued, "will search for these tokens of racial worth and weave around them his contribution to literature."

Black writers were far less unified in their responses. In his brief reply, Langston Hughes—like the white respondents—insisted on the freedom of the “true literary artist.” Similarly, Walter White maintained that “the artist should be allowed full freedom in the choice of his characters and material.” Other black writers, however, identified more closely with Du Bois’s concerns. Jessie Fauset was in emphatic agreement with the implication of Du Bois’s final question, regarding pressures on the young black writer to portray only the sordid side of black life. She added: “This is a grave danger making for a literary insincerity both insidious and abominable.” Countee Cullen’s response was more measured but still in line with Du Bois’s concerns: “Negro artists have a definite duty to perform in this matter [of reconstructing the image of black people in literature], one which should supersede their individual prerogatives without denying their rights.” Cullen also noted that the young black writer should choose material freely, even from among lower-class blacks, but he then added “only let him not pander to the popular trend of seeing no cleanliness in their squalor, no nobleness in their meanness, and no commonsense in their ignorance.”

The varied responses to the questions in this symposium mirror a larger debate in the Harlem Renaissance about the responsibilities and freedoms of the African American artist and the proper roles of white critics and publishers. In its May 1926 issue, *The Crisis* carried the third grouping of responses to the questions and announced briefly that Jessie Fauset had stepped down from her position as the journal’s literary editor. The fourth installment of the symposium coincided with the publication of Langston Hughes’s essay “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” in *The Nation* (23 June 1926), in which Hughes most famously develops his position on the responsibilities and freedoms of the African American writer. Along with the second-to-last set of responses (October 1926), Du Bois issued his own manifesto on blacks’ creative production, “Criteria of Negro Art,” in which he famously asserts: “All art is propaganda and ever must be, despite the wailing of the purists. . . . I do not care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda.” In the December 1926 issue of *The Crisis* (the issue following the last of the set of printed responses to the symposium), Du Bois published his scathing review of Carl Van Vechten’s novel *Nigger Heaven* (1926). Subsequent novels by others, including Julia Peterkin’s *Black April* (1927) and Claude McKay’s *Home to Harlem* (1928), also drew Du Bois’s sharp

criticism for their unsavory representations of African American life.

The symposium “The Negro in Art—How Shall He Be Portrayed?” remains of interest as an example of Du Bois’s concerns about literary tastes and publishing trends and as a concise record of the views of many other artists and intellectuals important to the Harlem Renaissance.

JAMES B. KELLEY

See also Crisis, The; Cullen, Countee; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Heyward, DuBoise; Knopf, Alfred A.; Lindsay, Vachel; Mencken, H. L.; Nigger Heaven; Peterkin, Julia Mood; Van Vechten, Carl

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Cullen, Countee

Concerning Countee Cullen (1903–1946), there is a sense of expectations unfulfilled. Cullen was one of the most respected poets of the Harlem Renaissance; but although the publication of *Color* in 1925 announced a young poet full of promise and potential, this first volume would turn out to be his best, so much so that critics and Cullen himself often noted the underachievement of his subsequent publications. As the author of several evocative and poignant lines about not only African Americans but also “universal” topics, such as life, death, and love, Cullen demands more serious appraisal and evaluation than he has yet received.

Cullen’s early background consists of puzzling ambiguities. There is, for example, some discrepancy about the place of his birth: Louisville, Kentucky; Baltimore, Maryland; and New York City have all been cited at various times. In addition, little is known about his

real parents. Records suggest that as a young child he lived with his grandmother. After she died, he lived with Rev. Frederick A. and Carolyn Cullen of New York. By 1918, when he may have been adopted by the Cullens, he identified himself as Countee P. Cullen; and eventually he called himself simply Countee Cullen.

Cullen had a classic literary education that influenced his poetry. He attended Dewitt Clinton High School, and his first published poems appeared in the high school literary journal, *The Magpie*, of which he was the associate editor during his senior year. He attended New York University from 1921 to 1925, after which he received his master's degree in English and French from Harvard University. From 1926 to 1928, Cullen wrote an editorial and book review column for *Opportunity* magazine called "The Dark Tower."

In April 1928, Cullen married Nina Yolande Du Bois, the daughter of W. E. B. Du Bois; Rev. Frederick A. Cullen performed the ceremony, which was well publicized, at his church. This union of two young members of the "talented tenth" appeared to be successful. Nina Yolande Du Bois received her master's degree from Columbia University and taught art and English at Frederick Douglass High School in Baltimore, and Cullen had recently won a Guggenheim fellowship; this fellowship sent him to France, and Yolande followed later. However, they divorced in March 1930 after being married for less than two years. Cullen was married again in 1940, to Ida Mae Roberson, whose scrapbooks concerning her husband have offered a wealth of information for scholars.

Cullen was a successful writer of sonnets, and the early nineteenth-century English poet John Keats was his model. But Cullen's usual choice of subject matter has tended to draw harsh criticism. Huggins (1971) described Cullen as "forever true" to a "genteel" strait-jacket (211), and Shucard (1984) said that "Cullen's voice sometimes sounds effete" (16). Cullen himself held his writings to a high standard. His own definition of "good poetry" expresses his idealistic criteria:

[G]ood poetry is a lofty thought beautifully expressed. . . . Poetry should not be too intellectual; it should deal more . . . with the emotions. The highest type of poem is that which warmly stirs the emotions, which awakens a responsive chord in the human heart. Poetry, like music, depends upon feeling rather than intellect, although there should of course be enough to satisfy the mind, too. (quoted in Perry 1971, 29)

Perhaps because of his artistic ideals, Cullen explicitly rejected a poetic identification solely with African Americans; in this, he differed from his contemporaries Claude McKay and Langston Hughes, who both made explicit references to their racial background (in McKay's case, that background was Caribbean). Cullen (1927) revealed his reluctance to be identified only as a "Negro poet" in the preface to an anthology he edited, *Caroling Dusk*:

I have called this collection an anthology of verse by Negro poets rather than an anthology of Negro verse, since this latter designation would be more confusing than accurate. . . . The attempt to corral the outbursts of the ebony muse into some definite mold to which all poetry by Negroes will conform seems altogether futile and aside from the facts. . . . As heretical as it may sound, there is the probability that Negro poets, dependent as they are on the English language, may have more to gain from the rich background of English and American poetry than from any nebulous atavistic yearnings toward an African inheritance. (xi)

These comments reveal the extent to which Cullen perceived the primitive as an unwelcome, anachronistic legacy for black people. Indeed, one of Cullen's best-known poems, "Heritage," evokes the divided response of the African American to his African past. Cullen's more "universal" poems were attempts not to deny his racial background but to assert the poet's right to compose lines on subjects not explicitly dealing with race:

Must we, willy-nilly, be forced into writing of the old atavistic urges, the more savage and none too beautiful aspects of our lives? May we not chant a hymn to the Sun God if we will, create a bit of phantasy in which not a spiritual or a blues appears, write a tract defending Christianity, though its practitioners aid us so little in our argument; in short do, write, create what we will, our only concern being that we do it well and with all the power in us? (1929, 373)

Cullen perceived the interest of the (usually white) public in the primitive and the salacious as a limitation for the black writer. Indeed, in his review of Langston Hughes's first book of poems, *The Weary Blues*, Cullen (1926) expressed a belief that Hughes was indulging in sensuality. He said, for instance, that Hughes's jazz poems "tend to hurl this poet into the

gaping pit that lies before all Negro writers, in the confines of which they become racial artists rather than artists pure and simple. There is too much emphasis here on strictly Negro themes" (74). For Cullen, Hughes' "spontaneous" poems coincided too well with the public's expectations of blackness.

Although Cullen resisted the title "black poet," some of his most memorable and most often anthologized poems are those that deal with the experience of race. In addition to "Heritage," other well-known poems such as "Incident," "Uncle Jim," and "From the Dark Tower" continue to resonate with readers decades after they were first published. The sonnet "Yet Do I Marvel," contains the classic couplet "Yet do I marvel at this curious thing:/To make a poet black and bid him sing!" One of Cullen's later poems, "Karengé Ya Marengé" (1942), evokes the frustrated desire for liberty that impelled the leader Mohandas Gandhi:

Is Indian speech so quaint, so weak, so rude,
So like its land enslaved, denied, and crude,
That men who claim they fight for liberty
Can hear this battle-shout impassively . . . ?

Cullen also wrote several long, narrative poems. *The Black Christ* was the story of a lynching, and *The Ballad of the Brown Girl* told the story of a young maiden whose lover leaves her for another.

Cullen's novel *One Way to Heaven* (1932) is sometimes taken as a response to Carl Van Vechten's novel of Harlem, *Nigger Heaven* (1926). Though frequently dismissed in favor of his poetry, *One Way to Heaven* does exhibit Cullen's strong writing skills. The opening chapter, for example, offers a quite dramatic and perceptive description of an African American church revival. In addition, Cullen's emphasis on a lower-class black couple, the usually unemployed Sam Lucas and the maid Mattie Johnson, makes this work stand out from the other novels of the period that dealt with the educated members of the talented tenth or with the familiar issue of racial passing. Unlike Van Vechten's *Scarlet Creeper* in *Nigger Heaven*, Sam, with his illegal escapes, inspires the reader's comprehension and sympathy.

Less known though equally intriguing are Cullen's children's stories: *My Lives and How I Lost Them*, about the adventures of a cat; and *The Lost Zoo*, about the animals that missed the opportunity to board Noah's ark. Cullen apparently had a strong interest in cats: He "cowrote" these children's books with a feline, Mr. Christopher Cat.

From 1934 until his death, Cullen taught French and English at Frederick Douglass High School in New York, where the young James Baldwin was one of his students. At the time Cullen died, he was in the process of collecting what he considered his best poems; this collection was published posthumously as *On These I Stand*. One of his other final projects was his work with Arna Bontemps on a dramatic version of Bontemps's novel *God Sends Sunday*. It was produced as *Saint Louis Woman* several months after Cullen's death.

One of the more recent issues in scholarship on Countee Cullen has been his sexual orientation. When Cullen left the United States on his Guggenheim fellowship, his best friend, Harold Jackman, went with him; there has been speculation that the two may have been lovers. Cullen's poem "Tableau" (1925) may support these conjectures: It presents two boys, one black and one white, "locked arm in arm." Although passersby are "indignant that these two should dare/In unison to walk," the boys are "oblivious to look and



Countee Cullen in Central Park, New York, 1941. (Library of Congress.)

word." However, Early (1991) notes that "nothing conclusive" has been presented to substantiate these claims (19, n. 21), and Cullen did have a strong relationship with second wife, Ida. In brief, there are some scholars who take Cullen's homosexuality as a given, whereas others have been more resistant to this idea.

Cullen died 9 January 1946, never having produced another volume that would receive as much critical acclaim as his first, *Color*. Bontemps (1947) noted that "Cullen did not live to see another springtime resurgence of his own creative powers comparable with the impulse that produced the first three books of poetry, the books which give his selected poems most of their lilt and brightness" (44). Nor has Cullen received as much retrospective attention as other writers of the Harlem Renaissance, such as Hughes. As Early (1991) suggests, this may have more to do with "the dynamics and politics of the making of a black literary reputation" (6) than with the perception that Cullen's writing is not worthy of new criticism. Although Cullen has been criticized for not being bolder in experimenting with his gift, he was unequalled in his talent for creating what one can politely call the formal poetry of the Harlem Renaissance.

Biography

The poet Countee P. Cullen (originally named Countee Porter) was born in 1903; the place of his birth is not certain, and little is known of his parents. He evidently lived with a grandmother; after her death, he lived with Rev. Frederick A. and Carolyn Cullen of New York, who may have adopted him by 1918. He then identified himself as Countee P. Cullen, and eventually simply as Countee Cullen. He attended Dewitt Clinton High School, and his first published poems appeared in its literary journal. He attended New York University (1921–1925) and then received a master's degree in English and French from Harvard University. In 1926–1928, he wrote an editorial and book review column, "The Dark Tower," for *Opportunity* magazine. In April 1928, he married Nina Yolande Du Bois, the daughter of W. E. B. Du Bois; this marriage ended in divorce in March 1930, and in 1940, he married Ida Mae Roberson. In addition to poetry, Cullen wrote a novel and children's stories. From 1934 to his death in 1946, he taught French and English at Frederick Douglass High School in New York.

MIRIAM THAGGERT

See also Authors: 5—Poets; Bontemps, Arna; *Color*; Cullen, Frederick Asbury; Cullen–Du Bois Wedding; Guggenheim Fellowships; Homosexuality; Hughes, Langston; Jackman, Harold; Literature: 7—Poetry; McKay, Claude; Primitivism; Talented Tenth; Van Vechten, Carl; *specific works*

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Cullen, Frederick Asbury

Frederick Asbury Cullen served for forty-two years as minister of Salem Methodist Episcopal Church in Harlem, but he is now remembered primarily as the foster father of the poet Countee Cullen. Having unofficially adopted the teenage Countee Porter, Cullen and his wife, Carolyn, raised the boy and introduced

him to Harlem's prestigious social circles, which would eventually celebrate him as Harlem's poet laureate. Frederick Cullen promoted his son's achievements as any father might do, attending readings and reprinting two of his son's poems in his self-published autobiography. Yet Frederick Cullen's significance hardly turned solely on his son's prestige. Indeed, as a minister, Cullen was clearly a more influential figure in Harlem than a poet could ever hope to be.

Arriving in 1902, Frederick Cullen began a ministry to Harlem under the aegis of Saint Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church. The Salem mission began with a service attended by three women, who left nineteen cents in the offering plate. But riding the wave of the "great migration," and inspired by Cullen's indefatigable evangelism, Salem swelled to more than 2,500 members by the 1920s. Along with churches such as Abyssinian Baptist, Salem became one of the most significant social institutions in Harlem, and its minister one of the most influential leaders. Prodded by Cullen, Salem began a variety of social ministries. Further, unlike some ministers, who catered to the tastes of the black bourgeoisie, Cullen changed the culture of worship at Salem in order to welcome southern immigrants. For instance, at the risk of some ridicule, he welcomed the flamboyant evangelist George W. Becton to his pulpit.

While insisting that the ultimate cure for Harlem's social ills was conversion to Christianity, Cullen also participated energetically in the political events of his day. He helped organize the Silent Parade of 1919 and headed a delegation to President Woodrow Wilson to protest against the execution of black soldiers following riots in Brownsville, Texas. Cullen was also an early member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); he served as president of the Harlem chapter and helped send W. E. B. Du Bois to the first Pan-African Congress. Thus, while Cullen's ideology and path to leadership mark him as a member of a more conservative generation of black leaders, he can also be seen as an early prototype of New Negro activism, paving the path for his son and other writers of the Harlem Renaissance.

This having been said, it remains true that Cullen's most direct significance to the Harlem Renaissance was through his influence on his son. A vigorous proponent of the traditional moral strictures of Methodism, Frederick Cullen often preached against the vices and entertainments of Harlem that he feared would lead his flock astray. Clearly, Frederick Cullen's devotion accounted for much of Countee Cullen's self-proclaimed

struggle between his "Christian upbringing" and the "pagan inclination" that he associated with poetry, with Africa, and with his homoerotic desires. Some commentators have suggested that the younger Cullen's struggle reflected tension having to do with Frederick Cullen's own ambiguous sexuality. Nevertheless, the son deeply appreciated his father's benevolence, penning several poems in his father's praise. The two remained lifelong companions, often traveling together to Europe and the Middle East. This intimate bond was symbolized when father and son died in the same year, 1946.

Biography

Frederick Asbury Cullen was born c. 1868 in Somerset County, Maryland. He was educated in Somerset County public schools and at Maryland State Normal School (later Towson University); he studied theology at Morgan College (1901). Cullen was converted to Christianity at Sharp Street Methodist Church in Baltimore, Maryland, in September 1894; he was ordained as a minister in Delaware County, Maryland, in 1900. He served as minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Catlin, Maryland (1900–1902) and of Salem Methodist Episcopal Church (later Salem United Methodist) in Harlem (1902–1944). He served as president of the Harlem branch of the NAACP and helped organize the National Urban League (1910). Cullen died 25 May 1946.

PETER POWERS

See also Abyssinian Baptist Church; Becton, George Wilson; Cullen, Countee; Lynching: Silent Protest Parade; National Urban League; Saint Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church

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Cullen—Du Bois Wedding

The wedding of Yolande Du Bois (1900–1961) and Countee Cullen took place on Easter Monday, 9 April 1928, at Salem Methodist Episcopal Church in Harlem. It had the aura of a royal wedding and became known as the single most important social event of the Harlem Renaissance. Yolande Du Bois, who was then twenty-five, was the only surviving child of the scholar and activist William Edward Burghardt (W. E. B.) Du Bois and his wife, Nina; she had been educated at Fisk University and was a teacher in the Baltimore public school system. Countee Cullen, then twenty-four, was one of the leading poets in the Harlem Renaissance (“Yet Do I Marvel” is among his best-known poems) and was one of the rare artists of the period who had actually grown up in Harlem; he was the adopted son of Rev. Frederick Cullen and Frederick’s wife, Carolyn.

It appears that Yolande Du Bois and Countee Cullen had been introduced in the mid-1920s by Cullen’s best friend, Harold Jackman, a debonair and charming man about town who encouraged their acquaintance. The courtship was somewhat rocky. With the support of her father, Cullen proposed to Yolande Du Bois during the Christmas holiday season of 1927; then, Cullen and W. E. B. Du Bois spent the next few months planning the wedding, with some input from her.

Extensive coverage by the African American press kept readers informed of virtually every detail of the wedding. Everything associated with the wedding was news—including the special rail car used to transport Yolande Du Bois and her bridesmaids from Baltimore, and Countee Cullen’s receipt of the marriage license four days before the ceremony so as to not be inconvenienced by any potential closing of the office for the Easter holiday. On the day of the wedding, the church was overcrowded, perhaps because of a banner headline that had appeared in the *Baltimore Afro-American* on the Saturday before—“5,000 to See Her Married Monday”—above a large photograph of Yolande Du Bois. There

were actually 1,200 invited guests, but 3,000 people attended the ceremony. This seems to have put Frederick Cullen, the minister who was to perform the marriage, in an awkward position; he was compelled to state “This isn’t my wedding!”—explaining that the bride’s parents were in charge of it and that he himself could not include additional guests. Yolande Du Bois was attended by sixteen bridesmaids. Countee Cullen was attended by nine groomsmen, including Edward Perry, Langston Hughes, Arna Bontemps, and Sydney Peterson; Harold Jackman served as his best man. After the wedding, the couple left New York City on Tuesday, 10 April 1928, for visits to Philadelphia; Atlantic City, New Jersey; and Great Barrington, Massachusetts. By the following week both were back at their jobs in New York City and Baltimore, respectively; however, their brief honeymoon was followed by a more extensive vacation later that summer.

Gossip spread when the African American press reported that Countee Cullen and Harold Jackman left for Europe in June 1928 and then that Yolande Cullen joined her husband in August. By September–October, W. E. B. Du Bois was counseling his son-in-law on maintaining the marriage. Presumably, the issue was not Yolande Cullen’s inexperience or her ways as a spoiled child but rather that Countee Cullen eventually admitted his preference for men, and the marriage was over. The separation and divorce were negotiated by Countee Cullen and W. E. B. Du Bois. The divorce became final in France in the spring of 1930.

JACQUELINE C. JONES

See also Cullen, Countee; Cullen, Frederick Asbury; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Jackman, Harold

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Cultural Organizations

A wide range of cultural organizations existed during the Harlem Renaissance to support the arts. They functioned in both formal and informal capacities. Black institutions such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Urban League gave significant support to the arts, although their main purposes were broader social and political missions. Public libraries served as informal community centers; the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library (now known as the Countee Cullen Regional Branch) was a central gathering place during the 1920s, with a series of forums that attracted a wide audience. Groups such as the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) located in black neighborhoods offered cultural events and provided spaces for plays and exhibitions. Wealthy white philanthropists ran foundations that benefited black artists directly. Last, interested African American individuals sponsored culture broadly within the black community.

Black associations played a critical role in encouraging young African American writers, artists, and musicians. Although not specifically created as cultural organizations, the National Urban League and the NAACP celebrated literature and the fine arts and recognized the achievements of African Americans through award programs. The magazines of both these organizations, *Opportunity* and *The Crisis*, published significant amounts of poetry and art by up-and-coming African Americans. In 1914, Joel E. Spingarn, chairman of the board of the NAACP, established the Spingarn Medal; it was given annually to an African American of note who had made significant contributions in "any field of elevated or honorable human endeavor." A decade later, Spingarn's wife, Amy Spingarn, established the Amy Spingarn Prizes for literature and the arts. The awards were announced in *The Crisis*, and the magazine sponsored the first awards ceremony at a dinner at the Renaissance Casino at 138th Street in August 1925. Several months earlier, the National Urban League sponsored the *Opportunity* Literary Contest, which gave prizes for

short stories, poetry, and drama. The first *Opportunity* awards were given in May 1925 at a dinner at the Fifth Avenue Restaurant. Among the winners were Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, and Countee Cullen, all young writers who formed the epicenter of the Harlem Renaissance.

Although it was not so well recognized in this regard, Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) published literature and poetry in its official weekly newspaper, *Negro World*, and sponsored literary clubs for its members. *Negro World* was an outlet for the young Zora Neale Hurston and Eric Walrond and for other aspiring writers from Africa, the Caribbean, and Central America. Branches of the UNIA established literary clubs in Boston, Portland (Oregon), Norfolk (Virginia), Philadelphia, and New York as well as in Montreal, Cuba, and the West Indies. These clubs arranged for members to attend concerts, poetry readings, and plays and participate in debates. Members of the UNIA frequently held functions at the 135th Street Library. The Booklovers Club met regularly at this library, and intellectuals associated with the UNIA presented lectures on topics such as "Negro Prose Writers," "Books and How to Read Them," and "Nordic Culture and the Negro" (Martin 1983).

The 135th Street Library was created with funds from Andrew Carnegie (he had donated \$5.2 million to New York City to build sixty-seven library branches, which were completed between 1901 and 1929). It opened on 14 January 1905 in a three-story classical revival building, designed by McKim, Mead, and White, with large windows, a wood-paneled vestibule, round plaster columns, and a main staircase with iron railings. The location of the 135th Street branch was central to its success: The 135th Street YMCA, Harlem Hospital, Abyssinian Baptist Church, and an elementary school were located within a radius of a few blocks.

The 135th Street Library was a repository for African and African American materials and an important place for the study of black culture. In 1920, Ernestine Rose was appointed librarian, with Catherine Allen Latimer as assistant librarian. Latimer, the first black librarian hired by the New York Public Library, began to create clipping files on black history and established a separate collection of books on African American life. Rose and Latimer eventually established, on the third floor of the library, a separate reference collection called the Division of Negro History. In 1926, the New York Public Library, with a \$10,000

gift from the Carnegie Corporation, purchased the bibliophile Arthur Schomburg's collection of rare books, prints, and manuscripts, making this division one of the most significant collections of such materials in the United States.

In the evenings, the 135th Street Library was alive with activity; it was a facility where one could see African American art and attend various cultural events. Rose, with the assistance of Jessie Fauset, Ethel Ray Nance, and Gwendolyn Bennett, organized poetry readings, book discussions, and other literary activities at the library. The 135th Street Library also lent its space for the annual Harmon Foundation exhibits. Writing about the importance of local library branches, Rose said that "the function of a library in any community is to act as a natural center for the development of the community's intellectual life" (Sinnette 1989). In the pursuit of this development of the mind, the library sponsored a Library Forum. One such forum took place in March 1923 with Countee Cullen, Bennett, Langston Hughes, Sadie Peterson, and the sculptor Augusta Savage reciting their poetry, Eric Walrond reading a short story, and Arthur Schomburg sitting in the audience (Martin 1983).

The "colored branches" of the YMCA also provided spaces for exhibitions, concerts, lectures, and literary and educational programs. African Americans had a long history of participation in the YMCA, which was established in the United States in 1852. Although the YMCA focused primarily on improving the spiritual and intellectual life of its members, its "colored branches" served broader goals in the African American community. The Washington, D.C., YMCA, one of the oldest branches in the nation, articulated the mission as the "mental, moral, and spiritual improvement of our race" (Mjagkij 1994). In segregated America, the "colored branches" offered, among other things, swimming pools, gymnasiums, reading rooms, dormitories, and cafés solely for the use of African American men. They provided opportunities for professional and personal development through organized sports, father-and-son events, and classes. Women attended evenings dedicated to cultural activities.

Between 1912 and 1933, twenty-four "colored branches" of the YMCA were built around the United States in such cities as Chicago (1913), Philadelphia (1914), and Cincinnati (1916). Most were constructed with substantial funding from Julius Rosenwald, the president of Sears, Roebuck, who was a committed philanthropist. In 1918, a new YMCA opened in

Brooklyn on Carleton Avenue; the following year, the newly built 135th Street YMCA opened to much fanfare. The 135th Street YMCA became a center of activity in Harlem. Paul Robeson performed there in 1920, in a production of Ridgely Torrence's *Simon the Cyrenian*, and W. E. B. Du Bois's Krigwa Players presented a full repertoire of dramas that attracted wide attendance in the YMCA's new auditorium. The Krigwa Players performed works by the black playwrights Angelina Weld Grimké, Willis Richardson, Georgia Douglas Johnson, and Eulalie Spence. Branches in Washington, D.C., Chicago, and Brooklyn were early locations for exhibitions devoted to the work of African American artists.

One of the key cultural organizations to emerge during the Harlem Renaissance was the Harmon Foundation, established in 1922 by the philanthropist and real estate tycoon William E. Harmon. This organization's original mission was to encourage individual self-help. Harmon later acknowledged African Americans' accomplishments when he established, in 1926, a five-year award program: the William E. Harmon Awards for Distinguished Achievement Among Negroes. Awards were offered in eight categories: literature, music, fine arts, business and industry, science and invention, education, religious service, and race relations. The Commission on Race Relations of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America under the guidance of George Haynes administered the Awards for Distinguished Achievement from 1926 to 1930. Harmon selected Haynes because of his dedicated service to interracial cooperation (Reynolds and Wright 1989).

From 1928 to 1933, the Harmon Foundation sponsored annual juried exhibitions to show the work of African American artists. The director, Mary Beattie Brady, established that a jury of five experts would evaluate the work. Artists submitted a portfolio that included art completed within the competition year, letters of recommendation, biographical information, and a recent photograph. Titled "Exhibit of Fine Arts Productions of American Negro Artists," the first three Harmon exhibitions opened in New York City at International House, located at 500 Riverside Drive. In 1931, the annual exhibition was moved to a better space for exhibiting art, the Art Center at 65–67 East 56th Street. With the assistance of the Commission on Race Relations, Brady also sponsored traveling exhibitions of the work; these went to art museums, colleges such as Fisk University and Spelman College, libraries, and "colored branches" of the YMCA. The last Harmon

Foundation exhibition took place in 1933. At the end of its five-year commitment, the organization decided to redirect its attention by supporting smaller group and solo exhibitions and providing small stipends directly to artists.

Although it clearly presented opportunities for exhibition, the Harmon Foundation and more particularly its director came under attack in the 1930s for including artists who appeared to lack ability, for segregating African Americans from the mainstream art world, and for assuming that black artists shared innate “racial qualities.” The most noted critique came from the artist Romare Bearden in an article entitled “The Negro Artist and Modern Art” for *Opportunity* in December 1934. He accused the Harmon Foundation of coddling and patronizing black artists and of creating a standard of inferiority by which African Americans would be judged as lesser artists in relation to the mainstream art world.

The Barnes Foundation would appear to have been less directly involved in the Harlem Renaissance, but it was an important place that encouraged art education, African art, and African American music. In 1922, Albert C. Barnes, a well-to-do pharmaceutical businessman and physician, established the Barnes Foundation on a 12-acre arboretum in Merion, Pennsylvania. Barnes created the educational institution “to promote the advancement of education and the appreciation of the fine arts.” Along with the foundation, Barnes had a residence and a gallery constructed to house his large collection of work, which was dominated by European and American modernist paintings and African art. A central part of Barnes’s mission was educating students in how to look at paintings and teaching them to understand the “plastic” relationship of art to nature. Classes at the Barnes Foundation actively involved studying works of art by such modernists as Paul Cézanne, Pablo Picasso, and Amedeo Modigliani as well as a variety of other artistic traditions including African sculpture; ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman carvings; and Chinese drawings and watercolors.

From the outset, Barnes himself was actively involved in the Harlem Renaissance. He attended the Civic Club dinner in March 1924 and was impressed with the range of talented authors and poets. After this encounter, he decided to support educational work among African Americans and contacted Alain Locke. Locke and Barnes had first met in Paris in January 1924, and it was Locke who invited Barnes to the Civic Club dinner. Barnes discussed with Locke

possible opportunities for young African American artists to study using his collection. One of the first individuals to benefit from this relationship was the graphic artist and painter Aaron Douglas, who received a stipend to study at the Barnes Foundation in 1925. Douglas wrote: “Gosh, but it is a marvelous place. He undoubtedly has the largest single collection of modern paintings in America and certainly the finest collection of Negro sculpture.” Charles Spurgeon Johnson, editor of *Opportunity*, reproduced selected pieces from Barnes’s collection of African art in the May 1924 issue. Locke also illustrated key pieces in his influential anthology *The New Negro* (1925). Barnes wrote an essay entitled “Negro Art and America” for this anthology that helped to define the Harlem Renaissance. Although this fact is infrequently noted, Locke took much of his understanding of African art from his interactions with Barnes (Clarke 1998).

Starting in 1925, Barnes also began to hold concerts of black spirituals at his foundation. Charles Spurgeon Johnson developed a cordial relationship with Barnes after the publication of his African art collection in *Opportunity* and in 1926 introduced Barnes to the Bordentown School Choir from Bordentown, New Jersey. From the first concert, Barnes was impressed, and he invited the choir to sing annually at the foundation. Barnes, who saw a strong link between music and art, included an annual lecture on the relationship between African sculpture and African American spirituals, giving his lecture between the sets of spirituals sung by the choir (Clarke 1998).

Other organizations and societies outside Harlem actively celebrated and promoted the culture of the 1920s. In such cities as Chicago and Washington, D.C., the black intelligentsia attended events similar to those of their counterparts in Harlem. Chicago’s Arts and Letters Society, the Chicago Art League, and the Tanner Art Students’ League in Washington, D.C., all supported exhibitions of the art of African Americans and also served as gathering places for those interested in literature and fine arts. The National Black Women’s Club Movement, with more than 1,000 clubs in American cities, sponsored numerous lectures and educational and cultural programs. In November 1927, the Chicago Woman’s Club organized the “Negro in Art Week,” a one-week extravaganza that included a concert, lectures, and an exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago. This groundbreaking show included work by contemporary African American artists and the Blondiau Collection of African Art from the Belgian Congo. The concert included Bach and

Ravel and traditional black spirituals sung by the Fisk Jubilee Singers. Both Alain Locke and James Weldon Johnson were invited to the exhibition, and Johnson gave a lecture entitled “The Art Approach to the Negro Problem.” The Chicago Woman’s Club is just one illustration of commitment by an organization to underscoring black culture and using culture as a tool to “uplift the race” (Meyerowitz 1997).

Individuals also were essential in promoting culture during this time: A’Lelia Walker stands out for her attempt to bring together both black and white literati. In 1928, Walker, the heiress of the hair-straightening magnate Madame C. J. Walker, established the Dark Tower, a literary salon held in her mansion at 108–110 West 136th Street in Harlem. The invitation to the opening of the Dark Tower stated, “We dedicate this tower to the aesthetes. That cultural group of young Negro writers, sculptors, painters, music artists, composers, and their friends.” The Dark Tower, which was for members only, functioned as place where one could mingle with the literati, hear poetry read, and see art. Walker decorated the walls of the salon with the written text from Countee Cullen’s poem “The Dark Tower” and Langston Hughes’s “The Weary Blues.” Although Walker’s sponsorship of literary conversation appealed primarily to an elite audience, she supported a venue where aspiring and established writers—including Cullen, Hughes, and Richard Nugent—could express themselves creatively.

Music flourished during the Harlem Renaissance, and several cultural organizations stand out for their dedication to promoting concert music and musicians. The National Association of Negro Musicians (NANM), organized in 1919, helped to establish black concert and recital music as critical components of the New Negro movement. The NANM, which was based in New York, said that its purpose was “stimulating progress, to discover and foster talent, to mold taste, to promote fellowship, and to advocate racial expression.” Its members included music teachers, professional musicians, and music clubs. By 1933, it had twenty-eight branches in the United States; it continues to function as an organization based in Chicago (Cuney-Hare 1936/1974).

Two important choral societies were established early in the twentieth century and continued to thrive during the Harlem Renaissance. The Choral Study Club was organized in 1900 and provided instruction and opportunities for performance and music appreciation to African Americans of Chicago. The Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Society gave its first concert in 1903

at the Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C. Like the Choral Study Club, the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Society fostered a choral music program but focused primarily on the work of African American composers. It was disbanded in 1915 after the death of its founders but was revived in 1921 and continued to perform into the 1930s. Choral societies abounded during this period, including many based on the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Society. Other prominent choirs included the People’s Choral Society of Philadelphia, Festival Chorus of Atlanta, and Musergia of Louisville, Kentucky.

Symphonic organizations also blossomed during this time. The Negro String Quartet and the Harlem Symphony Orchestra performed a wide range of music in New York City. The Negro String Quartet, founded in the same year as the NANM, performed show music, compositions by contemporary black composers, and classical work by European composers such as Beethoven, Haydn, and Tchaikovsky. The Harlem Symphony Orchestra performed the composer and songwriter James P. Johnson’s *Yamekraw* and a later concert of music by Weber, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn. Musicians and performers received their share of formal recognition as well. For a three-year period beginning in 1925, Casper Holstein donated monies for the Holstein Prizes for composition, awarded through *Opportunity*. The Spingarn Medal also acknowledged outstanding musicians and singers: Harry T. Burleigh received the prize in 1917 and Roland Hayes in 1925 (Floyd 1993).

The organizations, societies, and associations that supported cultural activity during the Harlem Renaissance were broad in range and deep in scope. The 135th Street Library and the 135th Street YMCA gave immeasurable assistance through their public programming and their nurturing of the arts. Organizations such as the NAACP and the National Urban League publicly acknowledged, through their various prizes, talented authors, poets, and playwrights. And the unflagging support of individuals and smaller groups proved that African American culture was vividly alive and dynamic and worthy of notice.

RENÉE ATER

See also Barnes, Albert C.; Booklovers Club; Civic Club Dinner, 1924; Crisis, The: Literary Prizes; Harmon Foundation; Haynes, George Edmund; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Krigwa Players; Locke, Alain; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; National Association of Negro Musicians;

National Urban League; Negro World; 135th Street Library; Opportunity Awards Dinner; Opportunity Literary Contests; Schomburg, Arthur A.; Spingarn, Joel; Spingarn Medal; Universal Negro Improvement Association; Walker, A'Lelia; *specific actors, artists, musicians, and writers*

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Cunard, Nancy

The British heiress Nancy Cunard (1896–1965) was a writer, editor, and printer who actively rebelled against the economic and racial ideologies of her class.

Her chief connection to the Harlem Renaissance is her massive anthology *Negro* (1934), which contains works by a number of its leading writers.

Early on, Cunard tried to escape the world of her mother, the famous socialite Emerald Cunard, by settling in France, where she became part of avant-garde circles in Paris and began her own printing press. In 1928, she met an African American jazz musician, Henry Crowder, in Venice; they became lovers, and one evening they discussed the state of American blacks. Crowder reported being amazed at Cunard's ignorance about this, but he found her immensely interested. Thereafter, racial justice became a passion for Cunard.

Her first public writings on race appeared in 1931. Upon hearing that her mother had learned about Crowder and was disgusted by the relationship, she wrote "Does Anyone Know Any Negroes," which was published in the magazine *The Crisis* in September of that year and in which she excoriated the racism of her mother's class and described instances of racial prejudice that she herself had encountered since she became involved with Crowder. A few months later, her privately printed pamphlet *Black Man and White Ladyship: An Anniversary* contained an even more vehement attack. Its first part was a vicious personal assault on Cunard's mother; its second part summarized the historic and current mistreatment of black people and argued passionately against racism and imperialism, but most readers agreed that the valuable points made in this second part were overshadowed by the personal hatred expressed in the first. Even Crowder (1987) called the pamphlet "an atrocious piece" (119).

As early as 1930, Cunard had considered compiling an anthology of black history and culture to challenge racial prejudice. In April 1931, she sent out a circular requesting submissions, and she spent the next three years assembling the work. She made two trips to Harlem during which she met some of her contributors, including Walter White, Langston Hughes, and Countee Cullen; continued raising money for the defense of the Scottsboro boys (a project she had taken up while in Europe); and was dogged by reporters who seemed interested only in salacious tidbits about her black lovers. These trips also gave her an opportunity to observe Harlem; she recorded her impressions in an article entitled "Harlem Reviewed" for the anthology. In this essay she criticizes Harlem's nightclubs for refusing to admit black patrons and accuses white writers such as "[Carl] Van Vechten and Co." of

presenting the public with a narrow, negative vision of Harlem as nothing more than “a round of hooch-filled night-clubs after a round of ‘snow’-filled boudoirs.”

Negro was published in England on 14 February 1934, at Cunard’s expense. It is a large book (855 pages), with more than 250 contributions: long and short articles, songs, poems, and illustrations. In addition to White, Hughes, and Cullen, contributors associated with the Harlem Renaissance include Zora Neale Hurston, Alain Locke, W. E. B. Du Bois, Arna Bontemps, and Sterling Brown; the book also contains pieces by black social scientists, musicologists, and historians as well as works by whites. Among Cunard’s own contributions—in addition to “Harlem Reviewed”—are a long report on the Scottsboro case, a harsh critique of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) as bourgeois and reactionary, and a sampling of the “hate letters” she had received during her visits to Harlem.

Negro is wide-ranging, divided into sections on the United States, black stars, music, poetry, the West Indies, South America, Europe, and Africa; titles of articles include “Flashes From Georgia Chain Gangs,” “A Negro Film Union, Why Not?” and “French Imperialism at Work in Madagascar.” In fact, *Negro* was so broad in scope that many readers found it an unwieldy hodgepodge, difficult to read and assess. Cunard was disappointed that it was not widely reviewed and that it did not sell well; an additional reason for this lack of public support may have been its communist slant. Cunard was never a member of the Communist Party, but she supported the communist agenda; the foreword to the anthology notes that “it is Communism alone which throws down the barriers of race. . . . The Communist world order is the solution to the race problem for the Negro.” Still, Cunard received private praise from many people, including Langston Hughes, and Arthur Schomburg; Alain Locke wrote, “I congratulate you—almost enviously, on the finest anthology in every sense of the word, ever compiled on the Negro” (quoted in Chisholm 1979, 293).

Original copies of *Negro* are now scarce, but an abridged version was published in 1970 and reprinted in 1996. The anthology has received limited attention in the primary studies of the Harlem Renaissance. Huggins (1971) makes no mention of Cunard and *Negro*, although Lewis (1981) and Wintz (1988) address them briefly. More recently, scholars such as Jane Marcus (1995) and Holly McSpadden (1997) have sought to recover *Negro* as a landmark text on race.

Cunard’s role as an advocate of racial justice is sometimes difficult to evaluate. In the early twentieth century, she was one of the most outspoken European supporters of equality for blacks, and few others so willingly condemned the racism of their own group. But one must also ask whether she was completely able to escape the influence of her class. For example, although she professed a distaste for primitivism, she often told Henry Crowder that she wished he were darker and admonished him to “be more African” (Chisholm 1979, 186), and he believed that she often chose lovers because of the darkness of their skin. She also sometimes saw racial politics in rather simplistic terms. To confront prejudice head-on, for instance, she would often take a black lover or a black friend to places that excluded African Americans, overlooking the real risk to her black companions in such encounters. Some commentators allow Cunard’s flamboyant personal life to preclude an objective analysis of her work on race; the fact that she had a sexual interest in black men is sometimes seen as undercutting the seriousness of her commitment to racial equality. Cunard herself, however, never doubted this commitment. In



Nancy Cunard in an inscribed photograph, 1927. (Library of Congress.)

making notes for an autobiography, she wrote that her work for the equality of the races was predominant in her life. She regarded her relationship with Crowder as life-changing; on learning of his death, she wrote to a friend, "Henry made me. I thank him."

Biography

Nancy Clara Cunard was born 10 March 1896 in Leicestershire, England, and was educated at private girls' schools in London, Munich, and Paris (1911–1914). She contributed a poem to *Wheels: An Anthology of Verse* in 1916 and published *Outlaws* (poems) in 1921, *Sublunary* (poems) in 1923, *Parallax* (a long poem) in 1925, *Poems* in 1930, *Grand Man: Memories of Norman Douglas* in 1954, and *G. M.: Memories of George Moore* in 1956. Cunard founded and ran the Hours Press in La Chapelle-Réanville, France (1928). She was a correspondent for the Associated Negro Press (1935–1950); and she reported on the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) for the Associated Negro Press, *New Times*, *Spanish Newsletter*, *Spain at War*, *Voice of Spain*, and *Manchester Guardian*. She edited *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War* (1937) and *Poems for France* (1944). Cunard died 16 March 1965 in Paris.

CHRISTINA G. BUCHER

See also Bontemps, Arna; Brown, Sterling; Crisis, The; Cullen, Countee; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; Locke, Alain; Negro: An Anthology; Primitivism; Schomburg, Arthur A.; Scottsboro; Van Vechten, Carl; White, Walter

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Cuney, Waring

Although Waring Cuney is today considered one of the minor poets of the Harlem Renaissance, and although he lived a quiet, private life that defies the efforts of biographers, his use of language and the rhythms of urban African Americans gave credibility to a kind of writing that was echoed throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. With his friend Langston Hughes, Cuney worked hard at being a poet during their years at Lincoln University; much later, in 1954, they coedited an anthology, *Lincoln University Poets: Centennial Anthology, 1854–1954*.

Cuney's first love was music, but his singing voice was weak, and so he was led to choose writing as a career. Still, his poetry was often influenced by his music education and his musical sensitivity. His poems are strongly rhythmic, and many of them are in ballad stanzas. He is especially known for creating poetic forms echoing blues. He also wrote song lyrics, some of which were recorded by Josh White. Many of Cuney's works are vivid character sketches of people living in black American inner cities, and their vernacular speech and folk rhythms are affirming and energetic. Attention is paid to the smallest and most humble details of daily life. Religion is a recurring theme.

Cuney's most famous poem, "No Images," which he wrote at the age of eighteen, has been called a minor masterpiece and has been widely anthologized. "No Images" won first prize in the literary contest sponsored by *Opportunity* magazine in 1926; and his poems "A Traditional Marching Song" and "De Jail Blues Song" won honorable mentions in 1927. Cuney's poetry and criticism were published in magazines such as *The Crisis*, *Fire!!*, *Harlem Quarterly*, *Negro Quarterly*, *Black World*, and *Opportunity*. His poetry was also selected for inclusion in anthologies such as *An Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1926*; Countee Cullen's *Caroling Dusk: An Anthology of Verse by Black Poets of the Twenties* (1927); James Weldon Johnson's *Book of American Negro Poetry* (1931); Sterling Brown's *Negro Caravan* (1941); and Arna Bontemps's *American Negro Poetry* (1963).

By the 1950s, Cuney was largely forgotten in the United States, but his work had been translated into German and Dutch and had a small following in Europe. In 1960, his poems were collected and published for the first time as a book, *Puzzles*, in the Netherlands. Shortly afterward, Cuney stopped writing and publishing and became a recluse. A second book, *Storefront Church*, was published in London in 1973.

Biography

William Waring Cuney was born in Washington, D.C., 6 May 1906. He was educated in public schools in Washington, D.C.; at Howard University; at Lincoln University, Pennsylvania (B.A.); at the New England Conservatory of Music, Boston; and at the Conservatory of Music, Rome. He was active as a poet from 1927 to 1962. Cuney served in the U.S. Army as a technical sergeant during World War II (1941–1945); he was awarded the Asiatic Pacific Theater Ribbon and three Bronze Stars. His poem "No Images" won first prize in *Opportunity's* contest of 1926. Cuney died in New York City 30 June 1976.

CYNTHIA BILY

See also Authors: 5—Poets; *Crisis*, *The*; *Fire!!*; Hughes, Langston; Literature: 7—Poetry; *Opportunity* Literary Contests

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Cuney-Hare, Maud

Maud Cuney-Hare (1874–1936) was a concert pianist, music historian, folklorist, writer, educator, playwright, producer, and lecturer. She was the author of a biography of her father, *Norris Wright Cuney: A Tribune of the Black People* (1913); editor of *Six Creole Folk Songs: With Original Creole and Translated English Text* (1921), a subject she was the first to bring to the attention of American concertgoers; and editor of a collection of poems, *The Message of the Trees: An Anthology of Leaves and Branches* (1918). She also contributed articles on music to *The Crisis* (where she edited the column on music and the arts), *Musical Quarterly*, *Musical Observer*, *Musical America*, and the *Christian Science Monitor*.

As a folklorist, Cuney-Hare traveled to Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Haiti, and the Virgin Islands, collecting songs and doing research on sources of African American music. She owned a famous collection of African American, Creole, and early American music that included instruments, photographs, scores, and programs. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) sponsored an exhibit of this collection at the Wanamaker store in Philadelphia; the exhibit was also shown in other libraries and museums in the Northeast and on the West Coast.

Cuney-Hare's authoritative reference work *Negro Musicians and Their Music* (1936) was published two months before her death and is still used today. In it, she traced the African influence on the music of black people; described African instruments, songs, and dances; and discussed the origin, variants, and applications of spirituals, folk music, sea chanteys, and work songs. Her work covered minstrelsy, vaudeville,

musical comedy, classical music, and some blues and jazz and included detailed biographies of famous and less well-known musicians, singers, and composers of African descent from Arabia, Europe, the Americas, the Caribbean, and the United States.

Cuney-Hare as pianist and the baritone William Howard Richardson developed a very popular lecture and concert series that they presented—sometimes in costume—in the United States and abroad from 1913 to the early 1930s. They specialized in African American and Creole music. Cuney-Hare and Richardson also gave concerts, especially of spirituals, with the violinist Clarence Cameron White and the singer Roland Hayes; in one of these concerts, Arthur Fiedler, the famous conductor of the Boston Pops orchestra, played the viola.

Cuney-Hare founded the Allied Arts Center in Boston, Massachusetts, which had a little theater group (c. 1926–1935). The center also offered children's theatrical workshops, concerts, art, music study classes, and drama classes; all races were invited to participate, but it was especially a training ground and showcase for young black performers and



Maud Cuney-Hare, c. 1910. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

playwrights. Although Cuney-Hare had begun this organization with only her own money, it later received outside donations and revenues from its activities. The black League of Women for Community Service found a site for the center in downtown Boston, opposite the New England Conservatory of Music.

The Allied Arts Players presented *Plumes* by Georgia Douglas Johnson; *Tambour* by John Frederick Matheus (1929); *Dessalines, Black Emperor of Haiti* by William Easton (on 15 May 1930); and Cuney-Hare's own original play, *Antar of Araby, Negro Poet of Araby* (1926), about a historical figure of the sixth century. The music for *Antar of Araby* was provided by Clarence Cameron White and Montague Ring (a pseudonym of Amanda Ira Aldridge, the daughter of Ira Aldridge, a prominent black Shakespearean actor of the time).

Biography

Maud Cuney-Hare was born 17 February 1874 in Galveston, Texas. In 1890, she was one of the first graduates of Central High School there, a school that was a direct result of efforts by her father to ensure an education for blacks. After graduating from the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, she studied English literature at Lowell Institute, Harvard University; and studied music privately with two famous European piano teachers: Edwin Klahre and Emil Ludwig. She also studied music theory with Martin Roeder. She became the director of music (1897–1898) for the Deaf, Dumb, and Blind Institute for Colored Youth in Austin, Texas. She worked at the settlement house of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Chicago and was a music instructor at Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College (1903–1904). She was a noted lecturer and concert artist and was the founder of an arts center in Boston, that included a theater. Cuney-Hare died 13 February 1936 in Boston.

MARVIE BROOKS

See also Crisis, The; Hayes, Roland; Johnson, Georgia Douglas; Matheus, John Frederick; New Challenge; White, Clarence Cameron

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Daddy Grace

Bishop Charles Manuel “Sweet Daddy” Grace was the founder, in 1919, of the United House of Prayer for All People of the Church on the Rock of Apostolic Faith. His denomination was based on the “apostolic faith” that emerged from the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles (1906); he emphasized God’s power to heal and advocated worship filled with the spirit. Daddy Grace drew attention from the press for his flamboyant attire, long painted fingernails, and extensive investments in real estate.

Grace, whose original name was Marcelino da Graca, left the Portuguese Cape Verde Islands for New Bedford, Massachusetts, in 1904; he anglicized his name within five years of his arrival. He was one of thousands of Cape Verdeans who immigrated to this area between 1900 and 1921, and like many of the others, he was puzzled by American racial categories. He did not accept the American classification “black” or “Negro” but insisted that he was a white citizen of Portugal. This claim led some critics, who were unaware of his Cape Verdean heritage, to describe him as a “race-rejecter.”

Dismayed by the limited options available to a man society viewed as “black,” Grace looked for a new occupation. In 1919 he founded his ministry in West Wareham, Massachusetts. He soon headed out in his “gospel car,” spreading his message throughout the southern United States. While his House of Prayer was explicitly created “for all people,” most of his followers were African Americans. Grace, however, did hold “mixed-race” meetings and was consequently a target of intimidation by the Ku Klux Klan in the

South. The press found it difficult to classify Grace, calling him variously a “Portuguese faith healer” and the “black Christ.”

In 1927 Grace formally incorporated the church in Washington, D.C., making that city his headquarters. His early successes in the South encouraged him to expand into Philadelphia and Harlem. In 1938 the writer Dorothy West documented a worship service in one of Grace’s Houses of Prayer in Harlem for the Works Progress Administration (WPA). She captured the integral role of music in the House of Prayer, including a forerunner of the church’s unique trombone shout bands. Also in 1938, Grace challenged Father Divine’s power in Harlem when he purchased Divine’s “Number One Heaven.”

As Grace’s ministry grew, he offered his followers a line of products, including *Grace Magazine*, Grace writing paper, and Grace hair pomade. He invested the money he raised in real estate, including a plantation in Cuba and the El Dorado apartment building on New York’s Upper West Side. He also created low-income housing and affordable dining options for his congregations; however, this aspect of his activity rarely received attention in the press, and, despite it, his critics charged that he was duping his followers out of their money. When Grace died, he was somewhat vindicated: he left the bulk of his holdings to his followers and the United House of Prayer.

Grace’s followers held an elaborate funeral for him. His body traveled from Los Angeles to Charlotte, North Carolina, and was then escorted to Newport News (Virginia), Washington (D.C.), Philadelphia, and Newark (New Jersey) before arriving in New Bedford



Daddy Grace, photographed by James Van Der Zee, 1938. (Library of Congress.)

for burial. In the years after Grace's death, the United House of Prayer for All People continued to thrive.

Biography

Charles Manuel Grace (Marcelino da Graca) was born in Brava, Cape Verde Islands, on 20 January 1881. He immigrated to and permanently settled in New Bedford, Massachusetts (1904). Grace began his formal ministry in 1919; made a trip to the Holy Land in 1923–1924; and incorporated his church, the United House of Prayer for All People of the Church on the Rock of Apostolic Faith, in Washington, D.C., in 1927. He died in Los Angeles, California, on 12 January 1960.

DANIELLE BRUNE

See also Father Divine; Fauset, Arthur Huff; West, Dorothy

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Dafora, Asadata

Asadata Dafora (1890–1965) was born in Sierra Leone; his mother was a concert pianist who had studied in Vienna and Paris, and his father was a city treasurer. As a student, Dafora traveled throughout west Africa, Europe, and Russia, and then studied voice at La Scala in Milan, Italy, for two years. He emigrated to the United States in 1929 to pursue a career in opera, but he found greater success during the Harlem Renaissance as a dancer and choreographer. He formed the company Shogola Oloba, with other African émigrés, to perform songs and dances of the Temini ethnic group.

Shogola Oloba performed at the Communist Party Bazaar in New York in 1933, as well as at the opening of the New YMCA Little Theater at 180 West 135 Street. In May 1934 Dafora presented *Kykunkor, or the Witch Woman*, the seminal African dance opera, which told of a bridegroom cursed by a scorned lover. Dafora arranged the libretto, music, and dances, and oversaw the entire production. This work combined operatic dramatic conventions with African dancing and singing by a large company of African and African American performers who were costumed with great theatrical flair according to his specifications; the production was accompanied by an orchestra of three drummers. *Kykunkor* confirmed the viability of African arts as American entertainment and awakened

a broad interest in traditional west African performance practice.

Artists from many disciplines saw *Kykunkor* and appreciated the implications of Dafora's vision. Among these artists were Leopold Stokowski, conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra; Lawrence Tibbett of the Boston Symphony; the composer George Gershwin; the novelists Sherwood Anderson and Theodore Dreiser; the choreographer George Balanchine; and the eminent literary critic Carl Van Doren. The work made its way to Broadway, where it ran for three months.

Following this resounding success, Dafora created several more works in the same vein, including *Bassa Moona* (1937) and *Zunguru* (1938), which were also performed on Broadway, at Carnegie Hall, at the Ninety-Second Street YM-YWHA, the New York Museum of Natural History, the Brooklyn Museum, the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, and the Bronx Zoo. Dafora also toured throughout the southern and western United States. In 1936, he served as choreographer for Orson Welles's production of *Voodoo Macbeth*.

In 1943, Dafora organized "African Dance Festival," a program held at Carnegie Hall on 13 December as the first arts project of the African Academy of Arts and Research. The academy's purpose was to "foster goodwill between the United States and Africa through a mutual exchange of cultural, social, and economic knowledge." Two guests of honor, Eleanor Roosevelt and Mary McLeod Bethune, spoke during the intermission in support of the academy and its artistic project.

Dafora's influence as a teacher and proponent of African music and dance has been underestimated. Throughout his career, he taught many significant dance and drum artists, including Ismay Andrews, Pearl Primus, Josephine Premice, Katherine Dunham, Norman Coker, Alphonse Cimber, Jean-Léon Destiné, Alice Dinizulu, Michael Olatunji, and Charles Moore. Shangola Oloba remained in existence until 1960, when Dafora returned briefly to Sierra Leone.

Biography

Asadata Dafora Horton was born on 4 August 1890 in Sierra Leone. He attended the Wesleyan Boys' High School and studied in England and Russia and at La Scala in Milan, Italy. He was artistic director of the Shogola Oloba company (1933–1960), choreographer for Orson Welles's *Voodoo Macbeth* (1936), and organizer

of the program "African Dance Festival" at Carnegie Hall on 13 December 1943. He died in New York City in March 1965.

THOMAS F. DEFRAZT

See also Anderson, Sherwood; Bethune, Mary McLeod; Dance; Dreiser, Theodore; Van Doren, Carl

Selected Works

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Damas, Léon

Léon Gontran Damas (1911–1978), poet, storyteller, pamphleteer, and lecturer, is remembered, with Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor, as a member of the "trinity" that formulated *négritude* (negritude) in Paris in the 1930s and spread the concept throughout the world.

Negritude meant acceptance of one's blackness and glorification of African history and culture. The concept enabled Damas to discover his own identity,

to move beyond being simply “an object of domination and a consumer of culture” and to become “a cultural actor in history.” Taking pride in one’s own culture would, he believed, lead not to racism and rejection of the other, but rather to the universal. Thus, while remaining profoundly Antillean and dedicated to the progress of blacks in his native Guiana, Damas insisted on the ties that bound blacks of the diaspora to each other and to African blacks. He stressed, in particular, that poets of negritude were indebted to musicians and writers of the Harlem Renaissance.

Damas had been born into an interracial, dysfunctional Guianan bourgeois family that was bent on assimilation with all things French, but his newfound roots led him to reject assimilation completely. *Pigments* (1937), his most famous work, records the revolt of a young black man who has discovered his identity in African-Guianan traditions. The poems accentuate a rhythm reminiscent of the tom-tom; their tone is nostalgic, humorous, at times biting irony. Many lines are confrontational: black-white, slave-master, innocence-cruelty, love-hatred, truth-falsehood.

The same themes underlie his report (*Retour de Guyane*, 1938) on a trip to Guiana that he undertook for the French anthropologist Paul Rivet to document the state of black culture there. He chastises the French for viewing Guiana as merely a penal colony, rather than a region with major agricultural and human potential.

Damas later illustrated this human potential by publishing his French transcription of Guianan-African tales collected during his trip (*Veillées noires*, 1943). Tales of animals, humans, or supernatural beings, in which the weak but intelligent triumph over the powerful, are passed on to a new generation by an old woman, Tètèche, who clearly symbolizes Guiana. Damas helps her reach a wider audience.

In his next major work, *Black Label* (1956)—which followed his portrayal of a failed love affair in *Graffiti* (1953)—the poet combines the personal and the polemic. “Black label” is the whiskey in which he drowns his sorrow, but also the mark of the branding iron on the slave. The now-mature poet creates dramatic tension by alternating themes of negritude with songs of love and nostalgia.

However, while important, Damas’s literary production is rather limited. The man and his spoken words greatly enhanced his role in the creation of an international black community and in the fight against racism. After World War II Damas traveled repeatedly to the United States and solidified the ties he had

established in Paris with black American intellectuals. Among his friends were Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, Mercer Cook, and Langston Hughes. In 1966 he settled in the United States, lecturing at various universities. He also continued to travel extensively throughout Europe, the Caribbean, and black Africa, lecturing on behalf of international organizations and becoming a bridge between Africans on several continents.

Biography

Léon Gontran Damas was born on 17 July 1912 in Cayenne, Guiana. He studied in Guiana, in Martinique (Lycée Victor Schoelcher), in Paris (School of Oriental Languages, School of the Humanities, Law School, 1929–1933), and again in Guiana (anthropology, 1934). In Paris in 1930–1933, he met Senghor, Césaire, and the Martinican students editing *La Revue du Monde Noir* (*Review of the Black World*). Damas was drafted into the colonial infantry in 1939 and demobilized in 1940. He returned to Paris in 1942; traveled to Guiana via New York and Washington, D.C.; was elected a deputy in the French national assembly as a socialist (1948–1951); married Martinican Isabelle Victoire Vécilia Achille (1948); was divorced (1951); went on cultural missions to Jamaica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, French West Africa, and French Equatorial Africa on behalf of French ministries of foreign affairs and of “overseas France” and participated in conferences in Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean and Latin America (1953–1963); married Marietta Campos (1964); continued traveling and lecturing, often for UNESCO (1965–1970); and taught in American universities and went on traveling and lecturing (1970–1977). He died on 22 January 1978 in Washington, D.C.; his ashes were brought to Guiana via Martinique, receiving great honors along the way.

L. NATALIE SANDOMIRSKY

See also Césaire, Aimé; Cullen, Countee; Francophone Caribbean and the Harlem Renaissance; Hughes, Langston; McKay, Claude; Negritude; Senghor, Léopold

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Dance

Dance of the Harlem Renaissance during the 1920s and 1930s was a flowering of artistic creativity that led to later innovations and to periodic revivals. In the context of dance, it is useful to note, briefly, the nature of the Harlem Renaissance, which has been one of the most intensely studied periods in the history of African American life. This renaissance was an intellectual awakening involving literary and visual artistic expression and a spiritual experience; the basis of the movement was equality, pride, and conscious recognition of being black. Beginning in 1916, there was a mass migration of blacks from the South to Harlem, which had formerly been an exclusive residential area for wealthy whites fleeing the congested lower-class immigrant neighborhoods of

downtown Manhattan. During the renaissance, Harlem became known as the black capital of America and was seen by African Americans as a symbolic mecca—and certainly, by young aspiring artists, as a beacon of light.

In examining the significance of dance in the Harlem Renaissance, it is also appropriate to consider the context of evolving knowledge about dance. Not until 1926 was dance recognized as a subject worthy of study in universities. In the 1950s, psychologists began to do research on nonverbal communication, a key element of dance. As more was learned about dance as a means of sending and receiving messages, the traditional split between mind and body was no longer accepted. Many scholars came to stress the “mentality of matter”: the merging of the physical, emotional, and cognitive in dance. One cannot create mindlessly; dance—like speaking and writing—requires an underlying faculty in the brain for conceptualization, innovation, and memory. Dance is actually in many ways like language: it has a vocabulary (steps and gestures), grammar (justifying how one movement follows another), and meaning—the multiple symbolic meanings of dance more often resemble poetry than prose. Also, dance has purposeful, intentionally rhythmic, culturally influenced sequences of body movements that are selected in much the same way as a person would choose sequences of verbal language.

In the Harlem Renaissance, new dances emerged out of the cultural mixing of African Americans from different parts of the South and the north; and Harlem became the fountainhead of the social dances that were a craze during America’s “roaring twenties.” As a result, racial agency, appropriation of cultural dance forms, and the commodification of black stereotypes were at issue. Also at issue was the purpose of art, including dance: many participants in the Harlem Renaissance valued art for its service to civil rights; others, however, believed that artistic freedom was the most important civil right.

During the intellectual fervor of the renaissance, the dances performed in Harlem influenced African American writers, who tried to capture the lives of the unsophisticated masses in rural areas and inner cities. But certain leaders of the Harlem Renaissance considered dance as something apart from the intellectual movement because to them, as to Americans in general, dance seemed merely emotional and physical. The old proverb “Good dancers mostly have better heels than heads” conveys a common misconception about dance. Mainstream society tends to distrust the

body and view it as separate from the mind that creates vocal and written discourse; and schools measure knowledge in words and numbers, not kinetic images.

Still, even when their significance went unrecognized by the leadership of the Harlem Renaissance, the dances of this era—in the street, at house parties, in theaters, in ballrooms—altered the course of dance in America and the world. Dances originated by blacks permeated established forms and influenced the emerging American repertoire of jazz dance and dance in theater and film, much as peasant folk dances had influenced European ballet. Dances popularized during the Harlem Renaissance continue to reverberate widely today, in new and old versions. Some of these indigenous American dances blossomed and then faded but eventually reseeded themselves, particularly in the 1990s, when a revival of swing dance swept the United States and also reached the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, and Germany.

The Harlem Renaissance, in effect, opened a window for—or gave an imprimatur to—the African American dance heritage, which came from the cultures of many African groups. The continent of Africa has some 1,000 different language groups and probably as many constellations of dance patterns. Blacks in America, uprooted from their homes in Africa, had been enslaved not only personally but also culturally. Ethnic groups, clans, and families were broken up, and as a result, African dances specific to these units were constrained and transformed in the new world. Even so, the styles of many African dances persisted in the diaspora. Asadata Dafora, a dancer from Sierra Leone who came to the United States in 1929, identified many black dance movements of the time as common in his homeland. Dancers in Harlem used different parts of the body, undulated the spine, rotated the hips, bent the knees, fluidly extended and flexed the legs, and moved on flat feet with the torso oriented earthward.

In 1921, the black musical *Shuffle Along* broke through to Broadway, entered the American imagination, and electrified the Harlem Renaissance. Great African American dancers had been known in vaudeville, but many of them performed on the segregated southern circuits and had remained unknown to the wider American public. *Shuffle Along* opened new doors for talented blacks and proved that money could be made with native, homegrown dancing; this was the first outstanding African American musical to play in white theaters nationwide. It ran a full year

on Broadway and continued in various revivals across the country into the 1940s.

The influence of minstrelsy and blackface performance on dance was perhaps somewhat mixed. White minstrels mastered African American expressive styles of performance, but they did this for the purpose of mockery. African American dancers, if they wanted to have opportunities to perform in mainstream society, often had to black up like white minstrels playing Negroes and say they were white. On the other hand, black minstrelsy—in which the black performers wore blackface just as white minstrels did—distinguished itself from its white counterpart by including women, and in this regard it was a precursor of the transition to vaudeville.

White audiences' preconceptions were a factor not only in minstrelsy and blackface entertainment but in other areas as well. To appeal to white audiences, black men and women portrayed themselves as primitive dancing fools, a white fantasy. Duke Ellington's band, for instance, played "Jungle Music." Earl "Snakehips" Tucker (who became famous among other dancers) and the tap dancer Bill "Bojangles" Robinson performed in a happy, sensual way, playing powerless fools. Also, there was a widespread assumption that blacks were natural dancers rather than performers who had learned their art and craft as any other artists do: through observation, coaching, and practice. This assumption could hardly be applied to blacks in general, even though it might have been appropriate for someone like Bill Robinson, who never did take dancing lessons as we understand them.

Robinson was one of several black dancers who became widely famous during the 1920s and 1930s. His nickname, Bojangles, may have come from a hat he wore as a signature piece—the hatmaker's name was Lion J. Boujasson, which sounds rather like it. In Harlem, both the elite and ordinary people were so crazy about Robinson that he was called the "mayor of Harlem," although at the same time he was fighting for a foothold in American society as a whole. Bojangles had begun his career as a "pick," that is, one of the pickaninnies in choruses of African American children, aged four to the early teens, who appeared in white minstrel shows. He performed the buck dancing style, a full-footed shuffle that was a forerunner of modern tap. "Buck and wing" was a minstrel term referring to a combination of jig and pigeon wing or chicken wing in which the neck was held still and arms and legs flailed like a bird's wings. Robinson also further popularized the cakewalk, a dance that whites, for their

blackface minstrel shows, had appropriated from enslaved blacks, who in turn had been mocking the pompous strutting mannerisms of whites. When Bojangles appeared on Broadway in *Blackbirds* in 1928, he achieved instantaneous success with his “stair dance,” in which he moved up and down a staircase, changing the tempo and dance movements on each step. Robinson could and did socialize with white people. In 1935, he costarred with Shirley Temple in *The Little Colonel*. In 1939, he was a hit in *Hot Mikado* at the New York World’s Fair. Robinson is known for his comment, “I’m copacetic. Everything is better than fine.”

Clayton “Peg Leg” Bates, another legendary tap dancer, could execute nearly any tap step with one leg. He wanted to surpass two-legged dancers, and he performed acrobatic turns, graceful soft-shoes, buck-and-wings, and powerful rhythm dances. With a regular tap shoe on his right foot and the peg leg covered with leather on the inside and rubber on the outside, he created a unique combination of sounds. Throughout the 1930s, he played at the top Harlem nightclubs.

John Bubbles is best-known for his portrayal of Sportin’ Life in George Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess* (1935) and as half of Buck and Bubbles, a singing and dancing comedy act; Buck was Ford Lee Washington. Buck and Bubbles were headliners in vaudeville, and Bubbles became more broadly appreciated on Broadway in the *Ziegfeld Follies* of 1931. They were the first black artists to appear at Radio City Music Hall in New York. Instead of dancing on his toes, as most tap dancers did, Bubbles dropped his heels to create gradations of tone and complex syncopations. He changed his routine for each show, to prevent other dancers from stealing his steps.

Earl “Snakehips” Tucker arrived in Harlem in the mid-1920s and performed “jungle ritual dances” to accompany the theme of Duke Ellington’s band. Snakehips slithered menacingly, like a cobra; his hips described wide circles, and he performed the belly roll, an undulation of the torso. Snakehips appeared briefly (along with Bill Robinson) in *Blackbirds*. The first male headliner who did not tap, he was ahead of his time with “outrageous” pelvic movements.

The Nicholas brothers, who played the Apollo in 1928, were acclaimed for a multiunit torso; thrust hips; shuffles with bent knee; movement with “jazz hands,” fingers outstretched; syncopations; and partnering steps from the lindy hop.

Audiences in the United States and Europe were extraordinarily fascinated with the dancer Josephine

Baker, who was even more acclaimed abroad than in her homeland. Baker performed wild renditions of the Charleston as well as her trademark *danse sauvage* at the Folies Bergère and elsewhere. Actually, she parodied the image of a savage sex goddess that had been cast for her. Her dance movements and rhythm influenced George Balanchine of the New York City Ballet.

The Charleston—which came from Charleston, South Carolina—had been introduced to New York by Elida Webb in 1923, in the Broadway show *Runnin’ Wild*. It became a huge national hit. Trendy young white women were called “flappers,” a term referring to their flailing limbs as they danced the Charleston. It was a fast dance in which the whole body was used in shimmying motions with a kicking step both forward and backward; the hands were crossed on the knees as they moved toward and away from each other. The shimmy was of African derivation: it was common among Igbo girls and mature warriors in Nigeria, and among the Ibibio people, Ghana’s Ashanti, and numerous other African groups.

Partly because of dance, Harlem was a site of diffusion as whites ventured uptown. These whites came to Harlem for the same reason as some other Americans went to Cuba: to be in touch with what they saw as primal authenticity, to feel the pulse of life. Many whites thought that blacks had sensate superiority and that blacks were sensual, lewd, libidinous, and licentious—a quintessential representation of the exotic, erotic, and primitive. Blacks were supposed to be incredibly potent, perhaps even a menace to morality. Whites saw these qualities as manifested in dance, in which, as in sex, the body is the instrument.

To whites, blacks seemed to have a provocative dance vocabulary: swinging hips; a rotating, thrusting pelvis; an undulating torso; and shimmying shoulders. Also, blacks appeared to take unabashed delight in the primacy of the body, to believe in the importance of the spiritual in dance, and to express universalized personal experience in their dances. Whites in Harlem nightclubs were thrilled to partake of a sense of illicit sexuality in a socially protected environment.

In the years after World War I, prosperity and economic growth meant not only more disposable income but also a shorter workweek and longer vacations: that is, more leisure time to pursue personal entertainment. The 1920s were a time of cultural transformation, shifting moral boundaries, and changing lifestyles. The Volstead Act of 1919 had ended the legal sale and distribution of alcoholic beverages; most of the big Harlem clubs were owned by whites and flourished

when liquor became illegal. As a result of all these factors, whites who lived downtown saw Harlem as a playground. Harlem witnessed a boom in cabarets from 133rd Street to 135th Street between and on Lexington and Seventh avenues. The Cotton Club, Connie's Inn, Ed Small's Paradise Nest, the Plantation Club, and the Savoy Ballroom were prominent; and the Cotton Club in particular took pride in being the source of new social dances.

Harlem revues were a saturnalia of humor, big bands, vocalists, and dancers. Revues produced for white audiences showcased light-skinned women who appealed not only to these audiences' concept of beauty but also to their taste for exoticism and animality. (Many blacks at the time of the Harlem Renaissance had the same notion of beauty and felt contempt for darker-skinned people.) Dances such as the truckin', Susie-Q, peckin', and scrotch gained recognition in production numbers and then caught on as ballroom fads. Interestingly, though, the lindy hopper George "Shorty" Snowden originated the "shorty George" step at the Savoy Ballroom; it then made its way to nightclub and vaudeville stages.

The lindy hop was the rage across black and white America and Europe for about twenty years. In one of the dance contests at the Savoy, George Snowden, its all-time champion, did a breakaway, flinging his partner out and improvising a few solo steps of his own. The effect was electric, and Snowden called the step the lindy, after Charles Lindbergh, who made a historic nonstop airplane flight from New York to Paris in 1927. In this dance, women actually did take flight; the lindy hop involved rocking and turning moves



Clayton "Peg Leg" Bates, 1927. (© Bettmann Corbis.)

with freewheeling, flowing, improvised steps to an eight-beat count. At the Savoy, the lindy hop had a democratizing effect, offering emotional freedom and individual expression: race and class boundaries temporarily dissolved.

White dancers often achieved recognition by performing dances that had been originated by blacks, although the whites transformed these dances by toning down the original uninhibited display of sexuality. This appropriation of African American dances by outsiders was sometimes resented and even considered a form of theft, but it did often evoke a sense of pride in black people—a sense of having created something that others valued.

Furthermore, this appropriation of black dances by whites motivated blacks to create new dances, frequently in the sensual African tradition. For African American dance, the locus of creativity was in streets, homes, and clubs. Style makers and rule breakers, African Americans could reinvent their identity through dance, presenting a new view of their American experience. This association of dance and identity is not unique to blacks: people everywhere may consciously use dance symbolically, as an identity marker, as they might use flags, uniforms, and hairstyles.



Josephine Baker *en pointe*. (Library of Congress, n.d.)

In most social dance settings, the participants would say they are dancing to have a good time. Some would also say that they are seeking social or sexual partners; and some would think in terms of health—“It’s good exercise.” Black dance also simultaneously conveyed messages having to do with identity: “This is who I am. This is how creative I am.” Dance was, like swearing, a form of release; it was also an assertion that the body is beautiful. It was a component of cultural identity; it encoded messages about hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, and exchanges across social boundaries. It might also be a covert political challenge, because dance involves a symbolic, stylistic breaking of rules. Thus artistic freedom for African Americans dancers during the Harlem Renaissance was a historically meaningful civil right.

Vocabulary: Terms in Song Accompanying Dance
 Balling: having fun, sex
 Belly rub: sexy dance
 Boogie-woogie: a kind of dance
 Bread, cabbage, cookie: vagina
 Charleston: popular dance of 1925 with movements common to several dances of the Igbo of Nigeria
 Dogging: dancing
 Fishtail: movement in which the hips create a figure eight
 Fungshun: crowded, sweaty dance
 Jagging jig: a black person; people dancing
 Jig and clog: body held upright
 Jooking: dance style
 Pecking: neck and shoulder movement similar to the Yanvallou dance of Dahomey
 Rug-cutter: a person too cheap to frequent dance halls; also, a good dancer
 Scronch: to dance with sexual innuendo
 Shaking the shimmy: a slow walk with frequent twitching of the shoulders (movement common among Igbo warriors of Nigeria)
 Shim-sham shimmy: erotic dance
 Shout: a ball or prom; one-step dance
 Stomp: raucous dance party
 Strut: stylized walk with attitude
 Trucking: dance step resembling a stroll
 Wobble: dance

JUDITH LYNNE HANNA

See also Baker, Josephine; Blackbirds; Bubbles, John; Cotton Club; Dafora, Asadata; Ellington, Duke; Harlem: 3—Entertainment; Nightclubs; Primitivism; Robinson, Bill “Bojangles”; Shuffle Along; Tucker, Earl “Snakehips”

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Dark Laughter

Sherwood Anderson’s novel *Dark Laughter* (1925)—his most popular work of fiction during his lifetime—demonstrates the influence of Jean Toomer’s *Cane* (1923) in its language and imagery. In *Dark Laughter*, Anderson presents an America racially divided between the sterile materialism of the white world and the more sensual indulgences of the African American world. Against this backdrop, the novel records the struggles of two white Americans to escape the neurosis and impotence of a society damaged by overindustrialization and world war. Serving as a Greek chorus to this rebellion is the “dark laughter” of African Americans, a sound that represents to Anderson a primitive state of sensual enjoyment now lost to the modern world.

One of the main characters, John Stockton, dissatisfied with his career and his marriage, leaves his wife and home and takes a new identity as Bruce Dudley, a drifter. He first wanders down to New Orleans, where he becomes enthralled by the easy movement and laughter of the African American workers on the docks. He envies their apparent freedom from the obsessions of the white world and tries to embrace a more sensual life. After this journey South, he settles in Old Harbor, Indiana, and earns a modest living painting carriage wheels. Aline Grey, the wife of the owner of the wheel factory, is also seeking to escape—in her case, from a stifled existence and a passionless marriage.

Aline's husband, who has been physically and psychologically wounded by the war, concerns himself only with plans to expand his business. Dudley's newfound easy manner attracts Aline, who hires him as a gardener. The consummation of their relationship takes place before the amused gaze of the African American servants, who laugh at the repressive sexuality of white people.

When it was published in 1925, *Dark Laughter* received mixed reviews and no notice from African American publications. Some reviewers disapproved of the novel's apparent immorality and its sometimes incomprehensible experimentalism; others praised Anderson's critique of modern American materialism. A few reviewers saw in Anderson's simple construction of racial difference an attempt to construct a primitivism that could serve as an antidote to a European civilization gone awry. Waldo Frank (1925) warned that Anderson's African Americans should not be read as an attempt to represent real African Americans accurately. Anderson's romanticized vision of blackness, Frank wrote, was merely an expression of white people's longing for redemptive laughter. More recent scholars have wrestled with issues raised by the African American presence in this novel. Howe (1951) found the depictions of African Americans "oversimplified and patronizing." But Fanning (1977), in an article about the reception of *Dark Laughter* by French critics in the 1920s, found the novel a valuable document reflecting the racist views of some progressive white people. Dickerson (1973) argued, in an important article, that Anderson's attempt to portray a lush, sensual world of African Americans in New Orleans bears the imprint of Jean Toomer's *Cane*. She did not consider *Dark Laughter* as convincing in its execution as Toomer's work, but she noted that Anderson's novel demonstrates the lasting influence of *Cane* on American literature.

CHARLES D. MARTIN

See also Anderson, Sherwood; *Cane*; Frank, Waldo; Toomer, Jean

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Dark Princess

W. E. B. Du Bois's *Dark Princess: A Romance* (1928) was his second novel (the first, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*, had appeared in 1911). *Dark Princess* can be read as dramatizing the problem of culture for the Negro—an issue of the Harlem Renaissance, the New Negro movement, and modernism.

This novel relates the journey of Matthew Towns from America to Europe and back, from one thwarted profession to another, and, after considerable struggle, from brooding isolation to happiness in marriage and fatherhood. When he is barred from completing a residency in obstetrics because he is black, Matthew goes to Berlin. There he falls in love with an Indian princess, under whose tutelage he joins an organization of "darker peoples"—Indians, Chinese, Japanese, and Egyptians—who want to dismantle European imperialism. Matthew returns home to track the progress of black Americans toward nationhood; under the guise of a Pullman porter, he becomes involved with a militant black leader in a drive to unionize black porters and then in a terrorist plot. Matthew is jailed but is then rescued by a businessman and launched into a political career that is at first brilliant but then hypocritical. Matthew enters a loveless marriage with his political manager and then a scandalous illicit affair; ultimately, though, he balances the personal with the social by marrying the Indian princess and becoming the parent of an African-Asian child who is called "king," "maharajah" and "messenger and messiah to all the darker worlds." The novel combines the conventions of social realism and romance; portrays a "new" black man; and depicts the many facets, personal and political, of desire.

The critical reception of *Dark Princess* reflects shifts in literary and cultural analysis and also suggests the specific challenge that Du Bois—a man with manifold and sometimes contrasting creative and social commitments—represents for readers and scholars. Alain

Locke, reviewing the novel for the *New York Herald Tribune*, gave it measured praise; but he called it a “not wholly successful” mixture of “pure romance” and “rich deposits of sociology,” and in a private letter to Langston Hughes he expressed graver doubts. Other reviews in the black press were more favorable. In *The Crisis* of October 1928, Allison Davis described *Dark Princess* as “propaganda at once eloquent and sane”; and Alice Dunbar Nelson, in her literary column, “As in a Looking Glass,” found it “complete and eminently soul-satisfying.” Reviews in the white press were also mixed: some considered the novel too romantic, whereas others thought its realistic portrayal of black humanity was not really “art.”

During the 1930s and 1940s, *Dark Princess* was overshadowed by novels of social protest, but it continued to receive attention from critics then and later (e.g., Broderick 1959; Redding 1939). Aptheker (1976) gives insight into Du Bois’s own view of this novel; in the publisher’s advertisements, Du Bois described it as a “story of the great movement of the darker races for self-expression and self-determination” and as a “romance with a message” about the “defense and self-development of the best in all races.” Moses (1982) locates *Dark Princess* in the tradition of African American messianic redemption. Beavers (2000) also reads it as a “messianic discourse,” and as reminiscent of the biblical parable of the prodigal son. Tate (1998) notes that it puts romantic and erotic elements at the service of racial propaganda and is disturbed by its celebration of racial hybridity and its idealization of Asian rather than African beauty; but Gilroy (1993) considers the merging of African and Asian cultures valuable and also finds in *Dark Princess* a “politics of transfiguration.” With regard to the aesthetics conveyed in *Dark Princess*, Byerman (1994) considers this element “play” (as opposed to the real “work” of the laborer); but others, including Gilroy and Posnock (1998), find deeper meaning in this theme. *Dark Princess* will probably continue to raise questions about race and culture, individuality and community, and politics and aesthetics.

ERIKA RENÉE WILLIAMS

See also Du Bois, W. E. B.; Locke, Alain; Modernism; Nelson, Alice Dunbar; New Negro Movement

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Dark Tower

The Dark Tower, a literary and artistic salon, would have been impossible without the sponsorship of A’Lelia Walker. She had, in 1919, inherited a fortune from her mother, Madame C. J. Walker, the inventor of

a very popular hair-straightening process. Whereas her mother had supported African American charities, A'Lelia Walker enjoyed spending her money on jewelry, card games, parties, and cars. As Richard Bruce Nugent, an eccentric among the younger Harlem Renaissance artists, suggested, A'Lelia Walker had two motives in sponsoring the Dark Tower. First, there certainly was a wish to support African American artists, many of whom she knew personally from parties and other social occasions. Another fact may also have played a decisive role: A'Lelia Walker could, as Nugent put it harshly, be described as a "social failure" in that she was not part of the mostly class-oriented black elite. She had become rich not because of an elevated class background but through inheritance, and she was furthermore far from the African American upper-class ideal of near-white. She may have thus viewed the organization of the Dark Tower as a potential gateway to higher social circles.

The Dark Tower, planned as a setting where young artists of the Harlem Renaissance could meet and discuss their plans, was much needed because no regular meeting place existed for them. Before the inception of this salon, they occasionally met at places like Jessie Fauset's home, for formal occasions with poetry recitals; or, in contrast, at the house of Wallace Thurman, where their meetings were usually characterized by drunkenness and chaos. What the black artists and A'Lelia Walker intended to create was "a sufficiently sympathetic place . . . completely informal, a quite homey, comfortable place to which they could bring their friends for a chat and a glass of lemonade, coffee, or tea." Walker would thus occupy a position like Mabel Dodge, who had opened her home to the artists of Greenwich Village.

A'Lelia Walker chose her twin limestone townhouse at 108–110 West 136th Street in Harlem as the location for the Dark Tower. Countee Cullen served as the inspiration for the name of her salon. He had written the popular poem "From the Dark Tower," published in 1927 in *Copper Sun*, in which he described the suffering of the suppressed "dark" race; and from 1926 to 1928 he had also contributed "The Dark Tower," a literary and cultural column in *Opportunity* magazine. To create an adequate framework, Walker dedicated an entire floor to the salon and made extensive plans for redecoration. In accordance with her desire to sponsor African American artists, she wanted Aaron Douglas, the best-known painter of the Harlem Renaissance, to decorate the main room, with Nugent as his assistant. According to Nugent, numerous meetings were

arranged, but no specific plans for redecorating were ever agreed on. It thus came as a surprise when formal invitations on stylish cards were issued for the grand opening of the Dark Tower in the autumn of 1928:

We dedicate this tower to the aesthetes. That cultural group of young Negro writers, sculptors, painters, music artists, composers and their friends. A quiet place of particular charm. A rendezvous where they may feel at home to partake of a little tidbit amid pleasant, interesting atmosphere. Members only and those whom they wish to bring will be accepted. If you choose to become one of us you may register when first attending "The Dark Tower." One dollar a year. Open nine at eve 'til two in the morn." (quoted in Watson 1995, 143)

The younger artists to whom the place was explicitly dedicated were astonished: the salon was characterized by what Nugent described as "stiff dignity" rather than, as planned, by a casual, relaxed atmosphere. The cream-colored walls had been decorated not by Aaron Douglas but by Paul Frankel, a local sign painter, who had put up passages from Cullen's "From the Dark Tower" and Langston Hughes's "The Weary Blues" in gold lettering on facing walls. Nor did the furniture correspond to earlier plans for an informal air: it consisted of stylish rosewood chairs and tables, a rosewood piano, rose-colored curtains, and a blue Victrola. More decisive for the future development of the Dark Tower, however, were the arrangements regarding prices. Before the opening of the salon, the plan had been to consider the young artists' lack of money—"Food was to be so reasonably priced that the artists would be benefited"—but now everything was set up differently: Everyone turned up in evening clothes; hats had to be checked for 15 cents; and food was expensive. As Nugent remembered it, there was only one option when the guests "saw the menus. Coffee—10 cents, sandwiches anywhere from 25 to 50 cents; lemonade a quarter—and on and on. They left hungry." Moreover, it seemed that the focus was not really on black artists. According to Nugent, "the place was filled to overflowing with whites from downtown who had come up expecting that this was a new and hot nightclub."

Although some artists of the Harlem Renaissance returned to the Dark Tower on other occasions, it was clear that the vision of a regular meeting place had failed. Nevertheless, the Dark Tower survived for

roughly one year. As is evident from newspaper reports by Geraldyn Dismond, the gossip columnist for the *Inter-State Tattler*, its social status was significant; and Dismond therefore bemoaned its closing. Moving from West 136 Street to her apartment on Edgecombe Avenue, A'Leia Walker decided to reopen the Dark Tower—this time, however, not as an artists' venue but as a nightclub and restaurant in the studio below the actual Dark Tower salon. The new venture, which opened, rather optimistically, on 27 October 1929, three days after Wall Street's "black Thursday," apparently continued until A'Leia Walker's death on 16 August 1931. Eventually, the place was leased to the city.

Although it did not achieve its actual purpose of serving African Americans artists, the Dark Tower still stands out as a symbol of an unprecedented upsurge of black self-confidence and creativity.

CHRISTA SCHWARZ

See also Cullen, Countee; Douglas, Aaron; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Hughes, Langston; *Inter-State Tattler*; Nugent, Richard Bruce; *Salons*; Thurman, Wallace; Walker, A'Leia

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DePriest, Oscar

When Oscar Stanton DePriest came to Chicago in 1889, the city was rapidly changing and expanding as a result of migration from the American South and immigration from Europe; between 1880 and 1930, Chicago's African American population would increase from 6,480 to 233,903. Although discrimination and de facto segregation existed in Chicago, racial issues were not as virulent there as in the South.

DePriest became active in local politics, joining the Republican Party. His service to the Republicans was rewarded in 1904, when he was nominated for and elected to the Cook County Commission; he served consecutively until 1908. After 1908, he concentrated on his real estate business.

Between 1906 and 1915 DePriest worked with leading African American politicians to form a black political organization centered in two predominantly black wards in Chicago's South Side. In this effort, they were aided by the large migration of blacks to Chicago during World War I; and they succeeded in organizing a voting bloc capable of settling factional disputes within the party.

In 1915 DePriest ran for the city council, backed by a progressive coalition that elected him as the first African American alderman in Chicago. As an alderman, he became part of William "Big Bill" Thompson's political machine. When the Republican U.S. Congressman Martin Madden died, DePriest ran for the open seat; in November 1928, attracting the rapidly rising African American constituency, he was elected and became a member of the Seventy-First Congress. He thus also



Oscar DePriest at his desk at the Capitol in Washington, D.C., 1929. (© Bettmann Corbis.)

became the first African American elected to Congress in the twentieth century, the first elected from a northern state, and an inspiration to politically minded Harlemites. He served three consecutive terms before leaving office on 2 January 1935, after the Democratic landslide in the election of 1934.

As an African American Congressman, DePriest was subjected to several personal slights, and his congressional career received mixed reviews. He was criticized, for example, for opposing federal aid to the unemployed; he was unable to get an antilynching bill passed; and he could not achieve a law changing the venue of a trial if the defendant believed that a fair trial was impossible in the designated jurisdiction. However, he was praised for demanding equal treatment in the House of Representatives and for eating in the Senate dining room. He also defended the right of students at Howard University to be served in the House restaurant; and he obtained approval of an increase from \$240,000 to \$460,000 in federal aid for Howard University's power plant. Ignoring death threats, he delivered speeches in the South. His most recognized legislative achievement was an amendment prohibiting discrimination in the Civilian Conservation Corps.

After serving in Congress, DePriest returned to Chicago and his real estate business. An ardent anti-communist, he remained politically active: he won a seat on the Chicago city council in 1943 and served until 1947. He died in 1951.

Biography

Oscar Stanton DePriest was born on 9 March 1871, in Florence, Alabama; his mother worked part time as a laundress; his father was a farmer. In 1878 the family settled in Kansas; Oscar DePriest was educated in local schools there and then studied business for two years at Salina Normal School. In 1888 he left home; he spent a year traveling and then moved to Chicago, working as a painter, a decorator, and eventually an independent contractor and realtor. He became active in the Republican Party and was commissioner in Cook County in 1904–1908. In 1906–1915 he participated in forming a black political organization in Chicago; in 1915, he was elected to the city council. He was elected to the U.S. Congress in 1928 and served until 1935. DePriest died in 1951, after having been hit by a bus.

ABEL BARTLEY

See also Politics and Politicians

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Dean, Lillian Harris

Lillian Harris (Lillian Harris Dean, 1870–1928), known as “Pig Foot Mary,” was an entrepreneur in Harlem. Unlike her famous contemporary, the businesswoman Madame C. J. Walker, Dean was known to few people outside Harlem. Yet in Harlem, she was a legendary success story: unable to read or write, she had achieved prosperity through inventiveness, hard work, and business savvy.

Pig Foot Mary was described as a black woman with a pleasant face and a deep voice, and physically immense—she was often called “Goliath” and “Amazon-like.” From early morning until late at night, her towering figure could be seen stationed on a segment of the sidewalk at Sixtieth Street and Amsterdam Avenue in front of Rudolph's Saloon. There, wearing one of her starched, checked gingham dresses, she sold the delicacies that many southern-born Harlemites had grown up eating: pigs' feet, chitterlings, corn on the cob, and hogmaws.

Pig Foot Mary had run away from her impoverished home as a teenager and had eventually come to New York City in 1901. She began her business shortly after arriving in Harlem, selling her wares at first from a dilapidated baby carriage. Taking five dollars that she had earned working as a domestic during her first week in Harlem, she spent three of the dollars for the baby carriage and a large wash boiler and spent the other two on pigs' feet. She persuaded the proprietor of Rudolph's saloon to allow her to use his stove each day to boil her wares, and by the end of a month, her business was a stunning success. She then progressed from the baby carriage to selling her wares over a specially constructed portable steam table that she had designed.

In 1917, in an effort to find better living conditions, many black people started moving farther uptown into Harlem. Pig Foot Mary then moved her business to the corner of 135th Street and Lenox Avenue, next to

John Dean, who had a flourishing newspaper stand and shoeshine stall there. She and Dean were married shortly afterward.

It has been said that one reason why Pig Foot Mary worked so hard was to save money for her old age: she wanted to afford a place for herself in a respectable old folks' home. After marrying Dean and evidently feeling somewhat more secure, she began to invest the income from her food business in Harlem real estate. Her first acquisition was a \$44,000 apartment on Seventh Avenue, which she sold six years later for \$72,000. She then bought more buildings at 69–71 West 138th Street, and then still more at 2324 Seventh Avenue, as well as houses in Pasadena, California. She was considered a tough, no-nonsense landlord; tenants and agents who fell behind in their rent would receive letters admonishing them to "Send it and send it damn quick!" By 1925, her real estate holdings were valued conservatively at \$375,000.

Biography

Lillian Harris Dean (Pig Foot Mary) was born in 1870, in a shanty on the Mississippi delta, to a large, poverty-stricken family. Longing for a better life, she ran away from home as a teenager and wandered to many northern cities before she arrived in New York City in the autumn of 1901. In Harlem, where she became a prosperous and legendary figure, she sold southern food on the street, married John Dean c. 1917, and invested profitably in real estate. She died in 1928 in California, at age fifty-eight.

JANICE TUCK LIVELY

See also other businesses

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Defender

See Chicago Defender

Delaney, Beauford

Beauford Delaney, an expressionist painter, whose brother Joseph was also an artist, was born in Tennessee in 1901 and studied in Boston. In the midst of the Harlem Renaissance, Beauford Delaney went to New York and found work as a bellboy. He lived in Greenwich Village during the 1930s and 1940s. During that period, he was highly productive; he exhibited at the Whitney Studio Gallery in 1930 and at the Harmon Foundation in Harlem, and he had his first one-man show at the Harlem branch of the New York Public Library. In 1936, under the auspices of the Federal Arts Project, he assisted Georgette Seabrooke Powell on a mural for the nurses' recreation room at Harlem Hospital.

In 1947 Delaney exhibited at the Pyramid Club in Philadelphia; in the 1950s he had a successful show at the RoKo Gallery in New York. At the time, his subjects were mainly urban scenes and portraits. Gregarious and endowed with an engaging personality, Delaney met many important people who recognized his talent and sat for portraits. Among his sitters were W. E. B. Dubois, the New Orleans jazz musician Billy Pierce, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, W. C. Handy, the cartoonist Al Hirschfeld, and the author Henry Miller.

Just as Delaney's subjects were inspired by the white community as well as by the African American community—he was at home both in Harlem and in the Village—so his style reflected influences from both groups. He was impressed by the painterly possibilities of abstract expressionism, which he combined with the rhythms of jazz. His *Can Fire in the Park* (1946), for example, has affinities with expressionism; the impasto

paint is thickly applied, and the color is vivid. It shows a group of blacks gathered around a fire in a garbage can. Illuminated with Delaney's unique light, the canvas pulsates with shimmering reds, yellows, blues, and greens. The outlines vibrate as if to the rhythm of music.

Like Jackson Pollock, Delaney studied for a time with Thomas Hart Benton at the Art Students League and was apparently influenced by his teacher's dynamic painted figures. With a fellowship to Yaddo in the 1950s, Delaney found the time and space to experiment with abstraction. From then on, nonrepresentational paintings would become part of his repertoire.

In the 1950s Delaney went to Paris, where he would spend the rest of his life and would become a magnet for other black artists living abroad. Constantly in need of money, he was helped by his friends among the expatriate American intellectuals in Paris. In addition to Miller, Delaney painted portraits of



Beauford Delaney, photographed by Carl Van Vechten. (Library of Congress.)

James Jones, James Baldwin, and Jean Genet. But sometimes he painted distinctively black themes, as in his portrait *Rosa Parks* (1970). He shows the defiant civil rights activist in a perky yellow hat and dress, seated confidently on a park bench, surrounded by his signature white impasto light. In the background the silhouette of a black man echoes a barren tree at the right.

In 1973, Delaney had a major retrospective in Paris, but by then his mind and his health were deteriorating as a result of alcoholism and Alzheimer's disease. He died in 1979.

Biography

Beauford Delaney was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, on 31 December 1901. His mother, Delia, had been born a slave in Virginia and later worked as a domestic. His father, part African American and part Native American Creek, was a Methodist Episcopal preacher who built churches in rural Tennessee and Virginia. Delaney attended an all-black high school in Knoxville before moving to Boston. There he studied art at the Massachusetts Normal School, the South Boston School of Art, and the Copley Society; frequented the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum; and developed an interest in classical music and opera. He moved to New York during the Harlem Renaissance and navigated between the white artists in Greenwich Village and the blacks who frequented Harlem. In the 1950s he went to Paris, where he remained until his death. He is best-known for his portraits, mainly of well-known intellectuals, and for his urban scenes. His style is expressionist, but he had a uniquely vivid color sense that he combined with musical rhythm, making his pictures seem to vibrate. Delaney died in 1979 and is buried in Paris.

Laurie Adams

See also Artists; Greenwich Village; Harmon Foundation

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Delany, Clarissa Scott

Although she is best-known for her poetry, Clarissa Scott Delany was active in several professions. She contributed essays, book reviews, and poems to *Crisis*, *Opportunity*, and *Palms*, but she also traveled in Europe, taught at the prestigious Dunbar High School, and collected statistical data as a social worker in New York City. Some insight into her varied experiences may be found in her poem "Solace," in which she writes "my life is fevered/and a restlessness at times . . . possesses me." In each endeavor, she addressed the concerns of African Americans from all walks of life.

Delany's social consciousness was probably inspired by her father, Emmet Jay Scott, who was Booker T. Washington's secretary. Delany was raised in the "black belt" in a middle-class family; she left home at age fifteen to study at the Bradford Academy in New England. Upon graduation, she entered Wellesley College, where she studied poetry and social economics and was a member of the varsity field hockey team, as well as many clubs. It was during this time that Scott began attending meetings of the Literary Guild in Boston, where she heard Claude McKay speak and made connections with other socially minded and artistically inspired African Americans.

Her literary and political interests blend in "A Golden Afternoon in Germany," an essay inspired by a postgraduation trip through Europe and published in *Opportunity* in 1925. This piece profiles two German artists whose works show, in Delany's words, "a recognition of soul, of spirituality in the African." Although the essay explicitly discusses major issues of the Harlem Renaissance, such as pan-Africanism, art, and essentialism, Delany's poetry is more subtle and personal, revealing her private struggles through the imagery of nature. For example, in "Solace," the speaker discovers in the "shifting/Pageant of the seasons" a way that she can "Take meaning from all turmoil/And leave serenity/Which knows no pain." Throughout her

poetry, rain and wind seem to be a counterpart to the speakers' emotions and seem to offer the writer some distance from anguish. Such distance is addressed more directly in "The Mask," which features a speaker so detached from emotion that she refers to herself as "she," until a betrayal causes the mask to fall and the "I" to emerge. However, Delany writes not only of masking the "bitter black despair" of social and personal defeat, but also of transcendence, as in her often-quoted "Interim": "Another day will find me brave/and not afraid to dare."

After three years of teaching at Dunbar High School, Clarissa Scott married Hubert T. Delany, a lawyer, and moved to New York City. She continued to work as a poet, critic, and social worker until her death of kidney disease in 1927. Although she published only four poems, her work was lauded by W. E. B. Du Bois, Alice Dunbar Nelson, and Countee Cullen, who included her poems in his anthology *Caroling Dusk*. Upon her death, Delany's Dunbar colleagues Angelina Weld Grimké and Anna Julia Cooper wrote moving tributes to her.

Biography

Clarissa Mae Scott Delany was born on 22 May 1901, in Tuskegee, Alabama. She studied at Bradford Academy, Haverhill, Massachusetts (1916–1919); and Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts (B.A., Phi Beta Kappa, 1919–1923). Delany taught at Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C. (1923–1926), and was a social worker with the National Urban League and the Women's City Club of New York (1926). Her husband was Hubert T. Delany, a lawyer. Her poem "Solace" won fourth place in the literary contest sponsored by *Opportunity*. She died in New York City, on 11 October 1927, at age twenty-six.

REBECCA MEACHAM

See also Authors: 5–Poets; Crisis, The; Cullen, Countee; Grimké, Angelina Weld; Nelson, Alice Dunbar; Opportunity; Opportunity Literary Contests; Palms

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Dett, Robert Nathaniel

I am a musician whose ambition in life is the advancement of my people, and who believes absolutely in equality of opportunity for all peoples, regardless of race, creed, or color, or previous condition of servitude. (Excerpt from *Annual Report to President Gregg*, Hampton Institute, 1918)

Robert Nathaniel Dett was born in Canada and raised in New York. He had been a child prodigy, and as an adult he worked for the advancement of "his people" through his roles as educator, pianist and organist, composer, conductor, and intellectual.

Dett's commitment to education was apparent not only in his personal academic studies and accomplishments but also through his teaching: he was a professor at numerous black institutes and colleges. His longest tenure was at Hampton Institute (1913–1932), where he served as the first black chair of music and introduced the B.S. degree in music. He was a protégé of the black educator and soprano E. Azalia Hackley; and one of his students—among other noted artists—was the acclaimed soprano Dorthy Maynor.

As a pianist and organist, Dett performed at numerous prestigious venues, including Carnegie Hall, Boston Symphony Hall, and the Library of Congress. He also performed for two presidents: Herbert Hoover and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Dett's rapid success during the early 1920s gained him the attention and support of the banker and philanthropist George Foster Peabody, who was his benefactor for more than a decade.

Dett was one of the most celebrated composers of the period; his nearly 100 compositions include works for piano, chorus, solo voice, orchestra, and organ. Many of his compositions reflect his love of black folk music, especially the spiritual. Dett's compositional style was characterized by traditional harmonies and rhythms and was often classified as neoromantic. He received some criticism because of this style, which was seen as an imitation of white classical composers. Nevertheless, along with Harry T. Burleigh, Will Marion Cook, and J. Rosamund Johnson, he paved the way for subsequent black composers; and Penman Lovinggood described Dett as "our most characteristically racial composer." Dett's most noted pieces during the period include the motet *The Chariot Jubilee* (1919), based on the spiritual "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot"; "Let Us Cheer the Weary Traveler" (1926); and the oratorio *The Ordering of Moses* (1931–1932, 1937).

Dett was also an esteemed leader within the music community. In the spirit of self-empowerment, he formed the Musical Arts Society in 1919 as a way to invite distinguished artists such as Marian Anderson, Percy Grainger, Roland Hayes, Clarence Cameron White, and Burleigh to the Hampton-Norfolk area to give lectures, concerts, and performance clinics. Also in 1919, motivated by his love of black folk music and by his desire to preserve this music and to foster talent, he cofounded the National Association of Negro Musicians (NANM) with Nora Holt, Henry Grant, and White. Dett served as chair of NAMN's advisory board and later as its president.

Many of Dett's thoughts on black music are expressed in his prize-winning four-part essay "Negro Music" (1920), and in numerous published and unpublished articles.

Biography

Robert Nathaniel Dett was born on 11 October 1882, in Drummondville, Ontario (Canada). He studied at Halstead Conservatory of Music in Lockport, New York, with its founder, Oliver Willis Halstead (1901–1903); at Oberlin College Conservatory of Music in Ohio, with Howard Handel Carter (piano), J. W. Horner (voice), F. Lehman (theory), Edward Dickinson (history of music), Arthur E. Heacox (theory), George Carl Hastings (piano), George W. Andrews (organ and composition), and J. R. Frampton (organ), receiving a bachelor of music degree in piano and composition (1908); again at the Oberlin Conservatory with Karl Gehrken (musical pedagogy, summer 1913); at Columbia University in New York with Peter Dykema (summer 1915); at the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago (summer 1915); at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, with Lawrence Erb (summer 1915); at Harvard University with Arthur Foote (1919–1920); at Fontainebleau School of Music in France, with Nadia Boulanger (1929); and at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, with Max Landow (piano), Bernard Rogers (composition and orchestration), Edward Royce (counterpoint), and Howard Hanson (modern harmony) in 1932. Dett taught at Lane College in Jackson, Tennessee (1908–1911); at Lincoln Institute in Jefferson, Missouri (1911–1913); at Hampton Institute in Virginia (1913–1932); at the Eastman School of Music (1931–1933); at Sam Houston College in Austin, Texas (summer 1937); and at Bennett College in Greensboro, North Carolina (1937–1942). He was the founder of the Musical Arts Society (1919); a cofounder (1919) and president (1924–1926) of the National Association of Negro Musicians; and director of the Hampton Institute Choir (1913–1931) and of the Hampton Institute School of Music (1928–1932). His awards included the Francis Boot Music Award (1919), Bowdoin Literary Prize (1920), and the Harmon Foundation Award (1928). He received honorary doctorates from Howard University (1924) and Oberlin College Conservatory of Music (1926). He was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, American Society of Composers, National Association of Negro Musicians, and National

Association of Teachers in Colored Schools. Dett died in Battle Creek, Michigan, on 2 October 1943.

EMMETT PRICE III

See also Anderson, Marian; Burleigh, Harry Thacker; Cook, Will Marion; Hayes, Roland; Holt, Nora; Johnson, John Rosamond; Lovinggood, Penman; Music; National Association of Negro Musicians; White, Clarence Cameron

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Domingo, Wilfred Adolphus

Wilfred Adolphus (W. A.) Domingo, an Afro-Caribbean immigrant, was a businessman, journalist, and author and a participant in the Garveyite, socialist, and communist movements in Harlem. He and Marcus Garvey had met in Kingston, where they were members of the National Club, a political organization, and they remained in close contact in the United States. Domingo introduced Garvey to the works of the nineteenth-century proto-black nationalist Edward Wilmot Blyden, and later to several radical black intellectuals in Harlem, including Hubert Harrison, A. Philip Randolph, Chandler Owen, and Richard B. Moore.

Although Domingo never officially joined Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), he was an active participant in early meetings of the New York branch in 1917–1919; he also arranged for a local printer, Henry Rogowski, to publish UNIA's periodical *Negro World*, and from August 1918 to July 1919, Domingo was its founding editor, a position in which Garvey gave him considerable latitude. However, Domingo's use of *Negro World* to express his own socialist views troubled Garvey, who espoused Booker T. Washington's bootstrap capitalism and who wanted to avoid trouble during the "red scare" of 1919. In June 1919, during a raid on the Rand School, the Lusk Committee seized many socialist texts, including a work in progress by Domingo called *Socialism Imperiled*, and Garvey and Domingo's collaboration came to an acrimonious end. Garvey and the UNIA's executive committee put Domingo on "trial" for publicizing views and ideas inconsistent with Garveyism, and Domingo left *Negro World* in July 1919. In 1925, in an open letter to the editor of the *Jamaican Gleaner*, Domingo publicly denounced Garvey's practices as "medieval, obscure, and dishonest" and Garvey's steamship corporation, the Black Star Line, as virtually a swindle.

As a political essayist, Domingo contributed articles on racism, capitalist exploitation, and imperialism to various radical black journals. He worked for the *Messenger* during the early 1920s, when the black socialists A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen were attacking Garvey (who had held an infamous meeting with the

Ku Klux Klan); but Domingo parted ways with the *Messenger* in 1923 after Randolph and Owen's crusade against Garvey became anti-West Indian. At this time, Domingo shifted his affiliation from the Socialist Party to the Harlem branch of the Communist Party. He also joined the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB) and began handling its periodical, the *Crusader*, as well as guiding ABB's publicity and propaganda. He started a weekly magazine of his own, the *Emancipator*, during the late 1920s.

One of Domingo's emphases was the importance of West Indian immigration to racial uplift in America. Later in his life, he was a notable critic of the short-lived West Indian Federation, a pan-Caribbean nationalist entity founded in 1958. Aside from this, however, little is known about Domingo's last years.

Biography

Wilfred Adolphus Domingo was born on 26 November 1889, in Kingston, Jamaica. He left Jamaica for the United States in 1910, relocated from Boston to New York in 1912, and started a fruit and vegetable import business in Harlem in 1922. Domingo was an editor of *Negro World*, a columnist for *The Messenger* (1917–1923), and a founding member of the African Blood Brotherhood (1919–1924). He also worked on and contributed to other radical black periodicals. He and Marcus Garvey had a long friendship and collaboration but eventually broke with each other. The date of Domingo's death is unknown.

J. M. FLOYD-THOMAS

See also African Blood Brotherhood; Black Star Line; Garvey, Marcus; Harrison, Hubert; Messenger, The; Moore, Richard B.; Negro World; Owen, Chandler; Randolph, A. Philip; Riots: 2—Red Summer of 1919; United Negro Improvement Association

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Who's Who in Colored America. 1933.

Douglas, Aaron

Aaron Douglas was the leading visual artist of the Harlem Renaissance. Within weeks of his arrival in Harlem in 1925, he was recruited by W. E. B. Du Bois, the editor of *The Crisis*; and by Charles S. Johnson, the editor of *Opportunity*, to illustrate their editorials and articles on lynching, segregation, political issues, theater, and jazz, as well as poems and stories. Douglas, a high school teacher in Kansas City, had decided to join the young artists of the Harlem Renaissance after seeing a copy of *Survey Graphic*, which had devoted a special issue to Harlem and had chosen the Bavarian artist Winold Reiss to create a cover for the magazine. Douglas was impressed by Reiss's dignified, forthright portrayal of blacks.

Douglas was hired to create a visual message about a largely literary movement, for a public that had grown dramatically with the increase of black migration to the North during World War I. Du Bois had complained often in *Crisis* about a lack of black patronage and of a black audience, most notably in his "Criteria of Negro Art." As he knew, black artists found that most support for their work came from whites, who were the main patrons of the Harlem Renaissance; and he believed that blacks needed to support their own artists. It was his hope that Douglas could reach a new, emerging black public across the United States, starting with Harlem. This was a role that only an illustrator could fill. *Crisis* had a wide national readership, and any illustration Douglas made would be seen in libraries, schools, and homes across the country. Douglas tried to reach this new black middle-class public by using the language of African art as one of his most important tools. Before Douglas, some American artists had begun to include African art in their work, but none had used it on a regular basis.

Du Bois realized that an artist could help relay a message; and art, according to Du Bois, should have a message. He stated: "I do not care a damn for any art

that is not used for propaganda. But I do care when propaganda is confined to one side while the other is stripped and silent." Douglas, accordingly, tried to create a new, positive black image, influenced by Africa. He was tired of white people's depictions of blacks and believed that his work could touch the black audience in a unique way. He wanted to change the way blacks were depicted in art and to bring the language of African art to Harlem and then to the entire United States. In 1925, he explained in a letter to Alta Sawyer, his future wife: "We are possessed, you know, with the idea that it is necessary to be white, to be beautiful. Nine times out of ten it is just the reverse. It takes lots of training or a tremendous effort to down the idea that thin lips and a straight nose [are] the apogee of beauty. But once free you can look back with a sigh of relief and wonder how anyone could be so deluded."

Douglas's growth and experimentation can be seen in his magazine illustrations, in which he created some of his most forceful and interesting works and evolved his artistic language, a language immersed in African art to a degree that was unprecedented among American artists. These works are clean and bold, often consisting of just a few simple figures that illustrate a basic idea or just show images of African Americans.

Douglas's first illustration in *Crisis*, in the issue of February 1962, was "Invincible Music: The Spirit of Africa," which had been drawn specifically for the magazine but was not accompanied by any related text and did not accompany any article. "Invincible Music" consists of one figure, presumably male, in silhouette, with head raised in song to the sky and right arm holding a mallet that is used to beat a large drum. This figure is crouching and is clad in only a simple wrap around the waist; the position—with shoulders parallel to the picture plane rather than receding into space in correct perspective—and the figure's hair and entire bodily profile or silhouette are reminiscent of Egyptian art, in which Douglas had a great interest. Here Egypt stands for all of Africa. Douglas was also trying to simplify the human form. Two shield-like marquis shapes are implanted in the ground behind the figure; their jagged design resembles African-inspired patterning. These shapes symbolize plant life, as do three smaller versions, which look like leaves and are placed in front of the figure. At the top of the drawing are two large jagged shapes that represent sources of energy, perhaps the sun or stars, as well as a stylized stream of smoke on the right. At the

bottom of the drawing are flat papyrus plants (resembling tulips), which appear to be inspired by art deco. This drawing is successful partly because it is so simple, with large expanses of solid black and a bright white background, highlighted by grayish outlines and details, and also because its format—a silhouette—is so forceful.

Douglas's next illustration for *Crisis*, "Poster of the Krigwa Players Little Negro Theatre of Harlem," appeared in the issue of May 1926. It was not related to any particular play but was rather a type of advertisement for Du Bois's theater project. This illustration is even more strongly influenced by Egyptian and African imagery. Like "Invincible Music," it is in solid black and white, and it is boldly executed, almost like a woodblock print. The poster shows a single figure, sitting cross-legged, with the face turned to the side so that it is shown in profile; the figure is angular, primarily rectilinear in form, with exaggeratedly thick lips, the appearance of geometric tribal makeup, an afro hairstyle, a large hoop earring dangling from the visible ear, and an African mask or ancestral head held in the left hand. Stylized plants and flowers, resembling African motifs and art deco patterning, surround the figure, and a palm tree is shown. Above the figure, the influence of Egypt is apparent in pyramids on the left, a sun form above, and a sphinx on the right. Wave patterns form the bottom third of the composition, perhaps representing the Nile. Although this picture may have little to do with actual African imagery, the viewer can immediately see that the inspiration is African. Du Bois wanted Douglas to remind the readers of *Crisis* of their African ancestry and to inspire in them an interest in their common heritage. Egypt provided a vocabulary for achieving this goal, although except for the fact that the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb had prompted a renewed interest in African art, there was only a tenuous link between Egypt and sub-Saharan Africa.

In addition to *Crisis* and *Opportunity*, Douglas did illustrations for other journals, including *Theatre Arts Monthly*; for books, including Locke's *New Negro*; and for the poems of Langston Hughes. He also received several commissions for murals and portraits. He created a particularly innovative cover for *Fire!!*, a radical black publication edited by Wallace Thurman that attempted to break away from the confines of the traditional leaders of the Harlem Renaissance and create a new artistic voice. Douglas also did three interior drawings for *Fire!!* and wrote its artistic statement.

In 1930 Douglas was commissioned to execute a cycle of murals for the library of Fisk University, representing a panorama of the history of black people in the new world. He began with life in Africa, then depicted slavery, emancipation, and freedom, which he symbolized as Fisk's Jubilee Hall. Through this extensive mural project, Douglas hoped to make the students at Fisk realize the important contributions of black Americans in building America. The final murals in the cycle, still visible today, represent philosophy, drama, music, poetry, and science, with depictions of night and day.

Many artists of the Harlem Renaissance traveled to Paris, and Douglas was no exception: he lived in Paris and studied at the Académie Scandinave there for one year, in 1931. This sojourn was followed by a one-year fellowship at the Barnes Foundation in Merion, Pennsylvania.

In 1934, as a project for the Works Progress Administration (WPA), Douglas executed what many people consider to be his masterpiece: the large Marxist-inspired murals *Aspects of Negro Life*, now at the Schomburg Center in Harlem. As early as the 1920s, Douglas had been determined to awaken middle-class blacks to the important issues of their time, but the Great Depression—which affected the black middle class more severely than its white counterpart—radicalized both Douglas and his audience. In *Aspects of Negro Life*, Douglas chronicled the struggle of black men and women from Africa through slavery and emancipation to their role as workers in the machine age. These murals—individually titled *The Negro in an African Setting*, *Slavery through Reconstruction*, *An Idyll of the Deep South*, and *Song of the Towers*—appealed directly to a public suffering the hardships of unemployment and poverty.

Douglas was not the only illustrator during these years to develop the vocabulary of Africa; numerous artists who followed him and were influenced by him took great pride in their African heritage. However, Douglas remains unique in that he provided crucial links between the literary figures of the Harlem Renaissance, their ideas about Africa, and the thinking of blacks throughout the world. Working during a time of limited artistic freedom for African Americans, he also had to confront the problem of trying to reach—with limited patronage—a public that was still geographically isolated, difficult to locate, and difficult to define. Despite these challenges, Douglas successfully addressed issues of importance to a growing black middle class. He based his work on studies of the

African heritage and was the first black artist in the United States to create racial art; and as an illustrator for black magazines, he was able to reach a large readership. Black leaders sought his work to illustrate their message, and he received regular commissions until his departure from Harlem in 1937. Douglas brought African art to Harlem in a new, accessible, immediate way and then, through his illustrations, brought it to Americans, both black and white, across the country. He never depended on white patronage: he created African-inspired works largely under his own direction and the influence of black leaders. His experience indicates that this group effort, however brief, was one of the most exciting aspects of the time. The artists of the Harlem Renaissance were a small band, but they opened doors and increased opportunities for black artists in the 1930s.

Douglas's works reflected pride, unity, strength, dignity, and self-awareness. He was a pioneer in American art, breaking away from the traditions of more famous white artists such as Robert Henri, Reginald Marsh, and Ben Shahn to create unique, sophisticated works that interpreted modernism in a new light. Moreover, Douglas's influence extended beyond his extensive commissions during the Harlem Renaissance. He was hired by Fisk University in 1940 to create a new art department, and he became its founding chairman, remaining in this position until his retirement in 1966.

Douglas recognized the similarity between the period of the Harlem Renaissance and the period of the civil rights movement. Both were times of rapid social, political, and economic change, and during both eras he had tremendous hope for a better life for African Americans. His art—depicting the history of Africa and of black Americans, and pervaded by African imagery—was a way to encourage racial pride and build blacks' self-esteem.

In his later years, Douglas often spoke of the Harlem Renaissance, reminding his students that it had been a time "fraught with hope, bitter frustration, and struggle against an indifferent and frequently hostile environment." Knowing that his students were in the midst of their own struggle in contemporary America, he urged them to remain optimistic and hopeful and to keep their eyes on the prize. When he was one of the few remaining figures from the renaissance, he assured his students: "We still rejoice that we were among those who were found able and willing to shoulder the heavy burden of the pioneer and the pathfinder, firm in the conviction that our labor was a



Aaron Douglas. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

small but withal an essential contribution to the continued flowering of the art and culture of the black people of this nation." In making their own contribution to black culture, these students could hardly find a better guide than Aaron Douglas. He ranks among the most important American artists of the twentieth century; and his experiences and insights—which were so essential during the civil rights era—remain valuable today, as artists of a new generation face many of the same obstacles and challenges.

Biography

Aaron Douglas was born in Topeka, Kansas, in 1899. He received a B.F.A. from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, in 1922; studied under Winold Reiss in New York in 1924–1927; studied at the Académie Scandinave in Paris (1931); and received an M.A. from Columbia University Teachers College in New York

(1944). Douglas was founder and chair of the art department at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee (1937–1966). He retired from Fisk in 1966 and died in Nashville in 1979, at age eighty.

AMY KIRSCHKE

See also Artists; Crisis, The; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Fire!!; Hughes, Langston; Krigwa Players; New Negro, The; Opportunity; Reiss, Winold; Survey Graphic; Visual Arts

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Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee. 1948, 1952, 1953.
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Draper, Muriel

Muriel Draper—a writer, social activist, and broadcaster—played a major role in the Harlem Renaissance through one of the most influential salons in New York. Noted for her unusual looks and inventive clothes, she moved in artistic circles in England and America. She married the lieder singer Paul Draper in 1909, and the couple relocated to Italy. The Drapers had a difficult marriage, and Paul Draper died in 1925 at age thirty-eight. Muriel Draper then moved to New York, where she worked as an interior decorator and magazine writer. She, Carl Van Vechten, and A. R. Orage formed a trio of white intellectuals who infused international cultural progressivism into Harlem.

Like the pioneering Harlem author Jean Toomer, Muriel Draper was a follower of the mystic G. I. Gurdjieff, who was based in Paris; for seven years,

from 1924 to 1931, Draper served the Gurdjieff group in New York as an unofficial secretary. During that time, meetings of the Gurdjieff group, led by Orage, were held at her apartment. Draper was a close associate of another of Gurdjieff's disciples, Carl Van Vechten, whose novel *Nigger Heaven* (1926) contributed to making Harlem a fad. Through their mixed-race gatherings, Draper and Van Vechten crusaded to break down the color barrier. Draper's Tuesday teas were modest affairs; however, she brought together the Harlem avant-garde and white artists without regard for race at a time when this was highly exceptional. With Carl Van Vechten, she also assisted the black singer Taylor Gordon in writing and publishing his memoirs, *Born to Be* (1929).

While participating in a creative writing group (to which Jean Toomer also belonged) conducted at her home by Orage, Draper wrote *Music at Midnight* (1929). This was a memoir of her years as a saloniste in London from 1911 to 1914, during her marriage to Paul Draper. Regular members of her salon in London had included Pablo Casals, Henry James, and Arthur Rubinstein, and she had also received visits from such notables as Gertrude Stein and Nancy Cunard.

Following up on the renown she achieved through *Music at Midnight*, she became a lecturer, speaking on social issues that were related to her interest in the psychoanalyst Karen Horney and in Marxism. After a tour of the Soviet Union in 1934–1935, Draper became active in leftist politics. She visited Spain during its civil war in 1937 and subsequently lectured about and raised money for the Loyalists. In 1938 she had a radio program on NBC, "It's a Woman's World," presenting political and social analyses. She made two further visits to the Soviet Union but ceased her political activities after being attacked by the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1949.

Van Vechten preserved Draper's papers and clothes at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, where Romaine Brooks's portrait of her also hangs.

Biography

Muriel Draper was born c. 1886 and attended public schools in Haverhill, Massachusetts. She was employed as an interior decorator by the architect Paul Chalfin in New York (1916–1920) and as assistant manager of the Chicago Opera Company (1920–1922); she then operated her own decorating business

(1922–1927). Draper published articles and sketches in *Harper's*, *Town and Country*, and *Vogue* (1920–1929) and had a radio program on NBC, "It's a Woman's World" (1938). She was a member of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship (1942) and the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), Congress of American Women (1945–1949), and served as its president (1949). Draper died in New York City on 26 August 1952.

JON WOODSON

See also Cunard, Nancy; Toomer, Jean; Van Vechten, Carl

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Dreiser, Theodore

Theodore Dreiser gained his reputation as a major American novelist during the first half of the twentieth century, as the author of critically acclaimed works that include *Sister Carrie* (1900), *Jennie Gerherdt* (1911), and *An American Tragedy* (1925). He was born in Terre Haute, Indiana, and grew up in a large family that included four brothers and five sisters. Because of constant financial pressure, Dreiser's family moved continually and even separated for a period of time. However, Dreiser managed to receive schooling and even attended college for a year at Indiana University (thanks to the financial assistance of a former schoolteacher). Eventually, Dreiser found work as a reporter for Chicago's *Daily Globe* and then wrote for a succession of newspapers across the United States. His experiences with these newspapers educated him about the world and enabled him to work at his craft. After writing several short stories, Dreiser published his first novel, *Sister Carrie*. Following the controversy surrounding this novel, Dreiser suffered a nervous breakdown. His brother Paul, the writer of popular songs such as "On the Banks of the Wabash," helped him recover and go on writing.

Although he was not a major figure in the Harlem Renaissance, Dreiser was a prominent writer and an active participant in the New York literary world; and his social life placed him in the circles of several renowned contributors to the renaissance. At one party held by the Van Vechtens, Dreiser heard James Weldon Johnson read "Go Down Death" and Paul Robeson sing. Along with Robeson and others, Dreiser later received the Award of Merit Medal from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Dreiser also attended the production of *Othello* in which Robeson starred. In 1945, Dreiser invited Robeson to one of his teas, at which the two discussed race relations and the possibility of writing an article on that topic; before leaving, Robeson sang a rendition of "Ol' Man River" for Dreiser. At this tea, Dreiser and Robeson also discussed Paul Robeson Jr.'s educational experiences in Russia. Dreiser had always been interested in the Soviet Union and had visited it in 1927. Throughout his life, he leaned heavily toward communism, although he did not join the Communist Party until shortly before his death.

Dreiser also spent time with Langston Hughes. In 1938, he and Hughes were selected as delegates to attend the International Convention for International Peace. Hughes had the difficult responsibility of looking after Dreiser, who had a reputation for unusual behavior. True to form, Dreiser failed to attend a lunch that was being given for the delegation by a group of British writers. Eventually, though, Dreiser came around and conducted himself well; Hughes even stated that he was glad Dreiser had been selected. Shortly after the conference, however, Dreiser proceeded to Spain at the invitation of the Loyalists and then went to London, bypassing his fellow American delegates and causing more anxiety for Hughes.

Dreiser served as an honorary chairman to the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners (NCDPP), which actively sought funds to support the legal defense of the nine Scottsboro boys in Alabama, who had been unjustly accused of assaulting two white girls and imprisoned; NCDPP also wrote a letter to the governor of Alabama. In July 1931, Dreiser wrote to the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching; his letter shows an acute sensitivity to the injustices related to the trial and conviction of the Scottsboro boys, and he places this case in the context of the larger racial problems plaguing the United States. Dreiser also wrote "They Shall Not Die" (1934) as a defense of the Scottsboro boys.

Dreiser's short story "Nigger Jeff" (1901) reflects his early thoughts about lynching. He based part of the narrative on incidents that he observed as a reporter in St. Louis, Missouri; and some critics believe that the story depicts Dreiser's own transformation from newspaper reporter to serious artist. Dreiser uses the perspective of a young reporter named Elmer Davies, who is sent to Pleasant Valley to cover the story of Jeff Ingalls, a black man accused of assaulting a white girl. The reporter witnesses a mob's effort to take Ingalls away from the local sheriff. Eventually, Ingalls is seized by the mob, which is led by the girl's father and brother; he is then brought to a bridge and hanged. This incident has a tremendous impact on the reporter. After the others leave, Davies does not rush back to the city but stays at the bridge with the body. He then returns to the Pleasant Valley and learns that the sheriff will not take action against the men who have killed Ingalls. Before he leaves, Davies walks out to Ingalls' cabin to see the body again, discovers Ingalls' mother weeping in the corner, and is moved to tears.



Theodore Dreiser, photographed by Carl Van Vechten in 1933.
(Library of Congress.)

He leaves the cabin understanding that “it was not always exact justice that was meted out to all.”

Dreiser’s body of work influenced younger writers such as Richard Wright. In particular, Wright discovered in *Jennie Gerhardt* and *Sister Carrie* a sense of suffering that he associated with his own mother. Dreiser’s *An American Tragedy* also influenced Wright’s *Native Son*. The poet Margaret Walker recalled that to construct his fictional narrative, Wright used Dreiser’s technique of collecting newspaper articles related to a specific crime. Several critics have since noted parallels between Dreiser’s character Clyde Griffiths and Wright’s Bigger Thomas. Wright eventually became friends with Dreiser, and in 1944 attended Dreiser’s farewell party in New York.

Theodore Dreiser remains an intriguing figure in the historical context of the Harlem Renaissance. His association with prominent African American artists and his interest in civil rights are worthy of more critical exploration.

Biography

Herman Theodore Dreiser was born on 27 August 1871, in Terre Haute, Indiana. He attended high school in Warsaw, Indiana, and entered Indiana University in 1889. He was a reporter for a series of newspapers: the *Chicago Globe* (1892), *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* (1892–1893), *St. Louis Republic* (1893), *Pittsburgh Dispatch* (1894), and *New York World* (1894). He was also an editor for a series of publications: the *New York Daily News* (1901–1903), *Smith’s Magazine* (1904–1905), *Broadway Magazine* (1906), the Butterick “trio” (*Delineator*, *Designer*, and *New Idea Woman’s Magazine*, 1907–1910), and the *American Spectator* (1932–1934). He applied to the Communist Party in 1945. His awards included the Merit Medal of the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1944). Dreiser died in Hollywood, California, on 28 December 1945.

PAUL R. CAPPUCCI

See also Hughes, Langston; Johnson, James Weldon; Robeson, Paul; Scottsboro; They Shall Not Die; Van Vechten, Carl; Walker, Margaret

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Du Bois, W. E. B.

Historian, sociologist, political activist, editor, essayist, novelist, poet, and prophet, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois stands as one of the towering figures in American history. In a public career encompassing three-quarters of a century, Du Bois delivered eloquent, trenchant, and occasionally contradictory commentary on what he called “the problem of the Twentieth Century . . . the problem of the color line.” In the 1920s, he played a central role in the unfolding drama of the Harlem Renaissance, initially as an

inspiration and patron and later as an increasingly captious critic.

Du Bois was born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, in 1868. His origins were humble. His mother, Mary, worked odd jobs, mostly as a domestic servant, before suffering a paralytic stroke; he scarcely knew his father, Alfred, who had abandoned the family. Still, Du Bois remembered his childhood as happy, a more or less “typically New England” upbringing, only occasionally ruffled by the racial realities of post-Reconstruction America. He flourished in Great Barrington’s public schools, exhibiting even in these early days the qualities that would distinguish his life and art: a voracious intellect, a romantic imagination, and an overweening (although, in retrospect, quite justified) sense of his own historical importance.

Du Bois graduated from Great Barrington High School in 1885 and proceeded to Fisk University, from which he graduated three years later. Fisk, the flagship of the American Missionary Association’s post-civil war campaign to uplift the freedpeople, gave Du Bois not only a fine classical education but also his first exposure to black life in the South under Jim Crow. In *Darkwater* (1921), Du Bois would describe that experience in characteristically grandiloquent prose: “Consider, for a moment, how miraculous it all was to a boy of seventeen, just escaped from a narrow valley. I willed and lo! my people came dancing about me . . . riotous in color, gay in laughter, full of sympathy, need, and pleading.”

From Fisk, Du Bois went to Harvard, where he earned a second bachelor’s degree in 1890 and a doctorate in history five years later. Although excluded from the university’s dormitories and most of its social life, he flourished academically, developing close relationships with some of America’s premier intellectuals, including the philosophers William James, Josiah Royce, and George Santayana and the historian Alfred Bushnell Hart. Du Bois’s Ph.D. dissertation, “The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America,” completed under Hart’s direction, was published in 1896—the first of his more than two dozen books.

Du Bois’s graduate education also included a two-year sojourn at the University of Berlin, where he immersed himself in the emerging discipline of sociology. Although he failed to earn the coveted German doctoral degree—his support from the white philanthropic Slater Fund dried up before he could complete the residency requirement—his years in Germany proved formative. The encounter with sociology not

only shaped Du Bois’s future academic career but also confirmed his political vocation, offering a framework for engaged intellectual activism. Although often frustrated by the sheer irrationality of racial prejudice, Du Bois remained convinced that it was possible to generate authoritative, objective knowledge about human life (and about Negro life in particular), and that this knowledge could be used to fashion a more rational, more just world. More broadly, his years in Germany established some of the signature tensions in his thought. Living in Germany sharpened his racialism, his conviction that each race or *Volk* possessed its own distinctive genius or “gift”; but at the same time, Germany confirmed the cosmopolitan in him who exulted in what he called “the world beyond the veil,” that vast “kingdom of culture” unsullied by American racial madness.

Despite his peerless education, Du Bois had no chance of a permanent appointment at a white university when he returned to the United States in 1894. He accepted a position teaching classics at Wilberforce University, an African Methodist Episcopal church school in Ohio. (Ironically, in light of future events, Du Bois also applied for and was offered a position at Booker T. Washington’s Tuskegee Institute, but the offer did not arrive until after he had accepted the post at Wilberforce.) Although he often waxed lyrical about African American Christianity, Du Bois had little patience with organized religion, and he soon became estranged from the dominant evangelical ethos at Wilberforce. In 1896, he left to accept a temporary research position at the University of Pennsylvania, from which came his second book, *The Philadelphia Negro*, which is still regarded as a classic of urban sociology. In retrospect, his years at Wilberforce are significant chiefly for introducing him to his future wife, a “doe-eyed,” somewhat stolid student named Nina Gomer. Although grievously mismatched, the couple remained married for more than half a century, until Nina’s death in 1950. They had two children: a son, Burghardt, whose death in infancy would later be poignantly rendered in “The Passing of the First Born,” one of the essays in *The Souls of Black Folk*; and a daughter, Yolande.

In 1898, Du Bois joined the faculty of Atlanta University, where he spent the next decade teaching, writing, and overseeing the Atlanta Studies, an ambitious annual series of conferences and monographs designed to provide an exact sociological portrait of African American life. He also put the final touches on his masterwork, *The Souls of Black Folk*, a collection

of essays, autobiographical fragments, and fiction intended to illuminate the subjective human reality of those who lived “within the veil.” In the book’s belletristic “Forethought,” Du Bois made it clear that his imagined audience was white, but this work would have its most profound impact on African American readers, including virtually all of the writers and artists who later distinguished themselves in the Harlem Renaissance.

The Souls of Black Folk marked Du Bois’s entrance into the arena of racial politics. Chapter 3, “Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others,” offered a respectful but telling critique of the so-called wizard of Tuskegee, whose advocacy of “industrial” education and political accommodation had lent an apparent black seal of approval to the Jim Crow regime settling over the South. In 1905, Du Bois helped organize the Niagara Movement, an assembly of black leaders opposed to Washington’s leadership and committed to fighting for full civil equality for African Americans. Although this movement never achieved a firm institutional foundation, it signaled a new black assertiveness and contributed directly to the establishment, four years later, of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In 1910, Du Bois moved to New York City, to take office as the director of publicity of NAACP and to edit its monthly journal, *The Crisis*.

Du Bois’s relationship with the predominantly white leadership of NAACP was contentious from the outset and would eventually culminate in his resignation. But for the predominantly black readership of *Crisis*, Du Bois was the NAACP. Working with limited funds and a minimal staff, he turned the magazine into his personal broadsheet, offering news and commentary, edifying reading lists, book reviews, and, on more than a few occasions, scathing criticism of individuals or institutions that had neglected their responsibility to the race. The riot in east St. Louis, the savage practice of lynching, America’s entry into World War I (which Du Bois, to his later regret, endorsed), the Bolshevik revolution, Garveyism, the biennial meetings of his own Pan-African Congress, the New Deal—all of these developments and more were discussed and digested in the columns of *Crisis*. In the words of Lewis (1993), Du Bois became the self-appointed “preceptor of the race.” No debate in black American life could be considered complete until Dr. Du Bois had had his say.

Inevitably, Du Bois was drawn into debates swirling around the Harlem Renaissance. Initially, he

expressed an almost paternal fondness for the writers of the “younger literary movement,” whom he regarded as his heirs. That assessment was characteristically immodest but by no means unfair. Virtually all of the core contentions of the New Negro movement can be found in Du Bois’s writing a generation before. Du Bois first insisted that the Negro was “primarily an artist,” that the “rude melodies” of black slaves constituted the “only true American music,” and that blacks’ “gift of laughter and song” had enriched an otherwise impoverished, materialistic American culture. Du Bois also recognized, long before Alain Locke, James Weldon Johnson, and other progenitors of the Harlem Renaissance, that artistic and literary production could provide a powerful weapon in African Americans’ continuing quest for justice and respect. Although his chief identity was as a scholar and editor, he occasionally wielded that weapon, most notably in the novel *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1911) and the sprawling historical pageant *The Star of Ethiopia* (1913).

Du Bois was quick to establish himself as a patron and mentor to the emerging New Negro movement. He hired the novelist Jessie Fauset as literary editor of *Crisis*, and together they launched one of the era’s first competitions for black writers. Among the young writers “discovered” by *Crisis* was Langston Hughes, whose epochal poem, “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” dedicated to Du Bois, appeared in 1921. Du Bois attended the Civic Club dinner of 1924 that served as literary Harlem’s downtown debut, and he was one of the first reviewers to hail the genius of Jean Toomer’s *Cane*, although he seems to have been taken more with the book’s lyricism than with its modernist conception, which left him frankly bewildered. “His art carries much that is difficult or even impossible to understand,” Du Bois complained. “I cannot, for the life of me, for instance, see why Toomer could not have made the tragedy of ‘Carma’ something that I could understand instead of vaguely guess at; ‘Box Seat’ muddles me to the last degree and I am not sure that I know what ‘Kabnis’ is about.”

Embedded in Du Bois’s curious review of *Cane* were the seeds of his future estrangement from the New Negro movement. For someone who wrote so eloquently of the “souls” of black “folk,” Du Bois had surprisingly conservative aesthetic tastes. In an era attuned to modernist experimentation and the possibilities of vernacular expression, Du Bois preferred the soaring flights of Byron and Tennyson or their German romantic antecedents, Goethe and Schiller.

(*The Souls of Black Folk* included epigrams from all four authors.) His taste in music was likewise classical and distinctly Eurocentric. Although he appreciated the majesty of the “sorrow songs,” he regarded blues as vulgar and jazz as unrefined. Whereas Langston Hughes glimpsed a universe of beauty in the keening wail of a saxophone on a Harlem street corner, Du Bois thrilled to Beethoven and Wagner.

As these differences in aesthetic values and judgment became apparent, Du Bois’s regard for the rising generation of black writers plummeted, as did their respect for him. By the mid-1920s, *Opportunity*, an upstart magazine launched by Charles Johnson and the National Urban League, had displaced *Crisis* as the premier outlet for New Negro writing, and figures like Johnson, Alain Locke, and Carl Van Vechten had usurped Du Bois’s role as literary patron. Personal encounters between Du Bois and his imagined offspring typically left both parties disappointed. The poet Claude McKay detected no human warmth in the idol of his youth, only “a cold, acid hauteur of spirit, which is not lessened when he vouchsafes a smile.” Although not mentioned by name, Du Bois was clearly one of the targets of *Fire!!*, a short-lived journal launched by “younger Negro writers” (including Langston Hughes, Wallace Thurman, Richard Bruce Nugent, and Zora Neale Hurston) as an artistic declaration of independence from the older generation of “respectable,” “bourgeois” black writers and critics.

Disagreements over the direction of the New Negro movement exploded into the open in 1926, following the publication of Carl Van Vechten’s notorious novel *Nigger Heaven*. Many black writers defended the novel—Wallace Thurman half-facetiously predicted that a statue in Van Vechten’s honor would one day be erected in Harlem—but Du Bois decried it as a “slap in the face,” a violation of the “hospitality” that black people had extended to its white author. The book’s appearance confirmed Du Bois’s belief that the New Negro movement had lost its way, that a movement begun to advance black claims to citizenship had degenerated into a modern-day minstrel show, purveying stereotypical images of black criminals, prostitutes, and buffoons for the amusement of white readers.

In the months that followed, Du Bois continued to rail against what he dubbed the “Van Vechten school” of black writing. In his eyes, younger black writers were guilty not only of political irresponsibility but also of artistic blindness, recycling tales of “low down” black people while ignoring the rich vein of artistic material to be found in the predicament of

intelligent, upstanding Negroes. His reviews of New Negro writing ranged from disappointed (*Fine Clothes to the Jew*, Langston Hughes’s second volume of poetry, contained “extraordinarily beautiful bits” but lamentably confined itself to “lowly types”) to vicious (passages in Claude McKay’s *Home to Harlem*, he reported, left him “wanting to take a bath”). In the end, only a handful of writers escaped his scorn, among them Jessie Fauset, Countee Cullen (who was briefly married to Du Bois’s daughter, Yolande), and Nella Larsen.

Over the course of the 1920s, Du Bois made several attempts to redirect the Harlem Renaissance along more appropriate lines. In 1926, he launched a symposium in *Crisis*: contributors, white and black, were asked to respond to a series of seven questions on the theme “The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed?” Although he circulated the questionnaire to a cross section of writers, editors, and publishers, his own opinions were obvious from the tone of the questions:

1. When the artist, black or white, portrays Negro characters, is he under any obligations or limitations as to the sort of character he will portray?
2. Can the author be criticized for painting the worst or the best characters of a group?
3. Can publishers be criticized for refusing to handle novels that portray Negroes of education and accomplishment, on the ground that these characters are no different from white folk and therefore not interesting?
4. What are Negroes to do when they are continually painted at their worst and judged by the public as they are painted?
5. Does the situation of the educated Negro in America with its pathos, humiliation, and tragedy call for artistic treatment at least as sincere and sympathetic as “Porgy” received?
6. Is not the continual portrayal of the sordid, foolish, and criminal among Negroes convincing the world that this and this alone is really and essentially Negroid, and preventing white artists from knowing any other types and preventing black artists from daring to paint them?
7. Is there not a real danger that young colored writers will be tempted to follow the popular trend in portraying Negro character in the underworld rather than seeking to paint the truth about themselves and their own social class?

For the next six months, Du Bois printed the replies in *Crisis*. Insofar as he had hoped, through the questionnaire, to recapture artistic leadership of the Harlem Renaissance, the results were disappointing. Although a few respondents answered in the intended spirit—Jessie Fauset’s reply deserved perfect marks—most reacted with something between bemusement and dismissal. “What’s the use of saying anything?” Langston Hughes asked. “The true artist is going to write what he chooses anyway regardless of outside opinion. . . . It’s the way people look at things, not what they look at, that needs to be changed.”

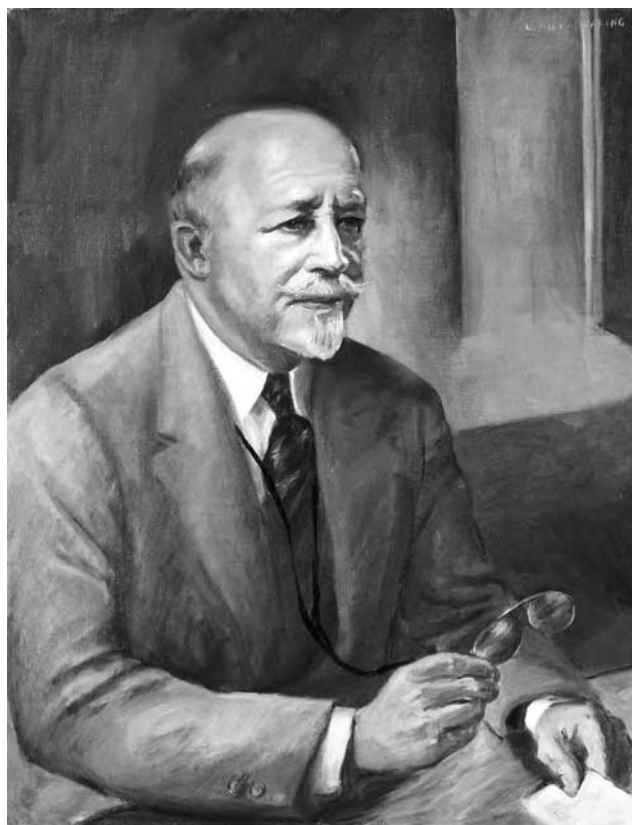
Du Bois concluded the symposium with a long essay of his own, “Criteria of Negro Art,” in which he explicated his ideas about the universal attributes of “beauty” and the specific contributions that black writers and artists might make toward its realization. The essay included stern instructions on the political responsibilities of the black writer, suggesting in several places that the duty of vindicating the reputation of the race trumped the value of art for art’s sake. “All art is Propaganda,” he thundered. “I do not give a damn for art that is not Propaganda.”

It is no disrespect to Du Bois, whose place in history is now secure, to say that this was not his finest hour. In the first place, his characterization of contemporary writing was factually incorrect. As James Weldon Johnson showed in a careful inventory published at the end of the 1920s, scarcely one-quarter of the works written by or about African Americans in the previous decade fell within what Du Bois called the “Van Vechten school.” Even *Nigger Heaven*, after its admittedly lurid beginning, dealt chiefly with the predicament of educated middle-class black people. The unfolding debate had also pushed Du Bois into a position—art equals propaganda—that not only smacked of philistinism but also directly contradicted positions he had previously maintained. Just five years before, for example, Du Bois had defended Eugene O’Neill’s controversial play *The Emperor Jones* against black critics who decried it for perpetuating racial stereotypes. To compel artists to represent only “the best and highest and noblest in us,” to “insist that Art and Propaganda be one,” betrayed a “complete misunderstanding . . . of the aim of Art,” he wrote on that occasion. “We have criminals and prostitutes, ignorant and debased elements just as all folks have.” Five years later, having seen his position as literary patron usurped, he was prepared to subject art to a more rigorous political test.

Du Bois’s second novel, *Dark Princess* (1928), can also be read as an attempt to move African American

literature in more responsible directions. The novel hewed closely to its author’s political prescriptions, with middle-class characters debating the predicament of the world’s darker races in impeccable English and with nary a prostitute or jazz club in sight. The main character, Matthew Towns, is a disillusioned black medical student who has fled the racism of the United States to live in Germany. There he meets the title character, a beautiful Indian princess who just happens to be the leader of a secret global movement of people of color. Alternately romantic and didactic, the book could scarcely have been more out of step with the artistic temperament of the 1920s, and it had little apparent impact on other black writers.

Although Du Bois surely lost the battle for the soul of the Harlem Renaissance, he may have won the war. As the Great Depression ravaged Harlem and popular enthusiasm for black people’s arts ebbed, many prominent “New Negroes” began to look back at the 1920s with a certain embarrassment, renouncing not only the bohemian excesses of the decade but also their own naïve belief that art alone could conquer racial prejudice. Du Bois watched it all with more than



W. E. B. Du Bois, portrait by Laura Wheeler Waring, oil on canvas. (National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution Art Resource, N.Y.)



W. E. B. Du Bois, photographed by Carl Van Vechten. (Library of Congress.)

a little satisfaction. In 1933, in a speech at Fisk University, he pronounced an epitaph for the renaissance—an epitaph that continues, for better and for worse, to shape critical assessments of the movement:

Why was it that the Renaissance of literature which began among Negroes ten years ago has never taken real and lasting root? It was because it was a transplanted and exotic thing. It was a literature written for the benefit of white people and at the behest of white readers, and starting out privately from the white point of view. It never had a real Negro constituency and it did not grow out of the inmost heart and frank experience of Negroes. On such an artificial basis no real literature can grow.

Although by 1933 Du Bois had settled comfortably into the role of curmudgeonly elder statesman, his public career had run scarcely half its course. He

survived for another three decades, remaining politically and intellectually engaged until the end. He resigned as editor of *Crisis* in 1934, but he continued to churn out articles, essays, and editorials on the issues of the day. He also published a steady stream of books, including *Black Reconstruction*, a classic work of radical history; *Dusk of Dawn*, a lyrical autobiography; and three more novels, the so-called Black Flame trilogy, which traced the movements of a thinly veiled autobiographical protagonist, Manuel Mansart, through the twentieth century.

As the shadow of McCarthyism darkened American political life, Du Bois found himself increasingly isolated and vulnerable. His passport was suspended, and he faced mounting harassment, an experience he recounted in the short book *In Battle for Peace*. In 1951, he was arrested for failing to register as an agent of a foreign principal, a politically motivated charge growing out of his involvement with an international Peace Information Center. In 1961, Du Bois accepted an invitation from Kwame Nkrumah, prime minister of the newly independent republic of Ghana, to spend his last years in Africa. On the day of his final departure from the United States, 1 October 1961, he formally enrolled as a member of the American Communist Party, a parting shot against the native land that had rejected his gifts.

Biography

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was born on 23 February 1868, in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. He studied at public schools in Great Barrington; Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee (A.B., 1888); Harvard University (A.B., 1890, A.M., 1891, Ph.D., 1895); and the University of Berlin (1892–1894). He taught at Wilberforce University, Xenia, Ohio (1894–1896); the University of Pennsylvania (1896–1897); and Atlanta University (1897–1910, 1934–1943). Du Bois was a participant in the Pan-African Conference of 1900 and the Universal Races Congress of 1911. He was a founding member of the Niagara Movement (1905), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (1910), and Pan-African Congresses (1919, 1921, 1923, 1927, 1945). Du Bois was an editor at *Moon Illustrated Weekly*, Memphis, Tennessee (1906–1907); *Horizon*, Washington, D.C. (1907–1910); *Crisis*, New York City (1910–1934); and *Phylon*, Atlanta (1940–1944). He was a columnist for the *Pittsburgh Courier* (1936–1938), *New York Amsterdam News* (1938–1944),

Chicago *Defender* (1947–1948), and *People's Voice* (1947–1948). He was also vice-chairman of the Council on African Affairs (1949–1954) and a candidate for the U.S. Senate (Labor Party, 1950). He immigrated to Ghana in 1961 and became a Ghanaian citizen. His awards included Knight Commander, Liberian Order of African Redemption (c. 1907); Spingarn Medal (1920); International Peace Prize (1952); and Lenin Peace Prize (1959). Du Bois died in Accra, Ghana, on 27 August 1963.

JAMES CAMPBELL

See also Atlanta University Studies; Cane; Crisis, The; Crisis: The Negro in Art—How Shall He Be Portrayed? A Symposium; Dark Princess; Emperor Jones, The; Fire!!; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Harlem Renaissance: 1—Black Critics of; Harlem Renaissance: 2—Black Promoters of; New Negro Movement; Niagara Movement; Nigger Heaven; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Pan-African Congresses; *specific individuals*

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Dudley, Sherman H.

Sherman H. Dudley, known for his rapid understated humor, was one of the leading black comedians of the early twentieth century and was also a manager and promoter. Although remarkably accomplished, he remains a neglected figure in the study of the Harlem Renaissance, partly because he often operated outside the Manhattan center of black art.

Early in his career, he performed with medicine shows and minstrel shows. He was the proprietor of a traveling tent show, Jolly Ethiopians; and he appeared with Richards and Pringle's Georgia Minstrels, Rusco and Holland Minstrels, McCabe and Young's Operatic Minstrels, P. T. Wright's Nashville Students, Sam Corker, and Will Marion Cook's *Clorindy* company; he also appeared with Billy Kersands in *King Rastus*. He had his own troupe, Dudley's Georgia Minstrels, in 1897–1898. In 1904 he joined the Smart Set Company, starred in its shows, and soon took over the productions.

Several companies used the name Smart Set between 1902 and 1924. Dudley's Smart Set Company produced musical comedies for mainly white audiences, including *The Black Politician*, *Dr. Beans from Boston*, and *His Honor the Barber*, featuring Dudley as principal comedian. These successful shows helped establish a format for black musical comedy: a variety show with a more structured plot usually involving hare-brained schemes, gambling, preposterous protagonists, and horse races. Dudley is perhaps best-known for his act with a trained mule in *His Honor the Barber*. This production was notable as well because black audience members were not relegated to the balcony ("nigger heaven"); rather, there were segregated seating areas throughout the house—a significant shift in the system. Also significantly, Dudley's shows were criticized by white and black reviewers for imitating white productions and for having performers who looked "too white" (some because of makeup). Their reaction suggests the complex racial situation at the time: performers had to strike a balance between black aesthetics and white audiences' stereotypes.

As an entrepreneur, Dudley was instrumental in creating unions and touring agencies for black

Dudley, Sherman H.

performers. He organized a vaudeville touring agency, Dudley's Theatrical Circuit, which operated from 1891 to 1916 and is considered the first black-controlled theater circuit and booking agency. It was based in Washington, D.C., and began with seven theaters there and elsewhere; by 1914 it had nineteen. In 1916, Dudley's Circuit and two other organizations merged into the Southern Consolidated Circuit (SCC), which had fierce battles with the Theater Owners' Booking Association (TOBA) and was eventually absorbed by TOBA (1921). The resulting touring circuit was complete and independent of the white circuits; although performers complained of mistreatment by TOBA, low pay, and southern racism, this circuit did guarantee work and increased exposure for black talent.

In 1921, Dudley helped found the Colored Actors' Union (CAU), the first African American theatrical union. In its first year, it had 800 individual members, 500 vaudeville acts, and twenty-seven stock companies. In 1926 it produced the *Colored Actors' Union Theatrical Guide*, a handbook containing a history of black theater, biographies of major players, a list of resources for performers, and articles about the national status of African Americans. In 1937, CAU was replaced by the Negro Actors Guild of America.

Biography

Sherman H. Dudley was born in 1880. He began his career in medicine shows and minstrel shows and had his own troupe, Dudley's Georgia Minstrels (1897–1898). He joined the Smart Set Company in 1904. His vaudeville touring agency, Dudley's Theatrical Circuit (1891–1916), is considered the first black-controlled theater circuit and booking agency. In 1916, Dudley's circuit and two other organizations merged to form the Southern Consolidated Circuit (SCC), which rivaled, but was later (1921) absorbed by, the Theater Owners' Booking Association (TOBA). Dudley helped found the Colored Actors' Union (CAU, 1921). He died in 1940.

NADINE GEORGE-GRAVES

See also Blacks in Theater; Minstrelsy; Musical Theater; Theater Owners' Booking Association

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Dunbar Apartments

The Dunbar Apartments—located at the northeastern end of Harlem, at Seventh Avenue and 150th Street—were completed in 1928, just before the Great Depression. These apartments were named after the African American poet and novelist Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1906), who had achieved fame at the turn of the twentieth century for such works as *Lyrics of Lowly Life* (1896) and *The Sport of the Gods* (1902) and who is often considered an inspiration for the Harlem Renaissance, although he never actually lived in Harlem.

Two decades after Dunbar's death, the apartment complex bearing his name was erected. It was designed by Andrew J. Thomas and was a massive construction project. The final complex occupied an entire city block and consisted of six separate redbrick buildings, each six stories high. These buildings were situated around a common garden that included a playground.

John D. Rockefeller Jr. financed the development, initially operating it on a cooperative basis. Eventually, though, as the Depression worsened and as the payment defaults mounted higher and higher, Rockefeller foreclosed on the buildings. Soon thereafter, the Dunbar



Dunbar Apartments. (Brown Brothers.)

National Bank, located in one of the buildings, was liquidated. The Dunbar National Bank had been the sole bank in Harlem operated by African Americans. After dissolving the cooperative, Rockefeller reimbursed the former tenant-owners for their capital infusion and then converted the apartments to rental units.

The Dunbar Apartments still stood as of this writing.

JANICE TRAFLET

See also Dunbar, Paul Laurence; Harlem: 4–Housing

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Dunbar, Paul Laurence

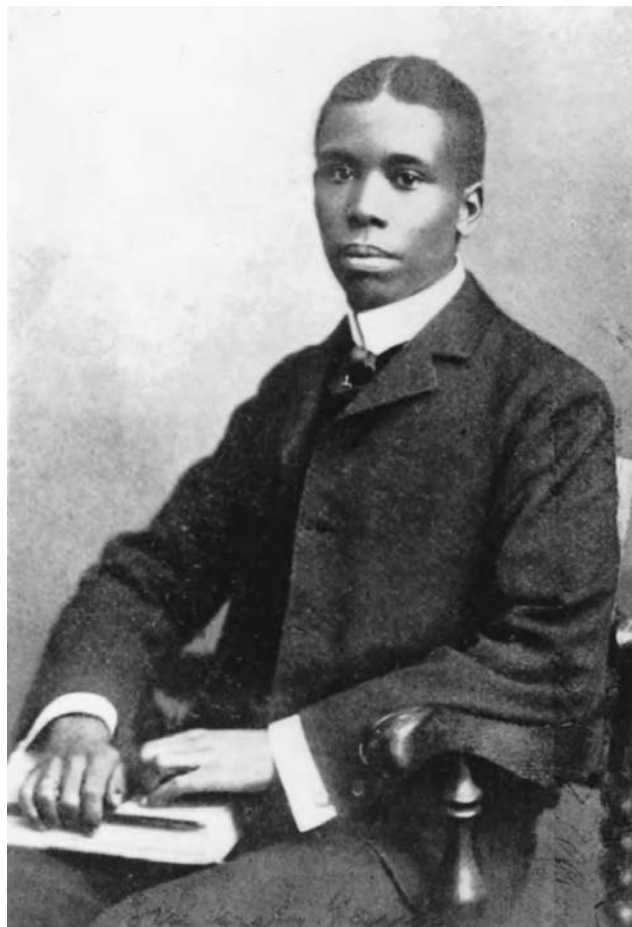
Paul Laurence Dunbar was a prolific and popular African American author whose works appeared in such noted literary magazines as the *Atlantic Monthly*, the *Century*, *Lippincott’s Monthly*, and the *Saturday Evening Post* and were read and enjoyed by both whites and blacks. In his incorporation of political themes and his use of local color and dialect, he was an important precursor of the Harlem Renaissance.

Dunbar was born in Dayton, Ohio. His parents—Matilda and Joshua Dunbar—were former slaves; Joshua Dunbar had escaped from a plantation in Kentucky and served in the Massachusetts Fifty-Fifth regiment during the Civil War. Paul Laurence Dunbar was educated in Dayton’s public schools; when he reached high school, he was the only African American student. During his high school years, he began to explore creative writing. At age sixteen, he began to write poetry, which appeared in the local newspaper and was largely influenced by British romantic poets such as Keats, Wordsworth, and Coleridge, and by Americans such as Whittier and Longfellow.

After graduating from high school, Dunbar entered a world that was sharply divided by race. Despite his education, he was unable to break through the racial

barriers, and he accepted a job as an elevator operator in a hotel in Dayton. However, he was able to find time and financial support for his writing, and in 1892, he published *Oak and Ivy*, a book of poems largely influenced and inspired by Longfellow’s style. Dunbar then went to Chicago’s World Columbian Expedition, where he met two men who would be his literary patrons: Charles Thatcher and Henry Tobey. They advanced Dunbar money so that he would be able to write another volume of poetry; they also promoted his work and ensured that it would be reviewed by the prominent literary editor William Dean Howells. Their funding allowed Dunbar to produce *Majors and Minors*, a collection of poetry that was instrumental in making him famous.

Despite racism and segregation, the American public was hungry for a gifted African American author, and Dunbar became popular because his work fulfilled at least three desires of readers: (1) he was an eloquent poet and a highly skilled versifier; (2) his



Paul Laurence Dunbar, c. 1909. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

fiction conformed to the public's need for local color; and (3) he was a writer who could provide and confirm the familiar, popular version of African Americans' experience under slavery and since emancipation. In many ways, *Majors and Minors* met all of these criteria; and Howells, in his review, proclaimed Dunbar the poet laureate of the Negro race. However, Howells also said that Dunbar was most authentic when writing in dialect rather than standard English—and this assessment, intended as praise, proved to be a double-edged sword. Dunbar did attract a tremendous following that moved past racial divisions, but his newfound reputation as a dialect poet in the “plantation tradition” obscured the political and social themes that actually dominated his work.

Later scholars would criticize Dunbar for perpetuating the racist concept of the “happy darky,” a figure central to the plantation tradition. This tradition chronicled an antebellum South in which the butler and the mammy are shadowy counterparts of the white master and mistress; that is, the black characters reflect the virtues and graces of the ruling caste. Dunbar's work was widely interpreted as being part of the plantation tradition—an interpretation that made no allowance for the difficult circumstances in which Dunbar had to write, or for the fact that in his time, editorial control and criticism were almost exclusively in the hands of whites. Also, this interpretation ignores an important aspect of Dunbar's writing: he worked within limiting literary conventions in order to use them as a vehicle for offering a radical political alternative to the racial problems of the era.

For example, Dunbar's “Mr. Cornelius Johnson, Office-Seeker,” published in *The Strength of Gideon and Other Stories* (his second volume of short stories, 1900), focuses on attempts by the title character to secure a patronage position in return for having done campaign work for a congressman and reveals the power of racism. Moreover, Johnson is unable to follow either Booker T. Washington's call for patience or W. E. B. Du Bois's call for aggressive political and social action. In many ways, Dunbar expands on this story's argument in his novel *The Sport of the Gods* (1902), which describes the difficulties of a southern African American family faced with the choice of staying in the South, and remaining loyal to the family that once owned them, or migrating to New York City, where racism is less but where there are many new, unforeseen dangers. In both of these works, Dunbar drew on the plantation tradition, but readers might also see how he used it for social protest.

Later commentators would also criticize Dunbar for his use of dialect in his poetry. In particular, African Americans such as Sterling Brown and Charles T. Davis—although they admitted that Dunbar had been the first American poet to treat African American life with any degree of fullness—also argued that Dunbar had willfully misrepresented black history. That is, in relying on dialect, and in adopting the plantation tradition, Dunbar had suggested that the “old time” African American was content to serve a white master and was out of place in postbellum America.

Still, some poets of the Harlem Renaissance, such as Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen, would find inspiration in Dunbar's work. Citing specific examples of Dunbar's poems—“We Wear the Mask,” “When Malindy Sings,” “Frederick Douglass,” “The Colored Soldiers,” “The Haunted Oak”—Hughes and Cullen argued that Dunbar had expressed pride in his African American heritage, and that his texts included passages where one might find his call for social action.

Dunbar was aware that his choice of dialect and the plantation tradition might lead to a misinterpretation of his intentions and vision. In fact, he predicted the critical reaction to his work and the damaging effects of Howells's praise. It is only more recently that readers and scholars have become fully aware of Dunbar's objectives and have been able to consider him an important forefather of African American literature.

Biography

Paul Laurence Dunbar was born on 27 June 1872, in Dayton, Ohio, and studied at public schools there. Dunbar edited at least three issues of the *Dayton Tattler*, a black district newspaper. He published *Oak and Ivy* in 1892, *Majors and Minors* in 1896, *Lyrics of the Hearthside* in 1899, *The Strength of Gideon and Other Stories* and *The Love of Landry* in 1900, *The Fanatics* in 1901, *The Sport of the Gods* in 1902, *Lyrics of Love and Laughter* and *In Old Plantation Days* in 1903, *The Heart of Happy Hollow* in 1904, and *Lyrics of Sunshine and Shadow* in 1905. Dunbar married Alice Ruth Moore, a teacher and writer, in 1898; they separated in 1902. Dunbar collaborated with Will Marion Cook on musical plays for black performers (1898–1900) and raised funds for the Tuskegee Institute in 1899; he also wrote a song for the Tuskegee Institute at Booker T. Washington's request

in 1901. Dunbar's health problems began around 1900, with pneumonia and then tuberculosis; he died of tuberculosis on 9 February 1906.

GINA ROSSETTI

See also Authors: 5—Poets; Brown, Sterling; Cook, Will Marion; Cullen, Countee; Howells, William Dean; Hughes, Langston; Literature: 7—Poetry; Poetry: Dialect

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Dunn, Blanche

Blanche Dunn was born in the West Indies in 1911 and left for the United States when she was fifteen years old. Very little is known about her early life in the West Indies or about her life when she first arrived in New York City. However, by 1927 she had attracted the affection of Wilda Gunn, a dress designer who was originally from Cleveland. Dunn's beauty, charm, and bravado gave her an entrée to opening nights on Broadway and to the best tables at Harlem's speakeasies, especially the very fashionable Hot Cha. Dunn also sought stardom as a singer and actress. She secured a small role in Dudley Murphy's film of *The Emperor Jones* (1933), which was moderately successful.

Dunn was a noteworthy figure at the legendary parties hosted by Carl Van Vechten—gatherings that were evidently designed to showcase Van Vechten's latest black artistic discoveries for a largely white audience. Langston Hughes attended some of these parties and recounted how Dunn captivated wealthy luminaries such as Salvador Dalí.

In 1940 Dunn began an affair with Marion "Joe" Carstairs, a British oil magnate who had set up a sort of oligarchy on the Bahamian island Whale Cay, where he was visited by celebrities such as Mabel Mercer and Marlene Dietrich. Dunn and Carstairs's tempestuous relationship ended in 1941, and Dunn returned to New York. That year, she posed for Carl Van Vechten's series *Portrait Photographs of Celebrities*.

In both of her portraits by Van Vechten, Dunn wears enormous silver hoop earrings, three strands of wooden beads, heavy beaded bracelets on both wrists, a very low-cut peasant-style blouse, a striped bustling skirt, and a matching head rag. This attire suggests some visual and racial editorializing on Van Vechten's part, but Dunn seems to overcome it: her mouth is defiantly set, and her eyes avoid engagement with the photographer, implying that she may have considered her own beauty a form of artful resistance.

At one time, there was speculation that Dunn was the basis of the character Audrey Denny in Nella Larsen's novel *Quicksand* (1928). However, this conjecture was unfounded: Denny—who is described as light-skinned, lives downtown, and seems to have no

Dunn, Blanche

West Indian connections—has little in common with Dunn, who was brown-skinned, spoke with a strong West Indian accent, and lived in Harlem. In fact, Denny was probably based on a friend of Larsen's named Anita Thompson.

Biography

Blanche Dunn was born in the West Indies in 1911. She immigrated to the United States in 1926 and met and was befriended by the dress designer Wilda Gunn in 1927. Dunn had a small role in a film adaptation of Eugene O'Neill's play *The Emperor Jones* in 1933. In 1940 she moved to Whale Cay, a Bahamian island purchased by a British oil magnate and speed boat champion, Marion "Joe" Carstairs; their affair (marked by an episode in which she chased him with a butcher knife and he escaped by leaping out of a window), ended in 1941. Also in 1941, Dunn posed for Carl Van Vechten's series *Portrait Photographs of Celebrities*.

HEATHER LEVY

See also *Emperor Jones, The*; Hughes, Langston; Quicksand; Van Vechten, Carl

Film and Portraits

The Emperor Jones. 1933. (United Artists, dir. Dudley Murphy.)

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Duse Mohamed Ali

See Ali, Duse Mohamed

Eastman, Crystal

Crystal Eastman helped prepare the legal blueprints for the workers' compensation program, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the Equal Rights Amendment. She was nicknamed "the tigress" by Hazel Halliran, an equally fearless suffragist. Even Eastman's enemies were willing to concede her absolute fairness and persuasive eloquence. A condescending newspaper announcement of her appointment as the only woman on the New York Employers' Liability Commission in 1909 read: "Portia Appointed by Governor."

Eastman gave most of the credit for her own social insights to her progressive mother, Annis Ford Eastman, an ordained minister who was a granddaughter of the automobile magnate Henry Ford and who had inherited the family ingenuity, although none of Ford's capital, and who encouraged her children to be intellectually independent and physically strong. Crystal Eastman spent a great deal of time riding a mustang that she had been given (although she refused to ride sidesaddle, as women were then expected to; she also wore short skirts, for freedom of movement, and cut her hair short), and she grew up to be an athletic, self-possessed six-foot-tall woman. She dedicated her life to feminism, and she and her scholarly brother Max had a lifelong intellectual collaboration—early on, they seriously examined how to advance the status of women and were advocates of birth control, open sexuality, and wages for housework.

Crystal Eastman achieved academic success at Vassar, Columbia University, and New York City University Law School. After a careful study of the dangerous working conditions in industries in Pittsburgh,

she drafted the first workers' compensation law. She was a peerless advocate not only of industrial safety but also of the antiwar movement: She was a founding member of the American Civil Liberties Union (1917) and the Women's Peace Party (1920); she also was one of the key writers of the Equal Rights Amendment in 1923. She developed friendships with a wide range of prominent people, such as the Roosevelt family.

Crystal Eastman was also—significantly for the Harlem Renaissance—a passionate advocate for the disenfranchised and was able to overcome public indifference about gender, race, sexuality, and class discrimination in order to achieve legal reforms. Her other gift to the Harlem Renaissance was her promotion of the poet Claude McKay, who became an associate editor of Eastman's journal *The Liberator*.

Biography

Crystal Eastman was born on 25 June 1881, in Marlborough, Massachusetts. At age three she had scarlet fever, which permanently affected her kidneys. As a girl, she rebelled against long skirts, wore a man's bathing costume, and with her brother Max Eastman founded the Apostles of Nakedness, a society dedicated to birth control and open sexuality, in 1893. In 1894, she wrote an essay, "Woman," advocating women's emotional and economic autonomy. She graduated from Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York, in 1899; went to Columbia University to study for a master's degree in sociology (1904); and graduated from New York University, where she had studied labor law, in 1907.



Crystal Eastman in 1916. (Photograph by Arnold Genthe.
Library of Congress.)

She taught high school English and history in Elmira, New York (1905); worked at the Greenwich Settlement House (1906); and took a job as a researcher with Paul Kellogg (1907). She was appointed by Governor Charles Evans Hughes as the only woman on the New York State Employers' Liability Commission and became a key member of the Wainwright Commission (1909). In addition to her career in labor law, she was an activist for woman's suffrage and later in antiwar and leftist causes. She married Wallace Benedict, an insurance agent, and moved to Milwaukee but decided that the marriage was a failure and returned to New York in 1913. With Lillian Wald, Jane Addams, Paul Kellogg, Rabbi Stephen Wise, and Oswald Garrison Villard, she organized the Anti-Preparedness Committee (later known as the American Union Against Militarism). In 1916, she married the British poet Walter Fuller; he too was an antiwar activist. In 1917, she formed the American Civil Liberties Union with Roger Baldwin and Norman Thomas. She was editor of the progressive left-wing journal *The Liberator* (1917–1921), was denounced during the "red scare" of 1920–1922, and

helped draft the Equal Rights Amendment in 1923. Fuller died of a stroke in 1927, and Eastman died on 8 July 1928, of nephritis. She was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in 2000.

HEATHER LEVY

See also Eastman, Max; Kellogg, Paul U.; *Liberator*, The; McKay, Claude; Villard, Oswald Garrison; Wise, Stephen Samuel

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Eastman, Max

Max Forrester Eastman (1883–1969) was a prominent journalist, political activist, and literary figure, who edited influential radical periodicals (*The Liberator*, which he co-owned with his sister Crystal Eastman, and *The Masses*); wrote twenty-six books, including fiction, poetry, and translations from Russian; and edited two anthologies and a documentary film on the Russian revolution. He opposed America's entry into World War I and was a feminist and socialist, but he was critical of Marxism, Joseph Stalin, and the Soviet Union and eventually rejected communism. Eastman lived in Greenwich Village at a time when it was becoming known as a hub of intellectual and artistic activity.

Under Eastman's editorship, the socialist monthly *The Masses* emphasized both politics and art. Its contributors and editors included Randolph Bourne, Floyd Dell, Art Sloan, John Reed, Sherwood Anderson, George Bellows, Carl Sandburg, John Sloan, Boardman Robinson, and Stuart Davis. In *The Masses*, Eastman expressed his own antiwar sentiments and his views against entering World War I; as a result, in August 1917, the federal government denied the publication second-class mailing privileges and put it out of business. Moreover, Eastman, along with seven other editors and contributors, was indicted on charges of conspiring to obstruct military recruiting. Two trials ensued, which received national press coverage and were noteworthy for Eastman's eloquence on the stand and in his summations; they both ended with divided juries.

Max and Crystal Eastman founded *The Liberator* in 1918 to advance the cause of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. In 1921, Eastman asked the poet Claude McKay to become an associate editor; soon afterward, Eastman made McKay and the writer Michael Gold coeditors. *The Liberator* published poetry by McKay in 1919, and one of Jean Toomer's poems in 1922. Langston Hughes was among its subscribers.

In 1922, Max Eastman went to the Soviet Union, where he learned Russian, conferred with Bolshevik leaders, and became a follower of Leon Trotsky. He then decided to go to western Europe, taking with



Max Eastman. (Brown Brothers.)

him a copy of "Lenin's Testament," in which V. I. Lenin named Trotsky as his political heir and warned against Stalin; Eastman published sections of it as *Since Lenin Died* (1925), and it served as a statement about the betrayal of the revolution under the new leadership of the Soviet Union. After returning to the United States in 1926, Eastman served as Trotsky's literary agent and translator. During the 1930s, Eastman supported himself as a lecturer and became the chief anti-Stalinist of the American political left (he was the only American writer to be personally attacked by Stalin, who called him a "gangster of the pen").

In later decades, Eastman moved further to the right, becoming an editor for *Reader's Digest* and a contributor to the *National Review*. During the 1950s, he supported the anticommunist crusader Senator Joseph McCarthy.

Biography

Max Forrester Eastman was born on 4 January 1883, in Canandaigua, New York. His parents, Samuel Elijah Eastman and Annis Ford Eastman, were both Protestant ministers. After attending Mercersburg Academy for two years, Max Eastman entered Williams College; he received his B.A. in 1905. He studied for a Ph.D. at Columbia University under the pragmatist John Dewey but did not complete his dissertation; later, he was a professor of logic at Columbia, and his book *The Enjoyment of Poetry* (1913) became a standard college text. In 1910, Eastman founded the Men's League for Woman Suffrage. He became Leon Trotsky's translator and literary agent in the 1920s; during the 1930s, he supported himself as a lecturer. He later moved to the right politically and was an editor of *Reader's Digest*. Eastman was married three times: to Ida Rauh in 1911 (they were divorced in 1922); to Eliena Vassilyenva Krylenko, a sister of the minister of justice of the Soviet Union, in 1924 (she died of cancer in 1956); and to Yvette Szekely in 1958. Eastman divided his time between residences in New York City, Martha's Vineyard, and the Caribbean. He died in Barbados on 25 March 1969.

MARTHA AVALEEN EGAN

See also Anderson, Sherwood; Eastman, Crystal; Greenwich Village; Liberator, The; McKay, Claude; Toomer, Jean

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Ebony and Topaz

Ebony and Topaz (1927), a large single-issue anthology edited by Charles S. Johnson, was published by *Opportunity* under the aegis of the National Urban League. Described as a "collectanea," it was intended as a companion piece to Alain Locke's *The New Negro* (1925), to which it was similar in format; however, the black literary expression in *Ebony and Topaz* was less self-conscious and more self-assured. It included prose and poetry, which reflected, according to Johnson, a "venture in expression . . . a faithful reflection of current interests and observations in Negro life."

Johnson loosely classified the contents in five parts in which a broadly interdisciplinary approach is evident: Negro folk life, historical figures in careers and art, racial problems and attitudes, introspection, and articulation of intimate feelings. In his introduction, Johnson said that the anthology was characterized by spontaneity and humor (which perhaps had previously been suppressed in favor of sobriety), and—more important—that it had a new impetus: "A spirit has been quietly manifest of late which it would be a gentle treason to ignore." However, Alain Locke, in his own blunt contribution "Our Little Renaissance," observed that "the mellowness of maturity has not yet come upon us."

Ebony and Topaz was an interracial exercise: Literary contributions came from both black and white writers, including Arna Bontemps, Abram L. Harris, Francis Holbrook, Frank Horne, Helene Johnson, George Chester Morse, Julia Peterkin, Baron von Rucksteschell, and Dorothy Scarborough. There were also bold illustrations by Charles Cullen, Richard Bruce Nugent, and Aaron Douglas (Douglas's contribution had previously

appeared in *Opportunity* in October 1926, accompanying poetry by Langston Hughes). Charles Cullen supplied the art for the cover, moderating his usual highly charged eroticism. However, Richard Bruce Nugent—whose art had sharpened considerably after his contribution to Wallace Thurman's periodical *Fire!!* (1926) gave him a taste for expression—seems to have had carte blanche and produced some of the most striking graphic images of the Harlem Renaissance: four illustrations titled *Drawings for Mulattoes*. Whereas Cullen's Negro body type is flawless and athletic, Bruce's figures have a flawed physicality and seem caught in cultural contortions. Additional illustrations, courtesy of Arthur Schomburg, reflected an interest in international high art: reproductions of works by Sebastian Gomez and the English court painters Thomas Gainsborough and Joshua Reynolds.

There are some parallels between *Ebony and Topaz* and *Fire!!*—for one thing, they had many of the same contributors. Still, their differences seem more significant. *Ebony and Topaz* lacked the edginess and independence of *Fire!!* and was perceived by critics as simply art for art's sake, but it tried to maintain realism, in which *Fire!!* was deficient. Retrospectively, *Ebony and Topaz* seems to have more in common with *Harlem: A Forum of Negro Life* (1928), Thurman's successor to *Fire!!*.

As a single volume, *Ebony and Topaz* may have had a negligible impact. Within the context of single-issue publications of the Harlem Renaissance, though, it represents a measured voice "stressing the black man's 'Americanism'" (Hayden 1968). It turned out to be Johnson's swan song at the National Urban League; he took up an academic career at Fisk University in 1928.

CATHERINE O'HARA

See also Bontemps, Arna; Douglas, Aaron; *Fire!!*; Harlem; Horne, Frank; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Johnson, Helene; Locke, Alain; National Urban League; New Negro, The; Nugent, Richard Bruce; *Opportunity*; Peterkin, Julia Mood; Schomburg, Arthur A.

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Eclectic Club

The Eclectic Club was an active literary and artistic society in Harlem that met monthly starting in early 1922. Largely ignored by posterity and often mistakenly referred to as the "Electric Club," the group nonetheless provided an important forum in which poets, politicians, and patrons socialized and discussed future projects. Its existence is documented principally in the columns of *Negro World*; the accounts there suggest that the Eclectics were a peripatetic group.

From the outset, the projects of the Eclectic Club were predominantly, although not exclusively, distinguished by their focus on Afro-Caribbean works. As Claude McKay, one of the club's most noted guests, insisted, the Puerto Rican areas of Harlem had the greatest interest in literary culture during the early 1920s. McKay spoke to the Eclectic Club on at least two occasions. One of these was on 8 April 1922, when McKay read poems from his collection *Harlem Shadows*; Arthur Schomburg and Joel Augustus Rogers were present at this event. During 1922 Schomburg and Rogers both frequently attended the club's other events, occasionally speaking before the group. Their attendance was probably a result of the fact that the Eclectics shared their interest in popularizing black history. William H. Ferris attended more sporadically, but his presence also illustrates the favorable reception the club gave to black history.

Other prominent members with an Afro-Caribbean background included Eric Walrond, who was also in attendance when McKay read his work. Walrond was one of the club's most important recruiters, introducing Zora Neale Hurston to the group in mid-1925, as well as his fellow columnists at *Negro World*, Lester Taylor and E. V. Plummer. Some of the Eclectics advanced their careers through the club's events. For instance, in January 1922, Duse Mohamed Ali addressed the club

at the Jackson School of Music on West 138th Street on the topic "Modern Egypt"; a few weeks later, Ali resumed a working relationship with Marcus Garvey, taking the position of foreign-affairs correspondent for Garvey's organization, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). (However, although the club was sympathetic to Garveyism, it by no means fell under the aegis of UNIA.) Walrond maintained strong ties with the Eclectics long after he left his position as editor of Garvey's publications, and Hubert Harrison's occasional appearances indicate that even those who had repudiated Garveyism might still find sufficient attraction in the club.

The president of the Eclectic Club was a man of modest means who went by the name William Service Bell. McKay considered Bell a "cultivated artistic New England Negro." Bell was by no means just a figurehead; he took an active interest in the work of those around him and occasionally even read his own work before the group. By 1926 Bell was making a living as an actor and singer, and for a short period he lived in a bohemian apartment house at 237 West 136th Street known as "Niggerati Manor." It was because of Bell that a few copies of the failed publication *Fire!!* were saved from the fire in which most copies were destroyed.

Although its name may have suggested otherwise, the rank-and-file members of the Eclectic Club tended to be "ladies and gentlemen in *tenue de rigueur*" (McKay 1937–1970). Through societies such as the Eclectic Club, the White Peacock, and the Booklovers Club (the present-day Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture), the "renaissance" became a part of everyday Harlem. Moreover, the early establishment of the Eclectic Club and its concern for Afro-Caribbean projects support a wider chronological and substantive definition of the Harlem Renaissance.

ANDREW MICHAEL FEARNLEY

See also Ali, Duse Mohamed; Booklovers Club; Ferris, William H.; *Fire!!*; Harrison, Hubert; Hurston, Zora Neale; McKay, Claude; *Negro World*; Rogers, Joel Augustus; Schomburg, Arthur A.; Walrond, Eric

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Edmonds, Randolph

During the Harlem Renaissance, musical stage productions were a common form of entertainment. Especially popular were shows that featured African Americans in song-and-dance routines; among these were such musicals as *Strut, Miss Lizzie* (1922); *Chocolate Dandies* (1924); and *Lucky Sambo* (1925). As the titles indicate, this form of entertainment often relied on stereotypes of African Americans and thus did little to aid blacks in their quest for equal rights. Many African American playwrights challenged these negative images by writing plays that depicted the discrimination confronting African Americans in their daily lives.

Fostered by W. E. B. Du Bois, the Negro "little theater" movement, which began in the 1920s, was a venue for exuberant activity among the nearly 300 African American dramatists writing in the 1920s and 1930s. To Du Bois, the stage was a platform for teaching about African American culture and history. Randolph Edmonds shared this view. Known as the "dean of black academic theater," Edmonds worked against stereotypes of African Americans by encouraging the development of drama based on their folk culture and history. Through his work with college and high school students, Edmonds promoted drama clubs and theater courses as part of the curriculum. His career was dedicated to teaching drama, administering theater organizations he had founded, writing more than fifty plays, and publishing three anthologies of his plays and some forty essays on the relationship between drama and education.

Edmonds began writing folk plays at Oberlin College, where he organized the Dunbar Forum, an African American group that produced several of his early plays. Through a fellowship he received from the Rockefeller Fund while attending Yale, Edmonds studied drama in England for one year. At that time he also took courses at Dublin University and attended productions at the Abbey Theater, which had promoted the development of folk drama.

Nearly all of Edmonds's plays focus on the life of working-class African Americans, the folk. Seldom light or joyous, his plays portray problems within

black families—problems caused by migration to the North, by the suffering endured during slavery, and by the sacrifices these families make for their communities. His play *Breeders* (1930) reveals how his work differed from typical productions on Harlem stages. In this play, the master of a black slave woman attempts to force her to have sexual intercourse with a black man in order to produce strong slave children; rather than submit, she poisons herself.

From 1926 until 1934, Edmonds taught drama at Morgan College (later Morgan University) in Baltimore, Maryland, where he directed the Morgan College Players, an organization he had founded. At Morgan, he formed the Negro Intercollegiate Dramatic Association (NIDA), which held annual tournaments among five African American colleges to encourage the creation and production of black folk plays. At Dillard University, he founded the Southern Association of Dramatic and Speech Arts (SADSA) in 1936; it later became the National Association of Dramatic and Speech Arts (NADSA). At Florida A&M University, he served as the chairman of the Department of Speech and Drama for more than twenty years.

The S. Randolph Edmonds Theatrical Collection is housed in the Black Archives Research Center and Museum at Florida A&M University.

Biography

Sheppard Randolph Edmonds was born in 1900 in Lawrenceville, Virginia. He studied at Saint Paul Normal and Industrial School in Lawrenceville, Oberlin College in Ohio (A.B. 1926), Columbia University (A.M., 1934), Yale School of Drama (1936), Dublin University, and the London School of Speech Training and Dramatic Arts (1938). He taught at Morgan College (later Morgan University) in Baltimore, Maryland (1926–1934); Dillard University, New Orleans, Louisiana (1935–1947); and Florida A&M University, Tallahassee (1948–1968). Edmonds was a theater columnist for the Baltimore *Afro-American* (1930–1934) and founder of the Morgan College Players, Negro Intercollegiate Dramatic Association (NIDA, 1931), and Southern Association of Dramatic and Speech Arts (SADSA, 1936; it later became the National Association of Dramatic and Speech Arts, NADSA). He died in Lawrenceville, Virginia, in 1983.

CHRISTINE RAUCHFUSS GRAY

See also Community Theater; Literature: 3—Drama

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Elder Becton

See Becton, George Wilson

Ellington, Duke

No figure of the Harlem Renaissance achieved more of the goals set by leaders and intellectuals of the movement than Duke Ellington, who purposefully promoted black artistic expression as a way of breaking down prejudice, achieving racial uplift, and displaying and documenting black humanity and achievement. He was one of the most famous and widely disseminated black voices in the international mass media, commenting for more than four decades on black identity, history, and pride. However, although some modern-day accounts include jazz and blues artists as part and parcel of the Harlem Renaissance, this represents a revisionist view: Its leadership kept popular musicians at a distance and downgraded their cultural contributions. The intellectuals of the renaissance tended to apply the same elite standards to music as to literature—recognizing only music that embraced European criteria, hoping for great achievements by African Americans in classical music, and encouraging

composers to transform supposedly primitive jazz, blues, and plantation melodies into conventional orchestrated works of Western art. This approach to music largely ignored the significant, decidedly non-primitive contributions of jazz and blues musicians. “Renaissance leaders aspired to create a New Negro, one who would attend concerts and operas and would be economically and socially prepared to enter an ideally integrated American society” (Floyd 1990). Ellington, although he brought his music to concert halls, rarely waded into these academic and semantic battles; he concentrated on creating and performing what may have been the most accomplished oeuvre in the history of American music, much of it pointedly inspired by African American themes, and enjoyed by millions around the world.

Ellington’s interest in black culture came largely from his upbringing in black middle-class Washington, D.C., which was considered the center of “respectable Negro society” from the end of the Civil War until World War II. African American students there received detailed instruction in black history and identity: “What used to happen was that they were concerned with you being representative of a great and proud race,” Ellington recalled in the 1960s. “They used to pound it into you, you go to the English class, that [race pride] was more important than the English.” The black community and schools also exposed students to African American music as well as European classical music, and there were elaborate pageants of black history using music, dance, and narration (Tucker 1991). One reason that Ellington gained national prominence and widespread respect—and earned millions of dollars—during the 1920s and 1930s, while the writers of the Harlem Renaissance were struggling to survive, is that a century-long tradition of successful black music productions and performers had preceded him, mostly centered in New York City. This tradition did not yet support long-form musical works or compositions that directly challenged American racism, but as early as the turn of the twentieth century, it provided a multiracial paying audience; and, as Ellington notes in his autobiography, he and his musical peers in Washington were part of that audience. He mentions dozens of acts that he followed avidly as a young man and whose success on a national level inspired him to leave a lucrative band business he had established in his hometown and venture North to New York City in 1923.

Ellington, though, took years to achieve success in the more competitive publishing and recording circles

of New York; and he might never have attained it at all if not for his partnership with the Jewish manager, publisher, and entrepreneur Irving Mills from 1926 to 1939. To find a niche in the crowded, frequently anti-Semitic and racist music publishing industry, Mills decided to focus on black jazz and blues, music shunned by most Tin Pan Alley publishers. This earned him admiring notice in black newspapers; introduced him to his most significant client, Ellington; and thus drew him into band managing. Mills’s main achievement for Ellington during the 1920s was the band’s residency at the Cotton Club, which lasted more than three years and included national nightly radio broadcasts—the first time a black band had received so much national exposure. During this early period in their association, Mills and Ellington seemed more concerned with establishing the orchestra as a top show business attraction than with promoting Ellington as a serious artist.

The Cotton Club was a glamorous, expensive, and successful night spot, even during the Great Depression, but it was also segregated, featuring blacks on-stage performing for an exclusively white audience. It was part of a lucrative market during the Harlem Renaissance that took advantage of a “Negro infatuation” among whites who wanted to expose themselves to the supposedly more licentious, primitive, authentic black culture. Ellington’s music at this time was often (although not always) promoted as “jungle” music or advertised with strongly African connotations. The distinctive growling, shrieking, moaning sounds of the band instrumentalists Bubber Miley and Joe Nanton inspired this characterization, as did the club’s penchant for skits set in Africa. These skits, usually featuring scantily clad light-skinned black women, often portrayed African Americans as one step removed (if that much) from the jungle, although Ellington and the band wore tuxedos, performed sophisticated music, and were not part of the jungle tableaux. Mills and Ellington, however, did not long adhere to emphasis on “primitive” and “weird” effects, which did not accord with Ellington’s view of black music or with Mills’s idea of the enormous commercial and artistic potential among white as well as black audiences for Ellington’s compositions. Starting in 1930, Mills began a historic, nonstereotyped marketing campaign that provided the financial and artistic foundation for Ellington’s nearly half-century career as a composer and popular entertainer.

Mills spent a decade churning out publicity that equated Ellington’s compositions and personal bearing with “genius,” “quality,” and respectability. During the

1930s, Mills placed Ellington in major studio feature films more often and more respectfully than any blacks would be presented until after World War II, with Ellington always in formal clothing, befitting a serious composer and conductor. Mills conveyed the compelling impression that Ellington's shows and recordings constituted an invitation to understand popular music, African American music, and African Americans in a new way. Although it was true that Mills promoted his other black artists using the same stereotypical images that prevailed in show business, and that Mills claimed for himself what would now be considered an unethically disproportionate part of Ellington's earnings, Ellington never protested, privately or publicly. Ellington knew that Mills had given him an opportunity to create and present music that no black composer and few American composers of any color had previously enjoyed. For black and white artists of this period, it took high-powered management to launch a popular music career, and the artists' financial sacrifice was seen as a normal cost of doing business.

Of course, Mills's marketing of Ellington worked so well principally because Ellington's music more than lived up to it. Onstage and in the recording studio, Ellington reveled in his dual role as entertainer and serious composer, which reflected his own musical interests and background and attracted the wide audience he needed to support his writing and the orchestra that performed his compositions. The more rigid critics may have had trouble reconciling artistic quality with the top-forty charts, but Ellington proved equally accomplished at creating intriguing compositions and recordings that easily fit into commercial boundaries, and at composing more esoteric and adventurous works, such as his extended compositions and his compositions that programmatically illustrated African American culture. Often, Ellington's best pieces fulfilled both functions; examples are "Black and Tan Fantasy," "East St. Louis Toodle-Oh" (a musical impression of the lope of a tired black man walking home from work), "Black Beauty" (written for the Harlem singer and actress Florence Mills, who had recently died), and "A Portrait of Bert Williams." The marketing emphasis on Ellington as a composer, as well as his need to write for a listening as well as a dancing audience during the Cotton Club's radio broadcasts, allowed him to work in a larger variety of genres and styles than any other black performer of the period: "hot" jazz, vocal tunes, dreamy instrumentals, low-down blues, swinging riff-laden stompers, and more.

Ellington's extended works, which had the bearing and length of symphonic music, were unprecedented, and they upset listeners who insisted on a strict division between pop and classical forms. These relaxed, charming pieces broke through the three-minute barrier of pop and jazz recording in the 1930s and 1940s: *Creole Rhapsody* lasted nine minutes (on two sides of a 78-rpm record), and *Reminiscing in Tempo* lasted thirteen minutes (on four sides). Moreover, their shifting tempos and unpredictable transitions represented a musical adventure that expanded audiences' expectations for pop and jazz performers, and made for some of the freshest and most intriguing pieces in the Ellington canon. They remain examples of the emotional, intricately arranged music that rewards repeated listenings and careful attention, like the best music of any genre. In these longer works, Ellington revealed the near-sightedness of musical as well as racial segregation.

The first European tour of Ellington's orchestra, in 1933, solidified his reputation as an important American composer. Unlike their American counterparts, English critics and audiences did not hesitate to place his music on a high plane alongside Bach, Wagner, and Schoenberg, and they linked Ellington's inspiration and genius to his African American heritage. The Europeans' views were extensively reproduced in the American press (even in the South) and changed Americans' attitudes and expectations. Ellington's music and demeanor, and the way he was marketed, began a shift in the cultural hierarchy—in which only European classical music had been exalted as high art and indigenous American forms had been denigrated. Before Aaron Copland and Charles Ives rose to national prominence at the time of World War II, ushering in a widespread celebration of and search for American highbrow music, Ellington inspired a reevaluation of American music and black music, and new schools of criticism of popular music and jazz, on both sides of the Atlantic. After the war, American music, like American literature, would be studied more frequently and more seriously in the United States and abroad. Without issuing declamatory or inflammatory statements, Ellington had challenged and altered not just social and political attitudes concerning African Americans but also the standing of American artists of all colors.

On 23 January 1943, Ellington and his orchestra appeared in their first concert at Carnegie Hall, amid a crowd of interracial celebrities and the biggest media buildup ever assembled on Ellington's behalf. The highlight of the evening was the premiere of his longest extended work (lasting more than forty minutes), *Black,*

Brown, and Beige: A Tone Parallel to the History of the American Negro, an ambitious multipart work program-matically illustrating black history from the African continent to blacks' contribution in World War II. With this event, Ellington used his own power in the music business, and Americans' wartime patriotism, to bring the subject of black respectability, pride, and history into the national consciousness even more fully than he had ever done before. In numerous interviews, he eloquently discussed such issues as the "middle pas-sage" and relations between blacks and whites during slavery, subjects that rarely received a hearing in the American mass media, let alone a serious or accurate one. Before it was common or even safe to confront American racism politically, Ellington used his art and his commercial success as a public arena, challenging the false suppositions of black inferiority that lay behind discrimination and bringing alternative messages about blacks to a national audience.

Eleven months after his debut in Carnegie Hall, Ellington continued these efforts to assemble a musical record of black life and history, with the premiere of his evocation of Roi Ottley's book *New World a-Comin'*



Duke Ellington. (Brown Brothers.)

(1943), which predicted better times for American blacks. Later additions to this part of the Ellington canon (often cowritten with his friend and writing partner Billy Strayhorn) include *A Tone Parallel to Harlem (Harlem Suite)*, *My People*, and *New Orleans Suite*. In the 1960s, Ellington continued to release extended suites, such as *Afro-Bossa*, *Far East Suite*, and *Afro-Eurasian Eclipse*, that reflected the African diaspora and the internationalism of many blacks during that period. Ellington's "sacred concerts," which he considered his most important work, featured personal and historical treatments of religion, an important facet of African American history. But Ellington repeatedly stressed that no single genre or theme could define his work. *Such Sweet Thunder* and *Suite Thursday*, evocative multipart suites illustrating works by William Shakespeare and John Steinbeck, are two of the many examples of Ellington's determination to remain, as an artist, beyond any easy categorization other than "American composer."

Biography

Edward Kennedy ("Duke") Ellington was born in Washington, D.C., on 29 April 1899. He attended public schools there; studied piano with a local teacher, Marietta Clinkscales; attended Armstrong High School; and studied harmony with Henry Grant (1918–1919). Ellington formed his first band, the Dukes Serenaders, in Washington, D.C. (1918). He performed regularly with his group the Washingtonians at the Kentucky Club, New York City (1923–1927) and was then hired by the Cotton Club (1927–1931). He composed music for and appeared in many films, including *Black and Tan* (1929), *Check and Double Check* (1930), *Murder at the Vanities* (1934), *Belle of the Nineties* (1934), *Symphony in Black* (1935), *Cabin in the Sky* (1943), *Reveille with Beverly* (1943), *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959), and *Paris Blues* (1961). He toured in the United States (1931–1974) and in Europe (1933, 1939, 1950, 1958, 1960s). He gave annual concerts at Carnegie Hall, premiering long-form works, in 1943–1948. Ellington made more than 200 appearances on international television from 1949 to 1973; from 1963 to 1973, he made tours abroad sponsored by the U.S. State Department; and in 1965, 1968, and 1973, he gave three sacred concerts. His awards included the George Washington Carver Memorial Institute, Supreme Award of Merit (1943); the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Spingarn Medal

(1959); an Oscar nomination for the score of *Paris Blues*; eight Grammy awards (1962–1973); City of New York, Musician of Every Year, Gold Medal (1965); Paris Medal (1965); City of Chicago Medal (1965); City Club of New York Medal, Distinguished New Yorker Award (1966); Emmy Award for “Duke Ellington: Love You Madly” (1967); Ordem dos Musicos do Brasil (1968); Presidential Medal of Freedom (1969); special papal blessing from Pope Paul VI (1969); Yale University Duke Ellington Fellowship Program (established 1972); National Association of Negro Musicians, Highest Award for Distinguished Service in Music (1972); Eleanor Roosevelt International Workshop in Human Relations, International Humanist Award (1972); commemorative stamp issued by the U.S. Postal Service (1986); and honorary doctorates from numerous schools, including Wilberforce College (1949), Yale University (1967), Brown University (1969), Berklee College of Music (1971), Howard University (1971), and University of Wisconsin at Madison (1971). Ellington died in New York City, on 24 May 1974.

HARVEY COHEN

See also Cotton Club; Harlem: 3—Entertainment; Jazz; Music; Music: Bands and Orchestras; Musicians; Nightclubs; Nightlife

Selected Works

“Black and Tan Fantasy.” 1927. (Cowritten with Bubber Miley.)
 “East St. Louis Toodle-Oo.” 1927. (Cowritten with Bubber Miley.)
 “Black Beauty.” 1928.
 “Mood Indigo.” 1930. (Cowritten with Irving Mills and Albany Bigard.)
Creole Rhapsody, Parts 1 and 2. 1931.
 “It Don’t Mean a Thing (If It Ain’t Got That Swing).” 1932. (Cowritten with Irving Mills.)
 “Solitude.” 1934. (Cowritten with Eddie DeLange and Irving Mills.)
Reminiscing in Tempo. 1935.
Symphony in Black. 1935. (Film soundtrack.)
 “Jack the Bear.” 1940.
 “Ko-Ko.” 1940.
 “Bojangles (A Portrait of Bill Robinson).” 1940.
 “A Portrait of Bert Williams.” 1940.
Black, Brown, and Beige. 1943.
New World a-Comin’. 1943.

Deep South Suite. 1946.
 “On a Turquoise Cloud.” 1947.
 “The Clothed Woman.” 1947.
A Tone Parallel to Harlem (Harlem Suite). 1951.
Such Sweet Thunder. 1957. (Cowritten with Billy Strayhorn.)
Suite Thursday. 1960. (Cowritten with Billy Strayhorn.)
My People. 1963.
Afro-Bossa. 1963. (Cowritten with Billy Strayhorn and Juan Tizol.)
Far East Suite. 1966. (Cowritten with Billy Strayhorn.)
Second Sacred Concert. 1968.
The River. 1970.
New Orleans Suite. 1970.
Afro-Eurasian Eclipse. 1971.

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Ellis, Evelyn

Evelyn Ellis appeared in both film and theater during the Harlem Renaissance; although she was a minor actress, she was connected to significant networks of African American filmmakers, playwrights, and performers. She appeared in race films and in a few plays with black casts during this era. She is notable for having played the role of Crown’s Bess in a successful

production by the Theater Guild of Dorothy and DuBose Heyward's play *Porgy* (1927); and as a member of the Lafayette Players Stock Company, Ellis was part of a black artistic community on the East Coast. Community theater groups such as the Lafayette Players that were not constrained by the racial codes of the film and theater industries offered African American actresses greater creative possibilities; thus Ellis and her colleagues in community groups could appear in plays that were not originally intended for African American performers. The actors of the Lafayette Players also often worked in race films, which were conceived with black performers and black audiences in mind, and Ellis acted in two of these during the 1920s, the golden age of the genre.

One of her race films was a silent-era comedy, Reol Productions' *Easy Money* (1921), in which Sherman Dudley also appeared. The setting is Millbrook, a thrifty little southern town. The character Andy Simpson (played by Dudley) is looked on as slow, plodding, and lacking in ambition by everyone except his sweetheart, Margie Watkins (played by Edna Morton), who is the daughter of a bank president. Margie becomes attracted to J. Overton Tighe, who has recently arrived in town in an expensive car; and despite Andy's warnings against easy money, the townspeople eagerly buy shares in a phony stock promoted by Tighe. As a comedy, this film was an exception for Reol, which usually produced dramas (including *Burden of a Race*, *Secret Sorrows*, and an adaptation of Paul Laurence Dunbar's novel of 1902, *Sport of the Gods*).

Later, Ellis performed in Oscar Micheaux's controversial film *A Son of Satan* (1924), which starred Lawrence Chenault and featured the chorus from the original company of *Shuffle Along*. Micheaux was the most prolific director of race films and was known, according to one contemporary critic, for "giving us the real stuff." The scenes of drinking in *A Son of Satan* offended the censors, and Micheaux was forced to reedit the film for exhibition.

Biography

Evelyn Ellis was born on 2 February 1894, in Boston, Massachusetts. She was a member of the Lafayette Players Stock Company and appeared in *Othello* (Lafayette Theater, 1919). During the 1920s she had minor roles in the films *Easy Money* (1921) and *A Son of Satan* (1924) and in the plays *Roseanne* (1923), *Goat Alley* (1927), and *Porgy* (1927). She later had roles in *Native*

Son (1941), *Blue Holiday*, (1945), the play *Deep Are the Roots* (1945), *The Lady from Shanghai* (1948), *The Joe Louis Story* (1953), *Interrupted Melody* (1955), *Tobacco Road* (with an all-black cast, 1950), *The Royal Family* (at City Center in New York, 1951), *Touchstone* (1953), and *Supper for the Dead* (1954). Ellis died on 5 June 1958, in Saranac Lake, New York.

TERRI FRANCIS

See also Chenault, Lawrence; Dudley, Sherman H.; Lafayette Players; Micheaux, Oscar; *Porgy*; Play; Race Films; *Shuffle Along*

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Ellison, Ralph

Ralph Ellison, the author of *Invisible Man*, one of the most important twentieth-century American novels, owed much of his development as a writer to the Harlem Renaissance. Ellison was born in 1914 in

Oklahoma; he moved with his mother to Indiana just before the riots of 1921 in Tulsa. From 1933 to 1936 he studied music at the Tuskegee Institute; then, intending to earn money for his senior year, he moved to New York. In New York he met Richard Wright, began to write under Wright's guidance, and joined the Communist Party. Ellison remained in New York until 1955, three years after *Invisible Man* was published and two years after it had received the National Book Award. Thus Ellison's career was launched from New York and in particular from the social and artistic milieu of Harlem.

Invisible Man is a tale of self-discovery. The young African American protagonist escapes from his segregated southern hometown to a black college, only to be expelled and sent to "the big city" to find his own way in the world. Thereafter he experiences a series of disillusionments—episodes that he narrates from a hole, deep in the ground, illuminated by 1,369 light-bulbs. He explains how he slowly came to realize that he had badly misunderstood his world, that he was blind both to the intricate social and political machinery of democracy and to the real nature of African Americans' place in greater American society. As he does so, the metaphor of invisibility comes to signify the experience of being black in America but also, more broadly, the experience of being an ordinary citizen in a democracy. As a narrator, the protagonist takes a jazzy, ironic, tragicomic attitude toward reality and insists on his own power to remake reality through creative speech. Early critics of *Invisible Man* considered it an outstanding existentialist account of the human condition. With time, however, and with Ellison's many essays (in *Shadow and Act* and *Going to the Territory*) as a guide, it has become clear that this novel also makes a profound sociotheoretical argument about democracy and the place of minority cultures and minority viewpoints in a democracy.

Invisible Man was born, according to Ellison, in 1945, when his efforts to work on a war novel were "interrupted by an ironic, down-home voice that struck me as being as irreverent as honky-tonk trumpet blasting through a performance, say, of Britten's *War Requiem*" (1995, xv). Like other figures of the Harlem Renaissance, Ellison was powerfully influenced by the blues and jazz tradition as well as by African American folklore. He drew on these sources as he worked toward a novel that simultaneously criticizes American society and affirms the ability of that society to consolidate independent traditions. The novel jokes, puns, and riddles its way through the argument that in the



Ralph Ellison. (Library of Congress.)

United States there is no such thing as white culture separate from black culture, or black culture separate from white culture; democracy is a political regime in which the common experiences of diverse citizens are constituted out of the sacrifices of their fellow citizens. Ellison, as he said of his protagonist, was "forged in the underground of American experience and yet managed to emerge less angry than ironic. [He was] a blues-toned laughter-at-wounds who included himself in his indictment of the human condition" (1995, xviii).

Biography

Ralph Waldo Ellison was born on 1 March 1914, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, where he attended segregated public schools. He later studied at the Tuskegee Institute. Ellis worked for the New York Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration in New York City (1938–1941); served as a merchant marine in World War II until 1945; worked at odd jobs as a freelance photographer and installing audio systems in New York (1945–1955); and taught at Bard College (1961), Rutgers University in New Jersey (1962–1964), and New York University (1970–1980). He was editor of the *Negro Quarterly* (1942–1943) and wrote for it (1942–1943) and many other periodicals, including *New Masses* (1938–1942), *Tomorrow* (1944), *New Republic*,

Saturday Review, *Antioch Review*, *Reporter*, *The Nation*, *New World Writing*, *Quarterly Review of Literature*, *Partisan Review*, and *Iowa Review*. During his lifetime, he published short stories and essays, one novel (*Invisible Man*, 1952), and two essay collections (*Shadow and Act*, 1966; and *Going to the Territory*, 1986). His *Flying Home and Other Short Stories* (1996) and a second novel, *Juneteenth* (1999), were published posthumously. Ellison was a charter member of the National Council on the Arts and Humanities; a member of the Carnegie Commission on public television; and a trustee of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and Colonial Williamsburg. His awards included the National Book Award (1953), the Russwurm Award, a fellowship at the American Academy of Rome (1955–1957), an appointment to the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1964), the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1969), Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres (France, 1970), and the National Medal of Arts (1985). Ellison died in New York City on 16 April 1994.

DANIELLE ALLEN

See also Federal Writers' Project; Second Harlem Renaissance; Works Progress Administration; Wright, Richard

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Emancipator

First published in March 1920, the *Emancipator* was a socialist weekly newspaper in Harlem, edited by Wilfred Adolphus (W. A.) Domingo. The mission of the *Emancipator* was to "provide a 'scientific chart and compass' for blacks, in relation to national and international, social and political movements" (Samuels 1977). Domingo advocated socialism as the answer to the oppression of blacks in the United States; he felt that black Americans were victims of capitalism and should be involved in the socialist revolution. The *Emancipator* sprang up in the context of other radical Harlem newspapers of the time (such as *Negro World* and the *Messenger*), with offices at 2295 Seventh Avenue in New York. It became famous in part because it was investigated by the Lusk Committee (the State of New York Joint Committee Investigating Seditious Activities), which was then looking into socialist and communist activities; but despite its fame, the *Emancipator* lasted only three months, publishing ten issues. Its last issue appeared in May 1920.

W. A. Domingo was born in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1889 and came to the United States in 1910. From August 1918 to July 1919, he edited *Negro World*, the newspaper of the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) led by Marcus Garvey. Domingo also contributed to another periodical of the Harlem Renaissance, the *Messenger*, edited by A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen. Randolph and Owen would later contribute articles to the *Emancipator*. However, the focus of the *Emancipator* differed from that of *Negro World* and the *Messenger* and their founders. Unlike

Garvey's *Negro World*, the *Emancipator* emphasized class issues more than racial issues; and the *Emancipator* spoke to the common, uneducated black masses, whereas the *Messenger* appealed to black intellectuals.

These differences in philosophy were most pronounced in relation to Garvey. Domingo had first met Garvey when they were both living in Jamaica, and—as noted above—Domingo edited *Negro World* and was involved with UNIA. However, he never joined UNIA, and he eventually parted ways with it and with Garvey. This break came because Domingo's socialist views conflicted with Garvey's philosophy: Domingo opposed Garvey's teachings and believed that the welfare of black Americans depended on class equality rather than racial issues. Domingo expressed his opposition in the pages of the *Emancipator*, criticizing Garvey's practices and Garvey's narrow focus on black nationalism. In addition to attempting to discredit Garvey in the *Emancipator* and other periodicals of the time, Domingo, Randolph, Owen, and other black socialists supported Garvey's eventual deportation to Jamaica.

The *Emancipator's* contributing editors included Richard B. Moore, Chandler Owen, A. Philip Randolph, Cyril Briggs, and Anselmo Jackson. Domingo and Moore, who was also a Caribbean-born activist, were members of the Twenty-First Assembly District Branch of the Socialist Party in New York City, and they used the *Emancipator* to promote socialist ideas. But like many other black socialists during the Harlem Renaissance, they became disenchanted with the Socialist Party of America (SPA) because of its inattention to the racial problems of blacks. In 1918, Domingo, Briggs, and Moore formed the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB), which advocated racial equality, freedom of blacks from capitalism, and an end to terrorism by the Ku Klux Klan and similar groups.

HEATHER MARTIN

See also African Blood Brotherhood; Briggs, Cyril; Domingo, Wilfred Adolphus; Garvey, Marcus; Messenger; Moore, Richard B.; *Negro World*; Owen, Chandler; Randolph, A. Philip; United Negro Improvement Association

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Emperor Jones, The

The Emperor Jones, a play by Eugene O'Neill, premiered at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York City on 3 November 1920. A film based on O'Neill's play, with a screenplay by DuBose Heyward, was produced in 1933. An opera by Louis Gruenberg with libretto by Kathleen de Jaffa, based on the play, premiered at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City, also in 1933.

Eugene O'Neill's play *The Emperor Jones* is the story of an African American, Brutus Jones, who has escaped prison to the West Indies. Over the course of eight scenes, Jones becomes the emperor of an island, and with the help of his Cockney aide-de-camp, the trader Henry Smithers, Jones rules with brutality and with an eye only to amassing a personal fortune. Jones and Smithers both categorize the "natives" of the island as backward and ignorant, but eventually Smithers alerts Jones that the "natives" are practicing witchcraft and preparing a rebellion. Jones flees the palace for the forest. He believes that he can be killed only by a silver bullet (the original title of the play was *The Silver Bullet*). In a series of flashbacks, brought about by his disorientation in the forest and the never-ending sound of drumming, Jones recalls incidents in his earlier life, which include being a Pullman porter, killing a man over a woman, going to and escaping from prison, and working on a ship and jumping overboard. He also hallucinates that he is being auctioned off in front of white planters, and he has encounters with a "Congo witch-doctor" and a crocodile. At the end of the play, Jones is killed by his own soldiers, who have made silver bullets.

O'Neill, the playwright, was greatly influenced by the expressionist work of two Europeans: August Strindberg and Frank Wedekind. *The Emperor Jones* was his own first attempt at this style of drama, which emphasizes a hero who experiences the world from

the inside out. Jones's hallucinations are the prime example of expressionism in *The Emperor Jones*. In his atmospheric portrayal of the Caribbean island, O'Neill also taps into the early twentieth-century fascination with primitivism in art and performance, as well as into his own experiences prospecting for gold in Honduras. For the plot, O'Neill combined various sources: a story he had heard about a onetime ruler of Haiti, Vilbrun Guillaume Sam, who had claimed that he could be killed only by a silver bullet; a book he had read on the use of drums in religious rituals in the Congo; and Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*. Many critics of *The Emperor Jones*, at the time and subsequently, have emphasized that O'Neill was not trying to show a close connection between African Americans and Africa, but rather was trying to give a more universal commentary on the fearful, primitive beast in all of us. Nevertheless, O'Neill did choose to confront this aspect of humanity through the character of Brutus Jones.

The production was directed by George Cram Cook (known as "Jig"), and the set was designed by Cleon Throckmorton. The costuming was by Blanche Hays, who chose to dress Jones as a parody of Marcus Garvey, the Jamaican-born founder of the United Negro Improvement Association; Garvey sometimes appeared in marches in Harlem wearing British military regalia. Except for the role of Brutus Jones, white performers played the black-identified roles in blackface. O'Neill's choice of an African American protagonist presented some difficulty. By 1920, no African American actor had been cast in a serious drama written by a white American. The casting of an actual African American, the actor Charles S. Gilpin (1878–1930), was a radical move for the already left-leaning theater group. There was a heated discussion among the actors about whether a black man or a white man in blackface should play the role. O'Neill does not seem to have expressed an opinion, although he is documented as having played a black character in blackface in one of his early plays, *Thirst* (1916); but Jasper Deeter, the actor who originated the role of Smithers, had seen Gilpin's recent success in a small part as William Custis, an old servant, in John Drinkwater's play *Abraham Lincoln*.

Gilpin, who was originally from Richmond, Virginia, had begun his professional life working at newspapers in Richmond and Philadelphia. In Philadelphia, he began participating in music hall performances. Gilpin toured with the Canada Jubilee Singers and the Smart Set, where he first met Bert Williams and

George Walker. He then sang in the chorus of Williams and Walker's *Abyssinia* in 1906. In 1915, he and Anita Bush formed the Lafayette Players in Harlem. Like many actors, Gilpin also worked at other jobs—for instance, as a Pullman porter and an elevator operator—between roles, a point emphasized in newspaper articles after the success of *The Emperor Jones*. The notion that the Provincetown Players “discovered” Gilpin as a “natural” talent looms large in these accounts, including one, which was often repeated, that Gilpin had been working at Macy's as an elevator operator immediately before he read for the part of Brutus Jones. The true story is that Gilpin was one of the leading character actors of the time, and he also needed to make a living.

The critical acclaim for *The Emperor Jones* was instantaneous. The Provincetown Players immediately began running, in their own playbill, excerpts from positive reviews by Heywood Broun (*New York Tribune*, 4 November 1920), Kenneth Macgowan (*New York Globe*, 4 November 1920), and Alexander Woollcott (*New York Times*, 7 November 1920). After its two-week run in the West Village, *The Emperor Jones* was moved to Broadway by the producer Adolph Klauber for a total run of 240 performances. In the African American press, most critics and intellectuals praised Gilpin but were less laudatory toward O'Neill. In *New York Age*, the drama critic Lester A. Walton stated bluntly: “Had not Charles S. Gilpin essayed to appear as Brutus Jones in the season's dramatic success, ‘The Emperor Jones,’ this play would be slumbering in manuscript” (30 April 1921). Jessie Redmon Fauset wrote, in an essay in *The Crisis* on Bert Williams: “Among many colored theatergoers, Charles Gilpin's rendition caused a deep sense of irritation. They could not distinguish between the artistic interpretation of a type and the deliberate travesty of a race, and so their appreciation was clouded. . . . I need hardly add that the character of Emperor Jones is a class type” (May 1922).

Gilpin was surely aware of the debate in the African American community about his participation in O'Neill's play. When *The Emperor Jones* started touring with Gilpin in the title role in 1921, he began changing O'Neill's frequent use of the pejorative “nigger” to “Negro” or “colored man.” O'Neill was not amused. Reportedly, he told Gilpin, “If you change the lines again, I'll beat the hell out of you” (Sheaffer 1973, 35). For two years, Gilpin spoke the word he felt so insulted by, and it continued to put him in an uncomfortable and ambivalent position in the

African American community. Gilpin began to drink, sometimes appearing onstage after a few too many. Ironically, O'Neill, who laid bare his own and his family's addiction in *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956), proved very impatient with Gilpin's developing alcoholism. By 1923, O'Neill wrote to his friend Mike Gold:

Yes, Gilpin is all “ham” and a yard wide. Honestly, I've stood for more from him than from all the white actors I've ever known—simply because he was colored! He played Emperor with author, play, and everyone concerned. . . . I'm “off him” and the result is he will get no chance to do it in London. . . . So I've corralled another Negro to do it over there . . . a young fellow with considerable experience, wonderful presence and voice, full of ambition and a damn fine man personally with real brains. (Sheaffer, 36–37)

The young fellow with brains was Paul Robeson, a graduate of Rutgers and Columbia Law School. Robeson had been cast in several amateur and professional plays, but he was also halfheartedly pursuing a career in law. In the autumn of 1923, Robeson became a subscriber to the Provincetown Players, and on his receipt one of its associate directors, Kenneth Macgowan, asked if he would be interested in auditioning for O'Neill's new play, *All God's Chillun Got Wings*. Rehearsals for that play began in March 1924, and, as a moneymaker, the company decided to revive *The Emperor Jones*, with Robeson in the leading role. Robeson opened in *The Emperor Jones* on 6 May, after a two-week rehearsal period. At the same time, he memorized his lines for *All God's Chillun* and dealt with the public uproar over that play (published in *American Mercury* three months before it premiered onstage), which was about a love affair between a white woman and a black man from the same poor New York neighborhood. For both roles, Robeson, the son of a preacher and highly educated, had to work with his wife, Essie, on making the black dialect, as written by O'Neill, sound natural (Duberman 1989, 59).

When the revival of *The Emperor Jones* opened on 6 May 1924, Robeson received a standing ovation and was asked to come out and bow five times. Gilpin was in the audience, and after the performance, he fought with Robeson backstage. Gilpin had acted in the role of Brutus Jones more than 1,500 times over the course of his association with it, which included several revivals

at the Provincetown Playhouse; but with the casting of Robeson, Brutus Jones was forever identified as Robeson's breakthrough role. The difference between the portrayals was significant. Gilpin's Brutus Jones was a man with an intellect, however crude his articulation of that intellect might be. Gilpin, who was light-skinned, slight of stature, age forty-two, and balding, relied on a lifetime of acting technique to get a sense of Jones as a character. Robeson, a former All-American football player, over six feet tall, and physically beautiful, took over the small stage at the Neighborhood Playhouse. He played Brutus as a brute, probably because of his own relative inexperience as an actor; intellectually, he was certainly able to contextualize the role. In an article in *Opportunity*, "Reflections on O'Neill's Plays," Robeson wrote: "And what a great part is 'Brutus Jones.' His is the exultant tragedy of the disintegration of



Charles Gilpin in *The Emperor Jones*, 1920. (Brown Brothers.)

a human soul" (December 1924). Robeson took the position of many people in African American theater regarding the significance of *The Emperor Jones*. Montgomery Gregory, the founder of the Howard Players, a drama laboratory at Howard University in Washington, D.C., stated: "In any further development of Negro drama, *The Emperor Jones*, written by O'Neill, interpreted by Gilpin, and produced by the Provincetown Players, will tower as a beacon-light of inspiration. It marks the breakwater plunge of Negro drama into the main stream of American drama" (1925, 157).

The Emperor Jones was made into a film in 1933, again starring Robeson as Brutus Jones; the screenplay was by DuBose Heyward (author of the novel *Porgy*), and the director was Dudley Murphy. The structure of the film puts Jones's flashbacks in the forefront. The physical presence of Robeson is still arresting, but his skill as an actor makes his performance. In fact, some white critics complained that Robeson's style was too civilized for Brutus. By 1933, Robeson had seven more years of acting experience, including *Othello*, than when he had originated the role. He also had a heightened awareness that the character Brutus Jones, although, in Robeson's words, a masterpiece, was not an example of the triumph of a great African "emperor" but the sad story of a pretender to a throne.

Also in 1933, the Metropolitan Opera in New York produced the operatic adaptation of *The Emperor Jones* by Louis Gruenberg and Kathleen de Jaffa. A few minor parts were cast with African Americans, but Lawrence Tibbett played in the title role, in blackface. The Metropolitan Opera would not cast an African American in a principal role until 1955, when Marian Anderson sang Ulrica in Verdi's *Masked Ball*.

ANNEMARIE BEAN

See also Bush, Anita; Crisis, The; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Garvey, Marcus; Gilpin, Charles; Gruenberg, Louis; Heyward, DuBose; Lafayette Players; Negro World; O'Neill, Eugene; Provincetown Players; Robeson, Paul; Walton, Lester

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The Emperor Jones. 1933. (Film, United Artists, dir. Dudley Murphy. Performance by Paul Robeson.)

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Ethiopian Art Players

The Ethiopian Art Players were a theater company of twenty-five African American performers based in Chicago and active in 1923–1925. Raymond O'Neil, a white man, was the founder and director of the company; reportedly, he was inspired to organize a black group (rather than a white group, as he had originally intended) after seeing how talented black nightclub performers in Chicago were. One of the group's sponsors was the wife of the playwright and novelist Sherwood Anderson.

O'Neil's goals for the Ethiopian Art Players were (1) to use dramatic material that had universal appeal to audiences, regardless of race; (2) to encourage whites and blacks to write plays about the black experience; and (3) if the Ethiopian Art Players were successful, to share what they had learned with other

black community theater groups. The Ethiopian Art Players accepted not only professional performers but also amateurs who would be trained and developed, and O'Neil was particularly interested in presenting the performers in nonmusical plays. With regard to elements of production, O'Neil admired the English scene designer and producer Edward Gordon Craig, who used color, line, forms, and lighting to create atmosphere. O'Neil also worked with the German producer and director Max Reinhardt and with Jacques Copeau, a French critic who had founded the Vieux Colombier theater. Both Reinhardt and Copeau applied Craig's ideas in their work. The repertoire of the Ethiopian Art Players included Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, and Molière's *The Follies of Scapin*, but it needed a work by a black playwright and requested help from *The Crisis*, the official publication of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). W. E. B. Du Bois, the editor of *The Crisis*, recommended Willis Richardson, who had won two of its annual literary contests, and the company chose Richardson's one-act play *The Chip Woman's Fortune*.

When Harry H. Frazee, a theater entrepreneur and philanthropist, saw the Ethiopian Art Players perform in Chicago, he was so impressed that he invited them to play at his theater, the Frazee, on Broadway in New York City. The company opened there on 15 May 1923, presenting *The Chip Woman's Fortune* as the curtain-opener, then *Salome*, and then a condensed modern-dress version of *The Comedy of Errors* accompanied by a jazz band. Evelyn Preer played the title role in *Salome* and the female lead in *The Chip Woman's Fortune*; Sidney Kirkpatrick played King Herod in *Salome*, the male lead in *The Chip Woman's Fortune*, and the merchant Aegeon in *The Comedy of Errors*.

The Chip Woman's Fortune, which centered on a critical incident in the life of a poor African American family and was the first serious nonmusical play by an African American to be presented on Broadway, turned out to be the piece that was best received by critics and theatergoers. The critics were not comfortable with African American performers taking the roles of white characters, as they did in *Salome* and *The Comedy of Errors*, although the players did meet the standards of European theater—and, ironically, although at that time many white performers darkened their skin to play black characters.

Richardson's characters in *The Chip Woman's Fortune* are not stereotyped: They have dignity, pride, and a love of God, family, and neighbors. Nor did other works produced by the Ethiopian Art Players stereotype African Americans as drunks, prostitutes, criminals, or clowns who grin and sham their way through life. Thus the Ethiopian Art Players not only performed classical European works and opened the door of mainstream professional theater to African American performers, but the company also opened doors for realistic plays about African American life.

MARVIE BROOKS

See also Blacks in Theater; Kirkpatrick, Sidney; Preer, Evelyn; Richardson, Willis; Theater

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Europe and the Harlem Renaissance: 1—Overview

As its most common name suggests, the flowering of African American culture in the 1920s and early 1930s has usually been seen as centered in Harlem. Harlem was indeed of central importance to the Harlem Renaissance, but from the start, the movement was also tied to developments in Europe.

In the preface to the March 1925 issue of *Survey Graphic*, Alain Locke compares the growing cultural identity of African Americans to the rise of new, independent nations in Europe in the early twentieth century: "Harlem has the same role to play for the New Negro as Dublin has had for the New Ireland or Prague for the New Czechoslovakia." He is optimistic about Harlem's role as the center of an emerging political and cultural identity, like Dublin or Prague, "those nascent centers of folk-expression and self-determination." An even more significant connection between Harlem and Europe began with the entry of the United States into World War I. Many historians and literary critics cite the participation of black soldiers in this war as a stimulus for the Harlem Renaissance. Black soldiers wondered what a victory against oppression in Europe would mean for their own lives back in the still largely segregated United States. Once home, they marched down Fifth Avenue in protest against a segregated military; the spirit of the demonstration is recorded in W. E. B. Du Bois's essay "Returning Soldiers" (1919).

Numerous minor connections between the Harlem Renaissance and specific European countries can also be traced. In Germany, for example, some citizens who were opposed to the Nazi regime cultivated a taste for jazz and other forms of black art. Two leading intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance, Alain Locke and W. E. B. Du Bois, studied at Humboldt University in Berlin; and the German artist Winold Reiss drew the illustrations for the special issue of *Survey Graphic*, including the cover image of Ronald Hayes, a singer

who first rose to fame in Europe between 1921 and 1923, and then gained prominence in the United States. Claude McKay and the singer and actor Paul Robeson lived and worked for some time in England, and from there Nancy Cunard compiled an important anthology, *Negro* (1934). The most substantial connections to the Harlem Renaissance, however, are found in France and the Soviet Union.

Langston Hughes's autobiography, *The Big Sea* (1940), offers an extended meditation on the position of the African American in the United States and abroad. Hughes frequently contrasts his experiences with racial segregation in the United States to the more liberal modes of interaction in Europe and records intimate interactions between whites and blacks in France that would have been nearly impossible at that time in many parts of the United States. Some of the most glowing praise for France is found in Countee Cullen's poem "To France" (1935); the French people and culture, Cullen writes, "most have made me feel that freedom's rays / Still have a shrine where they may leap and sear." The poem implies that the project of racial equality has failed in the United States. However, African Americans were not treated as true equals in France. France still had its colonies, and black Americans who were not intellectuals or artists were easily grouped with Algerian laborers and thus not warmly welcomed. Hughes records this bias as he tells of his search for a job in Paris. Even there, his opportunities for employment were limited. A group of "colored musicians" told him: "There're plenty of French people for ordinary work. 'Less you can play jazz or tap dance, you'd just as well go back home."

Black artists able to "play jazz or tap dance," however, could often make a career of it. Josephine Baker is the best known of the African American performers who helped create *le tumulte noir*, the Parisian craze for African American music and dance in the mid-1920s. In prints designed by the French artist Paul Colin, Baker is famously portrayed wearing a skirt of palm leaves or yellow bananas. These illustrations reflect the French public's treatment of the black American performer as the exotic other; this fetishizing, however, was already implicit in much of the writing by Harlem Renaissance artists (see, for example, the Harlem poems of McKay and Hughes).

A parallel craze for the African American intellectual and artist was developing in the Soviet Union. Here, darker skin tones were also often fetishized, but the people of the Soviet Union in some ways played down

racial difference and understood African Americans' drive for equality and self-determination in the United States more in terms of a shared class struggle. Many black artists were eager to visit the young Soviet Union. In the early 1920s, McKay spent several years there. He records an enthusiastic reception in the packed streets of Moscow in November 1922, but he shrewdly realizes that the welcome was not directed toward him as an individual: "I was welcomed thus as a symbol, as a member of the great American Negro group—kin to the unhappy black slaves of European Imperialism in Africa—that the workers in Soviet Russia, rejoicing in their freedom, were greeting through me." The twenty-two African Americans traveling to Moscow in 1932 to star in *Black and White*, a Soviet film on race and labor relations in the United States, received a similarly enthusiastic but problematic reception. The unsuccessful project was plagued by problems, including poor planning and a script so at odds with the realities of life in the United States that Langston Hughes—as he writes in his autobiography, *I Wonder as I Wander* (1959)—found it "improbable to the point of ludicrousness." Louise Thompson Patterson records that their hosts in the Soviet Union were extremely hospitable yet disappointed: Many of the educated black Americans making the journey did not seem dark enough and "didn't square with their concept of working class folk."

Although figures of the Harlem Renaissance traveled to Europe and attained a popularity abroad that often surpassed what they achieved in the United States, the European prejudice toward black Americans often limited the ways in which these artists and intellectuals were able to express themselves. Particularly in France, however, many ideas of the Harlem Renaissance did take root, and these ideas soon spread to other areas of the globe. A significant international legacy of the Harlem Renaissance is found among the key figures of the *négritude* movement. Three black poets who had been students together in Paris in the 1930s—Léopold Senghor (a president of Senegal), Aimé Césaire (a Martinican poet and statesman), and Léon Gontran-Damas (of French Guiana)—all mention Hughes and McKay as principal influences on them.

The Harlem Renaissance, in short, was not only about Harlem. Its limitations as well as its successes extended to Europe and beyond.

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See also Baker, Josephine; *Black and White*; Césaire, Aimé; Cullen, Countee; Damas, Léon; Du Bois, W. E. B.;

Hayes, Roland; Hughes, Langston; Locke, Alain; McKay, Claude; Negro: An Anthology; Patterson, Louise Thompson; Senghor, Léopold; Survey Graphic; Reiss, Winold; Robeson, Paul

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Europe and the Harlem Renaissance: 2—Berlin

Although the Harlem Renaissance was a distinctly national phenomenon, it also crossed national borders, absorbing transnational influences and spreading its own creative message. Paris, so popular with white artists of the 1920s, has already been explored by scholars as a favorite place of writers of the renaissance, but the links of Berlin and Germany to the movement, less prominent and obvious, have not received much attention.

The connection between the Harlem Renaissance and Berlin began before the actual start of the renaissance. In October 1892, W. E. B. Du Bois, who was to become a leading figure of the renaissance, arrived in Berlin to seek a doctorate in economics, supported

by a fellowship from the Slater Fund. Du Bois, then age twenty-four, began his studies at the Friedrich-Wilhelm III Universität at Berlin, generally known as the University of Berlin, one of Europe’s most highly reputed universities. Germany was ruled by Kaiser Wilhelm II, and Berlin, as its capital, had a distinct Prussian style, so that Du Bois received an impression of military regimentation and obedience. Du Bois was fascinated by German culture. He had admired Goethe and Schiller even before coming to Berlin, and once there, he dedicated much of his spare time to the German classics. In September 1893, he recommended that students at Fisk University study European culture and Goethe’s works in order to accelerate African Americans’ uplift. Du Bois’s German tutors left a strong impression on him, influencing his social and political outlook, which was fundamental to his role within the Harlem Renaissance. Taught by such famous professors as Gustav von Schmoller, Adolf Wagner, Heinrich von Treitschke, and Max Weber, Du Bois was guided in the direction of elitism; Wagner and von Schmoller, in particular, taught their vision of the top ranks of Prussian bureaucracy guiding the guardian state. From Weber, Du Bois acquired strong sociological skills, and it was also in Berlin that Du Bois developed a sense of leadership.

Alain Locke, another leader of the Harlem Renaissance, also enrolled at the University of Berlin. As the first African American Rhodes scholar, he had studied at Oxford University for three years before moving on to Berlin in 1910 for another year of studying philosophy. Although he arrived almost a decade later than Du Bois, Locke seems to have been inspired by the same intellectual ideas current in Berlin. Du Bois’s later concept of the “talented tenth”—an educated African American elite that was to represent all African Americans and eventually elevate the race—seems to be directly connected to this strain in Berlin. Locke also clearly subscribed to the concept of the talented tenth, and it profoundly shaped the Harlem Renaissance movement.

Berlin also offered something very different: African art and culture. The Austrian Felix von Luschan became assistant director of the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin in 1885. Within a few years, he built up an extensive collection of African and especially Benin art, superior in size and quality to that of any other European museum. By highlighting the value of African art through his scientific appraisal, Luschan contributed greatly to the “discovery” of African art in Europe—a significant fact for the Harlem Renaissance.

Locke was aware of Luschan's work, and during the renaissance era he frequently focused on African art, presenting it as part of a highly valuable cultural heritage. Thus a redefinition of African art and, consequently, a foundation for the appreciation of African American art in the United States occurred through Europe.

Another indirect link between Berlin and the Harlem Renaissance is evident in the person of Rudolf Virchow, a scientist, anthropologist, and politician who taught at the University of Berlin and was its rector during Du Bois's stay in Berlin. Virchow also taught the anthropologist Franz Boas, whose scientific battle against racism was familiar to the participants in the Harlem Renaissance and significantly influenced the attitudes of the contemporary white publishing establishment. Zora Neale Hurston, one of the most prominent women of the renaissance, studied anthropology under Boas, concentrating on folklore.

Berlin also had an emotional impact on the Harlem Renaissance. When Du Bois returned to the United States from Berlin in 1894, he had experienced a great disappointment: His grant from the Slater Fund had not been renewed, and as a result he had not earned his doctorate. Nevertheless, his stay in Berlin and his travels in Germany had a positive effect, similar to that documented by other African Americans who traveled to France. Du Bois noted, on his twenty-sixth birthday, that in Berlin he "felt free from most of those iron bands that bound me at home. Therefore, I have gained for my life work new hope and zeal—the Negro people shall yet stand among the honored of the world" (quoted in Lewis 1993, 145). In Berlin, the "veil of race" was, if only temporarily, lifted.

Locke, too, had felt liberated in Europe, not only because of the absence of racial constraints but also because, as a gay man, he apparently felt sexually liberated. Europe offered more sexual freedom than the United States even though homosexual contacts were against the law in Germany and England; and in Berlin and at Oxford, Locke joined well-structured homosexual subcultures. As is evident from Locke's correspondence with his friend C. Henry Dickerman, Berlin offered numerous opportunities for casual same-sex contacts. Locke clearly fell in love with Germany and Berlin, and throughout the 1920s he returned regularly not only to Berlin but also to other places, such as Dresden, admiring the culture, enjoying intimate friendships with numerous Germans with whom he corresponded intensely, and also using the renowned health resorts.

However, younger writers of the Harlem Renaissance reacted less favorably to Berlin and Germany. Locke attempted to persuade Countee Cullen (whom he guided along the path to gay self-discovery) to visit Germany and partake of the *Wandervogel* movement, which was well-known for its homosexual undercurrents. The planned trip never materialized, but Cullen eventually arrived in Berlin in 1929, when he had a Guggenheim fellowship for studies in Paris. Although Paris certainly was a better place for meeting fellow Americans, Berlin could also offer chance encounters, and Cullen ran into Marcus Garvey there. Cullen, like Du Bois, received an impression of Berlin as "an orderly, clean, regimented city, as if on dress parade" (1929, 119); otherwise, Cullen seems to have been largely unimpressed by the city.

Claude McKay, who first came to Berlin in the autumn of 1922, had an impression of wealth and stylishness. When he returned in 1923, however, the situation had changed dramatically: The Ruhr area was occupied by French soldiers as a consequence of provisions in the Versailles peace treaty, and inflation was skyrocketing. McKay had apparently been warned against returning to Germany because of allegations that black French soldiers on the Rhine had committed atrocities, and although he emphasized that he did not experience any form of racial hostility but was treated in a friendly way, Berlin seemed to have an atmosphere of depression, bitterness, and hostility. It thus seems fitting that McKay's poem "Berlin" conveys an image of a cold, harsh city. McKay stayed only from summer to autumn 1923 and then left Berlin for Paris.

Langston Hughes visited Berlin for only one night, in June 1932. He was on his way to the Soviet Union, where he, Louise Thompson Patterson, Dorothy West, and nineteen other African Americans were to take part in a movie about white supremacy in the southern United States. Hughes's impression of Berlin, although he only caught a glimpse of it, was one of misery and despair. Whereas the older generation of the Harlem Renaissance had been fascinated by Berlin, and more generally by German culture, the younger writers experienced a different place, with an atmosphere created by political and economic changes.

In Germany, despite these visits, little attention was paid to the initial development of the Harlem Renaissance. However, toward the middle to late 1920s African Americans began to be noticed in Germany. In 1925, a troupe called the Chocolate Kiddies performed in Berlin, followed by Josephine Baker and Louis Douglas in Nelson's theater. In 1927, Ruth Bayton, an

associate of Josephine Baker and Florence Mills (who were at that point engaged in Paris and London), performed in Berlin. Moreover, several plays with African American themes were produced in Berlin in 1929. Literature about or by African Americans was also “discovered” in the late 1920s. In 1927, Carl Van Vechten’s sensational novel *Nigger Heaven* was translated and serialized in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. The book had been a best-seller a year earlier in the United States, and its exoticism and alluring themes—African Americans, Harlem, love, jealousy, sex—could be expected to interest German readers. *Nigger Heaven*, however, was not the type of literature that Locke wanted Europeans to become aware of. In a letter to Paul Huldermann of the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, a major German newspaper published in Berlin, Locke described Van Vechten’s novel as an appetizer and expressed a wish that more serious issues and works would be offered to German readers. Locke published two major articles about African Americans in Huldermann’s newspaper in 1929, introducing Berliners and Germans in general to the Harlem Renaissance movement. As is evident from their correspondence, Huldermann also asked Locke for poems of the Harlem Renaissance, to be printed in a magazine produced by the major publishing house Ullstein. Apparently, Fischer Verlag, another major German publishing company, had considered translating Locke’s seminal work *The New Negro*, although it eventually gave up the plan because of the work’s length. Huldermann and Locke intended to publish a thinner version of *The New Negro*—tentatively called *Schwarzes Amerika* (“Black America”)—specifically for a European audience. Huldermann also published articles on African Americans and planned to include this subject in a series of radio addresses in January and February 1929, but it remains unclear whether these projects were realized.

Around the same time, other figures of the Harlem Renaissance were approached by Germans and particularly Austrians who wanted to translate and publish their works. In fact, Jessie Redmon Fauset’s novel *There Is Confusion* (1924) had evidently been translated into German by an unnamed Austrian the same year it was published, although her case was exceptional. In 1927, Countee Cullen was approached by an Austrian, Marie Murland, who asked for permission to translate some of Cullen’s poems in order to publish them in German newspapers such as the *Berliner Tägliche Rundschau*; and in 1931, James Weldon Johnson was asked for permission to translate his *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*. Johnson had to decline because the

Autobiography had already been translated in 1928; and it is not clear that these works were eventually published in Germany. Anna Nussbaum of Vienna did collect and translate poetry of the Harlem Renaissance with the permission of the authors, and in 1929, she published the anthology *Afrika Singt*. These efforts to introduce a German or German-speaking reading public to works of the Harlem Renaissance are impressive, but they apparently failed commercially: As Amy Spingarn informed James Weldon Johnson in 1930, *Afrika Singt* sold poorly, indicating a lack of interest in the literature of the renaissance.

In contrast to Paris, Berlin usually represented not much more than a stopover for the younger generation of the Harlem Renaissance. Still, the impact of Berlin, and of Germany, on the intellectual foundation of the movement and on the influential older figures who led the Harlem Renaissance should not be overlooked.

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See also Baker, Josephine; Boas, Franz; Cullen, Countee; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Garvey, Marcus; Homosexuality; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Johnson, James Weldon; Locke, Alain; McKay, Claude; Mills, Florence; Talented Tenth; *There Is Confusion*; Van Vechten, Carl; West, Dorothy

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Europe and the Harlem Renaissance: 3—London

As Europe's largest and most cosmopolitan city, London had attracted African Americans since the nineteenth century. The wealth of shared traditions, the many cultural ties, and the absence of a language barrier prompted a continuous migration of black Americans to London, which was home to the largest African-descended population outside of Africa before Harlem became the "capital of the black world" in the 1920s. London's black community consisted of immigrants and expatriates from Africa, the United States, and the West Indies. For many black American artists, writers, and performers, the city served as a hub before they moved on to Paris and other European locales. Black activists and intellectuals came to London, where they could exchange ideas with thinkers from different origins in the black diaspora.

Of course, London was not immune to racism. England's growing black migrant population experienced economic hardships and pervasive discrimination. During World War I, a shortage of white laborers temporarily shifted manufacturing jobs to blacks, but these blacks later found themselves in a worse

economic situation as prewar conditions returned in 1918. The following year brought race riots in several cities. As a result, blacks founded the League of Coloured Peoples (LCP) in 1931, advocating social and legal change to improve their living conditions in Britain.

The significance of London to the Harlem Renaissance era lies in (1) its abolitionist heritage and anti-slavery traditions, which helped shape the political aspirations of blacks in the early twentieth century; (2) its function as a crossroads of black communities from Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States; (3) its vibrant cultural life and political traditions, which nurtured intellectual experimentation; and (4) its complex and often contradictory strands of the colonial legacy and progressive traditions, which both encouraged and hindered black emancipation. In short, London can be seen as "an important junction point or crossroads on the webbed pathways of black Atlantic political culture" (Gilroy 1993).

London's first Pan-African Congress in 1900 marked the beginning of universal black political agendas. Seeking to unite people of African descent in their shared pursuit of racial equality and political emancipation, the conferences generated a sizable pan-African presence in London. By the 1920s, prominent black figures in London included Jomo Kenyatta and Kwame Nkrumah from Africa; Aimé Césaire, C. L. R. James, and Marcus Garvey from the Caribbean; and Paul Robeson and many others from the United States.

For the American sociologist and historian W. E. B. Du Bois, London became closely associated with his lifelong commitment to pan-African causes. He participated in London's Pan-African Conference, which first introduced the term "pan-African." As a participant in and co-organizer of related events in London, such as the First Universal Races Congress (1911) and the subsequent Pan-African Conferences in 1919, 1923, and 1927, Du Bois gained critical insights into the continuing impact of colonialism on the black diaspora. Exchanges with other delegates allowed him to review his theories of black emancipation in a transnational context.

London also figured as a politically transformative place for the black nationalist leader Marcus Garvey, who lived and studied there between 1912 and 1914. In London, Garvey met Duse Mohamed Ali, a Sudanese-Egyptian actor, writer, and publisher who had launched pioneering black newspapers in London. Duse introduced Garvey to other Africans, thus providing opportunities for exchange of political ideas in

the context of the diaspora. Garvey's experiences in London inspired him to found the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in his native Jamaica and later to establish branches in Harlem. During the brief success of his nationalist movement, Garvey hired Duse as a foreign affairs specialist for his own newspaper, *Negro World*.

London's vibrant cultural scene attracted leading artists, musicians, and performers of the Harlem Renaissance. The philosopher Alain Locke had a special connection to England: Support from the Quakers had enabled his grandfather Ishmael to study at Cambridge University. Locke spent time in London when he was the first African American Rhodes scholar to study at Oxford University, between 1907 and 1910. Claude McKay lived in Europe from 1919 to 1921, and then again from 1923 to 1934. During his first sojourn in London, McKay became involved with the communist movement, although he later abandoned this position. In literature, as in other areas of the Harlem Renaissance, texts were not created exclusively by African Americans; in this respect, the British socialite Nancy Cunard deserves mention for compiling and editing the illustrated anthology *Negro* in 1934.

Although London never had an artists' quarter like Montparnasse in Paris, it did become an important gateway for black American artists on their way to the continent. During the nineteenth century, black artists gravitated toward Britain, whose abolitionist groups had supported visits and grand tours by artists such as Robert M. Douglass Jr., Robert S. Duncanson, and Edmonia Lewis. For decades, London continued to serve as a first contact point with Europe for African American artists as they traveled to Paris, Rome, and other artistic centers. The painter Henry Ossawa Tanner, the sculptor Meta Warrick Fuller, the printmaker Albert Alexander Smith, and others passed through London, where they encountered artists from other countries. The British-born sculptor Edna Manley studied art in London before moving to Jamaica in 1922; in Kingston, she created works that would be exhibited in Britain from 1929 onward. Similarly, the Jamaican sculptor Ronald C. Moody exhibited at British galleries in 1935 and 1937. A Londoner, the white painter and stage designer Edward Burra spent almost a year in New York in 1933–1934, creating lasting impressions of Harlem street life.

During the 1910s and 1920s, London was a center for the dissemination of ragtime and early jazz in Europe, as African Americans came to London during

World War I and afterward. The Original Dixieland Jazz Band toured England as early as 1919. For the bandleader and composer James Reese Europe, London became a springboard to France, where his 369th "Hellfighters" Infantry Band introduced military and civilian audiences to early jazz. At the same time, Will Marion Cook's Southern Syncopated Orchestra had many successes in London, including a performance at Buckingham Palace. Several members of Cook's band remained in London, Paris, Berlin, and other European locales; influential figures from his group included Sidney Bechet, Arthur Briggs, and Benny Peyton. Bechet spent formative years of his career in London between 1919 and 1923 and again after 1925, when he joined Josephine Baker and Louis Douglas in the wildly successful *Revue Nègre* in Paris. The itineraries of many jazz revues reveal that engagements in London often marked the starting point of larger European tours.

As black musicians brought jazz to London, they nourished an emerging local jazz culture during the 1920s. This influence became evident in the original jazz criticism of the English double bass player, composer, and writer Spike Hughes. Similarly, the English trumpeter, singer, and bandleader Nathaniel "Nat" Gonella was inspired by Louis Armstrong, who performed to enthusiastic audiences in London between 1932 and 1935.

American dancers and other entertainers were also successful in London. Many stars who had made their name in Noble Sissle's production of *Shuffle Along* in New York became even more famous in London: They included Florence Mills, Ethel Waters, and Adelaide Hall. Mills, a dancer and singer, had some of her most significant successes at London's Pavilion Theater, where she had already been acclaimed for her appearance in *Blackbirds* (1926). Hall, a scat singer, joined Sam Wooding's *Chocolate Kiddies* in 1925 for a tour of London and other European cities; by 1934, she and her husband, Willie Hicks, settled permanently in London, where they opened a nightclub. Paul Robeson made his London stage debut in 1922, in a production of *Taboo*; his subsequent engagements included leading roles in Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* in 1924 and *Show Boat* in 1928. Robeson's experience in London is representative of that of many other African Americans: It gave him new political perspectives on historical interconnections. Other African Americans for whom London became synonymous with professional accomplishment included Lawrence Brown, Roland Hayes, and Marian Anderson. For them, London's

wealth of professional opportunities often resulted in groundbreaking successes that eventually led to recognition at home as well.

Although Harlem became the world's new "black capital" in the 1920s, London remained an essential site of cultural production for the Harlem Renaissance. Either despite or because of its contradictory blend of colonial legacies and emancipatory traditions, London continued to attract black artists, writers, musicians, philosophers, and thinkers from different points of origin in the diaspora. Thus London during the time of the Harlem Renaissance anticipated much of the energy and spirit of London today, which is and always has been a multiethnic metropolis.

JÜRGEN HEINRICH

See also Ali, Duse Mohamed; Anderson, Marian; Armstrong, Louis; Bechet, Sidney; Césaire, Aimé; Cook, Will Marion; Cunard, Nancy; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Europe, James Reese; Fuller, Meta Warrick; Garvey, Marcus; Hall, Adelaide; Hayes, Roland; Mills, Florence; Pan-African Congresses; Pan-Africanism; Robeson, Paul; Tanner, Henry Ossawa; Waters, Ethel

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Europe and the Harlem Renaissance: 4—Paris

By the time of the Harlem Renaissance, Paris had already been a cultural magnet for white Americans for centuries, symbolizing their European origins. African Americans were not entirely excluded from this contact. The story of Sally Hemings' sojourn there with Thomas Jefferson in the eighteenth century is well documented. During the nineteenth century the black Shakespearean actor Ira Aldridge toured France, and prominent blacks such as Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington visited Paris. The sculptor Meta Warrick Fuller (1877–1968) studied in Paris from 1899 to 1903, working with Auguste Rodin. In 1900, W. E. B. Du Bois organized an exhibition at the World Exposition in Paris to demonstrate "the history of the American Negro, his present condition, his education, and his literature." A few black entertainers, including Belle Davis, Louis Douglas, Will Garland, Ida Forsythe, and Ollie Burgoyne, also found their way to Paris in the early years of the twentieth century.

However, it was predominantly through World War I that black Americans discovered Paris as a haven of racial tolerance. The warm welcome that greeted black American troops in France made a lasting impression. It would be simplistic to suggest that France was free of racial and cultural prejudice; however, the French did not have the rigid notions regarding skin color that prevailed in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, and especially in America. The idea that it was possible to interact with white Europeans on an equal basis came as a culture shock—a pleasant one—to many black Americans, so much so that some actually stayed on, including the historian Rayford Logan and Eugene Bullard. Bullard had become the first black military aviator by joining the French forces and went on to become manager and part-owner of a popular nightclub, Le Grand Duc.

A more specific cultural impact came from contact between French musicians and their counterparts in black military bands, such as James Reese Europe's 369th Infantry Band (the Harlem Hellfighters) and Tim Brymn's 350th U. S. A. Artillery Band. Bands such as these entertained troops around France, amazing

French musicians with their ability to produce strange “jazz” effects from their instruments.

Encouraged by their welcome, many black musicians returned to Paris after the war. By 1918 Louis Mitchell and His Jazz Kings were established at the Casino de Paris. Other arrivals included the sensational drummer Buddy Gilmore and the trumpeter Arthur Briggs. Briggs came to Europe in 1919 with Will Marion Cook’s Southern Syncopated Orchestra, which also included Sidney Bechet and the young classical genius Edmund Thornton Jenkins. Jenkins settled in Paris in 1922 and died there in 1926 at the early age of thirty-two. In 1923, Palmer Jones and his wife, the singer Florence Embry Jones, were featured at Le Grand Duc until Florence joined Louis Mitchell’s new club, named—after her—*Chez Florence*. In 1924, Bricktop arrived to replace Florence at Le Grand Duc, staying on to become a Parisian legend for many years. In 1925, Josephine Baker arrived as part of the *Revue Nègre* to become the toast of Paris. In Bricktop’s words, “Paris was having its own version of the Harlem Renaissance. It was called *le tumulte noir*.”

These entertainers and musicians brought jazz-based dance music, with overtones of ragtime and blues. The classical conductor Ernest Ansermet’s perceptive reviews of the Southern Syncopated Orchestra marked the origin of serious appreciation of jazz as an art form. Important French critics like Hugues Panassie and Charles Delaunay, and the Belgian Robert Goffin, soon followed. The exotic appeal of black jazz for French audiences was augmented by an interest in African art and motifs that had been sparked by artists such as Matisse, Picasso, and Braque.

Although jazz and the nightclubs around Montmartre epitomized black Americans for the Parisians, many African Americans in Paris had only a passing interest, if any, in jazz. Many were artists and writers who had come to soak up the rich heritage of the great galleries and institutions, such as the Louvre and the Sorbonne, and also—as in the case of Aaron Douglas and Palmer Hayden—to study African art. Paris offered an important symbolic link, with its physical proximity to Africa and contacts with French-speaking Africans from the colonies. In 1919, W. E. B. Du Bois organized the first Pan-African Congress in Paris, with fifty-seven delegates from fifteen nations and colonies, and sixteen African Americans. In 1921, when the second congress held one of its sessions in Paris, the writers Jessie Redmon Fauset and Walter White accompanied Du Bois.

Fauset had studied at the Sorbonne in 1914, becoming sufficiently fluent in French that she was asked to translate *Batouala*, a novel by the African writer René Maran; however, although this novel had won the Goncourt Prize, Fauset considered it inappropriate for her image. Fauset returned for another six months in 1924, and (as noted above) she had also attended the session of the Pan-African Congress in Paris in 1921. Her own novel *Plum Bun* was written in Paris.

Other blacks who lived in Paris were businesspeople or students who were happy to temporarily escape from segregation at home. Throughout the 1920s there was a steady procession of African Americans coming to Paris, some merely as tourists or for short stays, others for extended periods. In addition to Fauset, a surprising number of significant writers and artists of the Harlem Renaissance stayed in Paris for at least some months, as if on a pilgrimage. Claude McKay arrived in 1923 from Russia and spent many years in France, much of the time in the provinces; his novel *Banjo* is set in Marseilles. Langston Hughes arrived in 1924; he was told that he was wasting his time if he didn’t play an instrument or tap dance, but he did get a job as a busboy at Le Grand Duc, with the help of Rayford Logan. Jean Toomer came in 1924 and again in 1926, becoming a disciple of the mystic philosopher Gurdjieff. Countee Cullen visited in 1926 and for a longer period in 1928–1929. Gwendolyn Bennett lived in the Latin Quarter during part of 1925–1926. J. A. Rogers did research for his book *Sex and Race* and lectured on anthropology at the Sorbonne in 1929. Other transient writers included Alain Locke (1927); Walter White (1927), negotiating a translation of his *Fire in the Flint*; Eric Walrond (1929); and Nella Larsen (1931).

Paris, of course, attracted African American painters. Henry Ossawa Tanner came as early as 1891; he lived and worked in Paris for most of the rest of his life and was awarded the French Legion of Honor in 1923. Many notable artists followed him. Laura Wheeler Waring studied expressionism and the Romantics at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, a popular Parisian workshop and studio, in 1924. William Henry Johnson arrived in Paris in the autumn of 1926 and had a studio in Montparnasse; he returned to New York in late 1929. Hale Woodruff was inspired to go to Paris (where he would stay until 1931) by hearing stories of Henry Ossawa Tanner, who helped him get started there. Palmer Hayden received a grant to study in

Paris at the *École des Beaux-Arts*; he stayed until 1932. After winning a Guggenheim fellowship, Archibald Motley left for Paris in 1929, returning to Chicago in 1930. Aaron Douglas started a year's study at the *Académie Scandinave* in 1931. Lois Mailou Jones came just before World War II; she had a scholarship from Howard University to study at the *Académie Julian* during the school year 1937–1938.

Sculptors were also attracted to Paris, in the footsteps of Meta Warrick Fuller. One of the first after Fuller was Nancy Elizabeth Prophet, in 1922. Prophet's work was exhibited at the August Salon in Paris from 1924–1927 and at the *Salon d'Automne* in 1931 and 1932. Augusta Savage almost came to Paris in 1923, but, on racial grounds, she was denied the scholarship she had won. She finally arrived in 1929, having won a Julius Rosenwald fellowship that gave her an opportunity to study in Paris for one year. She stayed until 1931.

Although jazz and popular music dominated the black musical scene in Paris, there was also classical music. Edmund Thornton Jenkins was a resident composer and performer, and there were occasional recitals by notables such as Roland Hayes, Paul Robeson, and Marian Anderson. Some black classical performers found it easier to gain acceptance in France than in the United States: These included Lillian Evanti, who made her debut with the Paris Opera in *Lakmé* in 1925; Caterina Yarboro, who had to establish herself in Europe before obtaining operatic roles at home; and the clarinetist Rudolph Dunbar, who later achieved fame in Europe as a conductor.

The many artists of various disciplines who established temporary residence in Paris did not constitute a close-knit black artistic community, having widely differing aesthetic viewpoints. Their main link was the many clubs and cabarets with black musicians and entertainers. Bricktop always gave a warm welcome to lonely expatriates, as did Florence Embry Jones. Later, Adelaide Hall established her Big Apple nightclub. Josephine Baker established herself as a Parisian institution and made her first French sound film, *Zou Zou*, in 1934.

There was also a continuous stream of black entertainment troupes passing through Paris. Sam Wooding and the *Chocolate Kiddies* came in 1925; Florence Mills came with her *Blackbirds* for four months in 1926; and later versions of Lew Leslie's *Blackbirds* came in 1929, 1934, and 1936. These brought names like the Nicholas Brothers, Adelaide Hall, Valaida Snow, and Edith

Wilson, and first-rate jazz orchestras led by Will Vodery, Noble Sissle, and others. Some of the entertainers would opt to stay on in Paris. Johnny Hudgins had a mime act that became a popular favorite in Paris in the late 1920s, inspiring a short film by Jean Renoir. Valaida Snow was based in Europe for most of the 1930s. By the early 1930s, jazz performers such as Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong were household names in France. Ellington and Armstrong toured and gave concerts there in 1933–1934; and Ellington's musicians were amazed how seriously the fans took their music—these French fans knew details of earlier recordings that the band members themselves had forgotten.

Although expatriate African Americans enjoyed their ability to interact freely with French people, relationships with traveling white Americans were more mixed. Many white Americans who traveled to Paris were cosmopolitan, with liberal social attitudes. Those who frequented Bricktop's and Chez Florence, like Cole Porter and F. Scott Fitzgerald, enjoyed the company of the black expatriates. Sinclair Lewis befriended Claude McKay; the English aristocrat Nancy Cunard made no secret of her affair with the pianist Henry Crowder and actively promoted contacts between blacks and whites; wealthy white American patrons courted the favors of Florence Embry Jones. For the painter Hale Woodruff, who was in Paris from 1927 to 1931, just knowing that the city was a center for writers such as Hemingway and artists such as Man Ray was exciting even though contact was limited and fortuitous.

However, there were also conservative Americans who reacted indignantly when black Americans were treated as equals. An incident reported in *Variety* had the headline, "Americans Protest at Negro Dancing With White Woman." This had occurred during the intermission of Florence Mills' *Blackbirds* show at the cabaret Les Ambassadeurs in 1926. A black professional dancer was dancing with a Frenchwoman at her husband's request, but the police had to be called to quiet the protesters. In 1927, Jimmy Walker, the mayor of New York, heatedly denied a story, reported in the Baltimore *Afro-American*, that he had behaved similarly in a Parisian cabaret.

By the late 1930s the Depression had taken its toll on the Harlem Renaissance at home, and the onset of fascism and a looming second world war effectively shut down its offshoot in Paris. Josephine Baker stayed on and became a hero of the French resistance;

Valaida Snow left Paris only to wind up in a Nazi detention center in Denmark. Although Paris was soon bereft of its contingent of black and white American expatriates, the memory of its hospitality was not lost. It would blossom again in a postwar black literary scene with figures such as Richard Wright, James Baldwin, and Chester Himes, and Josephine Baker would reclaim her status as a black superstar.

BILL EGAN

See also Artists; Authors: 2—Fiction; Authors: 5—Poets; Batouala; Blackbirds; Fire in the Flint, The; Francophone Africa and the Harlem Renaissance; Guggenheim Fellowships; Literary and Artistic Prizes; Music: Bands and Orchestras; Musicians; Pan-African Congresses; Pan-Africanism; Revue Nègre, La; Rosenwald Fellowships; Visual Arts; *specific artists, writers, and musicians*

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Europe and the Harlem Renaissance: 5—Soviet Union

Among the most striking features of the quest for cultural identity in the African diaspora in the early twentieth century was the extent to which it entailed travel abroad. Not just coincidentally, Langston Hughes’s and Claude McKay’s respective autobiographies were called *I Wonder as I Wander* and *A Long Way from Home*, and the *négritude* movement—created in the 1930s by African and Caribbean leaders who were directly inspired by the Harlem Renaissance—first emerged in France. It is not surprising, then, that the Harlem Renaissance also manifested itself as far east in Europe as Russia, and that both Hughes and McKay wrote poems about Moscow as well as Harlem. The lofty humanitarian ideals of the experiment in the Soviet Union were attractive to black intellectuals; and although the communist regime officially denounced nationalism of any kind, it actually provided material support to encourage assertion of black cultural identity in the Americas and Africa. The connections between the Soviet Union and the Harlem Renaissance illustrate, particularly, that the renaissance included music, theater, art, and politics as well as literature.

In Russia direct exposure to African American culture actually began at the very start of the twentieth century. For example, the concert singer Coretta Arli-Titz, formerly Coretta Alefred, had a career in Russia that spanned the czarist and Soviet periods. She came to Russia in 1904 as a member of a vaudeville troupe of seven Negro women called the Louisiana Amazon Guards; stayed through the revolution; eventually graduated from the Leningrad and Moscow conservatories of music; became one of the most popular singers in Moscow, performing in four languages, and a successful movie actress; and in the 1930s married a noted professor of music. Marian Anderson, on

a tour in the 1930s, visited Arli-Titz. The avant-garde theater director Vsevolod Meyerhold was allowed to include a full jazz band, consisting entirely of Russians, in some of his productions in the early 1920s, although communist ideology required that jazz represent decadence in Meyerhold's plots. A steady stream of entertainment artists toured the Soviet Union, such as the Leland Drayton revue for six months in 1925; and Sam Wooding and his Chocolate Kiddies, featuring thirty-three black American jazz musicians, dancers, and singers, for three months in 1926. Benny Peyton's seven-piece New Orleans Jazz Band, including the saxophonist Sidney Bechet, also visited Russia in 1926.

The reaction of the Russian public to these artists attests to a growing popularity of African American culture, especially jazz, in defiance of the official communist attitude, summed up in Maxim Gorky's description of jazz as "degenerate, bourgeois music." Jazz was considered harmful because it presumably expressed capitalist values and because it celebrated artistic spontaneity and individual freedom, both of which the Soviet regime consistently tried to repress. However, the Soviet authorities acquiesced partly because they were unable to stop it and partly because they wanted to acknowledge this manifestation of African American genius. Several writers of the Harlem Renaissance, such as McKay, Hughes, and Richard Wright, had some of their early work published in communist periodicals. The Soviet government also paid tribute to American Negroes during this period through special awards. For instance, the novelist Arna Bontemps won the Pushkin Prize in 1926; others were elected as honorary members of the Moscow city council; and a mountain was eventually named after Paul Robeson, who first visited Russia in 1934. Although Russian society in general shared the negative stereotypes of blacks prevalent in all Western societies, the Soviet leaders systematically used such honors as propaganda to point out American racial inequality. They even relaxed their usual atheistic censorship to allow Robeson's music, including spirituals such as "Steal Away to Jesus," to be broadcast on Radio Moscow, although with commentary informing the audience that such language at times served as encoded exhortations to slaves to run away.

With directives from Moscow, the American Communist Party was also systematically active in Harlem. A notable black leader in this endeavor was Louise Thompson Patterson, a social worker who was a close friend of Langston Hughes and was briefly married to the novelist Wallace Thurman. In her

apartment she held frequent informal gatherings of black artists and intellectuals, as well as specific discussions of the party's position on what was often called the "Negro question." Hughes was persuaded in 1930 to become president of a new party organization in Harlem, the League of Struggle for Negro Rights, that supported the antilynching crusade. In the 1930s, the Communist Party was also active in union organizing among unemployed artists and those working in New Deal relief programs that were constantly under fire from conservatives in the U.S. Congress. These programs included a branch of the Federal Writers' Project; the Harlem Community Art Center; a music project sponsoring orchestras, bands, and music appreciation classes; a puppet show; and an African dance troupe, all under the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

The founding of political schools in the 1920s "to promote universal communist brotherhood" brought a coterie of blacks to Russia, with ten places set aside in 1925–1926 for Africans and black Americans, including two for women, although none came that early. Nearly 100 African Americans would eventually train at these schools. Regarding the political dimensions of the Harlem Renaissance, it is noteworthy that many black artists and writers expressing cultural nationalism were also political figures. A closer look at the touring artists listed above reveals a number who were increasingly drawn into radical politics. One example is Claude McKay, the first prominent black American to visit the Soviet Union. He did so on his own, with no party affiliation, and when he arrived in 1922 he was welcomed as a poet rather than a politician. However, because the lone black American delegate to the fourth Communist International Congress in session there was the very light-complexioned Otto Huiswood, the Soviet leaders wanted McKay, who was very dark, to represent the American Negro to the Russian public. McKay was therefore photographed with the leaders of the Communist International (Comintern) and was introduced to luminaries such as the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky, Leon Trotsky, and V. I. Lenin's wife, Krupskaya, who was representing her mortally ill husband. McKay was also made an honorary member of the Moscow city council and was treated to a brief airplane ride while on an inspection of the Red Army. During several months' stay in Russia, McKay wrote articles and poetry that were published locally, including one reverent homage to Moscow and Lenin entitled "Moscow." The intense, if temporary, appeal of the Soviet dream can be appreciated if one

considers the mood of that poem alongside McKay's earlier poem "If We Must Die," a cry of outrage against lynching in America.

McKay was just one of the contributors to the Harlem Renaissance who spent time in Russia as well as Harlem during that era. W. E. B. Du Bois, for one, had been drawn to socialism in the early 1890s, while studying in Germany; publicly expressed socialist sympathies in the first decade of the twentieth century; first visited Russia in 1926; and used a Marxian analytical framework in some of his historical writing, especially in *Black Reconstruction* in the 1930s but also in earlier articles. Du Bois was encouraged by friends such as the reformer Mary White Ovington, a moderate socialist and cofounder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Otto Huiswood is another example. The grandson of a slave, Huiswood was born in 1893 in Suriname, a part of the Dutch empire. In 1912—like many West Indian and South American black intellectuals in the early twentieth century—he moved to the United States. There he was a trader in tropical products and later a printer in Harlem, and he became involved with American socialist and Negro organizations. One was a group connected to *The Messenger*, an originally socialist monthly established by A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen that ran from 1917 to 1928. By 1920, Huiswood was reputed to be the first black member of the American Communist Party; consequently, in 1922, he became a member of the American delegation to the Fourth Comintern Congress. Despite being upstaged by McKay in public appearances, Huiswood also was elected an honorary member of the Moscow city council and had a rare audience with Lenin. In 1927, Huiswood studied at the Lenin School in Moscow, one of the political institutions founded to train elite communist leaders. He became an authority on conditions in the Caribbean region, where he was assigned by Comintern to be the primary organizer. He also succeeded the Trinidadian George Padmore as editor of the Comintern monthly *Negro Worker*. Padmore, another West Indian drawn to New York and then to radical politics, had been the Communist Party's main liaison with black Africa until he was expelled from the party for opposing colonialism, on which the party line was temporarily equivocal. In communist debates over how to address the "Negro question" in America, Huiswood was among a majority of black members who insisted that racial equality was as critical as the class struggle, sometimes noting that racism was a

problem even within the party. This is another instance in which the black consciousness of the Harlem Renaissance period may be seen as influencing Soviet policies.

The Soviet critique of the dominant Western civilization resonated with black intellectuals. Even the usually mild-mannered, good-humored Langston Hughes was inspired at times to bitter musing, as in "Goodbye Christ," written during his travels in Russia in 1932. Hughes had come to Russia as part of a group—including Henry Lee Moon, Ted Poston, and some twenty others—recruited in the United States for *Black and White*, a propaganda film that proved abortive. (Incidentally, during the transatlantic voyage on the ship *Bremen*, some members of this group, traveling in second class, encountered Alain Locke and Ralph Bunche, who were in first class, bound for Paris.) Hughes recounts this project, for which he was hired as a consultant, in detail in his autobiography.

Two members of the *Black and White* project made Russia their home for the rest of their lives and were major contributors to Soviet film. The first was Lloyd Patterson, a graduate of Hampton Institute (1931) who had come seeking adventure. After the project folded, he worked for a time on stage sets at Vsevolod Meyerhold's theater, where he met his future wife, Vera Ippolitovna Aralova, later one of the Soviet Union's leading theatrical costume designers, as well as a celebrated painter. Patterson eventually played minor roles in several films and became a journalist for Radio Moscow. He died during World War II while Moscow was under siege. Lloyd Patterson's son, James ("baby James"), born in Moscow in 1933, became an instant sensation as a child star in the classic Soviet film *Circus* in 1936.

The second veteran of *Black and White* who became a celebrity in the Soviet Union, although he was little known in the United States, was Wayland Rudd. He had been raised by foster parents in Nebraska and had shown early talent as an actor. He preceded Paul Robeson in the role of Othello (which was then rarely played by blacks), at Jasper Deeter's Hedgerow Theatre in Rose Valley, Pennsylvania. There, he also played the lead in *The Emperor Jones*, another role that would later be associated with Robeson. Rudd initially returned home after two years in Russia but then decided to settle in Russia, convinced that Russian directors were much freer to pursue their art than their American counterparts. He attended the Russian State College of Theatrical Arts; graduated as a director;

and won wide popularity with Soviet audiences for roles in such films as *Tom Sawyer*, *Without Prejudice*, and an adaptation by George Grebner of Jules Verne's *Fifteen-Year-Old Captain*. In a letter to Robeson in 1952, Rudd still expressed strong support for the Soviet Union. When Rudd died in 1953, in Moscow, the Union of Soviet Artists accorded him its highest honors; at his funeral, a baritone sang a Russian version of "Deep River."

However, archival materials that have recently become available show that all was not well regarding the attitude of the Soviet Union toward blacks, and that other blacks in Russia made observations directly contradicting flattering accounts such as Rudd's. There is a dramatic report of a protest by African and African American students in the political schools, against racism in artistic productions and other Soviet practices. Moreover, this inconsistency between theory and practice existed not only in Russia but also within the American Communist Party, as is attested to by numerous accounts, such as Richard Wright's essay "American Hunger." In general, black artists had few illusions about going abroad and did not consider it a panacea. In a letter to Langston Hughes dated 28 February 1944, Eslanda Robeson congratulated Hughes on his remarks about race relations on the radio "Town Meeting of the Air"—remarks that apparently included scathing derision of Soviet society along with his denunciation of inequality in America.

Still, the direct exposure of Russian society to blacks, black culture, and black thought served to dispel some stereotypes and to reveal the complexities entailed in applying Marxist-Leninist theory to actual human conditions. And for black artists, travel abroad provided a basis for comparison that they would otherwise have lacked in appraising their status as human beings and as artists. For instance, Claude McKay—in a long, undated letter sent from Nice, France—chided Eslanda Robeson for underestimating the inferior treatment of Negro artists in America as compared with Europe. One positive contribution to the Harlem Renaissance of exposure to Russia and its ideals was that the Soviet Union, a major world society, affirmed the respectability of oppressed groups and their cultures. Furthermore, the Russians' expression of confidence in black culture seems to have been needed. Paul Robeson initially shared the American establishment's contempt for jazz as a form of music; and black thinkers had differences of opinion concerning the worth of black culture, betraying lingering doubts and perhaps suggesting a division along class lines.

Zora Neale Hurston, in a letter of 18 April 1934, to Eslanda Robeson, said:

One night, Alan [sic] Locke, Langston Hughes and Louise Thompson wrassled with me nearly all night long that folk sources were no [sic] important, nobody was interested, waste of time, it wasn't art nor even necessary thereto, ought to be suppressed, etc. etc., but I stuck to my guns and the world is certainly coming my way in regards to the Negro.

ALLISON BLAKELY

See also *Antilynching Crusade*; Bechet, Sidney; *Black and White*; Bontemps, Arna; *Communist Party*; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Hughes, Langston; McKay, Claude; *Messenger*, The; Ovington, Mary White; Patterson, Louise Thompson; Robeson, Paul; Wright, Richard

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Europe, James Reese

The multitalented James Reese Europe excelled in bandleading, arranging, organization, business, publicity, and military command, and in offering the public an erudite vision of the history and role of black music. He also wrote hit songs (although his compositions, redolent of turn-of-the-century ragtime, marching bands, and nineteenth-century string bands, have mostly not survived the test of time); and he was the primary force in guiding orchestrated jazz, ragtime, and blues to a wider audience in the 1910s. Europe was a significant influence on the Harlem Renaissance and on later efforts to put African American music as an art form on the same cultural plane as classical music.

Europe spent most of his school years in Washington, D.C., one of the few American communities where black history and music were openly celebrated and extensively taught. He came to New York City in 1902

or 1903, hoping to find a foothold in black Broadway productions—one of the few professional areas in which blacks competed on a high level with whites, although the two races did not perform together. Europe worked with all of the major creators of successful black musicals of the period, including Will Marion Cook, who advocated using black music to present a vision of black culture and history, an idea that Europe would promote more widely. In 1905, Europe performed with the Memphis Students, the group James Weldon Johnson credited with playing the first jazz heard in New York City. By 1910, Europe decided to devote himself to projects of his own devising.

Europe's leadership in the Clef Club brought about improved artistic and employment opportunities for black musicians. This organization, established in 1910, combated rampant discrimination in the musical world of New York City; it operated as a trade union, booking agency, and publicity service demonstrating the high standards and abilities of black classical and popular musicians and raising their profile and respectability. On 2 May 1912, Europe's Clef Club symphony orchestra became the first black orchestra to perform at Carnegie Hall, presenting a "serious and dignified program of African American music" to what was probably the first integrated audience for a concert in America. The program changed the perception not only of African American music but of all American popular music. According to one reviewer, this was the occasion when "popular music first invaded the concert auditorium." Europe believed that only a black orchestra could play black music, which diverged from classical music and represented a different identity and historical background. The orchestra's unorthodox 125-piece instrumentation included fourteen upright pianos that dominated the stage and were arranged to blend in unusual tonal colors and rippling rhythmic patterns; there were also banjos, mandolins, and harp guitars, as well as traditional orchestral instruments such as violins and cellos. The musicians occasionally sang and danced, adding to the dense, textured sound. Newspaper reviews praised the orchestra's "seductively rhythmic" jazz sound and its "soft and beautiful" qualities.

The enthusiastic reaction ensured a return to Carnegie Hall and numerous bookings in America and abroad, some for an upper-class clientele on yachts and in mansions. Europe also became the first black bandleader to receive a major recording contract. Yet a large segment of the critical community deemed



James Reese Europe's Clef Club Band, 1914. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

music worthy of respect only if it adopted exclusively European forms, and a critic for *Musical America* accordingly advised the Clef Club orchestra to “give its attention in the coming year to a . . . Haydn symphony. If the composers . . . will write short movements for orchestra, basing them on classic models, next year’s concert will inaugurate a new era for the Negro musician in New York and will aid him in being appraised at his full value and taken seriously.” Europe replied: “We have developed a kind of symphony music that, no matter what else you think, is different and distinctive, and that lends itself to the playing of the peculiar compositions of our race.” Black Americans, like Europeans, had to follow their own traditions. The music performed at Carnegie represented “the product of our souls; it’s been created by the sufferings and miseries of our race,” Europe explained to the *New York Post*. “Some of the old melodies we played . . . were made up by slaves of the old days, and others were handed down from the days before we left Africa.”

One recording by Europe’s Society orchestra, “Down Home Rag” (1913), gives a hint of what the Clef Club orchestra sounded like at Carnegie Hall. Although scaled down to eighteen pieces, the group in this recording has the same combination of traditional and less traditional string instruments, along with two pianos. The result is an exhilarating wall of sound with a rollicking beat, ominously droning backup vocals, and main melodies (led by the violin) that resemble reels; it brings nineteenth- and twentieth-century influences together into a wild and exciting *mélange*. “Down Home Rag” represents sophisticated African American music before musical rules were decided on in the young art form of jazz.

After his term as president of the Clef Club, Europe was important during the 1910s in bringing the controversial fad of social dancing to the American public, in a partnership with Vernon and Irene Castle. With the Castles (who were white) devising brisk dance steps and Europe and Ford Dabney writing and directing the music, several dance crazes were instigated, including the fox-trot and the turkey trot; and millions of records—frenetic, polyrhythmic renderings that were, for the time, particularly sexual and daring—were sold. These first efforts by black bands on major recording labels demonstrated that black music represented a new, exciting enterprise that could appeal to a multiracial, multiclass cross section of the American public. The recordings showed Europe’s facility with commercial as well as more highbrow genres; they also helped form a link between black music and

the mildly rebellious youth culture of the 1910s and 1920s. Moreover, having a white married couple—celebrities—dancing in front of a black orchestra and openly praising the African American influence in music was an unprecedented and influential development, economically and in terms of American race relations.

During World War I, Europe continued to break down barriers while serving as a lieutenant in the famous all-black 369th U.S. Infantry Division. He was the first African American to lead troops under fire as an officer in a machine gun company. The 369th was the first American regiment to fight side by side with the French, and the black American troops expressed surprise at and appreciation for the respect accorded to them by the French, unlike many counterparts in the U.S. Army. But Europe was mainly noted during and after the war for his leadership of the military band. Originally, he wanted to serve in a purely military capacity, in order to benefit “the race” as well as his country; but a private donation of \$10,000 and a formal request by the army persuaded him to take on the band as well. The group he created received a tumultuously affirmative response on both sides of the Atlantic; Europe was credited with exposing the European continent for the first time to the sounds of orchestrated ragtime, blues, and jazz. Lieutenant Noble Sissle, drum major for the band, recalled how the rendition of the “Memphis Blues” made the “dignified French officers . . . tap their feet, along with the American general, who temporarily had lost his style and grace” and that “even German prisoners forgot they were prisoners, dropped their work to listen and pat their feet to the stirring American tunes.” Sissle said that Europe’s band made him “satisfied that America’s music would someday be the world’s music”—a feeling shared by many contemporary observers and later commentators.

Biography

James Reese Europe was born in Mobile, Alabama, on 22 February 1880. He attended public schools in Washington, D.C.; studied composition, piano, and violin with Enrico Hurlei and Joseph Douglass (c. 1895); and studied in New York City with Melville Charlton and Harry T. Burleigh (c. 1903). Europe was a lieutenant and bandmaster in the 369th Infantry Regiment (“Hellfighters”) in World War I. He established himself as a composer of popular songs and instrumentals and as musical director of major black theater

productions, including John Larkin's *A Trip to Africa* (1904), S. H. Dudley's *The Black Politician* (1904–1908), Cole and Johnson's *Shoe-Fly Regiment* (1906–1907) and *Red Moon* (1908–1909), and Bert Williams's *Mr. Lode of Koal* (1909). He joined Ernest Hogan's Memphis Students in 1905. Europe founded the Clef Club, a union and booking agency for black musicians (1910) and organized and conducted annual concerts of African American music at Carnegie Hall by the large Clef Club Symphony Orchestra (1912–1913) and the National Negro Symphony Orchestra (1914). He was principal composer, orchestra conductor, and musical director, with Ford Dabney, for the dancers Irene and Vernon Castle (1913–1916). Europe obtained the first major recording contract for a black orchestra, with Victor, in 1913. He continued to compose marches, dances, and songs and to collaborate with artists such as Ford Dabney, Eubie Blake, Noble Sissle, Henry Creamer, and Bob Cole, from 1910 to 1919. He recorded for Pathé in 1919. Europe died in Boston, Massachusetts, on 9 May 1919, at age thirty-nine, after having been stabbed by a mentally disturbed member of his band during a postwar tour.

HARVEY COHEN

See also Clef Club; Cook, Will Marion; Fifteenth Infantry; Music; Music: Bands and Orchestras; Sissle, Noble

Selected Works

- The Black Politician*. 1904 (Musical comedy.)
"On The Gay Luneta." 1906. (Lyrics by Bob Cole.)
"Down Home Rag." 1913. (Composed by Wilbur Sweatman, performed on Victor by James Reese Europe's Society Orchestra.)
"Castle House Rag." 1913.
"Castle Walk." 1913. (Cowritten with Ford Dabney.)
"Hi! There!" 1915.
Darkeydom. 1915. (Also, *Darkeydom*; musical revue, cowritten with Will Marion Cook.)
"On Patrol in No Man's Land." 1919.
"Memphis Blues." 1919. (Composed by W. C. Handy and W. George Norton, recorded by Lieutenant Jim Europe's 369th Infantry Band.)

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Farrow, William McKnight

William McKnight Farrow was probably the best-known and most highly regarded African American printmaker of the early twentieth century. His printing medium of choice was etching; he was also an avid draftsman, watercolorist, and oil painter.

However, Farrow is important to the Harlem Renaissance not so much because of the works of art he made in the 1920s and 1930s but because he was an extremely important early source of inspiration and guidance for African American artists who became prominent in the mid-twentieth century. Farrow was an active supporter of African American artists and a promoter and advocate of their work, and he is perhaps most famous for this pivotal role in African American art. His teaching and curatorial positions at the Art Institute of Chicago made possible his considerable influence among African American artists.

Farrow was born in 1885 in Dayton, Ohio. He moved to Chicago, where he spent the rest of his life. He studied at the Art Institute of Chicago with Ralph Clarkson and Karl Buehr and was later hired to teach there, becoming the first black instructor at the Art Institute. At the Art Institute he taught etching and organized exhibits of contemporary art, including art by African Americans; he was also involved with other major curatorial projects, including reorganizing the Egyptian collection. Farrow was an early supporter of the study of African American visual arts. He wrote "Art for the Home," a weekly column for the *Chicago Defender*, and many articles on African American artists. He helped establish the Chicago Art League in 1925 and served as its president. The most important achievement of this

organization may have been the exhibit "The Negro in Art Week" (1927), a major early exhibit of the art of African Americans; Farrow was one of the curators, and his own works were exhibited in it. Farrow knew some of the most famous artists associated with the Harlem Renaissance and was particularly close to Archibald J. Motley Jr., with whom he studied at the Art Institute.

Farrow's prints varied considerably in subject matter. He did portraits of contemporary people of importance, such as African American artists, and of historical figures such as Abraham Lincoln. His paintings and illustrations were used as covers for *Crisis*. He also did illustrations for textbooks used in trade courses in the public schools of Chicago.

Farrow's reputation has suffered in recent decades because much of his work was technical and commercial. Nevertheless, his important role as an advocate for African American art at the dawn of the Harlem Renaissance deserves further recognition.

Biography

William McKnight Farrow was born on 13 April 1885, in Dayton, Ohio. He was educated at the Art Institute of Chicago (1908–1917) and taught there (he was also supervisor of the print shop at the Art Institute and assistant to the curator of temporary and contemporary exhibitions) and at the Carl Shurz Evening School and Museum, Northwestern University. He won first honors in figures and still life at the Lincoln Exposition (1915), the Eames McVeagh Prize for Etching from the Chicago Art League (1928), and the Peterson Prize (1929). Farrow was a member of the Art Institute of

Chicago Alumni, Alliance of Society of Fine Arts, Chicago Art League (which he served as president), Society for Sanity in Art, YMCA in Chicago, Chicago Urban League, and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. He died in 1967.

HERBERT R. HARTEL JR.

See also Chicago Defender; Crisis, The; Motley, Archibald J. Jr.

Exhibitions

- 1915. Lincoln Exposition.
- 1917. Arts and Letters Society of Chicago.
- 1922. Tanner Art League.
- 1924. New York Public Library, 135th Street branch.
- 1928–1945. Chicago Art League.
- 1930. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
- 1928, 1930, 1931, 1935. Harmon Foundation, New York.
- 1932. Howard University, Washington, D.C.
- 1933. Century of Progress, Chicago.
- 1939. Augusta Savage Studios
- 1940. American Negro Exposition, Chicago.
- 1945. South Side Community Center, Chicago.

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Reynolds, Gary A., and Beryl J. Wright. *Against the Odds: African-American Artists and the Harmon Foundation.* Newark, N.J.: Newark Museum, 1989, pp. 14, 17, 172, 183–187.

Father Divine

Father Divine became one of Harlem's most recognizable figures during the 1930s. He created the Peace Mission Movement, founded on the principles of New

Thought and Christian Science. Father Divine explained to his followers that he was God incarnate and that they could create heaven on earth. He also advocated a "raceless" society, believing that racial categories were not a legitimate way to classify people. In conjunction with his ministry, Father Divine established restaurants, boardinghouses, and stores, all of which offered affordable services and an integrated atmosphere. He and his Peace Mission became well known in Harlem for political activism and philanthropy. Estimates of Father Divine's followers during his heyday range from 10,000 to two million.

Although Father Divine and the Peace Mission did not acknowledge his prior incarnation, he had apparently been born in Rockville, Maryland, and his original name was George Baker. As a young man, he worked as a hedge cutter in Baltimore and taught Sunday school. In 1906 he met Rev. St. John Divine Bishop (John Hickerson) and Samuel Morris, two ministers who proclaimed their own divinity. He joined them and adopted the title "the Messenger." He eventually parted ways with these two men, but he had taken their message to heart.

When he arrived in New York City in 1914, he continued to preach his own divinity. He adopted a new name, Major Jealous Divine, which he had derived from the Bible (Exodus 34: 14): "For the Lord whose name is Jealous is a jealous God." In 1919, he and his wife, Penninah, moved with his followers to a home in an otherwise all-white neighborhood in Sayville, Long Island. From this home, he operated an employment service for his followers.

Father Divine and his followers coexisted fairly peacefully with their neighbors in Sayville until 1931. By then, his ministry had grown significantly, and more and more Harlemites were traveling to Sayville to visit him. In November 1931, neighbors filed a complaint regarding noise, and Father Divine and many of his followers were arrested. He believed that the complaint was racially motivated. The trial took place in May 1932, and afterward the presiding judge, Lewis J. Smith, gave Father Divine the harshest sentence possible, ignoring the jury's recommendation of leniency. Three days after handing down this severe sentence, Judge Smith died and Father Divine reportedly said, "I hated to do it." The attendant publicity spurred on the growth of the Peace Mission.

Although most of Father Divine's followers were African Americans, people of all races joined the Peace Mission. There were missions from New York to Los Angeles, but few were located in the southern

United States. Many of Father Divine's followers in Harlem committed themselves fully to the Peace Mission, turning over their belongings and living communally. They also had to lead a celibate life, even if they were married. This policy of celibacy led critics, including Marcus Garvey, to claim that Father Divine was advocating race suicide. Father Divine, despite his own marriage, believed that a celibate life was just as necessary for his followers as abstaining from alcohol, profanity, and untoward entertainment.

Worship at Father Divine's Peace Missions centered on huge banquets. Hundreds of followers attended these banquets and feasted on elaborate, multicourse meals. All of the food first passed through Father Divine's hands before it made its way around the table. At the banquets, followers would testify on his behalf, explaining how he had improved their lives. During the Depression, Father Divine and his Peace Mission also provided thousands of meals to residents of Harlem.

Father Divine encouraged his followers to make amends for wrongs they had committed in the past. Newspapers across the country carried stories of Father Divine's followers who paid off decades-old debts. Also, his followers took an active role in improving themselves and the communities in which they lived. For example, they enrolled en masse in New York City's night schools; and he urged members of the Peace Mission to intimidate drug dealers in Harlem.

Political activism was an integral part of the Peace Mission. Father Divine sponsored voter-registration drives and supported other organizations in protests and boycotts. This activism culminated in the Righteous Government Convention, held at the Rockland Palace in Harlem in 1936. With thousands in attendance, Father Divine and his followers passed a series of planks in support of antilynching laws, the abolition of capital punishment, and destruction of weapons of war. An antilynching bill written by the Peace Mission was introduced in the U.S. Congress but was defeated. Members of the "black bourgeoisie" generally criticized Father Divine's religious movement, but they did take note of the impact his political and philanthropic activities had on Harlem.

During the 1940s, Father Divine began to lose his appeal. The Peace Mission faced allegations of impropriety and financial mismanagement; and although neither Father Divine nor the mission was convicted of any charges, the scandals proved damaging. Some scholars also believe that the increasing prosperity in

America detracted from the services Father Divine offered his followers: people could provide for themselves and no longer needed his assistance. Furthermore, his second marriage in 1946, to twenty-one-year-old Canadian Edna Rose Ritchings (Mother Divine), disillusioned some of his followers who had given up their marriages for the movement.

Father Divine eventually moved the headquarters of the movement out of New York and into Philadelphia. The remaining Peace Missions became more centralized, and many of the businesses associated with the Peace Mission closed.

Father Divine died in Philadelphia in 1965. His death was not just the passing of a leader but also an ideological stumbling block for some of his remaining followers. He had claimed that, being God, he was immortal, and he had instructed his followers that if they truly believed in him, they too would become immortal. The death of a follower could be understood as a failure of faith, but his own death was more troubling. The Peace Mission explained that Father Divine had made the ultimate sacrifice and "laid his earthly body down."

As of this writing, the Peace Mission still existed, but on a much smaller scale than at the height of Father Divine's fame.



Father Divine. (Brown Brothers.)

Biography

Father Divine (George Baker) was born in Rockville, Maryland, in 1879. He arrived in New York City in 1914 and moved to Sayville, Long Island, in 1919. In January 1936, he held a three-day Righteous Government Convention. In 1942 he established new headquarters in Philadelphia. He died in Philadelphia on 10 September 1965.

DANIELLE BRUNE

See also Antilynching Crusade; Religion; Religious Organizations

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Fauset, Arthur Huff

Arthur Huff Fauset left his mark on the Harlem Renaissance through his contribution to major works such as *The New Negro* and to the sole issue of *Fire!!*, as well as through his stories in *Crisis* and *Opportunity*. Unlike many writers involved in the renaissance, Fauset did not relocate to Harlem but remained in Philadelphia, where he taught in the public schools and was a major figure in local civil rights issues.

Fauset's first literary work appeared in 1922 in an issue of *Crisis*, the magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Fauset's short piece retells a folktale that the narrator heard from the "queen of Sedalia" in North Carolina. Fauset's interest in folk literature was not lifelong, but this essay is indicative of his work to preserve African American folktales in the 1920s. While pursuing an undergraduate degree in anthropology, Fauset collected

Negro folktales in Nova Scotia under the guidance of the renowned anthropologist Elsie Clews Parsons. He later traveled throughout the southern United States collecting such material.

Alain Locke, who had been a mentor to Fauset, called on him to make a contribution to Locke's seminal collection, *The New Negro*. Fauset focused on his interest in African American folktales for his essay, "American Negro Folk Literature," and also compiled the bibliography of Negro folklore that appeared in the back of the book. In his essay, Fauset addressed the need for "scientific collection" of Negro folklore. Although he praised Joel Chandler Harris's efforts to collect "Uncle Remus" stories, Fauset pointed out that these were adaptations, not faithful representations, of traditional stories.

In April 1926, at an awards banquet held by *Opportunity* magazine, Fauset won first prize for his short story "Symphoniesque." Other honorees on this occasion included Arna Bontemps, Zora Neale Hurston, and Dorothy West. Fauset was in equally impressive company when he joined with Wallace Thurman, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and other notables to produce *Fire!!*—"a quarterly devoted to the younger Negro artists." Fauset provided financial support and also contributed the essay "Intelligentsia," in which he ridiculed the reverence accorded to intellectuals, suggesting that "the contribution of the Intelligentsia to society is as negligible as gin at a Methodist picnic."

Fauset's best-known work was the publication of his doctoral thesis, *Black Gods of the Metropolis*, in 1944. In this work he turned his anthropological eye on Negro religious cults in the urban North, documenting the practices, beliefs, and followers of cults such as Father Divine's Peace Mission and the Moorish Science Temple that had sprung up in the North amid the "great migration."

In part because of his distance from Harlem and in part because he was overshadowed by his well-known sister, Jessie Redmon Fauset, Arthur Huff Fauset has remained one of the relatively unknown participants in the Harlem Renaissance. David Levering Lewis's description of Claude McKay can also be applied to Arthur Huff Fauset: he was a man who was *in* the renaissance "but not of it."

Biography

Arthur Huff Fauset was born in Flemington, New Jersey, on 20 January 1899. He graduated from Central High

School in Philadelphia, the Philadelphia School of Pedagogy for Men, and the University of Pennsylvania (A.B., 1921; M.A.; Ph.D, 1942). He was an elementary school teacher in public schools in Philadelphia (1918–1926) and principal of the Joseph Singer School there (1926–1946). Fauset died in Philadelphia, on 2 September 1983.

DANIELLE BRUNE

See also Bontemps, Arna; *Crisis*, The; *Father Divine*; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; *Fire!!*; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; Locke, Alain; *New Negro*; *Opportunity* Literary Contests; Thurman, Wallace; West, Dorothy

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Fauset, Jessie Redmon

As literary editor of and a major contributor to *Crisis*, Jessie Redmon Fauset played a principal role in the development of many key figures and issues of the

Harlem Renaissance. As a novelist, she ranks with Zora Neale Hurston and Nella Larsen: She, Hurston, and Larsen were the three most respected female Harlem writers. Although Fauset’s books have not seen quite as much of a revival over the past two decades as have those of Hurston and Larsen, many scholars consider her influence as mentor, essayist, and literary critic unparalleled.

Although she identified her birthplace as Philadelphia, Fauset was born in Fredericksville, New Jersey; her family moved to Philadelphia while she was a child. She graduated from the Philadelphia High School for Girls in 1900 as valedictorian; she was probably the only African American at the school during that time. As an honors graduate, she was supposed to receive a scholarship to Bryn Mawr College, but it was never awarded. Instead, Fauset attended Cornell University; she was the first black woman to earn a degree there and the first black woman awarded membership in Phi Beta Kappa. She went on to pursue graduate work at the University of Pennsylvania, where she earned a master’s degree in French; she also studied at the Sorbonne.

In 1903, shortly after the death of her father, Fauset wrote to W. E. B. Du Bois, asking his advice about what kind of summer work she might undertake that would help her learn about other classes of African Americans. This correspondence began a lifelong friendship and professional association. Du Bois helped Fauset obtain a teaching position at Fisk University for the summer of 1904. Fauset then went to work teaching French and Latin at the famous M Street High School (later renamed Dunbar High) in Washington, D.C., in 1906. She remained there until 1919.

In 1912 Fauset published her first short story, “Emmy,” in *Crisis*, the magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). At this time she became active in the NAACP. Among other efforts, she was involved in an attempt to obtain dormitory space for black students at Smith College. She also began a regular column in *Crisis*, “The Looking Glass,” which provided literary and other news gathered from various international journals. She was paid \$50 per month for the column.

In 1919 Du Bois persuaded Fauset to become the literary editor of *Crisis*. She had regularly published short stories and essays there since her first contribution in 1912. Among the authors Fauset discovered and encouraged during her editorial tenure at *Crisis* are Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Jean Toomer, Nella Larsen, Georgia Douglas Johnson, Anne Spencer,

George Schuyler, Arna Bontemps, and Claude McKay. Langston Hughes recognized her contributions in his autobiography, *The Big Sea*: “Jessie Fauset at the *Crisis*, Charles Johnson at *Opportunity*, and Alain Locke in Washington were the people who midwived the so-called New Negro Literature into being. Kind and critical but not too critical for the young, they nursed us along until our books were born.” As Hughes implies, Fauset was a generation older than most of the Harlemites in the news; she was also much more reserved in demeanor. Although she was active in Harlem’s literary and salon life, she was not a part of its nightlife. Also, although she lived in New York City, she maintained associations in Washington, D.C., where she met regularly with the Saturday Nighters Club at the home of Georgia Douglas Johnson.

Jessie Fauset was among those who believed firmly that arts and letters could help overthrow racial prejudice. In addition to her editorial work, she contributed to *Crisis* and other publications, providing essays, poems, short stories, literary criticism, and biographical sketches of prominent black Americans. She considered biography a genre of particular importance. In 1932, in an interview for *Southern Workman*, she argued that there was an urgent need for “ambitious Negro youth” to have reading materials on “the achievements of their race.” Her essay production was prodigious; one of her most famous essays is “The Gift of Laughter,” which appeared in Alain Locke’s *New Negro*. Her poetry, on the other hand, has never been considered her strong point, remaining conventional in both form and themes.

In 1920 an offshoot of *Crisis* was developed for children, entitled *The Brownies’ Book*. Fauset served as its editor and a major contributor. She described it as “designed for all children but especially for ours.” The introductory issue began with Fauset’s dedication: “To Children, who with eager look/Scanned vainly library shelf and nook/For History or Song or Story/That told of Colored Peoples’ glory.” However, the *Brownies’ Book* lasted for only twenty-four issues.

In the June 1922 issue of *Crisis*, Fauset criticized the theme of primitivism that was so prevalent in attempts by white authors to write about African Americans. Her criticism was generated in part by her feelings on reading the white author T. S. Stribling’s novel *Birthright*. Fauset doubted that “white people will ever be able to write evenly on this racial situation in America,” and this reaction is thought to have motivated her decision to write a novel.

Fauset’s *There Is Confusion*—often cited as the first Harlem novel—was published on 21 March 1924, a date that coincided with a famous dinner given by the New York Writers Guild. This dinner, also known as the Manhattan Civic Club Dinner of 1924, earned a place in literary history because it was attended by virtually all of Harlem’s luminaries, including James Weldon Johnson, W. E. B. Du Bois, Countee Cullen, and Langston Hughes, as well as figures from the major publishing houses and editors of some of the most influential journals of the time. Charles S. Johnson, who had organized the dinner, suggested that it was meant to honor Fauset and her first novel, but much of the program was given over to introducing the upcoming stars of the Harlem Renaissance to those in positions to help them get published.

There Is Confusion has numerous characters and subplots, but the main focus is on the courtship of Joanna Marshall, who hopes to be a dancer; and Peter Bye, who plans on a career in medicine. In attempting to achieve their goals, both struggle against racism, and Joanna struggles against sexism as well. Eventually Joanna’s career leads her to work in vaudeville, which she considers less than respectable, and she gives it up, deciding that the best use of her talents will be to help her husband further his career. Wall (1995) argues that Fauset’s insistence on the fulfillment of the “marriage plot” impairs the aesthetic integrity and social integrity of the novel.

However, as a fiction writer—although she stayed within fairly traditional forms and styles—Fauset did break new ground through her depiction of middle-class African American life, a milieu that had not previously been represented. In “The Negro in American Literature” (1925), William Stanley Braithwaite praised Fauset’s creation of an “entirely new milieu in the treatment of race in fiction. . . . In such a story, race fiction, detaching itself from the limitations of propaganda on the one hand and genre fiction on the other, emerges from the color line and is incorporated into the body of general and universal art.”

In January 1925 Fauset traveled to North Africa; she was one of very few Harlem writers and artists to do so. She wrote about her trip in an article for *Crisis* entitled “Dark Algiers the White.”

Fauset’s second novel, *Plum Bun: A Novel without a Moral*, appeared in 1929, three years after she had resigned her editorship at *Crisis* and had returned to teaching. The protagonist of *Plum Bun*, Angela Murray, is a young African American living in Philadelphia. Realizing that racism is the only obstacle to her success

and happiness, and discovering that she can pass as white, she moves to New York. She studies art and meets and pursues a wealthy white man, who—because of her class—refuses to marry her. After becoming his mistress and then being rejected by him, she comes to respect the choices of her sister, who has stayed in Harlem and has found a loving husband and established a rich family life. *Plum Bun* considers the problems of passing and the racial and gender barriers faced by a young woman seeking to make her way in the world; it also offers a kind of cultural history of the Harlem Renaissance, exploring the caprices of patronage. Wall has suggested that some characters in this novel are fictional representations of certain historical figures, including Du Bois and the sculptor Augusta Savage.

In 1929, Fauset married Herbert E. Harris, who worked for the Victory Insurance Company. Their wedding was preceded by numerous social events, acknowledging Fauset's status in her community.

Fauset's third novel, *The Chinaberry Tree*, published in 1931, traces the lives of two generations of African American women in a small black community. One of the characters is "Aunt Sal" Strange, a former slave, who loved the white Colonel Halloway and bore him a daughter. He bought Sal a home in New Jersey but did not see marriage as an option. Sal's daughter, Laurentine, must bear the stigma of having been born out of wedlock in a community where propriety is valued above all else. Although Sal's choice is understood and forgiven because the circumstances of slavery are taken into account, there is no leeway for Laurentine or her cousin Melissa. Whereas Fauset explored the intersections of race and gender in *Plum Bun*, in *The Chinaberry Tree* she focuses on the intersections of race and class.

Fauset published her fourth novel, *Comedy: American Style*, in 1933. In this work the focus is again on a light-skinned African American woman, Olivia Carey, but her role as a mother is most important. Very much an "anti-race woman," she marries a light-skinned man and seems happy until her third child turns out to have much darker skin than the rest of the family. Olivia's fixation on color leads her daughter into a bad marriage and eventually leads her darker-skinned son to suicide. Olivia ends up living meagerly in a very poor house in Paris.

From 1927 to 1944 Fauset taught primarily in the public schools in New York City, most notably at DeWitt Clinton High. After *Comedy: American Style*, her literary output was negligible. Herbert Harris died in 1959; and



Jessie Redmon Fauset, portrait by Laura Wheeler Waring. (National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; Art Resource, N.Y.)

shortly thereafter, Fauset, whose own health was failing, took up residence with relatives. She died in 1961.

Biography

Jessie Redmon Fauset was born on 27 April 1882, in Fredericksville, New Jersey, the seventh child of Redmon and Annie Seamon Fauset. Her father was an African Methodist Episcopal minister. While she was still a child, her mother died, as did four of her siblings. She received a B.A. from Cornell University (1905) and an M.A. from the University of Pennsylvania (1919); she also studied at the Sorbonne. Fauset taught at Fisk University (1904); taught French and Latin in high schools (1905–1919); and taught in the New York City public schools (1926–1944). She was literary editor of *Crisis* (1919–1926) and editor of the *Brownies' Book* (1920–1921). She married Herbert E. Harris in 1929. Fauset died of heart disease on 30 April 1961, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

KATHRYN WEST

See also Authors: 2—Fiction; Birthright; Braithwaite, William Stanley; Brownies' Book, The; Civic Club Dinner,

Fauset, Jessie Redmon

1924; Crisis, The; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Literature: 4—Fiction; Stribling, Thomas Sigismund; There Is Confusion; *specific writers*

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Federal Programs

During the 1930s, employment opportunities disappeared for many artists of the Harlem Renaissance. Federal government programs, however, provided some of these black Americans with jobs and a way to preserve their skills and self-esteem.

The Great Depression (1929–1939) represented the greatest economic failure in U.S. history. Roughly fifteen million people lost their jobs. By 1934, 17 percent of the white population and 38 percent of the black population were viewed as incapable of self-support. Many Americans turned to the national government for help.

Before Franklin D. Roosevelt assumed the presidency in March 1933, he promised a "New Deal" for the American people. In his first inaugural address, he stirred the nation with the words, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." With congressional collaborators, he shepherded through Congress an impressive body of initiatives that attacked industrial stagnation and unemployment. Eleven measures became federal law during the First New Deal in 1933. These statutes established administrative agencies to regulate and set policy.

The Civil Works Administration (CWA), one of the first relief agencies to assist blacks, sponsored the Public Works of Art Project. It commissioned artists to paint in public buildings. Following the demise of CWA in 1934, the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture employed more than 5,000 artists. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) provided checks to unemployed survivors. To ensure minority employment, FERA placed several blacks in positions of authority. One, Forrester Washington, served as director of Negro Works.

Roosevelt certainly had his critics. Taking issue with the initial results of his New Deal, they pointed out that more than 10 million Americans were jobless. This led the president to start a second wave of legislation in 1935. The National Youth Administration, with Mary McLeod Bethune as head of the Negro Affairs section, helped young blacks receive job training. However, many scholars view the creation of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) as the most

far-reaching measure to revitalize the economy because it greatly reduced joblessness. Over an eight-year period, it employed more than 8.5 million people. WPA employees built roads, bridges, and public buildings. In 1936, from an initial funding of \$1.4 billion, Congress earmarked \$85 million for WPA to assist “educational, professional, and clerical persons.”

Harry L. Hopkins proved to be an excellent choice to head WPA. A former social worker, he had earlier overseen FERA and had previously dealt with racial issues. Soon after the creation of WPA, W. E. B. Du Bois—the editor of *Crisis*—and other black leaders sent letters to the administration that argued for employment relief in proportion to the population. Ultimately, the president issued Executive Order 7046, which required WPA to hire qualified workers irrespective of race. Hopkins reiterated this point by issuing directives with provisions against discrimination. He also established a “black cabinet,” which included Robert C. Weaver and William H. Hastie, to advise him on employment-related issues.

To help professional people, Hopkins set up a Professional Projects Division. The unit’s main goal was to hire needy writers, actors, artists, and musicians. Federal One, the program’s official name, consisted of four arts projects: Federal Writers’, Federal Theater, Federal Arts, and Federal Music. Each project had a national director: Henry G. Alsberg (Writers’), Hallie Flanagan (Theater), Holger Cahill (Art), and Nikolai Sokoloff (Music).

With regard to artists of the Harlem Renaissance, the Federal Writers’ Project is perhaps best known because of the many leading figures who participated in it. New York City alone had twenty Writers’ Projects. During the 1930s, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, and Claude McKay did research on little-known achievements of blacks; their research later resulted in a work called *The Negro in New York* (1967). Zora Neale Hurston took part in the Florida Project. In Washington, D.C., Sterling Brown served as national editor of *Negro Affairs*. The Illinois Project nurtured the literary aspirations of Margaret Walker and Frank Yerby. The careers of many lesser-known African Americans were also favorably affected by the Federal Writers’ Project.

When Hallie Flanagan became national director of the Federal Theater Project in 1935, she established nine black branches in major cities. She considered Harlem the pivotal location, appointing John Houseman, Orson Welles, and the black American actress Rose McClendon to manage the unit there. After they restored

the Lafayette Theater in Harlem, they employed 700 black actors, singers, dancers, and technicians. They envisioned the Lafayette as presenting plays that would deal with all aspects of black life. In 1936, Houseman opened the revived Lafayette with Frank Wilson’s *Walk Together Chillun*. In 1939, he presented *Macbeth*, the first full-scale professional black Shakespearean production. Overall, the Lafayette produced nearly 1,200 plays, including many with black themes.

The Federal Arts Project sponsored classes for aspiring black artists and strengthened the skills of established ones. In major cities, more than 100 artists secured employment. They painted murals for public buildings, worked as sculptors, produced posters, and were mentors to other artists. In Harlem, Vertis Hayes, Aaron Douglas, and Augusta Savage offered instruction in their own studios. In 1937, the Arts Project financed the Harlem Community Art Center and Chicago’s South Side Community Art Center. An impressive list of artists took advantage of government patronage, including Jacob Lawrence, Archibald Motley, Charles Sebree, Romare Bearden, and Dox Trash.

Under the leadership of Nikolai Sokoloff, the Federal Music Project created thirty-four new orchestras and offered music instruction throughout the nation. The orchestras and other programs provided jobs for nearly 10,000 musicians. The Music Project also established the Colored Concert Band, whose black musicians specialized in rhythm and blues; Norman L. Black directed the band. At one point, the Music Project employed nearly 6,000 teachers. Citizens received free lessons in music theory, history, and composition. Henrietta Robinson, a black teacher, participated in Philadelphia. In 1997, at age ninety-three, she published an account of the legacy of black musicians in southern New Jersey.

In 1942, believing that communists had infiltrated Federal One programs, the chairman of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, Martin Dies, persuaded his colleagues to halt funding. Clearly, the Great Depression had left the artists of the Harlem Renaissance with fewer opportunities; and even with federal programs, black artists, if they were employed, often received lower wages. Yet it cannot be denied that those who found jobs in federal programs not only gained economic relief but also earned self-respect through their work.

PAUL T. MILLS JR.

See also Bearden, Romare; Bethune, Mary McLeod; Brown, Sterling; Douglas, Aaron; Ellison, Ralph; Federal

Writers' Project; Hurston, Zora Neale; Lafayette Theater; Lawrence, Jacob; McLendon, Rose; McKay, Claude; Motley, Archibald; Savage, Augusta; Second Harlem Renaissance; Walker, Margaret; Wilson, Frank; Works Progress Administration; Wright, Richard; Yerby, Frank

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Federal Writers' Project

The Federal Writers' Project (FWP) began as a small, unique component of the larger Works Progress Administration (WPA), programs in the New Deal that were designed to employ portions of the nation's labor force. FWP, which was described as white-collar relief, provided work relief primarily to writers but also hired artists, actors, and musicians, all of whom were willing to work in aiding the arts. Many of the writers who were hired were placed in skilled and professional-technical positions. Before coming under the auspices of WPA, in 1934, FWP had been known as

the Authors' League and had been under the Civil Works Administration (CWA), also a white-collar relief program. By 1935, WPA had incorporated FWP into its mission, and in November of that year, FWP hired Henry G. Alsberg, an editorial writer, to serve as the director.

The writers hired for FWP were not necessarily professional writers but rather unemployed professionals from different occupations: newspaper people, lawyers, teachers, librarians, recent college graduates, and even physicians and preachers. Very few were trained creative writers. In 1935, its first year, FWP employed more than 4,000 workers, and by 1936 its payroll rose to 6,700. By 1939, however, the number of workers declined to 3,600; and in 1941, the number fell to 3,000. On average, 4,800 people were on the payrolls during the four-year life of FWP.

FWP hired a large percentage of blacks, the greatest numbers for its projects in New York City and Louisiana. In selecting individuals, Alsberg gave preference to already established editors, journalists, and freelance writers, and these individuals primarily lived in large cities, including New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. In rural areas, Alsberg had more difficulty hiring qualified writers, relying instead on volunteers who submitted their work to editors in the large cities. FWP was not specifically designed to promote writers' talents, but in effect it did so. Many young black writers, including Ralph Ellison and Richard Wright, began their careers with FWP; and many ambitious participants in FWP eventually returned to their careers with more self-assurance in their craft.

Alsberg had a passion for nonfiction and promoted it over other written genres, such as poetry and short stories. Under his direction FWP developed into an exceptional agency with regard to the utilitarian work produced by its writers; however, these professionals were not allowed to write their own works on FWP time, and some of them therefore felt frustrated. Still, Alsberg did encourage the participants to write on their own time, outside the office, so that their creativity could contribute to the FWP's literature.

The first, and major, contribution of Alsberg and his writers was the *American Guide Series* (AGS), which was loosely based on the Baedeker guidebooks in Europe, factual aids assisting travelers. Alsberg's goal for AGS was to inform and entertain the general reading public. Each book in the series contained three parts: Part 1 "offered essays on a variety of subjects important to a state—its history, people, the arts, economics,

politics, and religion." Part 2 "consisted of up-to-date, fact-laced pieces on the state's cities." Part 3, "the longest, directed the reader throughout the state on motor tours." The books also contained points of interest (POIs); and the history sections also described architecture, encouraging Americans to seek out architectural sites. The writers of FWP asked for suggestions about what to include in AGS, and the public responded with family records; state highway agencies calculated tour mileages; and rail and bus companies and government agencies provided information about roads and tourist sites. In addition, the writers relied on knowledgeable volunteers from small towns for descriptions of less visited yet interesting sites. Lewis Mumford, the Librarian of Congress, called these guides "a great patriotic effort" in rediscovering America. With the success of AGS, FWP began to produce additional new series, including the *American Recreation Series* and *American Pictorial Guides*. Auxiliary projects included the *Life in America Series*, about 150 published titles covering diverse topics from zoo animals to ethnic and religious groups.

There were also transcontinental tour books and trail guides, romanticizing America's pioneer era. Other writing projects included indexing of local newspapers; works on local history; a national project of organizing old state and local records, commonly known as the Historical Records Survey; and the creation of black studies in which the authors of smaller local guides described black communities and their contributions to local and state efforts. The editors of FWP saw these black historical and cultural essays as offering an understanding of the country's racial problems.

Preserving the country's folk heritage later developed into the American Folklore Project. America's folklore was slowly vanishing, so John A. Lomax, the first folklore editor, working under Alsberg's direction, set out to collect and record tales and songs of an older generation. Lomax encouraged the collection and recording of ballads, oral histories, and poetry, and through these recordings, dialects and speech rhythms were preserved. Another FWP project, in 1936, was recording the stories of people who had been slaves. Alsberg and Lomax called on former slaves to describe their life before and after emancipation. Before the project ended, FWP collected some 2,000 stories of former slaves from seventeen states.

In 1939, FWP was accused of radicalism and waste, and shortly thereafter, Congress restricted its activities. In December 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt

ordered all WPA projects closed; and FWP shut its doors in spring 1943. By 1943, FWP had created and published more than 1,200 pamphlets and books and had sold or given away some 3.5 million copies of its publications. It had also provided relief to white-collar professionals; had undertaken an artistic and literary effort to document America, the American people, and the American heritage; had observed and recorded unfamiliar parts of America; and had contributed to national self-awareness.

ANNE ROTHFELD

See also Ellison, Ralph; Federal Programs; Second Harlem Renaissance; Works Progress Administration; Wright, Richard

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Ferris, William H.

William Henry Ferris is often considered a minor figure among the black intelligentsia in the first half of the twentieth century, but he was a member of the "talented tenth" and an important contributor to the art and literature of the black nationalist movement in the 1920s.

Ferris was a graduate of Harvard and Yale universities and a charter member of the American Negro Academy, a sort of think tank founded by Alexander Crummell in 1897. He also took an active role in the debate between W. E. B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington. Ferris supported the Afro-American Council, an early precursor of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and worked with William Trotter, the radical editor of the *Boston Guardian*—although a dispute with Trotter led him to a brief flirtation with the Washington camp. In 1913, Ferris published his magnum opus, *The African Abroad*.

Ferris, William H.

Heavily influenced by the English writer Thomas Carlyle and the American Ralph Waldo Emerson, the book featured an eclectic mix of social, political, and economic commentary informed by literary and historical observations. *The African Abroad* is an excellent example of contributionist history. Its scope encompasses the evolution of Western civilization, locating cultures of Africa and the African diaspora within these developments. Ferris coined the term “Negro-Saxon,” which highlights his belief in the connection between African American and European, especially Anglo-Saxon, culture.

In 1919 Ferris, after having worked briefly as editor of the *Champion* in Chicago and at the A.M.E. Book Concern, joined Marcus Garvey’s movement as literary editor of *Negro World*. Garvey’s movement gave Ferris an important outlet for his intellectual beliefs. To him, Garvey embodied the possibility of blacks’ developing race art and literature. Throughout Ferris’s journalistic contributions to *Negro World*, one finds consistent themes: celebratory assessments of ancient Africa, contributionist appraisals of black art and literature, and a balanced assessment of Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). A central component of Garvey’s program was affirming the importance of history. Numerous historical articles in *Negro World*, no doubt written by Ferris, capitalized on this theme. His review in 1921 of John Cromwell’s *Negro in American History* is an example. Ferris also brought an artistic component to *Negro World* through numerous assessments of “Negro art and literature,” a topic not often associated with Garvey’s movement. Perhaps most interesting was Ferris’s discussion, in 1922, of the musical ability of the Black Star Line Band. Unlike W. E. B. Du Bois, whom he admired and whom he often presented as a paragon of black intellectual achievement, Ferris offered balanced and favorable assessments of Garvey’s movement. In his article “Dr. Du Bois’s Ten Mistakes” (1923), Ferris points out in a delicate, judicious tone numerous errors in Du Bois’s article “Back to Africa” (also 1923) in *Century Magazine*.

The importance of Ferris’s contribution lay in his attempts to link the components of civilization—art, literature, and music—to the nationalist discourse of Garvey’s movement. This goal may have influenced Ferris’s participation in the literary contest of UNIA, which was launched in 1921. The contest is significant because it preceded similar activities by mainstream organizations such as NAACP and the Urban League. Ferris raised blacks’ art, literature, and music to levels

of admiration and respect comparable to what was accorded to American and European artistic expression. His erudite commentary and astute observations laid the groundwork for deeper appreciation of black history and art during this period.

Biography

William Henry Ferris was born in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1874. He studied at Hillhouse High School there, at Yale University (A.B., 1899), and at Harvard University (M.A., 1900). He was editor of *The Champion* in Chicago (1916–1917); literary assistant at the African Methodist Episcopal Book Concern in Philadelphia (1917–1919), and literary editor of *Negro World* (1919–1923) and *Spokesman* (1925–1927). Ferris died in obscurity in New York City on 23 August 1941.

STEPHEN G. HALL

See also Du Bois, W. E. B.; Guardian, The; Negro World; Talented Tenth; Trotter, William Monroe; Universal Negro Improvement Association

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Fetchit, Stepin

Stepin Fetchit, a vaudeville entertainer and pioneering black film actor, emerged near the end of the Harlem Renaissance as Hollywood’s first African American movie star. He appeared in more than forty-five feature films and shorts between 1927 and 1976, including *Hearts in Dixie* (1929), *Judge Priest* (1934), *Stand Up and Cheer* (1934), *Charlie Chan in Egypt* (1935),

Miracle in Harlem (1948), and *The Sun Shines Bright* (1954). During the 1930s, his portrayals of stereotypical plantation “darkies,” chicken thieves, lazy roustabouts, and other “coon” characters made him a national celebrity. His performances drew laughter and applause from white and black moviegoers alike, but they also increasingly sparked firestorms of protest and criticism from civil rights organizations and black newspapers, which objected to the demeaning and offensive roles that made him a star.

Fetchit (whose original name was Lincoln Theodore Monroe Andrew Perry) was born in Key West, Florida, in 1902 and grew up in Alabama. Around 1914, he joined the Royal American Shows carnival, performing as “Rastus the Buck Dancer” in its plantation minstrel revue. Over the next decade he toured the South and southwest with minstrel groups, carnival companies, and medicine shows. He eventually formed his own minstrel act, with Ed Lee, billed as “Step ‘n’ Fetchit, the Two Dancing Crows from Dixie.” After the team split up in the mid-1920s, he retained the stage name Stepin Fetchit, and he soon became a successful solo entertainer on the Theater Owners Booking Association (TOBA) circuit. During this time he also moonlighted as an entertainment reporter for the *Chicago Defender*, writing a newspaper column that covered African American stage and vaudeville performers and, after his arrival in Hollywood, screen actors.

In 1927, Fetchit obtained his first screen role in MGM’s silent melodrama of the old South, *In Old Kentucky* (1927); and over the next two years he appeared in supporting roles in several successful films, including *The Kid’s Clever* (1929), *Salute* (1929), and *Show Boat* (1929). He gave his breakthrough performance as Gummy, a shiftless plantation laborer, in Fox Film Corporation’s critically acclaimed *Hearts in Dixie* (1929), an early talking film with an all-black cast. Fetchit reportedly earned \$1,500 per week for this film, making him one of the highest-paid black actors in Hollywood, and his performance led to a series of screen roles in which he portrayed lazy, dim-witted “coon” characters that represented then-current racist caricatures of African Americans.

Offered only a limited range of roles, Fetchit rose to stardom during the 1930s by essentially portraying the same shiftless, simple-minded character time and again. Onscreen, he sported a trademark shaved head and wore baggy clothing that accentuated his tall, lanky, loose-limbed frame. Bald and stoop-shouldered, his characters shuffled from place to place and, when confused, cast puzzled, bug-eyed stares and stammered

in broken dialect. They added comic relief to the films, often serving as targets of verbal and physical abuse by the white characters. In time, Fetchit even had a host of imitators, most notably Willie Best (originally billed as “Sleep ‘n’ Eat”) and Mantan Moreland.

Fetchit played his signature character in twenty-six feature motion pictures between 1929 and 1935, many of them for Twentieth-Century-Fox, including *Stand Up and Cheer* (1934), *David Harum* (1934), and *Judge Priest* (1934). In the mid-1930s, at the height of his popularity, he received featured billing with Shirley Temple and Will Rogers, and he was in such demand in Hollywood that, according to Bogle (1973), he often worked on several motion pictures simultaneously and had special roles written for him. Meanwhile, Fetchit continued to make stage appearances as a singer, dancer, and comedian, headlining at the Cotton Club, the Apollo Theater, and other major venues; he also composed at least two songs, “Member Mandy” and “Step Fetchit Strut,” both in 1929.

Fetchit led the extravagant lifestyle of a Hollywood movie star, described by the *Chicago Defender*, in 1936, as the “squire and lord mayor of Harlemwood.” At the height of his career, he owned six houses staffed with sixteen Chinese servants; wore \$2,000 cashmere suits imported from India; threw lavish cocktail parties; and had a fleet of twelve chauffeured automobiles, including a champagne-pink Rolls Royce, for cruising around town. But he was also plagued by personal problems. He became so temperamental and unreliable that in 1931 the exasperated executives of Fox released him; a three-year absence from motion pictures followed. His public fistfights, arrests for drunken driving and assault, and breach of contract suits were all regularly reported in the entertainment sections of black newspapers. Fetchit declared bankruptcy at least twice, once in 1930 and again in 1947, after squandering the more than \$2 million he had reportedly earned in films and vaudeville.

During Fetchit’s heyday in the 1930s—the midst of the Great Depression—his comedic film performances delighted both white and black audiences. Some film historians argue that his foolish, self-mocking characters particularly appealed to anxious white moviegoers in an America pervaded by Jim Crow practices and racial tension. But by the time of World War II, Fetchit’s humiliating portrayals of African American characters had thoroughly alienated black moviegoers, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the black press increasingly condemned him for propagating negative racial

stereotypes. He made only a few motion pictures during the 1940s and 1950s; and eventually he moved to Chicago, where for much of the rest of his life he worked as a stand-up comedian and singer in nightclubs and strip shows. In 1970, he sued the Columbia Broadcasting System for \$3 million, alleging that its documentary *Black History: Lost, Stolen or Strayed* (1968) had unjustly accused him of perpetuating shameful, degrading images of African Americans. The case was dismissed in 1974.

During the 1970s, after an absence of almost two decades, Fetchit returned to motion pictures, appearing in *Amazing Grace* (1974) with Moms Mabley, and in *Won-Ton-Ton, The Wonder Dog That Saved Hollywood* (1976), his final film appearance. In 1977, after suffering the first of a series of strokes, Fetchit entered the Motion Picture and Television Country House in Los Angeles, where he stayed until his death in 1985.

Stepin Fetchit remains a highly controversial figure in African American culture, but he nonetheless ranks as a pioneer of early African American cinema. Bogle defends him as an “immensely talented” actor and comedian who had “a legendary sense of timing” and “a strong visual presence” onscreen, and who opened the doors of movie studios to blacks in Hollywood.



Stepin Fetchit. (Photofest.)

The Hollywood chapter of the NAACP honored Fetchit with a Special Image Award in 1976, and he was inducted into the Black Film Makers Hall of Fame in 1978. Never apologetic, Fetchit always maintained that he had paved the way for succeeding black actors by portraying the first African American character that white moviegoers found “acceptable.” “I became the first Negro entertainer to become a millionaire,” he told an interviewer in 1968. “All the things that Bill Cosby and Sidney Poitier have done wouldn’t be possible if I hadn’t broken [racial barriers]. I set up thrones for them to come and sit on.”

Biography

Stepin Fetchit (Lincoln Theodore Monroe Andrew Perry) was born on 30 May 1902, in Key West, Florida, the son of Joseph and Dora (Monroe) Perry, both of whom had been born in England, probably of West Indian ancestry. He attended St. Joseph’s College in Montgomery, Alabama, until about age twelve. Beginning c. 1914 he toured professionally as Rastus the Buck Dancer with Royal American Shows, and as part of the vaudeville team Step ‘n’ Fetchit, the Two Dancing Crows from Dixie. He toured as a solo performer on the vaudeville circuit and later the nightclub circuit under the name Stepin Fetchit c. 1927–1975. He worked as entertainment reporter for the *Chicago Defender* c. 1924–1929 and appeared in more than forty-five feature films and shorts in 1927–1976. His awards included the Special Image Award of the Hollywood chapter of NAACP (1976) and induction into the Black Film Makers Hall of Fame (1978). He died in Los Angeles, California, on 19 November 1985, of congestive heart failure and pneumonia, at age eighty-three.

PATRICK HUBER

See also Chicago Defender; Film: Actors; Film: Blacks as Portrayed by White Filmmakers; Hearts in Dixie; Minstrelsy; Moreland, Mantan; Theater Owners Booking Association

Selected Works

- In Old Kentucky*. 1927.
- Hearts in Dixie*. 1929.
- Salute*. 1929.
- Show Boat*. 1929.
- David Harum*. 1934.

Judge Priest. 1934.
Stand Up and Cheer. (1934)
Marie Galante. 1934.
Charlie Chan in Egypt. 1935.
Dimples. 1936.
Big Timers. 1945.
Miracle in Harlem. 1947.
The Sun Shines Bright. 1954.
Amazing Grace. 1974.
Won-Ton-Ton, The Wonder Dog That Saved Hollywood. 1976.

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Fields, Dorothy

Between 1926 and 1973, Dorothy Fields matched her colloquial, witty lyrics to more than 400 songs. Many of them have become pop and jazz standards: “On the Sunny Side of the Street,” “Don’t Blame Me,” “Exactly Like You,” “I’m in the Mood for Love,” “A Fine Romance,” “Pick Yourself Up,” “The Way You Look Tonight,” and “Big Spender.” The list of her collaborators on Broadway and in Hollywood reads like a

who’s who of American popular song: Jimmy McHugh, Jerome Kern, Cole Porter, Sigmund Romberg, Irving Berlin, Arthur Schwartz, Cy Coleman, and her brother Herb Fields. Her songs have been performed by everyone from Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, Fred Astaire, and Ginger Rogers to Dizzy Gillespie, King Pleasure, Aretha Franklin, and a Brazilian leopard named Baby. In 1971, Fields was among the first ten members elected to the Songwriters Hall of Fame, and the only woman.

Fields most directly affected the Harlem Renaissance through the lyrics she wrote for floor shows at the Cotton Club during its heyday in the late 1920s. Her father, Lew Fields, a successful producer and veteran vaudeville comedian, discouraged his children from seeking careers in the theater. But in 1926 Fields, then age twenty-one, sent samples of her work to Jimmy McHugh, who had been retained by the Cotton Club to compose music for revues produced by Lew Leslie and later Dan Healey. A Fields-McHugh collaboration was performed on 4 December 1927, at the same opening in which Duke Ellington’s orchestra made its debut as the Cotton Club’s house band. Fields became a full writing partner for the revue of



Dorothy Fields, 1934. (© Bettmann/Corbis.)

spring 1928, which played on Broadway as *Lew Leslie's Blackbirds of 1928* and featured "I Must Have That Man," "Diga Diga Do," and "Doin' the New Low-Down." Adelaide Hall sang the show's biggest hit, "I Can't Give You Anything but Love" (interpolated from *Harry Delmar's Revels of 1927*, and sometimes rumored to have been composed by Fats Waller and Andy Razaf).

Cab Calloway, whose band began to substitute for Ellington's in 1929, maintained that Fields "wasn't really funky enough to write the kind of songs that would carry a Negro revue of that type" (Calloway and Rollins 1976, 93). Fields did quietly omit her name from the more risqué numbers demanded by Healey's formula for the Cotton Club and by the expectations of white audiences who were seeking authenticity, and she shared the ambivalence of many white participants in the Harlem Renaissance. For example, her lyrics for "You've Seen Harlem at Its Best" (recorded by Ethel Waters in 1934) stand uncertainly between the notion of Harlem as an uptown amusement destination for hip downtowners and a gender-conscious recognition of what James Weldon Johnson once described as a community of "ordinary, hardworking people" occupied with "the stern necessity of making a living" (1930, 161):

When you've seen gals who wail,
"Hello, baby, love for sale,"
Pound the pavements east to west,
Grabbing what they can to keep a handy man,
You've seen Harlem at its best.

Fields wrote for the Cotton Club until late 1929, when she and McHugh left for Hollywood, and songwriting chores for the revues were taken over by Harold Arlen and Ted Koehler.

Biography

Dorothy Fields was born in Allenhurst, New Jersey, on 15 July 1905. She was a lyricist for revues at the Cotton Club and on Broadway in New York with the composer Jimmy McHugh in 1927–1933; was a lyricist for film scores with the composers Jimmy McHugh and Jerome Kern and others in Hollywood in 1929–1939; wrote the book, lyrics, or both for Broadway musicals in collaboration with Herbert Fields and the composers Arthur Schwartz, Cole Porter, Cy Coleman, and others in 1939–1973; and was a lyricist for the

CBS DuPont Show of the Month, *Junior Miss*, with the composer Burton Lane (New York, 1957). Her honors included an Academy Award for Song of the Year ("The Way You Look Tonight") with the composer Jerome Kern (1936), a Tony Award for Musical Play (*Redhead*), and election to the Songwriters Hall of Fame (1971). Fields died in New York City, on 28 March 28, 1974.

RYAN JERVING

See also Blackbirds; Calloway, Cab; Cotton Club; Ellington, Duke; Hall, Adelaide; Leslie, Lew; Musical Theater

Selected Stage Works

- Harry Delmar's Revels of 1927*. (With Jimmy McHugh.)
Lew Leslie's Blackbirds of 1928. (With Jimmy McHugh.)
International Review. 1930. (With Jimmy McHugh.)
Something for the Boys. 1943. (Book only, with Herb Fields and Cole Porter, composer.)
Annie Get Your Gun. 1946. (Book only, with Herb Fields and Irving Berlin, composer.)
A Tree Grows in Brooklyn. 1951. (Book with Herb Fields and music with Arthur Schwartz.)
Sweet Charity. 1966. (With Cy Coleman.)

Films

- Roberta*. 1935. (With Jerome Kern.)
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Fifteenth Infantry

The return of the Fifteenth Infantry to New York, in February 1919, after the end of World War I, is sometimes considered to mark the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance. Neither the return of the Fifteenth Infantry nor the Harlem Renaissance brought an end to violations of African Americans' civil liberties or to legally sanctioned segregation, but both did begin an awareness of African Americans' contributions in all segments of society.

The Fifteenth Infantry, a unit of the New York National Guard, was officially formed on 16 June 1916, with Colonel William Hayward as commander. With a few notable exceptions, such as the band-leader James Reese Europe, the regiment was predominantly led by white officers. Along with Reese, other famous African American men who enlisted with the Fifteenth Infantry, and encouraged others to do so, were Noble Sissle, Eubie Banks, and Horace Pippin. Before their enlistment, most of these African American men had been Pullman porters and waiters, hotel waiters, and doormen. They had little or no experience as soldiers. For the most part, their own officers conducted their training, with almost no assistance from either the National Guard or the regular army.

Arthur Little, a white officer of the Fifteenth Infantry, described it as "the self-made regiment of the American Army. It started without traditions, without education, and without friends" (1936). It did not even have a home base. The regiment began training in an old dance hall in Brooklyn; it also used a state training camp near the town of Peekskill and later at Camp Whitman in New York state. After performing guard duty in various parts of New York state, the regiment was sent to Spartanburg, South Carolina, for further training before embarking for France. Its contentious reception in South Carolina reflected the reality that even though these men were serving their nation, large segments of society refused to recognize their contribution and still wanted them to remain segregated.

When the United States officially entered World War I and the American Expeditionary Force was organized, the Fifteenth Infantry Regiment was redesignated as the 369th and, with other "colored" units of the National Guard, became the Ninety-Third Division (Provisional). This new division was activated at Camp Stuart, Virginia, in December 1917, and almost immediately the 369th was sent to France, with the remainder of the division following in later months. Ostensibly, the division was sent to France because the French army needed replacements. The 369th participated in various defensive and holding operations; its largest operation was the Meuse-Argonne offensive from 16 September 1918 through 11 October 1918—in which, according to some reports, one-third of the unit was killed or wounded. The 369th was credited with never having had a soldier captured and never giving up an inch of ground that it had taken. It spent 191 days in combat and was the first unit to reach the Rhine.

While serving with the French, the 369th fought with distinction and was decorated as a unit, and 170 individuals were awarded the Croix de Guerre. Corporal Henry Johnson and Private Needham Roberts were the first Americans awarded the Croix de Guerre. They had been on guard duty on 14 May 1918 when twenty Germans on a raid tried to take Roberts prisoner. Johnson, using a knife, freed Roberts; and between the two of them, they killed four Germans, wounded several others, and held their position as the rest of the Germans fled. This skirmish became known as the "battle of Henry Johnson." In the battle of the Meuse-Argonne, the 369th captured and held the town of Sechault while facing artillery fire, machine gun fire, and entrenched German soldiers.

One aspect of the history of the Fifteenth Infantry during the war is the story of Lieutenant James Reese Europe. Europe, a well-known bandleader in the United States, conducted a military band known as the 369th Infantry Hell Fighters, which included Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake and is credited with introducing American jazz to Europe. During the war, this band entertained French soldiers and officers in camps and hospitals, and also civilians. Reese composed songs about his wartime experiences and recorded these when he came back to the United States; however, he was killed soon after returning from the war.

Little discusses the hardships that his soldiers suffered at home before the war as a consequence of racism and "the cumulative prejudices of hundreds of



The 369th Colored Infantry returns home: members of this famous unit, formerly the Fifteenth New York regulars, arrive in New York City, 1919. (© Corbis.)

years,” but he says that after the war they “were going home as heroes!” They had been denied a parade before departing for France; when they returned, however, the Fifteenth Infantry marched up Fifth Avenue to receive the plaudits of a million grateful citizens of New York, and then marched on for the full length of Lenox Avenue, through Harlem, cheered on by a quarter of a million black men, women, and children. Little reports that on this day, “New York City knew no color line.”

SUSIE SCIFRES KUILAN

See also Blake, Eubie; Europe, James Reese; Sissle, Noble; World War I

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Film

Whoever controls the film industry controls the most powerful medium of influence over the public.
(Thomas Edison)

Background

During the era of silent films, before the advent of the Harlem Renaissance, black faces appeared in motion pictures, but few belonged to African Americans. As a rule, white actors blackened their faces with burnt cork to play blacks in roles that reinforced images immortalized in the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) by Harriet Beecher Stowe. This practice peaked in 1915 with the release of D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*. Upset by the color prejudice manifest in this landmark movie, African Americans, such as Oscar Micheaux, stepped up efforts to organize film companies and produce their own pictures. An outpouring of group pride, which fostered creativity and collaboration by blacks throughout the jazz age, provoked the reaction to Griffith's work and gave rise to numerous films by African Americans. These “race movies” enchanted blacks from the beginning of the 1920s to the early 1930s.

Original Negatives

For nearly two decades after the dawn of motion pictures, African Americans had little influence in the film industry. To their dismay, a mood of nostalgia for antebellum times prevailed in popular culture. Most often, Hollywood movies presented black people as plantation slaves happy to serve their masters; otherwise, blacks were depicted as tramps, thieves, or tricksters. As noted previously, in general white actors played black parts with their faces painted dark, and this practice prevailed when Griffith cast *The Birth of a Nation*, a sweeping tale of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

The early movies in which whites performed black roles were continuing, or renewing, a custom. After the War of 1812, white minstrels began to make up with burnt cork and render impressions of blacks in song and dance. Out of their routines, a theatrical tradition was born. By the mid-nineteenth century, minstrel shows by whites in blackface were among the most popular pastimes in American society. Their popularity faded in the 1890s, though, as motion pictures emerged and adopted the convention.

In 1903, the first film narrative with a black lead premiered. It was an adaptation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* directed by Edwin Porter, who had a white actor, in burnt cork, take the role of Uncle Tom. Like the character in the novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe on which the film was based, the cinematic Uncle Tom thrilled contemporary audiences by submitting piously to his plight as a slave. Six subsequent movie versions of the novel appeared in theaters between 1909 and 1927 and confirmed the public's fascination with black performances, which reprised the black figures developed in the book. In other films by whites, such as *The Chicken Thief* (1904), *The Octoroon* (1911), *Old Mammy's Charge* (1913), *A Slave's Devotion* (1913), and *Rastus's Riotous Ride* (1914), black leads copied the devout Tom or other stock characters created by Stowe, including hearty Aunt Chloe, half-witted Topsy, dazzling Eliza, and defiant George. Griffith inserted a form of each type acted by whites into *The Birth of a Nation*. In the process, he lowered blacks to new depths through characterizations that stripped them of dignity. But Griffith also took filmmaking to new heights through innovative editing; and President Woodrow Wilson, voicing the opinion of the national majority, found the movie an exhilarating account of the past.

African Americans had been protesting against their onscreen image for years before *The Birth of a Nation*. The "great migration," beginning in 1910, brought many blacks to the North from southern counties plagued by the violence of the Ku Klux Klan and the futility of sharecropping. As these African Americans settled in tight pockets in and around northern cities, their resistance to negative portraits gathered strength. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), formed in 1909 under the leadership of W. E. B. Du Bois, reflected this mounting opposition. A short while after its inception, NAACP had launched a crusade against the use of stereotypes of blacks by the film industry. Other associations that were formed to promote the interests of African Americans—for example, the National Urban League—had soon followed suit. But *Birth of a Nation*, with its undignified blackface characters in menial or menacing roles, excited the most furious response; this film ignited an explosion of black cinema that contributed to the Harlem Renaissance.

Answer Prints

"Race movies" flourished in the black community before the Great Depression. They picked up a practice

that had been initiated by William Foster, who founded a motion picture company in 1910 and produced *The Railroad Porter*, with an all-black cast and crew, two years later. Race movies were issued by more and more African American filmmakers and were presented in an increasing number of black theater chains. The actors in these movies were real blacks, and the plots were about timely matters relevant to the audiences. These productions often had inadequate capital and thus contained rough cuts and poor lighting; even so, they elicited pleasure as well as pride.

The spread of black film ventures became apparent in 1916 when the Lincoln Motion Picture Company, formed by Noble Johnson, produced *The Realization of a Negro's Ambition*. These ventures met a demand for businesses owned and operated by African Americans. Marcus Garvey, who emigrated from Jamaica and gained a large following, was an important advocate of black enterprises. Garvey insisted that blacks had to rely on their own resources to improve their standing in society, and the positive response to his rhetoric suggested that an emergent generation was primed to change its fortunes through these means.

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, a union organized by A. Philip Randolph in 1925, was a sign of the times. It demonstrated the ascent of a social consciousness, involving an extensive commitment to cooperative economics, among African Americans; and this consciousness generated a market for race movies. In cities across the country, audiences filled movie houses to cheer *Body and Soul* (1925), which came from the Micheaux Film Corporation and starred Paul Robeson. Although this film about a wretched man who undergoes a radical transformation had an uneven narrative (as a result of poor funding and white censorship), it nevertheless delighted viewers. By its mere existence, the movie pleased blacks, for it assured them that, through collaborative activities, they could rise above the barriers of color prejudice.

Recognizing this climate of thought regarding the growth of black cinema, Alain Locke noted, in *The New Negro* (1925), that African Americans were moved by a fervor for unified action—and that he could hear a cry for arts respectful of black culture. Locke observed that this trend brought writers (such as Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston) considerable patronage throughout the "roaring twenties." Other black artists also enjoyed broad support; some of the most noteworthy were the sculptor Selma Burke, the photographer James Van Der Zee, and the musician

Duke Ellington. Micheaux too found encouragement for more than three dozen motion pictures.

Before the stock market crashed in 1929, numerous black film companies appeared. They tended to dissolve in the following decade, but in their day these businesses produced features for a network of movie chains located in black neighborhoods. The time was right for them, and their target audiences greeted them with enthusiasm. These films were collaborative enterprises that promised relief from the usual Hollywood fare in which blacks were restricted to demeaning roles. Thus through their design and material, the film studios fortified current trends.

Key Light

Although black film companies were reacting against the color prejudice that was rife in the social order, the movies they shot upheld national ideals. Jim Crow, imposing racial divisions, haunted the country: blacks were forced into segregated housing, schools, and jobs; and there were glaring inequalities between public accommodations maintained for blacks and those reserved for whites. These disparities grieved African Americans, but they still believed in the American creed, and their favorite race movies advanced mainstream morals.

The Lincoln Motion Picture Company—the brainchild of Noble Johnson, a black actor with modest film credits in Hollywood—relied on themes that became typical of black independent producers. Lincoln's initial release, *The Realization of a Negro's Ambition* (1916), espouses faith in the prospect of upward mobility. Reminiscent of Horatio Alger's *Ragged Dick*, the film has a hero who, through his own intelligence and initiative, rises from a farm to fame and fortune. Lincoln's second feature, *The Trooper of Company K* (1916), is the story of a slouch who enlists in the Tenth Calvary, develops better habits, and honors himself fighting for his country; thereafter, he wins the girl of his dreams. The standard script for the Lincoln studio had a happy ending. Its later productions, such as *The Law of Nature* (1917), *A Man's Duty* (1919), and *By Right of Birth* (1921), end with a joyful family reunion attained through honest effort in the face of enormous hardship.

The Foster Photoplay Company, pioneered by William Foster, preceded Lincoln by six years. Foster's productions shunned drama in favor of comedy. Soon, joined by the Afro-American Film Company, the invention of Hunter Haynes, Foster was specializing in slapstick borrowed from popular vaudeville routines.

His *Pullman Porter* (1913), about a raucous romantic triangle, typified his projects, offering delight in lieu of discretion. *Lovie Joe's Romance* (1914), from the Afro-American Film Company, was in the same vein. Unlike their successors, neither Foster nor Haynes explored issues of racial uplift.

On the brink of the jazz age, there was a turn toward themes related to social accomplishment. The Frederick Douglass Film Company, named after the famous nineteenth-century abolitionist, was part of this shifting tide: its film *The Colored American Winning His Suit* (1916) had a protagonist who becomes a lawyer and saves his future father-in-law from injustice. Motifs of moral and social triumph soon characterized race movies. Time and again the heroes used brains and hard work to beat hard times. Examples include *The Slacker* (1917), from the Peter P. Jones Photoplay Company; *Loyal Hearts* (1919), from the Democracy Film Company; and *Reformation* (1920), from the Loyalty Film Company. Each such film inspired blacks to dream that they could climb high in society despite handicaps.

Micheaux adopted this approach in 1918 when he filmed *The Homesteader*, which was based on his own novel about his younger days on the prairie in South Dakota. During the 1920s, he produced a rapid succession of motion pictures. In general, they had subjects that aroused a sense of pride and possibility among blacks across the country, and they attracted large audiences and received rave reviews into the 1930s. In 1931 Micheaux made *The Exile* (1931), a talkie with a melodramatic plot in which the protagonist's diligence and virtue elevate him in society. Micheaux's successes persuaded white businessmen to finance black film companies that were devoted to dramas of human progress. Reol Productions, for example, distinguished itself with parables such as *Easy Money* (1921), *Secret Sorrow* (1921), and *The Call of His People* (1922), along with *The Sport of the Gods* (1921), adapted from a novel of the same name by Paul Laurence Dunbar. Another company funded by whites, the Colored Players Film Corporation, appropriated the recognized format in *Ten Nights in a Barroom* (1926), starring Charles Gilpin, and *The Scar of Shame* (1927). The Harlem Renaissance, then, encompassed the ascendancy of race movies encouraging black achievements undaunted by color prejudice.

Boom Operator

Beyond doubt, Oscar Micheaux (1883–1951) was the leader of the pack. He had the spirit of a pioneer at age

seventeen, when he left his small family farm in rural Illinois to become a Pullman porter in Chicago. He held the job for six years, banking a good deal of his income, until he found an opportunity to buy land in South Dakota. Alone among whites on the prairie, he worked at agriculture and accumulated riches as well as respect from his fellow homesteaders. He married his hometown sweetheart, but the marriage failed because frontier life unsettled her. After their divorce, misfortune plagued Micheaux; his farm business dissipated, and he resorted to writing to make sense of his fallen state. A resulting series of novels, stories of redemption, got him back on his feet. By chance, the shift led him to shoot race movies and set the pace in the field.

In 1913, Woodruff Press printed Micheaux's first book, *The Conquest*, a veiled autobiography fictionalizing his life from his boyhood to his time as a homesteader. It sold well and justified the publication of a second novel, *The Forged Note* (1915). Micheaux's third work, *The Homesteader*, caught the attention of the Lincoln Motion Picture Company, which offered to make a movie out of it. The deal fell through because Micheaux wanted to direct the film and have it run longer than Lincoln's usual features. Nevertheless, with royalties from his book, he produced a cinematic version of the narrative. Reviewers showered the production with lavish praise; most of them deemed it a watershed in the history of black cinema, and their judgment proved valid.

Although Micheaux made films until 1948, he reached the crest of his career around the end of the Harlem Renaissance. In his heyday, he wrote, directed, and produced an average of two films per year; for instance, in 1920 he offered black moviegoers *Within Our Gates* and *The Brute*. During the 1920s, he had an unbroken string of films, including *Deceit* (1921), *The Dungeon* (1922), *The Ghost of Tolston's Manor* (1923), *Birthright* (1924), *Body and Soul* (1925), *Broken Violin* (1926), *The Millionaire* (1927), and *Wages of Sin* (1928). By the close of the decade, his output was unmatched. Micheaux's movies drew record crowds to black theaters before the onset of the Great Depression. After the Depression had begun, he made headlines with *The Exile* (1931), the first picture with sound from a black studio. But after that, his popularity waned during the 1930s, when he released *Easy Street* (1930), *Lem Hawkin's Confession* (1935), *The Underworld* (1937), *Temptation* (1938), *God's Stepchildren* (1938), and *Lying Lips* (1939). *The Betrayal* (1948), succeeding *The Notorious Elinor Lee* (1940), was his final production.

As yet, no black filmmaker has rivaled Hollywood to the same extent as Micheaux did. He made many accomplished black stage performers into stars of the screen. Laura Bowman, Shingzie Howard, Canada Lee, Ethel Moses, and Lorenzo Tucker are among the film celebrities associated with Micheaux. Also, an unprecedented number of African Americans came to see his films. He whetted their appetite with advertising campaigns that promised spectacular dramas with stellar black casts. To the audiences who packed the movie theaters, it mattered little that his films often suffered from bad lighting and jarring cuts resulting from budgetary constraints. Operating with a small amount of capital, he would take less than two months to shoot a film, in homes and nightclubs or on slapdash sets. The key to his success was his use of subjects and stars that conveyed a positive image of blacks—something that was absent in Hollywood productions.

As authors such as Hughes and Hurston won fame with folktales, Micheaux achieved distinction with movies that embodied black people's dreams. Beginning with *The Homesteader*, he gave top billing to dignified African Americans. He applied this principle to great effect in *The Birthright*; and for *Body and Soul*, he handed the lead to the legendary Paul Robeson, thereby bringing the first black superstar to the screen. When Micheaux switched to sound for *The Exile*, his style remained the same. He continued to put noble black characters in problematic situations that were familiar to African Americans, and in the process, he propelled the development of race movies.

Raw Stock

At the peak of the Harlem Renaissance, black cinema from Micheaux and his contemporaries received generous criticism. Ordinarily, the critics commended race movies for social reasons, avoiding any consideration of the aesthetics of the genre, because they felt that these movies filled a void in the film industry and should therefore be defended. On occasion, critics mentioned flaws such as erratic montages and uneven acting, but they attributed these problems to pressures imposed by creditors and censors, and they considered the flaws of little importance in light of the social function of race movies. These commentators stressed that the material gave African Americans a vital cinema of their own. Following the death of Micheaux, two decades passed before questions of form and content occupied very many critics. Then, galvanized by

the black arts movement, various scholars and researchers began to say that the old productions were deficient in artistic and cultural value.

Cripps (1977) and Sampson (1995) established that early black cinema had been hampered by censorship. From the outset, for example, movies by blacks were subjected to bowdlerization. The following are other specific examples. A need to appease white backers prevented Emmett Scott (a secretary to Booker T. Washington) from realizing "Lincoln's Dream," his planned response to *Birth of a Nation*; he had to change the name of his project to *Birth of a Race* and add footage that rendered the finished product an incoherent *mélange*. The Chicago Board of Censors objected to a lynching scene in Micheaux's *Within Our Gates* and attempted (although unsuccessfully) to prevent this film from appearing; and white operators of theaters in the South that catered to blacks refused to book the film. *Body and Soul* was edited to please censors in New York, and this editing jumbled the plot. Because of a romantic episode involving a black man and a white woman, the Pennsylvania Board of Censors prevented *The Exile* from being shown in Pittsburgh. Time and again, such incidents frustrated black independents.

Moreover, there was never enough money for more than B movies. Lacking the resources for expensive features, black film companies had to settle for moderate productions. Money shortages beset the Foster Photoplay Company and the Lincoln Motion Picture Company. In the 1920s, Reol Productions, the Ebony Film Corporation, and the Democracy Film Corporation managed to assemble decent films, but they did so under the control of white investors. Micheaux, hounded by fiscal woes, had to cut corners. Of course, the tight budgets within which black filmmakers had to work affected the quality of their movies.

In the past few decades, critics have also assailed the content of race movies. Some researchers have noted that light-skinned blacks were consistently given leading roles and have therefore upbraided Micheaux and his peers for replicating the hierarchy of color that prevailed in white cinema. Similarly, some scholars have objected to plots that conformed to conventional Hollywood scripts with happy endings, and several have deplored themes extolling bourgeois conduct. According to scholars such as these, race movies placed the fortunes of blacks in their own hands, thus absolving whites of blame for the problems of African Americans. Now, however,

challenges to such critiques are emerging from scholars who suggest that the black pictures of the Harlem Renaissance era should be understood as expressions of a mood which that found favor in black circles.

Because few copies of race movies are extant, details about them are often little more than speculation. The available material does indicate that meager budgets caused these films to lack polish and that the films were vitiated by censorship. But audiences forgave their imperfections and packed halls such as the Lafayette Theater in Harlem to watch them. These films offered dreams of black achievement to an entire generation. They were right for the time.

Closing Credits

In 1927, *The Jazz Singer*, starring Al Jolson, introduced talking pictures and sounded the death knell for blackface actors and for race movies. Although Jolson played the part of a blackface vaudevillian in *The Jazz Singer*, the new sound technology aroused—and fed—an appetite for realism; as a result, Hollywood was forced to cast more African Americans in black roles. This technological advance also increased the cost of producing movies because the apparatus required for a synchronized soundtrack was so expensive. In addition, after the stock market crashed, black independents had increasing difficulty securing enough capital to compete in the new era. These factors combined to squeeze black film companies out of the market. Before World War II began, race movies had passed from the American scene. A few black independents remained in business beyond the 1930s: Micheaux was one of them; another one was Spencer Williams, who released *Tenderfeet* in 1928 and *Go Down Death* in 1944. But eventually even the survivors were undone by insolvency.

During the Great Depression, Hollywood, with the promise of big paychecks, lured black stars like Clarence Brooks, Paul Robeson, and Lena Horne away from black studios. At the same time, white companies enticed black audiences by developing black musicals, such as *Black and Tan* (1929) and *Saint Louis Blues* (1929), respectively featuring Duke Ellington and Bessie Smith. Nostalgia for the antebellum South returned and made hits of *Hallelujah* (1929) and *Hearts in Dixie* (1929), which had all-black casts. Hollywood also discovered that it was profitable to sprinkle comedies, mysteries, and westerns with African Americans in stereotypical roles. By the time *Cabin in the Sky* (1943)

and *Stormy Weather* (1943)—both filled with African American actors—were made, the black independents had all gone out of business.

Race movies left a legacy for future black filmmakers. After Micheaux and his counterparts were gone, black cinema remained dormant for more than twenty-five years. Then, black film directors gained a foothold once again at the start of the black arts movement. This revival was initiated by films such as Melvin Van Peebles's *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* (1971) and *Shaft*, directed by Gordon Parks (also 1971). During the 1970s, numerous revenge dramas called "blaxploitation" films—such as *Superfly* (1972) and *Foxy Brown* (1974)—featured black stars. There was a significant audience for comedians such as Richard Pryor, Eddie Murphy, and Whoopi Goldberg and for movies with racial themes; and during the 1980s, such movies made some black comedians superstars. However, black film companies were still scarce until Spike Lee organized Forty Acres and a Mule Filmworks, whose productions, such as *She's Gotta Have It* (1986) and *Do the Right Thing* (1989), were very successful at the box office and sparked a second resurgence of black cinema. The trend begun by Lee brought filmmakers such as John Singleton, Julie Dash, and Charles Burnett to the fore and lasted until the end of the twentieth century.

So far, though, no generation of black filmmakers has matched the volume of output of those who created the race movies. Prohibitive costs and Hollywood blockbusters with African American headliners have continued to thwart black independents. Those who have been notably successful have applied a formula devised by their forerunners during the Harlem Renaissance: they have taken the pulse of the black community and have treated that community agreeably onscreen. This approach constitutes a special part of the heritage bequeathed by figures such as Micheaux.

Wrap

The Birth of a Nation, with its blackface actors, set off a boom in black cinema that reverberated throughout the Harlem Renaissance. The resulting race movies met a demand for positive images of blacks onscreen. A host of black independents opened for business, and their films excited pride and ambition. Among these filmmakers, Oscar Micheaux produced forty features. Black filmmakers were constrained by scanty budgets and by censorship, and their productions

were consequently impaired, but audiences packed the movie houses to see their films. Proponents of black aesthetics have frowned on the typical themes of race movies, but so little of these films remains available that commentary is often not much more than guesswork. After the *Jazz Singer* appeared, race movies faded from the scene, but they provided a lesson for future generations.

ROLAND L. WILLIAMS JR

See also Brooks, Clarence; Birth of a Nation, The; Birth of a Race, The; Colored Players Film Corporation; Film: Actors; Film: Black Filmmakers; Film: Blacks as Portrayed by White Filmmakers; Hallelujah; Hearts in Dixie; Lincoln Motion Picture Company; Micheaux, Oscar; Race Films; Robeson, Paul; *other specific individuals*

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Film: Actors

In 2002, when Halle Berry became the first black woman to win an Academy Award as best actress, more than six decades had passed since the first black woman had won an Academy Award in any category: that was Hattie McDaniel, who had won as best supporting actress for her performance in *Gone with the Wind* (1939). In the years between, only one other black woman had won: Whoopi Goldberg, in 1990, for her supporting role in *Ghost*. Interestingly, responses

in the black community to Berry's award (for her role in *Monster's Ball*, the story of a woman who falls in love with a recovering white racist who happens to be the man who executed her husband) were mixed. Recognition of this milestone was tempered by questions surrounding the range of roles offered by Hollywood to blacks and especially to black women. For some critics, Berry's character was contemporary evidence of the persistence of restrictions that had first been imposed on black actors at the dawn of American filmmaking.

The quarter-century from 1888 to 1915 that witnessed unprecedented technological advances in the newly established American film industry was also a period of perhaps unparalleled antiblack sentiment and violence. Somewhat ironically, the year 1896 saw both the first projection of moving images onto a large screen and a decision by the Supreme Court, in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, that helped usher in an era of legalized racial separation. Given its unquestioned power to shape public opinion—and despite its potential to challenge racial and other standards—American film during this period was implicated in the nation's subjugation and defamation of its black population. Black actors, during the heyday of the Harlem Renaissance, found themselves at the center of a people's struggle for accurate and humanistic representation onscreen.

Hollywood: Opportunity and Boundaries

During the 1920s, as reported by the black press and well documented in Hollywood's Central Casting Bureau, black actors made gains in terms of overall numbers employed by white studios, but those gains did not translate into improved status (Regester 1997, 95). Nor did their appearance in silent films during the 1920s significantly challenge long-standing stereotypes of black Americans. Black film actors, like members of other ethnic minority groups who responded to casting calls during this era, were consistently relegated to appearances as extras. Although employment opportunities generally were plentiful, black actors in the mid-1920s most often appeared as "backdrop": soldiers, slaves, members of crowds, and, frequently, natives in exoticized African or Pacific island settings. Although opportunities to challenge cinematic representations of race were clearly circumscribed, the black acting presence in Hollywood, at least in terms of sheer numbers, was firmly established by 1926 (Regester, 98).

With the transition to the sound era in film, blacks continued to be visible as extras, but they also began to secure a few major roles. In 1927, the same year that *The Jazz Singer* signaled the industry's transition to sound, and in the following year, several films—including *Louisiana, Jungle Gods, The Missing Link, The River, The Wedding March*, and *Diamond Handcuffs*—employed large numbers of blacks as extras and a few in substantial roles. In 1927, the famous black actor James Lowe obtained a leading role in a production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. And the end of the decade would bring the production of two major all-black feature films that showcased many of the most talented actors of the 1920s and 1930s. On the one hand, these gains represented a tremendous improvement in the financial viability of black acting, but on the other hand, black actors acquiesced in their own marginalization. Not until the late 1930s did blacks resort to strikes and other direct measures to gain higher wages and more dignified roles in film.

Hollywood: Black Actors and Comedy

Humor was ubiquitous in American films at the turn of the twentieth century. The silent film era may be best remembered for its comedies (Watkins 1994, 183). Unfortunately for blacks, the genre reinforced racial stereotypes for white audiences accustomed to laughing at the portrayals of black life provided by minstrelsy and vaudeville. Bogle (2001) and others have identified several black character types that appeared in minstrelsy and vaudeville and made an almost seamless transition to moving pictures: the fawning Tom, the self-mocking coon, the jolly but recalcitrant mammy (Aunt Jemima), the tragic mulatto, the brutal buck. Arguably, it was the figure of the coon, or Sambo, whose appearance in America cinema in the first half of the twentieth century had the most devastating impact on efforts to present an honest portrait of black life to American audiences.

Before his popularity began to wane in the late 1930s, Stepin Fetchit was the best-known and most successful black actor in Hollywood. He was, as well, the quintessential coon or Sambo figure in American film. He and his comic "stepchildren"—Willie Best, Mantan Moreland, and Fred "Snowflake" Toones, among others—would leave in the American psyche and memory an indelible image of a lazy, dull-witted, tongue-tied black man. Despite his efforts to inject some respectability into his film roles, Fetchit's characters were among the most demeaning figures in

black film history. Ultimately, although he was tremendously popular among white moviegoers, he alienated significant numbers of blacks.

A lesser-known source for exploring images of blacks in films before the civil rights era is the collection *Our Gang* (renamed *The Little Rascals* in its television version, for legal reasons), film shorts produced between 1922 and 1944. Four black child actors had major roles in this popular series. Ernie Morrison portrayed, among other characters, “Sunshine Sammy” in the early, silent installments of *Our Gang*. Allen Hoskins, who bridged the gap between the silent and sound versions, was best known as “Farina.” Matthew Beard’s “Stymie” and William Thomas Jr.’s “Buckwheat” are the black characters most often associated with *Our Gang*. Throughout its run, the series contained racial jokes and reinforced stereotypes of blacks in general and of black children in particular. However, as has been noted by several critics, the gang’s world—especially when compared with the adult black world depicted in films of the era—was one of “equal-opportunity buffoonery,” because all of the children were the butt of jokes and because they generally related to each other with no regard to race (Watkins, 219–220).

Hollywood: Black Actors and Musicals

The advent of sound movies sparked Hollywood’s interest in black performers for at least two reasons: the belief that black voices, with their “unmistakable resonance,” were well-suited to the new medium; and the continued popularity of black music. *The Jazz Singer* (1927) launched the sound era in filmmaking, and the critical reception of its star, Al Jolson, prompted renewed interest in blackface productions. Some of the earliest beneficiaries of shifting technologies were black musicians who made appearances in all-black musical shorts. In the late 1920s and into the 1930s, some of the nation’s greatest musicians appeared in one- and two-reelers that showcased their talents. Perhaps most notable were the performances of Bessie Smith in *Saint Louis Blues* (1929) and Duke Ellington in *Black and Tan* (also 1929). Black musicians also made cameo appearances, some quite unflattering, in white feature films of the period: for example, in Paramount’s *Rhapsody in Black and Blue* (1932), Louis Armstrong was cast as a jungle king, complete with animal skins and native headdress (Watkins, 214).

Three notable all-black movies produced in the 1920s and 1930s—*Hearts in Dixie* (1929), *Hallelujah!*

(1929), and *The Green Pastures* (1936)—were striking departures from the musical shorts and cameo appearances. All three were lavish productions in which black musical talent was showcased along with black acting. *Hearts in Dixie* starred Clarence Muse and Stepin Fetchit, the former in a seemingly dignified role and the latter exhibiting his standard buffoonery. Set in the South during the plantation era, *Hearts in Dixie* offered standard antebellum stereotypes, but its all-black cast was the first to appear in a feature-length film. *Hallelujah!* was a morality play directed by King Vidor; its leading lady, Nina Mae McKinney, was the first recognized black film actress (Bogle, 33). *Green Pastures*, the cinematic adaptation of a successful Broadway play, highlighted the talents of Rex Ingram and Eddie “Rochester” Anderson. Despite their technical and narrative weaknesses, all three films gave black actors an opportunity to display their talents and helped pave the way for subsequent all-black productions.

Hollywood: Black Actors and Drama

D. W. Griffith’s controversial production *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) was the first feature-length American film. A technological marvel, it was powerful evidence that history and drama could combine to produce a popular, influential, and—for black Americans—dangerous work of art. That this film would so successfully rewrite the history of the Civil War and Reconstruction was cause for alarm; that it would so unflinchingly reinforce stereotypes of blacks as socially and politically incompetent, and black men as bestial by nature, was an even greater motivation for black Americans to protest its release. But *Birth of a Nation* was not unique. Aside from black independent filmmakers’ visions of black life, most cinematic drama marginalized rather than humanized black Americans.

While the stereotype of the coon, or Sambo, dominated portraits of blacks in comedy films, Hollywood drama in the 1920s and 1930s was replete with other black character types: the long-suffering, loyal Tom; the aggressive, asexual mammy; and the tragic mulatto. Dramatic film has always held the potential to question, if not subvert, the existing racial order, but the “New Negro” was seldom to be found in Hollywood cinema. Bogle (35, 53) notes that with regard to black film roles, the 1930s were an “era of servants,” a period when even the most dignified black actors were relegated to subservient relationships with white

leading actors. Thus the legendary actor and dancer Bill “Bojangles” Robinson became humorist Will Rogers’s loyal servant in *In Old Kentucky* (1935), and most famously Shirley Temple’s trusted “Uncle Billy” in a plantation melodrama, *The Littlest Rebel* (1935). Clarence Muse became the archetypal Tom, Nigger Jim, in *Huckleberry Finn* (1931). And the antebellum mammy or Aunt Jemima—a figure who often combined the loyalty of Tom, the comic affability of Sambo, and her own unique “sassiness” (i.e., bitchiness)—was resurrected as a maid in the twentieth century and portrayed by Louise Beavers and Hattie McDaniel, among others.

A mainstay of American film and literature in the first half of the twentieth century was the “tragic mulatto,” almost always a woman. The actress Fredi Washington, whose facial features were racially ambiguous, was frequently cast as a black woman passing for white with tragic consequences. She appeared opposite Paul Robeson in *The Emperor Jones* (1933) and opposite Louise Beavers in 1934 in a version of *Imitation of Life*, a film that would become the archetypal statement of the consequences of racial passing. These films were seemingly vehicles for a sophisticated exploration of identity by biracial or multiracial Americans but were based on the faulty assumption that the mulatto’s experience is inherently tragic.

Beyond Hollywood: Black Actors and Black Independent Film

Historically, black independent films have offered alternative images of black life and culture, and in the early twentieth century they provided much-needed work for black artists beyond the reach of Hollywood. William Foster, Oscar Micheaux, Noble and George Johnson, Spencer Williams, and a few other black independent filmmakers offered a working environment that generally allowed black actors to avoid the demeaning roles assigned to their Hollywood counterparts. These underground “race films” also provided a rapidly growing black moviegoing population with a form of entertainment of which they could be proud.

The earliest phase of race films—despite their technical flaws—challenged existing portraits of black Americans. This phase began with William Foster’s *The Railroad Porter* (1912); continued with Biograph Pictures’ *A Natural Born Gambler* (released in 1914 and starring the noted vaudevillian Bert Williams); and crystallized in *Birth of a Race* (originally called “Lincoln’s

Dream”), the black community’s response to *Birth of a Nation*.

The next phase of independent black filmmaking began with the incorporation of Noble and George Johnson’s Lincoln Motion Picture Company in 1916. The Johnson brothers’ films, which included *The Realization of a Negro’s Ambition* (1916) and *The Trooper of Troop K* (1916), were conscious attempts to capture the achievements of black Americans and create heroes and heroines (Bogle, 341). In order to remain with Lincoln, actors such as Jimmie Smith and Beulah Hall would forgo other opportunities; perhaps these actors appreciated the control over image enjoyed by a black production crew and acting ensemble. However, by the late 1920s and early 1930s—because of a lack of capital and because the film industry was rapidly expanding and diversifying—many of the black companies had folded. White filmmakers, recognizing that films aimed at a black audience were commercially viable, began to dominate the market (this trend foreshadowed the emergence of “blaxplotation” films in the 1970s).

Beginning in 1918, the legendary independent filmmaker Oscar Micheaux produced pioneering works for three decades. His films included narratives that, like those of the Johnson brothers, were dedicated to the theme of black uplift. However, Micheaux consistently navigated dangerous thematic terrain, exploring interracial relationships and the “color complex”—a range of contentious issues related to gradations of skin color and to the resulting conflicts within the black community. Among the actors employed by Micheaux were Lorenzo Tucker, the “black Valentino”; Bee Freeman, the “sepia Mae West”; the sultry Ethel Moses; and Julia Theresa Russell and Paul Robeson, who had the leading roles in Micheaux’s masterpiece *Body and Soul* (1925).

It might be argued that the cinematic counterpart to the New Negro in the literature of the Harlem Renaissance was to be found in the world of black independent filmmaking. Literature and film both argued for honest depictions of black life; each was uncompromising in its own way; both began to wane in the mid- to late 1930s; and both would leave an indelible imprint on black history and culture. Bogle (136) has suggested that the New Negro would not appear in Hollywood films until the 1940s, when a new generation of actors and their roles—outgrowths of the social spirit of the day—would help redefine the relationship between blacks and America.

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See also Baker, Josephine; Beavers, Louise; Birth of a Nation, The; Birth of a Race, The; Blackface Performance; Blacks in Theater; Calloway, Cab; Colored Players Film Corporation; Ellington, Duke; Emperor Jones, The; Fetchit, Stepin; Film; Film: Black Filmmakers; Film: Blacks as Portrayed by White Filmmakers; Green Pastures, The; Hallelujah!; Hearts in Dixie; Johnson, Noble; Lincoln Motion Picture Company; Lowe, James B.; Madame Sul Te Wan; McKinney, Nina Mae; Micheaux, Oscar; Minstrelsy; Moreland, Mantan; Muse, Clarence; Race Films; Robeson, Paul; Robinson, Bill "Bojangles"; Vaudeville; Washington, Fred; Waters, Ethel; Within Our Gates

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Film: Black Filmmakers

An African American appeared in the first motion picture copyrighted in the United States; this was a young laboratory assistant of Thomas Alva Edison's, Fred Ott, who pretended to sneeze, and made history with his silent, overacted, head-snapping atchoo.

From then on, black people were part of the film industry. Early white American filmmakers featured black vaudeville entertainers, among other subjects, in short silent films; one 35-mm film that survives from the early era shows a black male tap dancer.

During the early experimental phase of the film industry—a phase characterized by rapid progress through trial and error—black assistants worked behind the scenes, beside open-minded white inventors. These black laboratory assistants would sometimes be captured on laboratory demonstration films intended to depict human movement. They were often the inspiration or even the masterminds of cinematic breakthroughs, but because of cultural prejudice, their names were never registered on the patents.

In these early days, between 1888 and 1896, only a few black people other than those employed in laboratories were able to view movies. Edison's Kinetoscope machine accommodated only a single viewer at a time, and other technologies allowed only a few people to watch a film, in a small space (of course, these limitations also restricted the number of white people who could see a movie). In 1896, however, the first motion pictures were presented in a "movie theater" in New York City. The Edison Company had devised a projector known as the Projectoscope and started showing films to large, paying audiences on a regular basis. The first such film showed contemporary scenes of Herald Square in New York City and travelogues of more exotic places, including Niagara Falls in upstate New York and Passaic Falls in New Jersey.

The laboratory of the Edison Company, in West Orange, New Jersey (less than ten miles from New York City), began filming trains and train routes in *Black Diamond Express* in December 1896. Black men employed as porters, cooks, and skilled laborers on the trains were often seen in these films. Travelogues featuring train rides with scenic views were very popular, and black audiences particularly enjoyed seeing black workers in the background. But black moviegoers were segregated. In some localities, blacks were relegated to the balconies of white vaudeville theaters; in larger northern and southern cities that already had lucrative black vaudeville theaters with middle-class black patrons, the Edison films were shown to all-black audiences between burlesque comedy routines and party music.

Travelogues, newsreels, special events, crime, war, the Paris Exposition of 1900, and Native American cultural events were the typical subjects of most silent films at the turn of the twentieth century. There

was also footage of black soldiers going off to fight the Spanish-American War. All of this made movies a very popular form of entertainment and a source of information, but the paying public soon began to demand fictional films with plots. Accordingly, white businesspeople, and soon afterward black businesspeople, scrambled to meet this demand. It was natural and convenient to adapt for the screen some of the vaudeville dramas that were being featured in the same theaters as the early films. Many popular vaudeville stories and stage actors and actresses found their way to silent movies between 1902 and 1915.

In 1903, a fourteen-minute film dramatization of Harriet Beecher Stowe's popular novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was released and shown to enthusiastic audiences in theaters all over the country. The black characters were portrayed by white actors in blackface, and this film proved very effective at transferring demeaning stereotypes of blacks from literature to the movies. At about this time, many other films were produced that also depicted black people in subservient and comic roles.

Not until 1912—when William Foster founded the Foster Photoplay Company—did a filmmaker challenge these onscreen images of black people or depict blacks as confronting complex issues. Foster, a publicity and booking agent for vaudeville in Chicago, was the first black to use the vast pool of African American talent and community drama as a resource for films. His Foster Photoplay Company was organized particularly to specialize in “non-degrading Black-cast comedies,” as he wrote in *Freeman* (in the issue of 20 December 1913). He noted: “Nothing has done so much to awaken race consciousness of the colored man in the United States as the motion picture. It has made him hungry to see himself as he has come to be.”

With a stock company of black actors from vaudeville and musical theater, Foster set out to represent in American movies the lifestyles of the black middle class. His debut film, in 1912, was a ten-minute comedy-drama, *The Railroad Porter*—America's first movie with an all-black cast. *The Railroad Porter* was in part a parody of railroad travelogue films, but it also included the complexities of what can happen when a man stays away from home too long: Foster's porter must cope with a cheating wife. In this film, Foster gave life to the black railroad porter, a figure who had previously appeared in movies only as serving white travelers. Foster produced at least eleven films before

his company folded in 1918 as a result of insufficient funding and distribution. His titles included *The Butler* and *The Fall Guy*. In 1914, he also produced a newsreel, *The Colored Championship Baseball Game*, which is the only known film documenting the Colored Baseball Leagues.

To a considerable degree, Foster's hope of uplifting the race was dashed when *Birth of a Nation* was released in 1915. This film, directed by D. W. Griffith, was a masterpiece, but it depicted American history in the aftermath of the Civil War from the viewpoint of those who sympathized with the Confederacy, and it portrayed black people as rapists, thieves, ignorant preachers, and cowering rascals. Foster responded with a screenplay that would eventually bear the title *Birth of a Race* and started production on it in 1916. After two years of production and financing from several backers—including Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Circle, Universal Pictures, and Julius Rosenwald of Sears Roebuck—Foster's last film was a commercial failure.

As Foster's company in Chicago faltered, the brothers George Johnson (a black postal worker originally from Omaha) and Noble Johnson (an actor) founded the Lincoln Motion Picture Company in Los Angeles, California. According to its promotional literature, Lincoln “not only produced pictures entertaining to Negroes but to all races. Our market is as large as we make it; the world is our field.”

In 1916, the Johnson brothers produced the country's first full-length black film drama, *A Realization of a Negro's Ambition*. This was the story of a black graduate of Tuskegee Institute who becomes an oil tycoon in California. Twenty years later, George Johnson said that the film had allowed “black actors to pursue performances liberated from the stereotypes of buffoonery promoted in the mainstream film business.” The Lincoln Motion Picture Company produced films until it was forced out of business by a flu epidemic that closed movie theaters in 1921. Its titles included *A Trooper of Company K* (1917) and *By Right of Birth* (1921).

In 1918, another young black filmmaker, Oscar Micheaux, responded to Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*. Micheaux, an up-and-coming novelist who was originally from Chicago, dramatized his book *The Homesteader*, based on his own experience as a black farmer in South Dakota and financed by other farmers there, black and white. Micheaux had turned down an offer by the Johnson brothers, who wanted to buy his screenplay; he opened the Micheaux Book and Film Company in

Chicago and proceeded to produce his own films, of which *The Homesteader* was the first. Micheaux shot his early films on location in Chicago and in studios in New York. In 1926, he closed his Chicago operation and moved permanently to Harlem.

Micheaux became the most successful black filmmaker in American history. He produced more than thirty films between 1918 and 1951. Although he emphasized middle-class black America, he also addressed contemporary issues such as lynching. His titles include *Within Our Gates* (1919), *The Brute* (1920), *The Symbol of the Unconquered* (1920), *The Gunsaulus Mystery* (1921), *The House behind the Cedars* (1924), *The Son of Satan* (1924), *Birthright* (1924 and 1939), *Thirty Years Later* (1928), *The Daughter of the Congo* (1930), *The Exile* (1931), *Darktown Revue* (1931), *Temptation* (1936), *The Underworld* (1936), *God's Stepchildren* (1939), *The Notorious Elinor Lee* (1940), and *The Betrayal* (1948).

Despite Micheaux's success, many of his films seem to have been crudely produced with minimal funding. Members of his technical crew would double as extras—as would Micheaux, who also made cameo appearances in his own films. He was often criticized for using light-skinned black people to play the roles of whites and authority figures.

Micheaux marketed his pictures to black audiences on a circuit of black vaudeville theaters in the South and along the east coast—the “Chitterlings Circuit,” as it was affectionately called by its patrons. His films were also shown in churches, community centers, and dance halls; and he would often exhibit his personal copy of a film as he drove from location to location in his own car. As soon as he completed the exhibition circuit, Micheaux would immediately start filming his next project.

Micheaux has been credited with keeping black stage actors working when times were hard during the Depression. He introduced Paul Robeson to the movies in 1924, in the silent drama *Body and Soul*. Micheaux said in 1920, “The appreciation my people have shown my maiden efforts convinces me that they want racial photoplays depicting racial life, and to that task I have concentrated my mind and efforts.” In his films, he was able to explore many topics that were unique to black America; for example, he often used the “tragic mulatto” as a theme in which his characters overcame life's difficulties. He emphasized the positive, praiseworthy qualities of black America, but he was not afraid to show the seedy aspects of black life as well—and as a result, the black press continually criticized him and his movies.

In 1928, Micheaux filed a voluntary bankruptcy petition in the U.S. Seventh District Court in New York City. In 1929, with new white partners, he reorganized his company in New York state under the name Micheaux Film Corporation. The president of this new company, Frank Schiffman, also owned several theaters in New York City that catered to black audiences. However, the partnership was short-lived and Micheaux ultimately ran his film production company without partners. By the 1930s, Micheaux was not the only producer interested in making films for black audiences: nearly 150 film companies were targeting the black community, although most of their films were poorly written, poorly acted, and poorly directed.

Another black filmmaker who was unsatisfied with Hollywood's depiction of his race was the actor and director Spencer Williams. Williams made his mark in black films during the 1930s. Films he directed include *Bronze Buckaroo*, *Harlem on the Prairie*, *Blood of Jesus*, *Dirty Girtie from Harlem*, and *Juke Joint*. Of these, *Blood of Jesus* is of particular interest. The main female character is faced with a traditional choice—life in the country versus the more exciting but also more sinful life of a big city—and Williams accordingly documented a river baptism; but he also introduced double exposure to black films, as an inexpensive special effect. In his films, Williams did not try to correct all that was wrong in America; he tended to show ordinary black life. Because his films were popular among audiences as well as critics, he was considered the most successful black film director of his era. (In his later years, Williams was even more famous as Andy in the popular television program *Amos 'n' Andy*. Although he was criticized for taking this role, he maintained that the character was not stereotypical but strong and intelligent.)

A few black actors and actresses who became famous in films produced by blacks also crossed over to white companies that produced “race films” with all-black casts for black audiences. Paul Robeson was one of the first black victims of white Hollywood's double-edged sword. Two white producers, John Krimsky and Gifford Cochran, recruited Robeson in 1933. Robeson's talent as an entertainer, athlete, and scholar was undisputed, and he had already made his film debut in Micheaux's *Body and Soul* and had starred in a Swiss film, *Boarderline*, in 1929; but he fell prey to filmmakers who had ultimate control over the final edit and could therefore remake his image and that of black people. Robeson, who made nine feature

films between 1929 and 1942, said that he was never satisfied with their depiction of blacks and that he had been tricked into playing characters whose roles were reconstructed in the editing room without his knowledge. (One such film was *Sanders of the River* in 1937.) Robeson was an outspoken advocate of civil rights whose complaints to white producers were tolerated, perhaps because his appeal at the box office outweighed other considerations. Evidently, he was selected in preference to other black actors at least partly because he was able to pacify both black and white moviegoers. To blacks, he represented hope (his screen presence was very impressive); to whites, he was seen as being kept in his place as long as his screen characters were submissive to whites. Robeson said that he took questionable roles in order to strengthen his bargaining position; but he finally gave up his fight with Hollywood in 1942, when he joined a picket line protesting against his last movie, *Tales of Manhattan*—and in any case he had little effect on the white film industry, which refused to create the kind of scripts that would have complemented his talent. Other black actors had even less access to positive roles; most of them were grateful just to have a job and performed stereotyped roles in order to get a paycheck.

The most successful actor who crossed over from all-black films to Hollywood films was Stepin Fetchit (Lincoln Theodore Perry). As a vaudevillian, he had developed, with a partner, a routine called “Step ‘n’ Fetchit.” After that act broke up in the mid-1920s, he took Stepin Fetchit as his stage name and created a new character based on his former partner. Perry perfected the lazy, stupid, subservient black stereotype onstage and carried it into movies. When black filmmakers fell on hard times, Stepin Fetchit found steady work in white Hollywood; he was the first black actor to achieve featured billing in movies with white stars, and he never bowed to objections about his character. He saw himself simply as a hardworking comic actor; claimed that he was the first black entertainer to become a millionaire; and believed that he had been influential in opening doors to the motion picture world for other blacks. Stepin Fetchit starred in at least forty films from 1927 to 1975; they included *In Old Kentucky* (1927), *Salute* (1929), *Judge Priest* (1934), and *Steamboat around the Bend* (1935). Other blacks who crossed over were Duke Ellington (who appeared with his orchestra in *Black and Tan*, an RCA Phonophone production of 1929), Mantan Moreland (who appeared in *Tall, Tan,*

and Terrific in 1946), and Bill Robinson (who appeared in *Harlem Is Heaven* in 1945).

Eventually, a lack of coordinated distribution, exhibition, and publicity caused black filmmakers, one by one, to stop producing. Another factor was film rationing during World War II. Moreover, exhibition space for black films was drastically reduced; many of the black vaudeville theaters that at one time had shown black films went out of business during World War II and abandoned their buildings. Black filmmaking could not recover from economic hardships, the loss of exhibition space, and the shortage of film stock available to nonwhite businesses in the early 1940s, and it succumbed during a flurry of wartime recruitment films for the U.S. Army. The first phase of black filmmaking was over by 1950.

SHARON ELIZABETH SEXTON

See also Amos ‘n’ Andy; Birth of a Nation, The; Birth of a Race, The; Ellington, Duke; Fetchit, Stepin; Film; Film: Actors; Film: Blacks as Portrayed by White Filmmakers; Johnson, Noble; Lincoln Motion Picture Company; Micheaux, Oscar; Moreland, Mantan; Race Films; Robeson, Paul; Robinson, Bill “Bojangles”

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Film: Blacks as Portrayed by White Filmmakers

On the basis of his darkness he glowed. (Ralph Ellison)

Perspective

In the wake of World War I, a stream of hope surged through African American culture, but this wave clashed with the depiction of blacks presented in films made by whites. Thousands of black people aspiring to social equality and economic security poured into northern cities from the rural South; they were seeking a fair chance to demonstrate their true talents, and they swore that, given the opportunity, they could soar to new heights and in the process promote the general welfare. To their dismay, these migrants encountered Hollywood movies that mocked their ambitions by casting blacks in roles that simply perpetuated stereotypes formed during the era of slavery.

Alain Locke observed the postwar mood among African Americans. In *The New Negro* (1925), he described a spirit that was infusing blacks with a strong determination to leave the bottom of society, where slavery and segregation had stranded them, and climb up the social ladder. With regard to popular portrayals of black people, Locke discerned a growing intolerance for traditional depictions of blacks as servile characters such as Uncle Tom and Sambo in Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). Locke had identified the trend of a new generation, and his insight was verified by the angry reaction of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Urban League to D. W. Griffith's film *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), which slighted African Americans and supported the Ku Klux Klan.

By the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance, as African Americans sought to rise in society, protests against stereotypical portraits in motion pictures became a common topic of articles in *Crisis* and *Opportunity*, two journals that conveyed the perspective of the

black community. This outcry, however, failed to stem the tide of unrealistic images of blacks that flowed from white film studios. In fact, the growing demand by blacks for fairness in movies effectively created a backlash: Hollywood habitually featured blacks as flat characters reminiscent of Stowe's verbal sketches of slaves.

Group Show

When it was first published, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* stirred the country. It was a sincere indictment of slavery, and it was widely credited with inciting the Civil War. Throughout the last half of the nineteenth century, this book inspired a variety of imitators, including novels and plays, that thrilled the general public; and its influence extended into the twentieth century, affecting the motion picture industry. In 1903, Edwin Porter adapted Stowe's novel for the screen, and several cinematic versions of the story arrived in theaters during the era of silent films. Before movies began to talk in 1927, white filmmakers settled on showing five types of blacks, each resembling a figure in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: Uncle Tom, Topsy, Eliza, Aunt Chloe, and George Harris. Imitations of these five figures covered the complete range of black characters in white cinema. Like the figures in the book, blacks in mainstream movies evoked, respectively, a shaman, scamp, siren, shrew, and scoundrel. Bogle (1997) described the few black roles as "Toms, coons, mulattoes, mammies, and bucks." Moreover, these characterizations of blacks persisted long after *The Jazz Singer* (1927) introduced sound, continuing well beyond the stock market crash of 1929 that started the Great Depression.

Birth of a Nation contains the entire array of blacks featured in white productions. The faithful soul who serves the Cameron family to the end has the air of a shaman that distinguishes Uncle Tom in Stowe's novel; the film is full of derelict scamps akin to the pickaninny Topsy, particularly the barefoot blacks in Congress after the Civil War; Lydia Brown, the mulatto, has the allure of a siren and recalls Eliza; Mammy has the shrewish manner of Aunt Chloe; and Silas Lynch and the sinister Gus behave as scoundrels, displaying the defiance of George Harris. Every black figure in *Birth of a Nation* represents one of the five types.

Birth of a Nation fascinated President Woodrow Wilson, who proclaimed, "It's like writing history

with lightning,” but it appalled African Americans. Blacks in Boston rioted after its premiere there. The NAACP tried to have the film banned and picketed showings in New York and Chicago. W. E. B. Du Bois condemned it in *Crisis*. Across the country, black magazines and newspapers railed against it. A reviewer in the *Chicago Defender* called it despicable racist propaganda. Despite these protests from the African American community, however, *Birth of a Nation* remained in demand, and its treatment of black characters continued to find favor in American cinema.

Evidently, the formulaic roles of blacks in feature films satisfied a widespread desire to excuse slavery in early American society. Initially, around 1619, Africans had entered American culture as indentured servants, equal to the average white immigrant and with the right to gain their freedom. Two generations later, to stabilize the workforce, one region after another instituted bondage for blacks—contrary to the emergent social ethos whereby everyone was said to be born for liberty. This development entailed a dehumanization of blacks and a sense that blacks were at their best in service to whites, a concept that persisted into the nineteenth century, with two sides divided over the degree to which whites stood superior to blacks. That concept influenced Stowe. In *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, as James Baldwin once noted, she immortalized the most popular images of blacks at that time, placing blacks below whites but above slavery. Her work was appealing enough to impress the motion picture industry; and during the period of the Harlem Renaissance—to repeat—black characters in mainstream movies were variations of her five types, despite strong opposition from African Americans.

Primary Colors

The first “black” star in American cinema was actually white: an actor who painted his face black to play Uncle Tom in Edwin Porter’s movie adaptation (1903) of Stowe’s novel. Such portrayals were enormously popular; moviegoers welcomed a succession of imitators who appeared in silent movies. The next stars were also white: women who enacted fair black belles in dramas such as *Octoroon* (1911), in which a few drops of black blood make the title character a tragic figure. Not until the jazz age did black actors star in movies made by whites, but by the time the Harlem Renaissance was reaching a downturn, African Americans were in vogue in films, as fretful scoundrels and

full-bodied shrews. Paul Robeson became famous in *The Emperor Jones* (1933); Hattie McDaniel won a Academy Award for her role in *Gone with the Wind* (1939); and funny scamps, like the black lead in *Topsy and Eva* (1927), remained in style. Characters such as these appeared more or less frequently from time to time, but at no time did they disappear.

Several white actors wearing burnt cork played Uncle Tom before Sam Lucas, an African American, stepped into the role in 1914, to be followed by James Lowe (1927). Likewise, whites in blackface initially played loyal slaves in films such as *The Confederate Spy* (1910), *For His Master’s Sake* (1911), and *A Slave’s Devotion* (1913). Clarence Muse became the most celebrated authentic black performer of this type after his appearance as Jim in a screen version of *Huckleberry Finn* (1931). During the early era of silent films, the only other type that achieved the prestige of Uncle Tom was the star-crossed siren evocative of Eliza in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. This spellbinder appeared in *The Debt* (1912), *The Octoroon’s Sacrifice* (1912), and *In Slavery Days* (1913; in this film a white actor in makeup performed the black part). Nina Mae McKinney won renown for this kind of role when she starred as Chick in *Hallelujah!* (1929).

Another type, the renegade who defies white authority (reminiscent of George Harris in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*), took a while to earn applause in movie theaters. The conduct of Silas and Gus in *Birth of a Nation* was deplorable enough to check interest in their kind. Even the beloved black vaudevillian Bert Williams attracted little attention when—hidden by the minstrels’ blackface—he imitated the notorious toughs in *A Natural Born Gambler* (1916). The round black shrew became popular long before the rogue. Figures based on Aunt Chloe in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* helped make hits of films such as *Old Mammy’s Charge* (1913) and *Coon Town Suffragettes* (1914). Louise Beavers represented this type in *Imitation of Life* (1934) and received rave reviews.

Eventually, though, black scamps started to become prominent in silent films, and thereafter they never faded from motion pictures. This type, similar to Stowe’s figure of Topsy and created for comic relief, originated in *Ten Pickaninnies* (1904); appeared in *Wooing and Wedding of a Coon* (1905) and *The Masher* (1907); and ensured the success of the Rastus Series, including *How Rastus Got His Turkey* (1910), *Rastus in Zululand* (1910), and *Rastus’s Riotous Ride* (1914). Characters in this category are messy and mischievous, tantamount to capricious children. Stepin Fetchit (Lincoln Perry)

perfected this role, beginning with the film *In Old Kentucky* (1927); and by the time he appeared in *Judge Priest* (1934), his rendition of a scamp had made him a top box-office attraction.

As pictures with sound became prevalent, Hollywood abandoned its habit of assigning black parts to whites in blackface. In *The Jazz Singer* (1927), the first talkie, Al Jolson played a vaudevillian who sang on-stage with his face painted black, but this was the last major application of the practice. As the Harlem Renaissance ebbed, African Americans were performing most of the black roles in mainstream movies. However, films produced by whites still did not show the spirit of the New Negro heralded by Alain Locke, and African American actors stayed chained to the old stereotypes.

Trompe l'Oeil

Three prominent and popular film projects can serve to illustrate the modest range of parts reserved for blacks in American cinema during the “roaring twenties”: the *Our Gang* series of comic shorts, started in 1922 by Hal Roach, presented a succession of black scamps; *Hearts in Dixie* (1929) had a scamp and a shaman in starring roles; and *Hallelujah!* (also 1929) had a siren opposite a scoundrel and a shrew. Each of these productions broke new ground in motion picture history, but none of the dramatic leads deviated from the old standards.

Our Gang brought the first black child superstar to the screen: a small boy (Allen Clayton Hoskins) who played Farina. Audiences adored him. Surrounded by a motley crew of white children, he seemed to stand equal in status to them; nevertheless, his appearance and attitude called Topsy to mind. Like Topsy, Farina wore a profusion of pigtailed all over his head; and, again like Topsy, he cloaked a penchant for duplicity with a plaintive air of dignity. Therefore, although many fans thought that Farina constituted an improvement in racial representation, he actually reinforced low expectations for blacks—the attitude that sustained Jim Crow laws. After the first child actor outgrew the role, Roach replaced him with two other boys who became known as Stymie and Buckwheat, and they matched Farina in bearing and behavior.

Hearts in Dixie, directed by Paul Sloane, was the first all-black musical. Stepin Fetchit, playing Gummy in this film, resembled an older, bald Farina, and his performance recaptured the buffoonery that Stowe

had attributed to Topsy. In the eyes of some critics, Clarence Muse dignified the film by his handling of the role of Nappus, but even this character perpetuated the traits of Uncle Tom. Like Stowe's hero, Nappus is portrayed as devout, deferential, docile, and self-sacrificing. The supporting roles in *Hearts in Dixie* were split between singing scamps and shrews, consorting with a fledgling siren and scoundrel. Although this film was revolutionary in content, then, it was routine in characterization.

Hallelujah!—a musical written and directed by King Vidor—was filled with blacks breaking into song at the drop of a hat. Overall, it was enthusiastically received, even by W. E. B. Du Bois; critics said that this movie gave black performers a chance to try their wings and that they did take flight in fine form. Nina Mae McKinney, in the role of Chick, won the most acclaim, becoming a screen goddess; but, as noted previously, her role too was a type—McKinney conveyed the allure of Eliza, the mulatto in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Chick turns Zeke, a good boy, into an outlaw and distresses his devout parents, Pappy and Mammy. Essentially, every role in this production approximated a plantation slave as imagined by Stowe; thus *Hallelujah!* kept racial representation within the bounds of convention.

In brief, with regard to the treatment of blacks in film, the increasing use of African Americans (rather than whites wearing blackface) in black parts was the sole innovation that came out of Hollywood during the 1920s. The characterization of blacks in *Hearts in Dixie* and *Hallelujah!* simply extended an established tradition; these two musicals, along with *Our Gang*, gave only an illusion of progress in racial representation. On the whole, stereotypes of blacks prevailed.

Picture Plane

On 19 February 1919, African Americans lined Fifth Avenue to watch the all-black 369th Infantry Regiment (Fifteenth Infantry), nicknamed the Hell Fighters by their French comrades in World War I, parade into Harlem after returning home from combat. As the marchers crossed 130th Street, the band broke into a popular tune and the crowd became almost frenzied: the uniformed soldiers symbolized African Americans' readiness for full participation in American society. At the end of that year, a black film company captured these soldiers' service to the country in *Our Colored Soldiers*. White filmmakers ignored their story.

The career of Noble Johnson demonstrates how blacks stayed shackled to stereotypes in mainstream movies against their wishes. Johnson's father was a rancher in Colorado who raised and raced horses and had won the Kentucky Derby in 1902, and Noble Johnson exuded confidence and charm. By chance, his familiarity with horses, plus his fair skin and sharp features, earned him the part of a Native American in a western called *The Eagle's Nest*. The experience inspired him to join in organizing the Lincoln Motion Picture Company, the second black studio in the United States. Lincoln, with Johnson in the leading role, produced *The Realization of a Negro's Ambition* (1916), echoing the faith of Booker T. Washington that decency and diligence never go unrecognized. Johnson's performance thrilled audiences; and after he played a complex hero in two additional films released by Lincoln, Universal Pictures offered him a contract. This contract required him to resign from Lincoln, but tight finances forced him to accept it; and Universal—a white studio—then proceeded to squeeze him into bit parts as a servant or savage of African, Asian, or Native American ancestry.

At the same time, though, Oscar Micheaux, an African American, sought to develop movies with black stars playing dynamic heroes. He started his own studio in 1918, and it survived the Great Depression; before going out of business in 1948, he shot more than thirty pictures, such as *The Homesteader* (1918) and *Body and Soul* (1925), featuring many complicated black characters. Micheaux was the first of a wave of black filmmakers animated by the spirit of the black community. Like the others, though, he had to settle for a small share of the movie market. Jim Crow regulations confined his work to a few theaters open to blacks. Works by white producers played in far more locations; thus white producers controlled the general impression of blacks conveyed by movies.

Before and behind the cameras, blacks had a low profile in the motion picture industry. Everyone who was apparently rising in stature eventually came up against a low "glass ceiling," crashed, and fell into oblivion. For example, the glory that enveloped Nina Mae McKinney after her appearance in *Hallelujah!* disappeared in the blink of an eye. After making *Hallelujah!*, she went abroad for two years with a cabaret act that played at Chez Florence in Paris and the Palladium theater in London; during this time she appeared as a jungle siren in a British picture, *Congo Raid* (1930), and she came home to New York for its

world premiere. Thereafter, she declined into obscurity, although she did star as a crafty charmer in *The Devil's Daughter* (1939), released by a black studio; and she played a terrible tramp in *Pinky* (1940), a Hollywood product. She later earned a living performing on the road with her own band; in 1967, barely remembered, she died at age fifty-four.

Given the confidence that prevailed among African Americans in the 1920s—a confidence noted by Alain Locke—one would expect blacks like McKinney, Micheaux, and Johnson to remain in the limelight for a long time. But events of the summer of 1919, which James Weldon Johnson called the "red summer," revealed a staunch impulse to restrict blacks' prestige. Although 1919 had begun with the prideful parade of the 369th Infantry Regiment, the summer brought race riots in two dozen cities, including Washington, Atlanta, Chicago, St. Louis, and Omaha. The turmoil was incited by the activities of the Ku Klux Klan opposing equality for African American citizens. The Klan's racist objectives had evolved from the rationale for black bondage in early American society, which in turn had set the stage for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Throughout the 1920s, its influence persisted, and Hollywood continued to cast blacks as figures from Stowe's novel, lacking in depth and limited in distinction.

Retrospective

At the height of the Harlem Renaissance, the New Negroes hailed by Alain Locke had come to big cities seeking success. Independent films by Oscar Micheaux and other blacks reflected the African American mind, but mainstream movies posed a challenge. Hollywood portrayed black people as five types of flat figures, all of whom were overshadowed by whites. Generally, the motion picture industry preserved a bias provoked by slavery and perpetuated by *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. It allotted blacks only a very narrow space for achievement and, figuratively speaking, compelled them to sing the blues during the jazz age.

ROLAND L. WILLIAMS JR.

See also Beavers, Louise; Birth of a Nation, The; Crisis, The; Emperor Jones, The; Fetchit, Stepin; Film; Film: Actors; Film: Black Filmmakers; Hallelujah!; Hearts in Dixie; Johnson, Noble; Lincoln Motion Picture Company; Locke, Alain; Lowe, James; McKinney, Nina Mae; Micheaux, Oscar; Muse, Clarence; New Negro,

The; Opportunity; Riots: 2—Red Summer of 1919; Robeson, Paul; Williams, Egbert Austin “Bert”

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Fine Clothes to the Jew

Langston Hughes’ second volume of poetry, *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927), was published at the height of the Harlem Renaissance. It followed his highly successful debut volume, *The Weary Blues* (1926), and was in turn followed by *The Negro Mother and Other Dramatic Recitations* (1931). This context is significant because *Fine Clothes to the Jew* remains Hughes’ most controversial book of poetry, became a transitional work in his canon, and was a classic acknowledgment of his manifesto “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” (1926).

Fine Clothes to the Jew derives its title from an observation Hughes had made: he noticed that many residents of Harlem pawned their own clothes in neighborhood shops, most of which were owned and operated by Jews. However, this meaning was often misunderstood, and Hughes eventually regretted that he had let the title stand.

It is a courageous volume. Hughes was attempting to broaden his thematic base and to bring something Whitmanesque to the setting of Harlem. In one poem, “Brass Spittoons” a young Negro sings “A bright bowl of brass is beautiful to the Lord” as he polishes a spittoon; the theme of “Ballad of Gin Mary” is evident, as is that of “The New Cabaret Girl.” “Mulatto,” “Prayer,” “Feet o’ Jesus,” and “Song for a Dark Girl” were all very well received, and the blues component in these poems was highly praised. But the critics made little mention of originality, and *Fine Clothes to the Jew* is decidedly uneven, suffering in comparison with Hughes’s later collections of poetry.

What made *Fine Clothes to the Jew* controversial was the reaction of some black intellectuals—readers or reviewers—who concluded that it was a sorry return to the dialect tradition and that it overemphasized the negative aspects of Negro life. A review in the *Pittsburgh Courier* bore the headline “Langston Hughes’s Book of Poems Trash”; a review in the *New York Amsterdam News* bore the headline “Langston Hughes—The Sewer Dweller.” The Harlem Renaissance promoted racial pride, and those who were perceived as naysayers were quickly confronted. Hughes was no exception. However, he stated that his poetry was an attempt to tell stories of Negroes who were “workers, roustabouts, and singers, and job hunters on Lenox Avenue in New York or Seventh Street in Washington or South Street in Chicago.” Accordingly, *Fine Clothes to the Jew* contains poems about gambling, love, prostitution, drugs, religion, jealousy, and friendship, among other topics. The common theme is daily life in Harlem.

Hughes was deeply affected by the adverse criticism of *Fine Clothes to the Jew*, criticism generated primarily by the black press. In his first autobiography, *The Big Sea*, he says that “the Negro critics did not like it at all. . . . Certainly, I personally knew very few people anywhere who were wholly beautiful and wholly good. . . . [I didn’t] write them protesting letters, nor in any way attempt to defend my book.” Hughes subsequently notes that many of the controversial poems in *Fine Clothes to the Jew* were later used successfully in Negro schools and colleges. Nevertheless, Hughes mentioned *Fine Clothes to the Jew* in the collection *Anna Bontemps/Langston Hughes Letters 1925–1969* only very briefly, the most notable comment being that the volume was his sole work that was out of print in 1946. In 2002, first editions of *Fine Clothes to the Jew* sold for between \$200 and \$1,100.

BRIAN J. BENSON

See also *Amsterdam News*; Authors: 5—Poets; Hughes, Langston; Literature: 7—Poetry; *Pittsburgh Courier*

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Fire!!

Fire!! (1926) was a projected periodical, edited by Wallace Thurman; it was intended to appear quarterly, but only one issue was actually produced.

For younger artists, *Crisis* and *Opportunity* were crusty establishment publications; these artists' own métier was to debunk the genteel standards (which Thurman called "party-line art") espoused by the "talented tenth" and to position themselves as firebrand agitators for a modern black culture. Their subversive publication *Fire!!* came out in November 1926; it was inspired by Carl van Vechten's provocative novel *Nigger Heaven*, which had been published earlier that year and which W. E. B. Du Bois had found "neither truthful nor artistic." Although *Fire!!* consisted of only its first issue, it was immortalized in the annals of the Harlem Renaissance for having been "Devoted to Younger Negro Artists."

This new publishing venture aimed to be radical, provocative, and available to both the white and the black cultural establishment; and its contributors were expected to take their inspiration from not the bourgeoisie but the proletariat. Thurman, as the editor, had assembled an impressive array of artists and writers who were eager to define a true "Negro aesthetic"; they wanted to produce something genuinely modern and had no intention of splicing high and low art to make some kind of mongrel art. Like the talented tenth, they wanted a pure representation of the Negro experience—a way to "express our dark skinned selves without fear or shame"—and so they looked to the streets, where the worker could be found, as could

the seedier side of black life with its illicit gratifications. Therefore, the topics covered in *Fire!!* would include sex, racism, androgyny, homoeroticism, the "primitive" Negro, prostitution, and interracial relations.

Contributions to *Fire!!* took the form of stories, essays, poetry, plays, editorials, and artwork. One piece, "Cordelia the Crude," Thurman's story about a sixteen-year-old prostitute, later appeared on Broadway and eventually in theaters in Chicago and Los Angeles. Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Edward Silvera, Lewis Alexander, Helene Johnson, Waring Cuney, and Arna Bontemps contributed poetry. Arthur Huff Fauset's sociological essay on the intelligentsia was a witty swipe at the pretentious acolytes whom Zora Neale Hurston called "Negrotarians" and "niggerati." Gwendolyn Bennett contributed a story on interracial relations, "Wedding Day." Hurston supplied a play in four scenes called "Color Struck" and a short story called "Sweat," about marital vengeance and regret.

Art came from Aaron Douglas and Richard Bruce Nugent; the latter made a literary contribution as well. The enigmatic cover was by Douglas, and the integrated title and the lean geometric strokes are characteristic of his work; perhaps in no other image from the Harlem Renaissance are the motifs so strikingly pared down. Douglas also supplied incidental art that is unmistakably African in style: three economically drawn figures of a pastor preaching, an artist painting, and a waitress serving. These three vignettes seem satirical, although they make no racial or political declamation except, possibly, as icons of Western materialism. Bruce was considered the *enfant terrible* of New Negro art (David Levering Lewis has described him as a "self-conscious decadent"), and his recurring themes were homosexuality and androgyny.

At the time, black critics hated *Fire!!* Even Douglas's artwork did not escape criticism. Rean Graves of the Baltimore *Afro-American* said: "Aaron Douglas who in spite of himself and the meaningless grotesqueness of his creations, has gained a reputation as an artist, is permitted to spoil these perfectly good pages and a cover with his pen and ink hudge pudge." Nugent's literary and artistic contributions were antithetical to the high culture embraced by the talented tenth and therefore attracted much attention. Referring to Bruce's homoerotic story in *Fire!!*—"Smoke, Lilies, and Jade"—W. E. B. Du Bois voiced a concern that the "Negro renaissance" was being turned "into decadence." In recent times, Cooke (1984) has described *Fire!!* as a "quasi-surrealistic organ"; when compared with contemporary establishment publications, it is iconoclastic

(particularly in its secularism) and simultaneously ironic and anguished. Lewis (1994) has described it as a “flawed, folk centered masterpiece,” concisely suggesting a distinctive but tentative movement toward exploring black identity within a white hegemony.

In any case, the assertions of “younger” artists such as Thurman, Hurston, Nugent, and Hughes made *Fire!!* a pivotal moment in the Harlem Renaissance, because Negroes were being called on to reject the paternalism of the talented tenth and seek autonomy. However, autonomy came at a price: *Fire!!* left Thurman in considerable debt, despite appeals in the first issue for donations. Later, a fire destroyed unsold editions that were being kept in storage. Ultimately, *Fire!!* is important for its verve rather than for intellectual grandiloquence.

Thurman tried again in November 1928, with *Harlem: A Forum of Negro Life*, a magazine which was perhaps less subversive and less primitive than *Fire!!* However, *Harlem* ran for only two issues.

CATHERINE O'HARA

See also Baltimore Afro-American; Crisis, The; Douglas, Aaron; Harlem; Negrotarians; Nigger Heaven; Niggerati; Nugent, Richard Bruce; Opportunity; Talented Tenth; Thurman, Wallace; *other specific writers*

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Fire in the Flint, The

Walter White’s novel *The Fire in the Flint* (1924) caused a stir because of its unflinching exploration of lynching in the American South. White was active in the

antilynching crusade and directed the efforts of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to have Congress pass antilynching bills. White also published a nonfiction examination of lynching, *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch* (1929).

White’s novel tells the story of Dr. Kenneth Harper, who is clearly intended to stand in sharp contrast to the usual portrayals of victims of lynching as either depraved beasts or agitators seeking to destabilize the social structure. Harper’s father has told him that “only bad Negroes ever get lynched.” The book begins when Harper opens a medical practice in Central City, Georgia, and ends just a few months later with his death at the hands of a mob. Harper has attended Atlanta University, has attended medical school “in the North,” and has served admirably in World War I. He returns from France to his hometown, where he believes he can do good; he assumes, naively, that he will not “have any trouble” with the local racists. Harper at first stays detached from the racial issues of the town, but inevitably he is drawn in—both professionally, because he is called on to save a white woman’s life, and personally, because he falls in love with an activist, Jane Phillips. Jane inspires him to help organize sharecroppers into a collective which would allow them at least a chance of not going deeper into debt with each harvest. (White uses this love story to convey the message that black citizens need to organize themselves politically.) Still, Harper, despite his movement from idealistic indifference to engagement with programs for social change, remains convinced that through hard work and moral living, he can be accepted, if not respected, in the white community. Finally, however, after his sister is raped and his brother commits suicide to avoid being lynched, Harper loses his illusions. Nevertheless, he answers the call to attend his white patient, an act that leads to his own brutal murder.

The melodramatic details of the plot have led many critics to dismiss *The Fire in the Flint* as propaganda, but the book was widely read and generated many articles debating whether it gave a realistic account of race relations. White, in his autobiography, characterizes the reaction to the book as “gratifyingly prompt and vigorous.” Today, the novel remains provocative, and the struggles Harper faces as a professional trying to succeed in a racist culture continue to offer insights. White suggested that after World War I, southern society became increasingly intolerant as a result of specific political and sociological

events—an idea suggesting in turn that the attitudes leading to lynching and to racism in general can be changed if social conditions are changed. White (1948) wrote that although the novel ends with Harper's murder, "one senses that the spirit of revolt against bigotry which he symbolizes will be accelerated rather than diminished by his death."

NEIL BROOKS

See also Antilynching Crusade; White, Walter

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Fisher, Rudolph

Rudolph Fisher, who would become the chief chronicler of life in Harlem during the period of the Harlem Renaissance, initially gained recognition as a short-story writer while he was still a medical student at Howard University. With encouragement from Alain Locke, Fisher succeeded in placing his first (and most famous) short story, "The City of Refuge," in the February 1925 issue of the prestigious *Atlantic Monthly*. According to Arna Bontemps, this feat "created something of a sensation" among African American writers because none of them "had been able to break into that magazine" (Tignor 1982). Fisher would publish his work three more times in *Atlantic Monthly* as well as in other periodicals owned by whites, including *McClure's*, *Story*, *American Mercury*, and the *New York Herald Tribune*. Of course, he also published work in periodicals owned by blacks, such as *Opportunity* and *Crisis*; however, for African Americans at that time, literary success was measured largely in terms of gaining access to mainstream (white) readers. Fisher certainly achieved this, and his success was partly

the result of early efforts by Walter White, Carl Van Vechten, and others who recognized his promising talent. In March 1925 Fisher's "The South Lingers On" was included in a special issue of *Survey Graphic*; also in 1926, *Crisis* awarded Fisher first place in the Amy Spingarn Prize for fiction (for his "High Yaller"). Fisher's "The City of Refuge" was included in Edward J. O'Brien's *Best Short Stories of 1925*; and "Miss Cynthia" was included in *Best Short Stories: 1934*. During Fisher's brief literary career before his death at age thirty-seven, his work also appeared in three other anthologies. He published a total of fifteen short stories, all but one of which are set in Harlem.

Fisher likewise proved himself a gifted novelist, with *The Walls of Jericho* (1928). Alfred A. Knopf published this debut novel and reportedly contracted with Fisher for two additional ones. Reviews of *The Walls of Jericho* were generally positive, and several reviewers expressed relief that Fisher had provided a well-proportioned, propaganda-free alternative to the more sensational fare offered up in Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* (1926) and Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem* (1928). *The Walls of Jericho* had been inspired by a wager with a friend, who had bet that Fisher could not write a novel effectively uniting Harlem's upper and lower classes. Fisher met the challenge and crafted a work unique among the novels of the period, because other authors predominantly focused on a single class. Fisher's seriocomic novel is also notable for his adroit social satire—a skill that had not so far been revealed in his short fiction. Fisher's satire, like his humor, succeeds in part because it is democratic, taking aim at blacks and whites alike as well as at all levels of society; and it differs noticeably from the more caustic, condemnatory, cynical satire of George S. Schuyler and Wallace Thurman.

In 1932 Covici-Friede published Fisher's second novel, *The Conjure-Man Dies: A Mystery Tale of Dark Harlem*. Reviews were generally encouraging, although this novel did not arouse the same enthusiasm as *The Walls of Jericho*. Fisher had been preceded in detective fiction by the African American serial novelists J. E. Bruce and Pauline Hopkins; however, *The Conjure-Man Dies* remains a watershed as the first detective novel by an African American author to be set in an all-black environment and to have an all-black cast of characters. Although of signal importance today, this accomplishment remained uncelebrated in Fisher's lifetime and for decades thereafter. Nevertheless, the plot was resurrected for a highly popular stage production by

the Works Progress Administration (WPA) at the Lafayette Theater in Harlem in 1936. (Critics are divided regarding how much Fisher was involved in writing the stage adaptation.) Fisher intended to write at least two more novels with the same pair of detectives—Dart and Archer—but had only enough time to produce a follow-up short story, “John Archer’s Nose,” before he died.

For the better part of the twentieth century, literary critics classified Fisher as a talented also-ran of the Harlem Renaissance: a writer of merit, but one whose achievements were limited and were worthy of only limited discussion. Some critics considered his short fiction to be his best work, and he received consistent praise for his ability as a humorist and satirist as well as for his objective realism and general craftsmanship. However, *The Walls of Jericho* received less attention over the years, and *The Conjure-Man Dies* rarely elicited any critical response at all. The 1980s and 1990s marked a turning point in studies of Fisher: the short fiction was collected and published for the first time in 1987; both of his novels were reprinted in paperback for the first time in the 1990s; and two new generations of critics brought a newfound enthusiasm to bear on Fisher’s work, particularly the detective fiction. The growth in critical attention has been remarkable. Significant work on Fisher was done in the 1980s by John McCluskey Jr., Margaret Perry, Leonard J. Deutsch, and Eleanor Q. Tignor. Somewhat newer critics, such as Stephen F. Soitos, Adrienne Johnson Gosselin, and Maria Balshaw, have considered the complexities of Fisher’s multifaceted representation of Harlem during the 1920s and 1930s, as well as his contribution to African American literature both during and after the Harlem Renaissance.

Biography

Rudolph John Chauncey Fisher was born on 9 May 1897, in Washington, D.C. He studied at public schools in Providence, Rhode Island; Brown University in Providence (A.B., 1919; A.M., 1920); Howard University in Washington, D.C. (M.D., 1924); Freedmen’s Hospital in Washington, D.C. (1924–1925); and Columbia University (1925–1927). He was a lecturer at Howard University in 1920–1924; began a private medical practice in 1927; was a roentgenologist at Mount Sinai and Montefiore hospitals in New York City in 1927; was acting superintendent at International Hospital in New York City in 1929–1932; was an x-ray technician

for New York City Health Department in 1930–1934; was a first lieutenant in the medical corps of the New York National Guard, 369th Infantry, in 1931–1934; and was a book reviewer for the New York *Herald Tribune* in 1931–1932. His awards included a National Research Council Fellowship in 1925 and the Amy Spingarn Prize in 1927. Fisher was a member of the North Harlem Medical Association in 1927–1930, the Harlem Health Center (advisory board) in 1930–1933, the Manhattan Medical Society in 1930–1934, and the Queens Clinical Society in 1932–1934. He died in New York City on 26 December 1934.

CRAIG GABLE

See also American Mercury; Conjure-Man Dies, The; Crisis, The; Locke, Alain; Opportunity; Survey Graphic; Van Vechten, Carl; Walls of Jericho, The; White, Walter

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580 Saint Nicholas Avenue

Ethel Ray Nance, Regina Anderson (Regina M. Anderson Andrews), and Louella Tucker shared a fifth-floor apartment—sometimes called "Dream Haven"—in a stylish six-story building at 580 Saint Nicholas Avenue in Harlem, at the corner of 139th Street, near City College of New York. This apartment building, where Ethel Waters also lived, began welcoming black residents at the same time as nearby buildings on Saint Nicholas Avenue became home to W. E. B. Du Bois and to Saint James Presbyterian Church. Nance worked for Charles S. Johnson and *Opportunity* magazine; Anderson was a librarian at the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library; and both women extended the work of these two important organizations to "580," as part of their commitment to racial uplift and women's independence and achievement. They brought home books to review; Anderson searched for potential programs to bring to the library, where readings and discussion groups were held; and because the apartment was within walking distance of the 135th Street library and the popular 135th Street YMCA, it became a place of rest and relaxation for people who had been attending events there and at

other nearby locations. At "580," Nance hosted an evening meeting to discuss the format of the *Survey Graphic* issue on Harlem, introducing her own collection of Aaron Douglas's art to Charles Johnson, Winold Reiss, and the editor, Paul Kellogg; this was a factor in making Douglas the visual artist of choice during the Harlem Renaissance.

In fact, 580—which became so popular that cab-drivers could identify it just by that number—was central to virtually everything and everyone associated with the Harlem Renaissance. Countee Cullen would bring new poems there to read, and the women at 580 took him to his first cabaret. Eric Walrond loved to come to relate his downtown exploits. Gwendolyn Bennett was a frequent visitor. Carl Van Vechten, on his first visit, brought both a bottle of wine and Jean Toomer. Aaron Douglas, penniless and moving from Kansas to New York at Nance's urging, slept on the sofa at 580 until he found work and his own home. Zora Neale Hurston, who had also been impoverished, relinquished the sofa when a change of fortune made her Fannie Hurst's live-in secretary. At 580, W. E. B. Du Bois, Charles S. Johnson, James Weldon Johnson, and Jessie Fauset shared ideas and dreams with the younger artists whose work inspired *Opportunity* and *Crisis* to run literary contests. Following the first *Opportunity* awards program in 1925, many of the attendees assembled at 580, and a historic group photo that included Langston Hughes, Charles S. Johnson, E. Franklin Frazier, Rudolph Fisher, and Hubert Delany was taken on the roof.

Although 580 had an enduring impact, it was short-lived, lasting for less than two years before Nance returned home to Duluth, Minnesota, to take care of her ailing mother in late 1925 and Anderson married in 1926. A fictional relationship between two characters in Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven*—Mary and Olive—was modeled on the supportive friendship between Nance and Anderson. Their sense of uplift found expression in numerous individual and group projects after the Harlem Renaissance: one of the most notable was *Black New Yorkers*, a project initiated by Anderson with research assistance from Nance. In 2000, their text inspired the book *Black New Yorkers* and an accompanying exhibition at Harlem's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

ONITA ESTES-HICKS

See also Anderson, Regina M.; Douglas, Aaron; Johnson, Charles Sprugeon; Kellogg, Paul U.; Nance, Ethel Ray;

135th Street Library; Opportunity; Reiss, Winold; Survey Graphic; *specific artists, writers, and others*

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Fool's Errand

Fool's Errand, a play by Eulalie Spence (1894–1981), was first presented by the Krigwa Players Little Negro Theater, as part of its second production season in April 1927. Spence, a high school teacher who became an integral part of the "little theater" movement in Harlem, had been born in Nevis, West Indies, and had joined the Krigwa Players soon after this theater company was founded by W. E. B. Du Bois in 1925. She served the Krigwa Players in

several capacities, as a performer, technician, and playwright.

Fool's Errand was a departure for Spence: her one-act plays usually explored some facet of contemporary urban life, but this was a folk comedy-drama set in a cabin in an "unprogressive Negro settlement" somewhere in the rural South. The cabin is occupied by Doug; his wife, Mom; and their teenage daughter, Maza. Mom has been called away to a temporary live-in job as a domestic, and the cabin has been tended by Aunt Cassie. When Aunt Cassie discovers some hidden baby clothes, she assumes the worst and calls in the church council to confront Maza and identify the father of her illegitimate child. Freddie and Jud, Maza's two suitors, are to be tricked into attending the council meeting; arriving too soon, Maza and Jud are sent on a trumped-up "fool's errand" until the council is ready. When the inquisition finally begins, Maza protests her innocence. Before a shotgun wedding can be arranged, Mom returns and reveals that it is she who is pregnant; nonplussed by having a second child so many years after the first, she hid the baby clothes she had made until she could tell her family. The real fool's errand has been performed by the church council, prodded by Aunt Cassie's snooping.

Du Bois selected *Fool's Errand* as the Krigwa Players' entry in the Fifth Annual International Little Theatre Tournament, sponsored by the New York Drama League. This was the Krigwa Players' first competition; and the Krigwa company was also the first entry by an African American troupe with an African American playwright. Spence took over as the play's director, took on the responsibility of preparing for the tournament, and led the cast in restoring for use in the tournament a discarded set her sister had found in Greenwich Village. During the tournament, which lasted from 2 to 7 May 1927, the Krigwa Players, competing against sixteen other groups, gave three performances at Broadway's Frolic Theater. Although the Krigwa Players did not win the David Belasco Trophy, they were awarded \$200 for presenting one of the best unpublished plays. A short time later, *Fool's Errand* was published by Samuel French—another first for an African American playwright. During the contest, Spence had also been selected for second prize and a shared third prize in the playwriting competition sponsored by the Urban League's journal, *Opportunity*, for her plays *The Hunch* and *The Starter*. In 1926, she had taken second place in the Krigwa

playwriting contest, supported by *Crisis* (the journal of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), for another one-act work, *Foreign Mail*.

Ironically, the fine showing in the tournament by Spence and the Krigwa Players, rather than strengthening the company, led to its demise. Du Bois refused to share the cash award with Spence or the cast, stating that the prize money was needed to cover the company's expenses. Many company members left, and Du Bois withdrew, taking with him the copyrighted name Krigwa.

FREDA SCOTT GILES

See also *Crisis*, The: Literary Prizes; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Krigwa Players; Little Theater Tournament; Opportunity Literary Contests

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Ford, Arnold Josiah

Arnold Ford's first career once he came to the United States in 1912 was as a musician. He performed jazz as a member of Harlem's Clef Club and was bandmaster for the New Amsterdam Musical Association. In 1917 he became musical director and choirmaster of Liberty Hall, the Harlem center of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Ford produced the group's *Universal Ethiopian Hymnal*, writing several of the songs himself. He was

a cowriter of UNIA's anthem, "Ethiopia, Land of Our Fathers." The hymns Ford composed drew on Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and African traditions and celebrated a future African redemption. UNIA was one of many groups that found parallels between the Old Testament stories of the Hebrews escaping from captivity in Egypt and the emancipation of American slaves.

Building on these connections, it was a relatively small step to the establishment of a new religion borrowing elements of Judaism. With a partner, Rabbi Wentworth Arthur Matthew, Ford founded the Black Jews of Harlem, recruiting members from among Garvey's followers. Members called themselves Ethiopian Hebrews or Hebrew Israelites, and they believed that the ancient Hebrews were black. White Jews, Ford believed, were offshoots of the original Hebrews, who had adopted their religion from Africans with whom they came into contact.

In 1923, Ford broke with UNIA; and in 1924 he established Beth Bnai Abraham (House, or Congregation, of the Sons of Abraham) in Harlem. Like Ford, many members of the congregation were from the West Indies. Ford was fluent in Hebrew and in Yiddish, had studied the Torah and the Talmud, and had made contacts with liberal white Jews who answered his questions about their faith. Calling himself Rabbi Ford, he led the congregation, set up an Ethiopian-Hebrew school, and worked to establish a black Jewish homeland in Ethiopia. Ford used his influence to found the Progressive Corporation, a mostly secular organization of black businessmen; and the Aurieth Club, a group of black professionals who supported the idea of a black Jewish Zion.

In 1930, Ford traveled to Ethiopia to witness the coronation of Haile Selassie. Over the next few years he worked to accumulate enough land in Ethiopia for what he hoped would be a wave of immigrants, and in fact some sixty followers joined him there in 1931 and 1932. Little is known about the few remaining years of his life. Some have suggested that Ford reappeared in Detroit in 1930, and that as Wallace Fard he established the Nation of Islam, but most scholars find the theory unsupportable and believe he died in Ethiopia in 1935.

Biography

Arnold Josiah Ford was born in Barbados, West Indies, c. 1890 and was educated in public schools there. He

served as a music teacher for the British navy. He emigrated to Harlem in 1912; was a jazz musician, 1912–1920; was musical director of UNIA, 1917–1923; and founded and led Beth Bnai Abraham, 1923–1930. Ford died in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in September 1935.

CYNTHIA BILY

See also Clef Club; Universal Negro Improvement Association

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Ford, James William

James William Ford was a preeminent African American member of the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) and—as a vice-presidential candidate in the election of 1932—the first African American on a national ballot.

Ford was born in Alabama. After graduating from Fisk University, he moved to Chicago, where he worked as a parcel post dispatcher with the U.S. Post Office and joined the Chicago Postal Workers Union. His experiences in Chicago during the 1920s largely

shaped his commitment to the American trade union movement. His trade unionism became more militant in reaction to Jim Crow employment policies and tyrannical union officials, and his reputation as a trade unionist grew steadily. He was an early supporter of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and formed a lasting friendship with its founder, A. Philip Randolph. Ford joined the American Negro Labor Congress (ANLC) in 1925 and the Trade Union Educational League in 1926; he then joined CPUSA and rose rapidly through its ranks, serving as an elected delegate of the committee meeting of the Communist International (Comintern) in 1927 and 1928. His increasing radicalism caused problems with his job as a postal worker, and he was fired in 1927, reportedly having been framed.

Ford believed that victory against the ravages of capitalism could be achieved through the "unity of the Negro people and the white workers." In 1927, he was an elected delegate of the Trade Union Educational League to the International Labor Union's Fourth World Congress in Moscow. At this congress, he was elected to its executive committee. A year later, Ford returned to Moscow for the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern and traveled throughout the Soviet Union to observe how national minorities fared there. After returning to the United States, he relocated from Chicago to New York City and became part of Harlem's political scene. In 1929 he was arrested for protesting against the United States' military actions in Haiti; also in 1928, as a member of the American delegation to the Second World Congress of the League Against Imperialism in Frankfurt, Germany, he demanded the unconditional liberation of Ethiopia. Ford devoted much time and energy to forging solidarity between oppressed people in the United States and worldwide in a struggle against capitalism and imperialism; he wanted to merge Garveyite pan-Africanism and Communism, and he was instrumental in organizing the First International Conference of Negro Workers in Hamburg, Germany, in 1930. In 1931, at the League of Nations' conference on African children, he spoke against European colonial policy. In 1932, in the United States, he participated in the Bonus Army March, a protest by veterans of World War I who were seeking federal relief, and was again arrested.

During the 1930s, Ford was a major force within CPUSA. In 1932 he was nominated to run for vice-president on the Communist Party ticket alongside William Z. Foster. In 1933, Ford became the head of

CPUSA's Harlem branch. He was later a member of the Political Committee, New York State Committee, and National Committee of CPUSA; and he was influential in moving CPUSA toward a "united front" with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Urban League, the National Negro Congress, and other civil rights organizations—a significant revision of communist policy toward race-based movements. By 1937, he was asserting that racial injustice and the class struggle could be dealt with in tandem because African Americans sought three goals: a decent and secure livelihood; human rights; and an equal, honorable, and respectable status in society. He was again nominated for vice president in 1936 and 1940. In 1938, Ford was the party's candidate for the U.S. Senate from New York.

During World War II, Ford still led the Harlem section of CPUSA, although he had less power nationally. By the 1950s, during the cold war, he was executive director of the National Committee to Defend Negro Leadership, a group organized to assist African American party members who were targeted by federal laws against presumed communists and subversives. He remained an active member of CPUSA until his death.

Biography

James William Ford was born in Pratt City, Alabama, on 22 December 1893, the son of Lyman and Nancy Reynolds Foursche. (The family's surname was changed to Ford when a racist policeman questioned the father and could not spell or pronounce Foursche.) Ford completed high school in 1913 and then went to Fisk University, where he became a campus leader as a scholar and an athlete. He joined the army in 1917, during World War I, before graduating from Fisk, but he returned there in 1919 after his honorable discharge and received a B.A. He then moved to Chicago, where he worked for the post office and became a trade unionist; he also joined the Communist Party. In 1927 his radicalism led to his dismissal from the post office. He attended labor congresses in Moscow and traveled in the Soviet Union. Around 1928 he relocated from Chicago to New York City and entered the political scene in Harlem. He became head of the CPUSA's Harlem Branch in 1933. In 1932, 1936, and 1940 he ran for vice-president on the Communist Party ticket; in 1938 he ran for the Senate as the Communist

Party's candidate from New York. Ford died on 21 June 1957.

JUAN FLOYD-THOMAS

See also American Negro Labor Congress; Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; Communist Party; Garveyism; Pan-Africanism; Randolph, A. Philip

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Forsyne, Ida

Although Langston Hughes named Ida Forsyne as one of the twelve best dancers of all time, she never achieved as much commercial or critical success in the United States as she did in Europe.

By age ten, Forsyne was dancing and singing for small sums of money at candy stores and house-rent parties, and she cakewalked for twenty-five cents a day at the Chicago World's Fair. She broke into professional theater when she joined Sissieretta Jones's *Black Patti's Troubadours*, a show in which she sang "You're Just a Little Nigger but You're Mine All Mine" while pushing a baby carriage across the stage. After the tour, she appeared in modified minstrel shows in Manhattan, Coney Island, and Atlantic City and had a solo act in the first interracial musical, Will Marion Cook's *The Southerners*. Forsyne went abroad with the Tennessee Students to perform at the Palace Theater in London, billed as "Topsy, the Famous Negro Dancer," a stock figure from minstrelsy based on the character in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The tiny, exuberant Forsyne enthralled audiences and critics in London with her wild dance numbers. She continued to appear in major venues, such as the Moulin Rouge in Paris, where she began performing a dance routine in a potato sack, occasionally with a chorus of ballet dancers in blackface. By 1911, Forsyne's success led her to Moscow, where her routines included cakewalking as well as Russian dance steps. According to Stearns and Stearns (1994), Forsyne inspired a modest trend of Russian dancing on the vaudeville stage in the United States.

Forsyne's success in Europe lasted for nine years but was cut short by World War I. In 1914, she returned to the United States, where she faced difficulty getting jobs in theater as a result of the shifting aesthetic and social values ushered in by the Harlem Renaissance. The dance routines that had made her famous throughout Europe were considered stereotypical by most black New York audiences, whose interest had turned to jazz dancing. Of her brief appearance at the Lincoln Theater in Harlem, she said, "Lincoln audiences were terrible and always booed anything artistic. All they wanted was bumps and Shake dancing" (quoted in Stearns and Stearns, 254).

Also, she was considered too dark for the Harlem nightclub circuit, which tended to feature light-skinned women. She explained: "I couldn't get a job because I was black, and my own people discriminated against me" (Stearns and Stearns, 256). Forsyne did appear in the musical comedy *Darkydom* (1914) at the Lafayette Theater in Harlem.

By the early 1920s, Forsyne's career had stalled, although she toured with Sophie Tucker and later with Bessie Smith on the Theater Owners' Booking Association (TOBA) circuit. She also was cast in several minor film roles. In 1951, she assisted Ruthanna Boris with the choreography for New York City Ballet's "The Cakewalk." Little is known about her life after her theatrical career, except that for a brief time she worked as an elevator operator in a hotel in upstate New York. Soon thereafter, she lived at the Concord Baptist Nursing Home in Brooklyn, where she died in 1983.

Biography

Ida Forsyne (also known as Ida Forcen and Ida Forsyne Hubbard) was born in 1883 in Chicago. She toured with Black Patti's Troubadours, 1898–1902; performed in Europe, 1905–1910; performed in Russia, 1911–1914; toured with Sophie Tucker, 1920–1922; toured with Mamie Smith, 1924; and toured with Bessie Smith, 1927. Forsyne died in Brooklyn, New York, on 19 August 1983.

PAUL SCOLIERI

See also Cook, Will Marion; Lafayette Theater; Lincoln Theater; Mitchell, Abbie; Smith, Bessie; Smith, Mamie; Theater Owners' Booking Association

Selected Stage Credits

Smart Set. 1902. (Road show produced by Gus Hill.)
The Southerners. 1904. (Musical review produced by Will Marion Cook at the New York Roof Garden.)
Abbie Mitchell and Her Coloured Students. 1906. (Musical review at the Palace Theater, London.)
Darkydom. 1914. (Musical comedy at the Lafayette Theater, New York.)

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The Emperor Jones. 1933. (United Artists.)
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Forsythe, Harold Bruce

Harold Bruce Forsythe was a prolific composer and writer, but except for some manuscript songs in the European tradition, now at the Huntington Library, his music—which included symphonic poems and an opera, among other works—is lost; and Harry Hay reported settings of spirituals with a strong blues character that as of the present writing remained unlocated. Forsythe's formal music training was largely in the European romantic tradition. On his own, however, he developed a strong interest in African and African American music as well as history, art, religion, and magic. More of Forsythe's writing than his music survives, also in manuscript form. A long manuscript novel, "Masks" (also "Frailest Leaves"), is partly autobiographical and probably descriptive of the New Negro movement in Los Angeles.

Forsythe found in the composer William Grant Still a compelling model who was exploring ways to use the European-American concert tradition in music to express aspects of African American culture. His writing on Still's music, which offers significant insights, may be the most important part of his output. Still and Forsythe probably met in New York City; they developed a professional friendship important to both during 1929–1930, while Still was working temporarily in Los Angeles. Forsythe's "A Study in Contradictions," the first serious critical essay on Still's music and the first to recognize the subtleties of Still's fusion of styles, came in 1930. Soon afterward, Forsythe provided a long essay, "The Rising Sun," intended as

an introduction for Still's ballet *Sahdji*. Later, Forsythe wrote the libretto to Still's first opera, *Blue Steel*, and a scenario for a ballet, *The Sorcerer*. Still and Forsythe's friendship ended abruptly in 1935, however.

A combination of ill health, early deafness, and cultural isolation prevented Forsythe from pursuing the path he had laid out for himself of discovering, exploring, and explicating the African aspects of his heritage in both music and words.

Biography

Harold Forsythe went to Los Angeles with his parents in 1913 and remained there except for one period of study in New York City. He studied piano with Nada McCullough and William T. Wilkins at the Wilkins Conservatory concurrently with his high school education. He also studied music composition privately with Charles E. Pemberton, a faculty member at the University of Southern California. His introduction to literature and to the New Negro movement came through Wallace Thurman, who boarded with Forsythe's family while attending the University of Southern California in 1922. Forsythe graduated from Manual Arts High School, where he was recognized as a gifted pianist and composer, in 1926. The following fall, he enrolled at the Juilliard School of Music in New York, where he studied briefly with Rubin Goldmark. At Juilliard, Forsythe became aware of his growing deafness, which was probably why he withdrew before completing a full year of study. Returning to Los Angeles, he supported himself through odd jobs and a stint as a pianist on an offshore gambling ship during Prohibition. Advancing deafness brought his career as a musician to a halt by the late 1930s. He retrained himself as a nurseryman and worked at that occupation for more than two decades. He died in poverty. He had married Sara Turner, a former Cotton Club showgirl, in 1945; at the time of this writing, one of his two sons, Harold Sumner Forsythe, was a professor of history at Rancho Santiago College.

CATHERINE PARSONS SMITH

See also Still, William Grant; Thurman, Wallace

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Fortune, Timothy Thomas

Timothy (T.) Thomas Fortune—the most important black journalist of his time—founded the newspaper *New York Age* in order to speak out against racism and injustice in the United States, particularly in the South.

Fortune was born a slave in 1856; during Reconstruction he worked as a page in the Florida legislature. He began his career in journalism as a compositor for the Jacksonville *Daily Union*. During the late nineteenth century, he worked at several newspapers and magazines (including *People's Advocate*, *Weekly Witness*, and *Rumor*) and started the *Globe*. He came to New York around 1880 and became a leading proponent of black rights in the 1880s and 1890s. By the time of the *Globe's* demise in 1883–1884, Fortune had a considerable reputation as a fearless editor. In 1884 he was the sole owner, editor, and chief printer of *Freeman*, speaking out against racism in the South. (Some white publishers and editors considered *Freeman* dangerous—evidence that people read it and took it very seriously.) In 1885 Fortune published a book, *Black and White: Land, Labor, and Politics in the South*, in which he focused on economic factors, discussing working conditions under capitalism and criticizing land grants to railroads. In 1887 he organized the National Afro-American League, a civil rights group. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, he advocated mixed marriages, used the courts to fight racial discrimination, supported Ida B. Wells's protest against lynching, and urged that blacks be called Afro-Americans.

Fortune developed a lifelong friendship with Booker T. Washington, with whom—through the medium of *New York Age*—he would be very influential. Although the two men differed in temperament and disagreed over Washington's political philosophy of accommodation, Fortune supported Washington's programs in editorials in *New York Age*; and this support caused some of Washington's critics to accuse Fortune of expediency. (Those critics included W. E. B. Du Bois; J. Max Barber, publisher of *Voice of the Negro* in Atlanta; and William Monroe Trotter, editor of the Boston *Guardian*.)

Fortune used *New York Age* to fight against the disenfranchisement of African Americans and to urge them to become independent voters; he believed that political independence would strengthen their negotiating position. By nineteenth-century standards, Fortune's language was strikingly militant, caustic, and jolting, and it unsettled some readers, especially white southerners. But the editor of the Cincinnati *Afro-American* stated that Fortune was "without peer or superior as a colored journalist."

In 1904, Fortune, who was facing a personal financial crisis, sold *New York Age* to Frederick Randolph Moore but maintained his editorship. By then, Fortune was also doing work for other publications, including *Colored American Magazine*, which was published in Boston; and the *Amsterdam News*, which was published in New York. In 1914 Fortune moved to Washington, D.C., where he became publisher and editor of the *Washington Sun*. He continued to exhort black Americans to address their own political and economic conditions and to fight for equal rights and opportunities.

Fortune's work as an editor attracted the attention of Marcus Garvey, and Fortune served as the editor of Garvey's *Negro World* from 1923 until his death in 1928. However, there is no evidence that Fortune joined Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).

Fortune's career at *New York Age* and *Negro World* coincided with the Harlem Renaissance; during this period his efforts to promote change took on a new urgency. Fortune helped articulate blacks' demands for equality and renewed racial pride in a new urban environment.

Biography

Timothy (T.) Thomas Fortune was born a slave in Marianna, Florida, on 3 October 1856; his father, who was of mixed blood, was a shoemaker, tanner, and political leader. As a child during the Civil War, Fortune was taught by Union soldiers who were stationed in Marianna; he retained a lifelong interest in learning. He served as a page in the senate in Tallahassee during Reconstruction and received an appointment to West Point, which he could not accept because of his race. In the 1880s, he attended Stanton Institute, a school established by the Freedman's Bureau; he also attended Howard University. He got his start in journalism working as a compositor for the Jacksonville



T. Thomas Fortune, c. 1910. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library)

Daily Union; while he was in school, he worked as a printer for the *People's Advocate*, an African American newspaper, but then he returned to the *Daily Union*. He married Carrie C. Smiley of Florida while he was employed at the *Advocate*; they later separated. He came to New York c. 1880 and worked at the *Weekly Witness*, a religious paper; the *People's Advocate*; and *Rumor*. He also started the *Globe*, which lasted until 1883–1884, and was the owner and editor of *Freeman* (1884). He published a book, *Black and White: Land, Labor, and Politics in the South*, in 1885. He founded *New York Age* in 1887 and sold it to Frederick Randolph Moore in 1904. Fortune moved to Washington, D.C., in 1914 and became editor and publisher of the *Washington Sun*. He was the editor of Marcus Garvey's *Negro World* from 1923 to 1928. Fortune died on 2 June 1928.

CAROLYN CALLOWAY-THOMAS
THURMON GARNER

See also *Amsterdam News*; Barnett, Ida B. Wells; Garvey, Marcus; Moore, Frederick Randolph; *Negro World*; *New York Age*; Trotter, William Monroe; Washington, Booker T.

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Four Saints in Three Acts

The opera *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1934), with libretto by Gertrude Stein and score by Virgil Thomson, occupies a unique position in American performance history. First produced in 1934, right after Stein's best-selling *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, the opera was an immediate success. Its all-black cast, plotless libretto, opaque dialogue, and garish cellophane set alternately thrilled and shocked audiences. To this day it remains the longest-running opera in the history of Broadway. Its very singularity, however, precluded its having a broad, lasting influence in the arts. Attempts to revive *Four Saints in Three Acts* have tended to fail,

and only recently have scholars begun to examine its cultural and historical significance.

Stein and Thomson conceived *Four Saints in Three Acts* as an opera about the contemplative life of the working artist, an existence which Stein likened to that of saints, who, in Stein's estimation, mostly sit around doing nothing. Hence, although the nominal setting was sixteenth-century Spain, the authors and producers did all they could to subordinate the historical context to the theme of creative meditation. Stein's libretto omits references to time and place; Thomson's score drew from American secular traditions; and Florence Stettheimer's brightly colored cellophane curtains and trees rendered the stage otherworldly.

Virgil Thomson's decision, approved by Stein, to cast African Americans in all of the parts was certainly part of this dissociative strategy. The black cast, more than any other aspect of the performance, cut against the ostensible setting. Although Thomson publicly insisted that black performers were necessary only for their rich voices and poise, he nevertheless rejected a proposal to have the cast perform in whiteface. Moreover, he conceded ulterior motives for his casting strategy in a newspaper interview: "Negroes objectify themselves very easily," he said. "They live on the surface of their consciousness" (quoted in Watson 1998, 202).

The disjunction between the opera's setting and its cast attracted much critical attention. By 1934, New York theater audiences had seen many all-black shows, among them Marc Connelly's *Green Pastures* and Hall Johnson's *Run Little Chillun*, but blacks had not yet penetrated the upper reaches of the fine arts. Most white critics praised the black cast, acknowledging the power of the voices even as they were struck by the performers' appearance. Significantly, black critics almost completely ignored *Four Saints in Three Acts*, focusing instead on *They Shall Not Die*, a play about the Scottsboro trial. To these black critics, Stein and Thomson's opera seemed a terrible waste of talent and opportunity. History bore out their viewpoint: audiences viewed the black cast as a gimmick not to be repeated, and of the performers, only Edward Matthews (Saint Ignatius) enjoyed much acclaim afterward.

Today, cultural critics question Stein's and Thomson's motives. Webb argues, for example, that *Four Saints in Three Acts* "deliberately situated black persons in a timeless realm devoid of history or stories" (2000, p. 449). Ironically, the renewed interest in this opera derives from scholarly attempts to locate Stein's racial

and cultural politics—exactly the historically specific questions that Stein and Thomson tried to evade.

JUSTIN A. PITTAS-GIROUX

See also *Green Pastures*, *The*; Johnson, Hall; *They Shall Not Die*

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Francophone Africa and the Harlem Renaissance

The idea of Africa occupied a central place in the politics, aesthetics, art, and imagination of the Harlem Renaissance. However, the renaissance had an ambivalent attitude toward that idea. From one angle, Harlem's aesthetics reproduced the totalizing stereotypes of Africa as exotic and primitive. From another angle, Harlem's aesthetics reproduced idealized and positive images of Africa that exemplified the concern of the movement with nostalgia and its agenda of reclaiming roots and heritage. The presence of the idea of Africa underscores the international theme in Harlem's aesthetics, one that encapsulated the preoccupation of the movement with discourses of encounter and a black diaspora. Because its international theme incorporated a search for a common origin of the black diaspora, the Harlem Renaissance drew inspiration from Africa, first as a geographic monolith and second from the diverse geographic regions that were mostly under colonial rule. One such region was francophone Africa, which then consisted of French colonies primarily in the western, northern, and central regions of Africa. Francophone Africa gave imaginative energy to the political, artistic, and aesthetic focus of the Harlem Renaissance. Moreover, francophone Africa provided possibilities for imagining racial pride through cultural awareness and heritage.

Understanding the relationship of the Harlem Renaissance to francophone Africa requires, first, an

understanding of its relationship to France. For many people, the Harlem Renaissance as a movement of self-affirmation had its beginnings in 1919, at a parade in Harlem by the men of the 369th Infantry (Fifteenth Infantry, the Harlem Hellfighters), a predominantly African American regiment in the then-segregated U.S. Army. The men of the 369th had served in France during World War I and had experienced no racial segregation, oppression, bias, or prejudice there. The French had treated the soldiers as equals, an experience the U.S. Army denied them. This valuing of France and French ideas about liberty started the long relationship between the Harlem Renaissance and France. However, the racial equality experienced by African American soldiers blinded some intellectuals and political activists of the Harlem Renaissance to France's colonial policies in Africa, which were oppressive and antithetical to the French liberal tradition. Significantly, many writers and intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance "met" and confronted their African heritage in and through France—through interaction with francophone African intellectuals and politicians who were mostly based in Paris.

In Harlem, there was an expanded awareness and consciousness aptly captured by the idea of the "New Negro," a term that Alain Locke used as the title of the most representative text of the movement, *The New Negro* (1925), which became influential among francophone Africans in France. The New Negro espoused black pride and power, a bold declaration that called into question the oppression of blacks, including colonialism in Africa, and resonated with francophone African politicians and intellectuals. W. E. B. Du Bois, in "The Negro Mind Reaches Out" (a piece in *The New Negro*), spelled out France's relationship with its African colonies. Using the central metaphor of shadow to talk about European colonialism generally, Du Bois portrayed the shadow of France in francophone Africa as a systematic mode of political oppression, economic exploitation, and cultural domination. Du Bois highlighted the paradox of France, with its ideals of equality and liberty, subjugating and suppressing Africans in its colonies. French industry exploited African colonies for the economic development of France. Educational and cultural systems promoted French in the colonies instead of African languages and customs.

Other writers in Harlem produced creative and ethnographic work to represent Africa and its traditions and customs. Magazines and newspapers such

as *Opportunity*, *Crisis*, and Marcus Garvey's *Negro World* published articles and editorials on French colonial policies in Africa, championed the liberation of francophone Africa, and highlighted the problems of Africans under French colonial rule. At times these publications focused on art and aesthetics from francophone Africa. Alfred G. Barnes's article "Negro Art, Past and Present" (in *Opportunity* of May 1926) focused on the francophone African territories of Gabon, Ivory Coast, and Sudan-Niger. Lawrence Buermyer's article "The Negro Spirituals and American Art" focused on the francophone region of the Bushongo and Baluba of francophone Congo (*Opportunity*, 1926). In his article "The Art of the Congo" (*Opportunity* of May 1927), Melville Herskovits examined the francophone territories of the Congo basin in order to comment on the sophistication of African art. Also, publications in Harlem reviewed texts on francophone Africa such as André Gide's *Voyage au Congo* (1927) and *Retour du Tchad* (1928) and Paul Morand's *Magie noire* (1928).

The relationship between Harlem and francophone Africa was partly intellectual. Francophone African writers in the 1930s read the work of writers of the Harlem Renaissance such as Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, James Weldon Johnson, Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, and Sterling Brown in English and in translation. Mercer Cook, an African American professor of French at Howard University, first publicized in the United States the work of French-speaking blacks, among them francophone Africans. Publications by blacks in France, such as *Revue du Monde/Review of the Black World* (1931–1932), *Depeche Africaine* (1928–1930), and *Les Continents* (1924), promoted race consciousness and Afrocentric aesthetics and philosophy. *Revue du Monde/Review of the Black World* published works by writers of the Harlem Renaissance such as Hughes and McKay; excerpted *The New Negro*; and published articles that focused on art, aesthetics, philosophy, and literature of the black diaspora.

Perhaps the most dramatic entry of francophone Africa into the consciousness of Harlem came through a significant personality, René Maran, who lived in France and Africa as a colonial administrator for France; and a significant publication, Maran's novel *Batouala* (1921). *Batouala*, which won Maran a prestigious French literary award, the Prix Goncourt, exposed the exploitative and racist practices of French colonialism in central Africa, the former *Africaine Equatoriale Française*. Publications such as *Opportunity*, *Crisis*, and *Negro World* reviewed Maran's novel

positively. For example, in *Negro World*, Eric Walrond's "Batouala, Art, and Propaganda" (1922) and William H. Ferris's "The Significance of René Maran" (1922, editorial) focused on the political purposes of the novel; Ferris's "World's Ten Greatest Novels: Why René Maran's *Batouala* Won Goncourt Prize; Novels for Propaganda" (1922) and Alain Locke's "The Colonial Literature of France" (1923) provided in-depth analyses of francophone colonial literature in Africa. Maran became an inspirational figure who promoted the Harlem Renaissance in France. His friendship with Alain Locke in the 1920s and 1930s promoted intellectual, aesthetic, and scholarly interest in Africa. Maran participated symbolically in the literary Harlem Renaissance through his contributions to *Opportunity* and *Crisis*. With the Dahomean Kojou Tovalou-Houenou, he edited *Les Continents*, a publication devoted to black cultural, aesthetic, and political concerns. It published works by Harlem's writers, such as Hughes, Cullen, and Locke; published Garvey's speeches; and reported the activities of Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).

Another dimension of the relationship between francophone Africa and the Harlem Renaissance was the international political realm, as represented by the pan-African organization that had been partly conceptualized and realized by Du Bois. It advocated equal rights and political rights for blacks and whites and also called for political freedom, education, and land and economic resources for Africans under colonial rule. This organization fostered relations that emphasized the commonality of the black experience. Paris was the site of the first Pan-African Congress in 1919. Among the participants were Du Bois; Blaise Diagne, the Senegalese and black representative to the French National Assembly; and Gratien Candace, the black deputy from Guadeloupe. At the time of the second Pan-African Congress in 1921, there was a deep ideological fissure in the organization over Du Bois's open call for an end to colonial rule in Africa versus Diagne's advocacy of retaining a French colonial system that recognized the role of Africa within French colonial hegemony. The distrust between Du Bois and Diagne had severe consequences for the pan-African organization. Diagne abandoned it, and with him francophone African leadership and support. The rift also prevented the convening of the fourth Pan-African Congress in 1925. Opposition by colonial powers also hindered the vision of the organization. The Pan-African Congress considered holding its fifth

assembly in Tunis (North Africa), which was then a French colony, but the French government would not allow the congress to be held on francophone African soil, for fear of political turmoil in its other African colonies.

Francophone Africans responded favorably to Marcus Garvey, who in the early 1920s popularized the slogan "back to Africa," promoting ties between African Americans and Africa. Kodjo Tovalou-Houenou, who was based in Paris and was associated with Garvey, sent copies of *Negro World* to Dahomey, and in 1924 created in Paris the Ligue Universelle pour la Défense de la Race Noire, which articulated pan-Negroism as promoted by Garvey's UNIA. The organization later became known as the Comité de Défense de la Race Nègre, and its first president was Lamine Senghor, a cousin of Léopold Senghor. Race consciousness and pride as articulated by Garvey and other figures of the Harlem Renaissance permeated the work of francophone African writers, who began to define themselves in terms of their race—a development that later was transformed into the full-fledged *négritude* (negritude) movement.

In fact, the negritude movement was the most significant contribution of Harlem's aesthetics to francophone Africa. Harlem provided the fundamental philosophical and aesthetic concepts of negritude, and the founders of the movement—Aimé Césaire, Léopold Senghor, and Léon Gontran-Damas—spoke of their indebtedness to the Harlemite writers of the 1930s, mostly Hughes, Cullen, Toomer, and McKay. Senghor openly credited McKay as the spiritual founder of negritude. McKay's novel *Banjo* was a favorite of many francophone African writers, who in turn explored its themes and style in their own work. The expressiveness and spontaneity of Harlem's aesthetics influenced francophone African writers such as Senghor, Birago Diop, Sembene Ousmane, and Ousmane Soce Diop, author of *Mirages du Paris* (1937). Negritude poetry, in particular Senghor's oeuvre, gave an important place to feelings, music, song, and rhythm—elements that came directly from Harlem's aesthetics. Negritude writers learned from the writers of the Harlem Renaissance about the power of poetry for self-expression, self-exploration, and social change. In addition to this literary influence, the central tenets of negritude were based on Garvey's black nationalism—which was opposed to racial assimilation and prized a pure, unadulterated African culture—and on the philosophical underpinnings of the pan-African movement. Thus the themes of self-assertion, rebellion, and

racial pride articulated by the Harlem Renaissance influenced francophone African writers in their conceptualization of negritude aesthetics and the eventual political mobilization against French colonial rule in Africa.

PATRICK S. BERNARD

See also Batouala; Césaire, Aimé; Crisis, The; Damas, Léon; Fifteenth Infantry; Garvey, Marcus; Herskovits, Melville; Locke, Alain; Maran, René; McKay, Claude; Negritude; Negro World; Opportunity; Pan-Africanism; Pan-African Congresses; Senghor, Léopold

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Francophone Caribbean and the Harlem Renaissance

The influence of the Harlem Renaissance on the cultural dynamics of the francophone Caribbean is inestimable. Franco-Caribbean literature was born with negritude (*négritude*), and negritude was a diasporic offshoot of the Harlem Renaissance. World War I and the international political events in its aftermath brought African Americans and French-speaking blacks together in Paris, the capital of France. Besides black soldiers, many musicians and intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance made their way to France.

In this *après-guerre* France, jazz and primitivism became the rage of Paris, perhaps in an attempt to block out the horrors wrought by the war. And blackness was linked to cosmopolitanism, becoming a source of creative inspiration in literature and the arts among Europeans, with their exoticist tracts and tableaux, and cultural workers of the Harlem Renaissance.

W. E. B. Du Bois, editor of *Crisis* and author of the classic *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), was among the first of the Harlem Renaissance coterie to coalesce with elite francophones of color. With the help of Blaise Diagne (the Senegalese deputy in the French parliament) and Gratien Candace, Du Bois was able to organize the first Pan-African Congress, held in Paris from 19 to 21 February 1919. Because Du Bois was (in the words of David Levering Lewis) the “impresario of pan-Africanism,” his theories on the “talented tenth,” on the uneasy symbiosis of blackness and Americanness, and on the cultural histories of Africa and its diaspora found currency among a cadre of elite francophones in Paris at the time, some of whom were committed to reconciling France’s discourse on humanism with its slipshod colonial practices. Such encounters helped make the worldview of French-speaking blacks more global and also expand their understanding of racial inequality and oppression. Hitherto, they had lacked a language imbued with the complexities of race and racialism to articulate the malaise many of them experienced in France. They were citizens of France but—curiously, considering the color blindness implied by the French ideal of *liberté, fraternité, and égalité*—they were treated as outsiders.

Du Bois’s vigorous anticolonialism and anti-imperialism were moderated with respect to France. His admiration for the principles of Jacobin France and his own personal ability to exist in France unfettered by the “accursed veil” clouded his radicalism. Nevertheless, the tenuous alliance that he established with these *métropolitains de couleur* under the rubric of the “Pan African Association” proved no match for the fruits offered by the French policy of assimilation. His vision of a black international community eventually came to be considered “dangerously internationalist” and threatening to French colonial policy, with its *mission civilisatrice* and its assimilationist dicta. Most elite francophones believed that France held out the only hope for the cultural advancement of the “backward races in Africa,” as the rhetoric on civilization went.

Marcus Garvey, with his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), also cast his eye on France. He even channeled funds to the fledgling newspaper *Dépêche Africaine*, whose colonial reformist radicalism perturbed French government officials sufficiently to make them begin a campaign of dogged monitoring. However, Garvey’s vision of global black solidarity and “Africa for the Africans” failed to appeal widely to *les français noirs*. His failure to overcome the idea of a color-blind France is perhaps more obvious than Du Bois’s, as Kojo Tovalou, editor of the newspaper *Les Continents*, emphasized during a visit to UNIA’s headquarters in New York in 1924: “Mr. President Garvey . . . France is the only country that does not have race prejudice, but struggles for its disappearance.” In the end, colonial reforms, which would facilitate assimilation into Frenchness rather than the eventual decolonization proposed by both Garvey and Du Bois, were the marching orders followed by French-speaking blacks. As the editors of *Dépêche Africaine* definitively surmised, “the methods of colonization by civilized nations are far from perfect; but colonization itself is a human and necessary project.”

However, the Harlem Renaissance had its most lasting impact not in politics but in the cultural realm, particularly in literature. In salons set up in Paris by the author René Maran (who was a winner of the Prix Goncourt) and in Clamart, a suburb of Paris, by Andrée, Jane, and Paulette Nardal, and in the pages of newspapers, reviews, and magazines like *Continents*, *Dépêche Africaine*, and *Revue du Monde Noir*, francophone and Harlem Renaissance writers, intellectuals, and journalists discussed issues of race, culture, identity, and internationalism. Although jazz was in vogue, literary ideas and ideals professed in such texts as Alain Locke’s anthology *The New Negro*, Langston Hughes’s poetry, and Claude McKay’s novel *Banjo* would become the cultural legacy exported to the French West Indies in the years preceding World War II.

Black self-expression, racial pride, and cultural exploration embodied in the works mentioned previously instigated calls for an authentic black literature in the French Caribbean rather than the usual imitation of French literary masters. “Race-conscious literature” became the battle cry. Langston Hughes’ proletarian literature, lacking the exoticist themes characteristic of McKay’s *Banjo*, served as a model. Like the New Negro in America, francophone writers also endeavored to invoke a “race spirit,” in accordance with Alain Locke’s theories in his introduction to *The New Negro*, to create a francophone New Negro in a new world.

The New Negro spawned the term *néo-nègre* in the francophone context—a concept that would later be transformed into the cultural movement *négritude*. The most readily identifiable proponents of the francophone New Negro movement that began in France are Aimé Césaire of Martinique, Léon-Gontran Damas of Guyana, and Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal. The ideological content of *néo-nègre* and *négritude* were conceived at Maran's salon and the salon in Clamart and on the pages of *Revue du Monde Noir* under the stewardship of Paulette and Jane Nardal. The poet Aimé Césaire coined the neologism in *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1936). He, Damas, and Senghor—as attendees at those salons and as avid readers of *Revue du Monde Noir*, whose six issues were decidedly diasporic in content, including translations of poetry and prose by Harlem Renaissance writers—would make their distinctive marks on this burgeoning movement in the francophone world in subsequent literary and philosophical works.

Although *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* was neither conceived nor written in Martinique, Césaire's *pays natal* became the muse for his reflections on the cultural vapidness of the Antilles, a condition he saw as caused by French colonial imposition and solipsism. This cultural void was a result of a defective system of formation whereby Antilleans were “crammed to splitting open with white morality, white culture, white education, white prejudice,” as the poet Étienne Léro wrote in the surrealist manifesto *Légitime défense* (1932), and succinctly represented in the deleterious phrase *nos ancêtres les gaulois*. Also in this text, in the fashion of Langston Hughes, Césaire proposes to become the *porte-parole* of the proletariat, where his “tongue” as poet “will serve those miseries which have no tongue”; “his voice the liberty of those who founder in the dungeons of despair.”

And so as another world war loomed, Aimé Césaire, his philosopher wife Suzanne Césaire, and the Marxist and surrealist René Ménénil returned to Martinique. With their newfound understanding of Africa, a global race consciousness, and a profound respect for Haiti (where black consciousness directly manifested itself as a result of the Haitian revolution and international isolation through indigenism and such writers as Jean-Price-Mars and the anthropologist Anténor Firmin), they undertook a mission—to urge Antillean artists to shed cultural sterility through their literary and cultural review *Tropiques*.

Tropiques emerged in the Antillean cultural landscape in April 1941. René Ménénil had already taken

West Indian writers of color to task some nine years earlier in *Légitime défense*. Describing works by these authors as “bored and boring; depressed and depressing,” he suggested that they use the New “American” Negro writer as an inspiration for what Caribbean literature could become. In his debut essay “Naissance de notre art” (1941) in *Tropiques*, Ménénil continued to accuse Martinican artists in particular of mediocrity, of coming to “courts of Culture empty-handed . . . with borrowed graces.” In the first anniversary issue of *Tropiques*, Suzanne Césaire lamented, in the tellingly titled essay “Malaise d'une civilisation” (1942), that Martinican cultural workers lived inauthentically, in imitation, and hence had produced no “original” styles.

Both Césaire's and Ménénil's criticisms echoed Paulette Nardal's prophetic words in “The Awakening of Race Consciousness among Black Students” (1932), published in the last issue of *Revue du Monde Noir*. Nardal recognized that, because of the processes of French acculturation and assimilation, Caribbean writers were uneasy in their black skin. This malaise led to feelings of inferiority and made their creative works mere “tributaries of Latin culture.” Evoking the Harlem Renaissance as a model and citing Langston Hughes, Nardal concluded that the “Americans, having thrown off all inferiority complexes, tranquilly ‘express their individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame.’” This purging of inferiority complexes and coming to terms with the particularity of the “land, race, and economic forms, etc.” of the Caribbean, as Ménénil writes in “Naissance,” would allow for the development of fecund, inimitable cultural productions. Such was the challenge of the Negro writer in the francophone Caribbean *entre deux guerres*; the road map for the realization of this cultural awakening was the Harlem Renaissance.

TRACY DENEAN SHARPLEY-WHITING

See also Césaire, Aimé; Damas, Léon; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Garvey, Marcus; Hughes, Langston; Locke, Alain; Maran, René; McKay, Claude; *Négritude*; *New Negro*, *The*; Pan-African Congresses; Senghor, Léopold

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Frank, Waldo

In *Our America* (1919), Waldo Frank claimed, as had Van Wyck Brooks in *America's Coming of Age* (1915), that America was culturally split between genteel idealism (highbrow) and material obsession (lowbrow). In Frank's words, modern America was "externalized." What was most needed was an awakened sense of cohesion and purpose, a sense of collective identity, that only the artist and the intellectual could provide. Initially, in the first issue of *Seven Arts* (a journal Frank founded with Brooks, Floyd Dell, and James Oppenheim) and in an essay titled "Emerging Greatness," Frank saw in Sherwood Anderson this promise of a renaissance of the imagination that would help create a new sense of "national self consciousness." However, if Anderson ultimately proved disappointing, Frank detected in Jean Toomer "the spiritual power to hoist himself wholly into a more essential plane: the plane in which the materials of the phenomenal world are re-created into pure aesthetic forms." As a result, Toomer, who thought that "art had a sort of religious function," felt that he and Frank were united "in the dual task of creating an American literature."

Hutchinson (1995) has argued that the Harlem Renaissance is best understood as a search for an American national identity commonly pursued and contested by black and white intellectuals: "The issue of American national identity was, in any case, the dominant problematic structuring the literary field

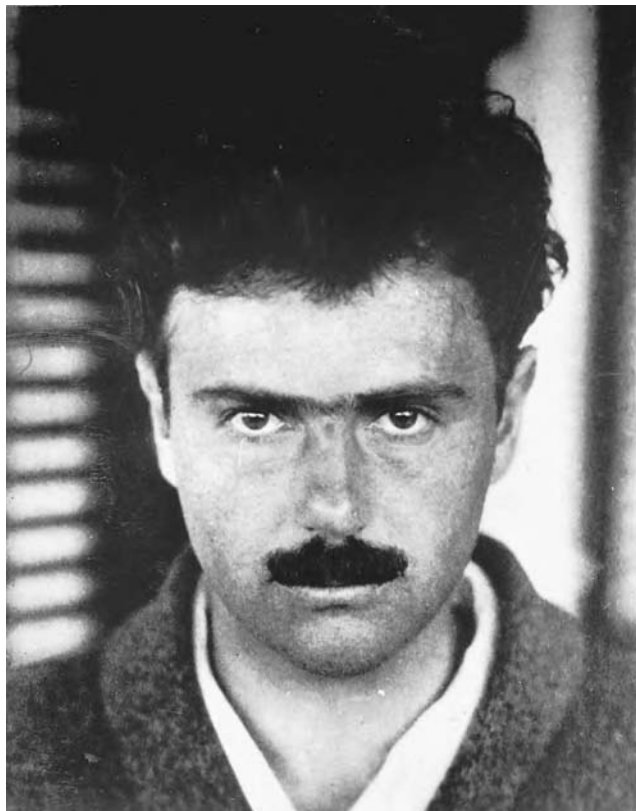
relevant to the Harlem Renaissance. . . . The attempt, overall, came down to an effort to expand the notion of 'the people' who compose the national community." Through his relationship with many of the young intellectuals who made up what Blake (1990) called the "beloved community," Frank was indirectly linked to the cultural renaissance symbolically focused in Harlem, but Frank was most directly linked with the imaginative concerns of African Americans through the person of Jean Toomer.

In 1921 Toomer accepted the job of acting principal of a small black industrial school in Sparta, Georgia. This experience led him to write several stories that would eventually make up *Cane*, the novel many people consider to be the greatest artistic achievement of the Harlem Renaissance. One year later, Toomer returned to the South (this time to Spartanburg, South Carolina), together with Frank—who, after having spent time in Virginia and the deep South, was drawn by Toomer's insistence that the South and the southern Negro offered "the opportunity for a vivid symbolism" for a world fast becoming homogenized by "machines, motor cars, phonographs, [and] movies." Out of this experience came Toomer's *Cane* and Frank's *Holiday*. Each novel was unquestionably the work of its author, but the two novels would not have been the same without the other's criticism and encouragement. In Toomer's "Bona and Paul," for example, Frank found "a certain loss of intensity—a certain amount of mere writing" in much of the imagery. But "Kabnis," he suggested, was "quite perfect as an expression of the man who wrote it." And Frank, whose novel centers on a lynching in a small southern town, eagerly asked for Toomer's critical comments: "I shall send you the other parts in quick order. You can help me INES-TIMABLY, Jean, if you will go through the whole thing carefully—take what time you need for that and mark all the 'stiffnesses' and give me your suggestions of improvements." Even after the publication of *Holiday*, Frank continued to consult Toomer regarding the validity of the critical comments.

Frank's aphorism "The person is the individual made real" expresses the code he shared with Jean Toomer in their attempt to overcome, through art, the alienation they saw in modern life.

Biography

Waldo Frank was born on 25 August 1889. He studied at De Witt Clinton High School, New York (1902–1906);



Waldo Frank. (Brown Brothers.)

at a private preparatory school in Lausanne, Switzerland (1906–1907); and at Yale University (1907–1911). He was a reporter for the *New York Evening Post* and *New York Times* (1911–1913), an associate editor for *Seven Arts* (1916–1917), a contributing editor for *New Masses* (1926), chairman of the League of American Writers (1936), and a delegate to the Congress of Revolutionary Writers and Artists of Mexico in Mexico City (1937–1938). His awards included membership in the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Frank died on 9 January 1967.

MARK HELBLING

See also Anderson, Sherwood; Cane; Toomer, Jean

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Frazier, E. Franklin

E. Franklin Frazier was one of the leading cultural critics during the maturation of the Harlem Renaissance. This black American—who would go on to become chairman of the department of sociology at Howard University, president of the American Sociological Society (later Association), and one of the most acclaimed authorities on the black family, the black middle class, and race relations—established a reputation during the “Negro movement” as someone who wanted to combine the essential insights of two diametrically opposed orientations: integration and separatism. During the 1920s, Frazier’s popular articles were published in *Southern Workman*, *Crisis*, *Opportunity*, and *Nation*; his scholarly articles appeared in *Journal of Social Forces*, *Howard Review*, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, and *Current History*. At the first *Opportunity* fete in May 1925, Frazier’s essay on social equality was awarded first prize—a tribute to his critical acuity. As early as 1925, Frazier published an article, “Durham: Capital

of the Black Middle Class," in Alain Locke's classic anthology *The New Negro*. In this essay, Frazier argued unequivocally, as Moses has observed, for the necessity of "black economic self-reliance as a basis for ethnic regeneration of black Americans" (1990, 108). Three years later, in an essay entitled "La Bourgeois Noire," which appeared in V. F. Calverton's *Anthology of American Negro Literature*, Frazier went so far as to applaud Marcus Garvey's movement for its attempt to develop "nationalistic aims with an economic program" (108). In other words, Frazier thought that the black American question was not solely economic; for Frazier, as Cruse observed, the question "was, and is, also a cultural one" (1967, 155). The Harlem Renaissance lacked directionality, Frazier suggested, at least partly because it represented a type of cultural nationalism that was supported by white rather than black capitalists. Furthermore, Lewis has argued with regard to the New Negro movement that Frazier "exposed its deficiencies from the vantage point of one of its presumed agents" (1994, 173). Frazier succinctly summed up the shortcomings of the Negro Movement when he argued that "it knows nothing of . . . Work and Wealth" (181).

Although Frazier preached a variant of economic nationalism, his views on black cultural nationalism were far more complex. As Platt (1991) has noted, Frazier argued that the African past had no relevance for black culture in the United States. Nonetheless, Frazier thought that it would be good to nurture black racial identity by teaching and developing courses in black history, and by the artistic exploitation of themes from the vital black folk culture of the United States. As a consequence, Frazier abhorred some black peoples' imitation of whites—the use of skin-bleaching creams, the vogue of hair straightening, and other current fashions. Still, he argued that social equality would eventually destroy both racial identity and racial consciousness. In short, Frazier thought that integration and eventual assimilation were inevitable.

Frazier's critiques were an integral part of the New Negro movement during the 1920s. Thus, although his professional relationship with the sociologist Charles S. Johnson would eventually sour in the 1930s, during the Harlem Renaissance the two had a mutually beneficial relationship. In fact, during the years 1924 to 1929 Johnson published eight of Frazier's articles in the National Urban League's organ *Opportunity*; three of these articles were the genesis of some of Frazier's later work on the black family. Subsequent historians

and cultural critics, such as Cruse and Platt, have applauded Frazier's work during the 1920s. For example, Cruse notes that Frazier knew "The unique literary and cultural revival of the 1920s turned out to be a directionless movement . . . because it was divorced from the politics and economics of Negro culture as a group concept" (156). Platt has written that during the Harlem Renaissance, "At stake was the content of culture, which, Frazier argued, could not be separated from issues of class and politics" (128).

At least one critic, in contradistinction to Cruse's and Platt's analyses of Frazier's nationalist cultural examinations, has described Frazier as an assimilationist; however, this label ignores the critiques that Frazier wrote during the 1920s. It is more likely that Frazier's writings during this period were characterized by an ambiguity and openness that left them



E. Franklin Frazier. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

subject to more than one interpretation. As mentioned previously, Frazier's writings were inspired by his yearning to combine the insights of two opposed positions—color-blind universalism and racially exclusive nationalism. In other words, he desired the integration of diverse racial groups on an equal basis, but without the complete loss of each group's own cultural identity. Thus, although Frazier believed that the world's races and peoples would eventually merge, he was not an assimilationist during the 1920s. Throughout his career, he felt that in the foreseeable future it would be necessary for blacks to reconstruct a communal and institutional life capable of accomplishing the arduous task of black uplift—a mission that he felt the artists of Harlem had failed to perform.

Biography

Edward Franklin Frazier was born on 24 September 1894, in Baltimore, Maryland. He studied at public schools in Baltimore; Howard University, Washington, D.C. (B.A., 1916); Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts (M.A., 1920); New York School of Social Work (research fellow, 1920–1921); American-Scandinavian Foundation (fellow, 1921–1922); and the University of Chicago (Ph.D., 1931). He taught at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama (1916–1917); Saint Paul's Normal and Industrial School, Lawrenceville, Virginia (1917–1918); Baltimore High School (1918–1919); Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia (1922–1927); Atlanta School of Social Work (1922–1927); Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee (1929–1934); and Howard University (1934–1962). Frazier was director of the Harlem Riot Commission (1935), a Guggenheim fellow (1940), consultant for *An American Dilemma* (1942), president of the American Sociological Association (1948), and chief of the Division of Applied Social Sciences in UNESCO (1951–1953). He died on 16 May 1962.

VERNON J. WILLIAMS

See also Calverton, V. F.; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; New Negro, The; New Negro Movement; Opportunity

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Fuller, Meta Warrick

Meta Vaux Warrick is sometimes seen as a precursor of the Harlem Renaissance. Although she did not live in New York, she was inspired by the ideals of

W. E. B. Du Bois, whom she met in Paris. Her long career began at a time when the art world was just beginning to open up to women and lasted until her death at age ninety.

Warrick grew up in a comfortable middle-class family in Philadelphia and later spent summers on Martha's Vineyard. In 1894, she won a three-year scholarship to the Pennsylvania School for Industrial Arts. In the fall of 1899, she traveled to Paris, where she studied with Rodin, met several other important artists, and exhibited at Samuel Bing's Art Nouveau Gallery. She also studied in Rome at the Colarossi Academy. Later she was included in shows in Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Washington, D.C.

After returning to the United States in 1902, she became engaged with issues affecting blacks. The following year, she made a plaque commemorating Emperor Menelik II of Abyssinia. She married the first black psychiatrist in America, Dr. Solomon Fuller, who was originally from Liberia. They moved to Framingham, Massachusetts, where she set up a studio. In 1907, Meta Warrick Fuller became the first black female artist hired by the federal government.

All of the work Fuller did before 1910 was destroyed in a fire. Her surviving work, however, reflects her increasing involvement in black culture. She was impressed by an anticolonial movement called Ethiopianism, which combined black American traditions with those of Africa. That movement inspired Fuller's best-known sculpture, *Ethiopia Awakening* (1914, or more probably 1921). Although this work was made before the heyday of the Harlem Renaissance, it merges the two cultures—African and black American. The lower half represents a wrapped mummy, and the upper half is an Egyptian princess who is very much alive. The theme of birth as a metaphor for artistic creation is used here in the context of the legendary land of the queen of Sheba, who is considered black by tradition.

In 1917, blacks protested against the lynching of Mary Turner, a black woman from Georgia who had been accused of plotting the murder of a white man. The protests were publicized in the magazine *Crisis*. To commemorate this event, in 1919 Fuller produced *Mary Turner*, subtitled *Protest against Mob Violence*. It shows a woman quietly gazing down at heads embedded in the painted plaster from which it was modeled. Like *Ethiopia Awakening*, although in a very different style, this sculpture depicts a woman immobilized below the waist (here, because she is

embedded in the material itself) but able to move above the waist.

Fuller's *Talking Skull* (1937) is a contemplative work, showing an African man meditating on a skull. It reflects the artist's lifelong interest in themes of death as well as birth and rebirth.

By the 1950s, following the march of African Americans' progress in the United States, Fuller was creating several works inspired by the civil rights movement. In 1957, the Afro-American Women's Council in Washington, D.C., commissioned her to execute ten sculptures of famous black women. Fuller died eleven years later, in 1968.

Biography

Meta V. W. Fuller was born on 9 June 1877, into a comfortable Philadelphia family. She is considered a precursor of the Harlem Renaissance, and although she lived and worked around Boston, she was sympathetic to the ideals of the renaissance. After graduating from art school, she studied in Paris, where she



Meta Warrick Fuller. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

Fuller, Meta Warrick

met and was influenced politically and culturally by W. E. B. Du Bois and artistically mainly by Rodin. When she returned to the United States, Fuller became involved in black issues, which are reflected in the themes of her sculpture. She died in 1968, at age ninety.

Laurie Adams

See also Artists; Visual Arts

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Talking Skull. 1937. (Museum of Afro-American History, Boston.)

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Garland Fund

The Garland Fund—so named for its benefactor, Charles Garland, but more properly called the American Fund for Public Service—was unique among American philanthropies in the 1920s and 1930s. The fund was directly set up to counter the ruling class's domination, especially in education, labor organizing, the media, and race relations.

Ironically, radicalism was aided by a rising stock market. The fund had an initial capitalization of \$800,000; and not quite twenty years later its directors had disbursed almost \$2 million. With the libertarian Roger Baldwin, founder of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), as secretary and the socialist Norman Thomas as president, the fund's board provided an unusually cooperative meeting ground of the American left. Almost every radical cause and campaign applied to the Garland Fund for money during the 1920s and 1930s, including striking workers, the American Birth Control League, and the ACLU.

Among the first applicants to the Garland Fund was A. Philip Randolph, who sought a loan to help his struggling journal, *The Messenger*. A loan of \$500 was made by the fund to the paper in 1923, followed by a grant of \$2,000. The fund lent money to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) the same year and later made a donation to its antilynching campaign. The next year, the National Urban League received \$1,000 to fund a study titled "Negro Relations to the Trade Unions." When A. Philip Randolph was initially contacted to head the effort to establish the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in 1925, the Garland Fund voted to give \$1,200 for the

production of organizational materials. Eventually, the fund gave \$11,200 for the brotherhood's general organizing fund, enough to pay the salaries of several field organizers.

At the same meeting, the fund's board voted \$26,000 to NAACP to defend Dr. Ossian Sweet, who had been accused of murder as a result of a riot in the all-white Detroit neighborhood into which his family attempted to move after buying a home. The money, which was conditional on the raising of matching funds, led eventually to the establishment of a permanent defense fund by NAACP. It was a very important aid in a developing strategy to obtain legal equality. Money from the Garland Fund also made possible, in 1927, the pursuit of *Nixon v. Herndon* that resulted at least temporarily in the invalidation of the all-white primary.

The influence of the Garland Fund was not welcome in all quarters. In 1926, Robert L. Vann, publisher of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, attacked James Weldon Johnson in print, accusing Johnson—who was a member of the fund's board—of occupying palatial offices on Fifth Avenue and of using the fund's money as a personal slush fund.

Johnson's membership on the fund's board, however, paid dividends for NAACP. In 1930, after the stock market crash reduced income, the fund decided on a major investment in a strategy of NAACP—a legal campaign to achieve racial equality. The NAACP's decision in 1931 to focus its efforts on ending segregation in schools paved the way for the eventual landmark decision by the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. The Garland Fund had given some \$30,000 to the campaign during the 1930s.

The Garland Fund also aided other campaigns for black equality in America: the successful appeal of Lloyd L. Gaines to attend the University of Missouri, the defense of the Scottsboro boys, and the interracial Southern Tenant Farmers Union.

After slowing its activities in 1937 and 1938, the fund finally liquidated itself in June 1941, a victim of its success and of the inability of board members to overcome factional political differences in order to continue to work together.

STEPHEN BURWOOD

See also Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; Johnson, James Weldon; Messenger, The; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; National Urban League; Philanthropy and Philanthropic Organizations; Pittsburgh Courier; Randolph, A. Philip; Vann, Robert L.

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Garvey, Marcus

Marcus Garvey was the dominant African American figure in the era of the Harlem Renaissance, especially from about 1919 to 1925. His Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) was the largest African American mass movement ever. More than any single individual, he provided the radical political underpinning to the Harlem Renaissance, known as the New Negro movement. Garvey also significantly affected the purely literary and cultural aspects of the Harlem Renaissance through his encouragement of literature and the arts. From his headquarters on 135th Street in Harlem, Garvey presided over a multifaceted and far-flung empire that encompassed millions of followers

and sympathizers all over the world. There were about 1,200 branches of the UNIA spread over more than forty countries, from Australia to the United States. Most of these branches and most members were in the United States. New York City, as befit the headquarters, had the largest single branch, with 35,000 to 40,000 members.

Garvey arrived in the United States in March 1916, after several early years of agitational work in Costa Rica, Panama, Jamaica, and Europe. He had led a printers' strike in Jamaica. He had published newspapers and fought for better treatment for the Caribbean immigrants in Costa Rica and Panama. He had traveled through several European countries and had worked in London for an important pan-African journal, *Africa Times and Orient Review*.

Garvey was born in 1887 in St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica. As a youth, he excelled at the printing trade. He also participated in anticolonialist political activity and in the nascent Jamaican labor movement. He founded UNIA in 1914 shortly after his return home from four years of travel. The organization was a response to the suffering that Garvey encountered everywhere among the African masses. Garvey came to the United States in March 1916, after UNIA had been active for almost two years in Jamaica. His immediate purpose was to raise funds for his work in Jamaica. He had hoped to meet Booker T. Washington, founder of Tuskegee Institute, the most famous institution of African American education, but Washington, whom he admired, died a few months before Garvey's arrival.

Garvey toured the United States and Canada in 1916 and 1917. On his return to his new base in Harlem, he joined a corps of open-air speakers and stepladder orators who abounded on Harlem's street corners. Harlem had only recently become the major African American section of New York City, but by the time of Garvey's arrival, less than a decade after its transformation into an African American enclave, it was already well on the way to becoming a veritable capital of the African world. Its population was cosmopolitan, with recent immigrants from the South accounting for about half its population and immigrants from the Caribbean making up 20 percent.

Garvey was by this time a polished speaker. He had won a prize for public speaking in Jamaica and had spoken at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park in London. He quickly built a following on the streets and moved into a rented hall when his audiences became too large for the street. By 1918 he had made the decision to relocate his headquarters from Kingston, Jamaica,

to Harlem. He incorporated the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League, as the organization was officially called, and moved ahead with great speed. His newspaper, *Negro World*, appeared in 1918. It would soon be the most widely circulated newspaper in the African world. It would also be one of the best. Its editors over the next few years would include some of African America's most talented journalists: T. Thomas Fortune, a former aide to Booker T. Washington and the generally acknowledged "dean" of African American journalists; John Edward Bruce ("Bruce Grit"), perhaps second only to Fortune in the hall of African American journalistic fame; Amy Jacques Garvey, the talented wife of Marcus Garvey; William H. Ferris, author of a two-volume work *The African Abroad*, who had a B.A. from Yale and an M.A. from Harvard in journalism; and Eric Walrond, author of *Tropic Death*, one of the outstanding collections of short stories of the Harlem Renaissance.

At the end of World War I in November 1918, Garvey could already attract a crowd of 5,000 to a meeting celebrating the armistice. In this year he also established the Negro Factories Corporation, which in turn established restaurants; a millinery factory, black doll factory, tailoring establishment, hotel, trucking business, and job printing press; and other enterprises in Harlem. By the early 1920s the Negro Factories Corporation was employing more than 1,000 people. In 1919, only three years after his arrival in the United States, Garvey—who was then thirty-two years old—began his most spectacular undertaking, the Black Star Line Steamship Company. This steamship line was plagued with difficulties and eventually collapsed, but its ships had sailed up and down the eastern seaboard of the United States and to several Caribbean islands and Central America. The line's appearance was everywhere met with jubilant demonstrations from African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans, who greeted it as an expression of hope for a suffering people.

In 1920 Garvey held the largest convention in African American history to that time. UNIA's First International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World met on 1 August 1920 at Madison Square Garden in New York, with 25,000 people in attendance—an overflow crowd. Delegates came from many countries. After the ceremonial opening, the deliberations continued at the organization's Liberty Hall in Harlem for the rest of the month.

Garvey was by now the best-known figure in the African world. The king of Swaziland is said to have

admitted that he knew of only two African Americans, namely Marcus Garvey and Jack Johnson, the heavy-weight boxing champion. Garvey's exploits were being reported, often with exaggeration and even hysteria, in the newspapers of Europe and farther afield. British and other colonial governments were banning his newspaper and imprisoning his followers in an attempt to curb his influence. The U.S. government kept him under intense surveillance. By 1919 J. Edgar Hoover, later famous as head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), had begun plotting to have Garvey deported, a plot that was realized in 1927. In 1919 Garvey also survived an attempted assassination said to have been instigated by a district attorney in New York.

Meanwhile Garvey's physical presence in Harlem had become inescapable. His weekly meetings at Liberty Hall on 138th Street attracted thousands. UNIA and the Black Star Line boasted some of the best choirs and orchestras in New York, and UNIA's convention parades were spectacular affairs, with numerous brass bands, uniformed auxiliaries of UNIA, and thousands of spectators. The opening parade of the convention of 1920 is said to have been ten miles long. Garvey rode in an open car, wearing the plumed hat and military uniform favored by powerful leaders of the day. By contrast, his day-to-day attire could be plain and even shabby on occasion.

Garvey's physical presence was matched by his ideological presence. Harlem was an area of radical ideas and influential personalities. Between World War I and 1920 A. Philip Randolph published the socialist magazine *The Messenger*. Hubert H. Harrison, a "race man" and sometime socialist, published *The Voice* and in 1917 founded the Liberty League of Negro Americans. Cyril Briggs led the African Blood Brotherhood. He published the magazine *Crusader* and led a small cadre into the Workers (Communist) Party. Downtown, on the white side of New York, the integrationist and exponent of protest politics W. E. B. Du Bois published *Crisis*, which was the organ of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and African America's largest magazine.

Garvey distinguished himself from this crowded field by championing the ideology of African nationalism, which in due course would become known as Garveyism. Like Booker T. Washington he felt that Africa's descendants should become economically self-reliant. He went much farther than Washington, however, in eschewing financial assistance from whites, in building a racially exclusive organization, and in

adopting a confrontational attitude toward the white power structure.

There were three facets to his nationalist ideology: “race first,” self-reliance, and nationhood. “Race first” was a term used earlier by Hubert H. Harrison, who later joined forces with Garvey for a while. It suggested that African people must put their racial self-interest first. Garvey thought that despite the class difference among Africa’s descendants, they were all beset by the problem of race, which therefore became a common denominator. He hoped to turn the disability of race into a positive factor by rallying his followers around the reality that they had in common. By politically organizing around the concept of race, he would turn it into a powerful force for mobilization and empowerment.

Only people of African descent could join UNIA. African descent was defined liberally to include people of mixed African and other races, as long as they acknowledged and identified with their African origin. Garvey was hostile to those for whom light skin encouraged disdain for their darker brethren. Although he recruited the darker masses like none other, there was a fair representation of members of all hues within the organization.

Race first meant that African people should see beauty in themselves. Racially demeaning ads for beauty products were frowned on, and Garveyites were encouraged to display racially appropriate pictures in their homes. Garvey’s framed essay, “African Fundamentalism,” was a favorite wall decoration. Race first also meant putting the racial interest first in literature, historical writing, religion, and every sphere of life. It did not mean unwarranted antagonism toward other races, but Garvey was adamant that all other peoples put their racial self-interest first and that African peoples must learn to aggressively pursue theirs. He therefore urged his followers to scrutinize critically the works of other historians on the African past. He argued that other historians could never write with true love or feeling for the African. Garvey’s Afrocentric vision led him to challenge the assertions of European historians that King Tut, whose tomb was discovered in Egypt in 1922, was white.

Race first also meant that God had to be depicted as black. People have always depicted their gods in their own image and likeness, Garvey argued, and African people should not be exceptions to that rule. Race first also made necessary independent media capable of injecting the perspectives of the race into the

marketplace of ideas. UNIA’s *Negro World* performed this task admirably.

It was in literature and the arts that race first had the most direct impact on the Harlem Renaissance, which was essentially a literary and cultural movement. By the time that the renaissance became fully conscious of itself in the mid-1920s, Garvey and UNIA had already anticipated its activity by several years. *Negro World* was UNIA’s single most important contribution to the renaissance. Under the direction of Hubert H. Harrison, it introduced the first regular book review section in an African American publication. From the early 1920s it published “Poetry for the People,” a section that showcased the poems, both good and bad, of hundreds of contributors. Important literary figures such as Zora Neale Hurston and important political figures such as T. Albert Marryshow of Grenada and Kobina Sekyi of Ghana were among the aspiring poets, as was Garvey. Poetic submissions were supplemented by contributions on poetics (usually entitled “What Is Poetry?”), music, drama, and the like. In the period 1920 to 1925 *Negro World* was in all likelihood the most important literary outlet for pan-African writing. It also pioneered literary competitions, later a notable feature of the renaissance. With a weekly publication schedule and a circulation much larger than that of Du Bois’s *Crisis*, *Negro World* reached more readers in more countries and published more aspiring writers than many of its rivals combined. Most of Garvey’s own poetry was published from 1927 to the late 1930s, after the heyday of literary activity by *Negro World*. His collected poems are enough to fill a work of respectable size, *The Poetical Works of Marcus Garvey*.

Garvey’s second major idea, self-reliance, was exemplified by the Negro Factories Corporation and the Black Star Line, as well as in *Negro World*, which was in addition to everything else a successful business. His famous admonition “do for self” later became a staple in the ideas of the Nation of Islam, led by a former Garveyite, Elijah Muhammad.

Nationhood postulated the building of independent political power, whether in the United States or abroad. Garvey’s ambitious Universal Political Union attempted to enlist the voting strength of his followers to influence politics in the United States. It was, however, unable to develop to its full potential because of Garvey’s imprisonment in 1925 and the consequent slow decline of UNIA.

By the early 1920s Marcus Garvey was indisputably the most powerful leader in African America and the

pan-African world. His UNIA had approximately 1,200 branches (called divisions) in more than forty countries. There were divisions in thirty-eight states, with the South being far and away the most intensely organized region. Louisiana alone had seventy-four branches, according to surviving records, and in actuality the number was somewhat larger. Large cities throughout North America had large branches with thousands of members, and these branches owned substantial amounts of real estate. The cities included New York, Chicago, Detroit, Boston, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Toronto, Montreal, Miami, and New Orleans.

Garvey's success and his well-defined ideology brought forth a host of adversaries. Some, such as communists and integrationists, opposed him on ideological grounds. Communists preached the primacy of class over race and saw the united workers of the world as the most potent force for political change. Garvey countered that white workers were as infected as anyone else with the virus of racism and that while interracial working-class solidarity might be good as an ideal, it was premature to adopt this as a practical strategy to lift the African race out of oppression. Integrationists, led by NAACP, resented Garvey's ability to mobilize a vast number of people and to amass more money than the integrationists could, despite their access to white philanthropy. Du Bois became the major unofficial spokesman for the integrationist group. Du Bois, who had been trained at Harvard and was still fresh from a serious conflict with Garvey's mentor Booker T. Washington, considered Garvey poorly educated, uncouth, and dishonest. He described Garvey as black and ugly and called him a lunatic or a traitor. Garvey responded with similar vitriol, suggesting that Du Bois hated the small amount of African blood that flowed through his veins.

The most damaging of Garvey's opponents, however, were the European colonialist governments and the United States. Colonial powers such as Great Britain and France banned *Negro World*, arrested Garveyites, sometimes prevented Garvey from landing in their territories, and generally tried to frustrate the work of UNIA. The United States arrayed its security apparatus against Garvey, planted agents in his organization, and eventually sent him to prison on a dubious charge of mail fraud in connection with the failure of the Black Star Line.

After serving almost three years of his five-year sentence, Garvey was released early when President Calvin Coolidge commuted his sentence in 1927. By

this time millions of people around the world had appended their names to petitions asking for Garvey's release. The timing of his release may also have been influenced by an impending presidential year in the United States. Presidential commutation was, however, made contingent on deportation, and Garvey was shipped to Jamaica in December 1927. There he arrived to the greatest hero's welcome in the history of that country. He again published newspapers and held a grand international convention. In 1929 he founded the People's Political Party, Jamaica's first modern political party. He was once more imprisoned, however, this time by Jamaica's British rulers. He relocated to England in 1935 in an effort to rebuild his declining movement, now weakened by a schism.

Garvey died in London in 1940. Although UNIA never regained the dominance it had held during the 1920s, it remained an important organization in several places as late as the 1950s. An impressive array of later leaders in African America and throughout the pan-African world had roots in Garveyism. They included such children of Garveyites as Congressman Charles Diggs of Detroit, Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm of Brooklyn (New York), and Malcolm X. Garvey's ideas also permeated the "black power" era



Marcus Garvey, 1926. (Library of Congress.)



Marcus Garvey, c. 1920. (Library of Congress.)

of the 1960s and 1970s and the later Afrocentric movement in academia. After two decades during which Garvey had been nearly expunged from the historical record, the black power movement of the 1960s rediscovered him as a precursor and a hero. He has since become, in addition, a very popular object of academic inquiry. The centenary of his birth in 1987 was an occasion for large-scale celebrations around the world.

Biography

Marcus Garvey was born on 17 August 1887, in St. Ann's Bay on Jamaica's north coast. He founded UNIA in 1914; he arrived in the United States in March 1916. By 1918 he had decided to relocate his headquarters from Kingston, Jamaica, to Harlem; his newspaper, *Negro World*, appeared in 1918. He began the Black Star Line in 1919. UNIA's First International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World met on 1 August 1920, at Madison Square Garden in New York. Garvey championed African nationalism (Garveyism), and his Universal Political Union attempted to mobilize voters to

influence politics in the United States. Garvey was imprisoned in 1925 (on a charge related to the failure of the Black Star Line); he was released in 1927 but was deported to Jamaica in December of that year. In 1929 he founded the People's Political Party in Jamaica, but he was imprisoned again in Jamaica and in 1935 went to Great Britain. Garvey died in London in 1940, at age fifty-two.

TONY MARTIN

See also Black Star Line; Garveyism; Negro World; New Negro Movement; Pan-Africanism; Universal Negro Improvement Association; *specific individuals*

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Garveyism

Garveyism is the term applied to the ideology of Marcus Mozhiah Garvey (1887–1940), leader of the largest African American and pan-African mass movement ever. Garveyism flourished in the 1920s, the peak period of Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). It has remained a vital force in pan-African life. The term is probably as old as his UNIA (founded in Jamaica in 1914), but it was further popularized by *Garvey and Garveyism* (1963), the biography written by his wife, Amy Jacques Garvey.

Garveyism was essentially what has variously been called African or black nationalism. It was therefore not a new ideology, although it received arguably its most definitive articulation from Marcus Garvey. This idea has been a staple of African American thought since the inception of political activity in that community. In UNIA, Garvey was able to fashion a mass instrument to implement his ideas on a scale without precedent or parallel.

Black nationalism has traditionally been articulated in contradistinction to integrationism. Whereas integrationists have preferred to stress the Americanness of African Americans, nationalists have emphasized the African aspect. Integrationists have therefore worked within interracial organizations, often, like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), founded and led by Euro-Americans. Nationalists have tended toward racially exclusive organizations, preferring independent endeavor rather than dependence on the goodwill of others.

Among Garvey's distinguished nationalist precursors can be counted David Walker, whose *David Walker's Appeal* (1829) remains one of the most celebrated polemics of African American history. Walker refuted the pseudoscientific theories that considered Africans to be an inferior species. He denounced American slavery as the harshest in history and saw the white perpetrators of this evil as devils. He encouraged the African American population to rise up against its oppressors. Martin Delany, author of *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (1852), is another precursor, as are Bishop Henry McNeal Turner of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and Edward Wilmot Blyden, an intellectual of the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth who was born in the Caribbean and based in West Africa. Delany, Turner, and Blyden all exalted their blackness, sought to rescue African history from the distortions of others, and advocated emigration to Africa as the ultimate salvation for African Americans in a hostile land. Bishop Turner insisted that God be portrayed as black. All of these ideas would later be incorporated into Garveyism.

The ideology of Garveyism was systematically developed by Garvey in hundreds of speeches, supplemented by essays, poems, and other writings, throughout his political life. The major tenets of the ideology revolved around three very straightforward concepts: "race first," self-reliance, and nationhood. In his early readings and in his travels in the Caribbean, Latin America, and Europe between 1910 and 1914,

Garvey noticed, with great alarm, the universal suffering of the African race. The race was everywhere subjugated and weak, and Garvey grappled with the problem of how to turn its fortunes around and save it, as he assessed the situation, from reenslavement or even extinction. For a people lacking political or economic power, he saw the power of organization, buttressed by an appropriate ideology of empowerment, as the solution to their predicament.

"Race first" postulated the necessity for African-descended peoples to put their own racial self-interest first. The precise expression was initially popularized by a Harlemite intellectual, Hubert H. Harrison, a sometime collaborator with Garvey. Garvey argued that all other races put their interests first, often to the detriment of others. Africans would have to be equally solicitous of their own welfare, although not necessarily to the extent of oppressing others. "Race first," Garvey said, freely acknowledged the right of others to safeguard their interests, although not the right to oppress others.

"Race first" permeated all aspects of his people's existence. It meant that African people should see physical beauty in themselves. This needed to be emphasized after several hundred years of slavery and its aftermath, which had stereotyped African hair, skin color, and phenotypes as ugly. Garvey urged his followers to remove white pinups from their walls. He frowned on racially demeaning advertisements for beauty products. He also praised the beauty of black women in poetry:

Black queen of beauty, thou hast given color to the world!

Among other women thou art royal and the fairest!

Like the brightest of jewels in the regal diadem,

Shin'st thou, Goddess of Africa, Nature's purest emblem!

Garvey's newspaper, *Negro World*, published a gala Christmas edition in 1921 showcasing beautiful African women of various tints and phenotypes, from all over the world. One of the beauties was Amy Jacques, soon to be Garvey's second wife.

But "race first" went well beyond physical considerations. Garvey was adamant that African people, alternatively dictated to and paternalistically led for so long, should now define their own reality. This must be the case in historical studies. Garvey, a keen amateur student of history, would have agreed with the famous

assertion of the first editorial in African America's first newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, in 1827: "Too long have others spoken for us," wrote the editors, John Brown Russwurm and Rev. Samuel Cornish. "We wish to plead our own cause." Garvey thought that other historians showed little love for the African. He stressed that only the suffering African could definitively interpret the experience of his or her people. "Mr. H. G. Wells may divert civilization for the benefit of his Anglo-Saxon group," he said on one occasion, "but that does not make it a fact that the people who laid claims to the civilization he attributed to others are going to give up easily. The black man knows his past."

Several prominent historians accordingly gravitated toward UNIA or were sympathetic to its aims. J. A. Rogers, the great discoverer of little-known facts of African history, on occasion wrote for *Negro World*. Carter G. Woodson, who was the second African American to receive a Ph.D. in history at Harvard University (1912), wrote a weekly column for the paper.

"Race first" also extended to religion. Garvey had a Christian upbringing, and his speeches and writings were laced with Christian allusions. Yet he advocated widespread religious tolerance within UNIA. Christians, Muslims, atheists, African Hebrews, and later Rastafarians were among those accommodated within the organization. All those who believed in a god probably accepted Garvey's insistence that God for African people must be portrayed in their own image and likeness (that is, as black). Two of the most important organizations growing out of UNIA after its decline in the 1930s made this idea a focal point of their new theologies. Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam proclaimed Islam the black man's religion, with a black God and a white devil. The Rastafarian movement accepted His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie of Ethiopia as the "living God."

Garveyism's strong advocacy of "race first" brought it into a symbiotic relationship with white supremacists such as Earnest Sevier Cox of the White America Society. Garvey was as hostile as anybody to the pseudoscience of supremacists, but he also distrusted white liberals, such as those running NAACP. In his rejection of miscegenation and in his desire for a separate state, he shared at least two crucial preferences with white supremacists. It was presumably on this basis that Garvey accepted a request from the Ku Klux Klan for a summit meeting in Atlanta in 1922. Neither side had any illusions about the other's position. "I was speaking to a man who was brutally a white man,"

Garvey picturesquely put it, "and I was speaking to him as a man who was brutally a Negro."

When UNIA was founded in 1914, Garvey was already an accomplished printer and journalist. He had by then edited his own publications in Jamaica, Costa Rica, and Panama and had worked for the foremost pan-African journal of the day, Duse Mohamed Ali's *Africa Times and Orient Review*, which was based in London. He was therefore acutely aware of the power of the media. Uncompromisingly independent media thus became an indispensable adjunct to the idea of "race first." A struggling race had to inject its point of view into the marketplace of ideas. "We are not afraid of the word 'propaganda,'" Garvey explained, "for we use the term in the sense of disseminating our ideas among Negroes all the world over. We have nothing stealthy in this meaning." Garvey's *Negro World*, published in Harlem from 1918 to 1933, became the African world's most widely circulated newspaper in the 1920s. In addition to general news, its editorials, transcribed speeches, creative writing, and letters all reflected UNIA's doctrine of race first. The potency of this message was not lost on imperialist governments, which banned *Negro World* in several countries in Africa, Central America, and the Caribbean.

"Race first" helped provide the underpinning of racial pride and awareness that permeated the Harlem Renaissance. Garvey's influence on the renaissance was also more direct, because his activities inserted themselves into Harlem's literary and cultural life. Garvey's movement nurtured such well-known fledgling writers and artists as Zora Neale Hurston, Eric Walrond, Claude McKay, and the sculptor Augusta Savage, together with others less well known. Some of these did their earliest apprentice work in the pages of *Negro World*, which practically doubled as political newspaper and literary organ.

Garvey encouraged an explosion of literary and cultural activity that actually anticipated the "official" dates (c. mid- to late 1920s) usually given for the Harlem Renaissance. *Negro World*, in its section "Poetry for the People," published many bards, known and unknown, from all over the world. It also provided a rich fare of literary vignettes, short stories, literary criticism, articles on poetics, thoughts on music appreciation, and the like. *Negro World* also pioneered the literary competitions of the Harlem Renaissance era. African America's first regular book review column appeared in *Negro World*, edited by Hubert H. Harrison.

Garvey applied his idea of "race first" to literary work, in what in hindsight might be called the Garvey

aesthetic. Black writers should approach their task responsibly. They should maintain a certain racial decorum. They should not “prostitute” their talent, as Garvey put it, to titillate white audiences desirous of confirming their negative stereotypes of the race. Garvey accordingly criticized Claude McKay’s blockbuster novel *Home to Harlem* (1928). He similarly criticized Paul Robeson for acting in films such as *The Emperor Jones*, which held the race up to ridicule.

Garvey practiced what he preached and produced a substantial corpus of poems and plays, in addition to many memorable speeches and essays. Many of the prose items were collected by Amy Jacques Garvey in the famous *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, Or, Africa for the Africans* (1923 and 1925). The literary aspect of Garveyism was also articulated by the accomplished corps of editorial workers at *Negro World*. These included T. Thomas Fortune, the generally acknowledged “dean” of African American journalists; William H. Ferris, a graduate of Harvard and Yale; John Edward Bruce (popularly known as “Bruce Grit”), a highly respected veteran journalist; Eric Walrond, a major short-story writer; and Amy Jacques Garvey, an associate editor at *Negro World*.

The second major principle of Garveyism was self-reliance. Garvey stressed the psychological benefits to be derived from “doing for self.” Although he favored reparations, he refused to accept financial assistance from white philanthropists for the mature UNIA. UNIA’s monuments to self-reliance were exceedingly successful for a time and astounded friend and foe alike. The Negro Factories Corporation operated restaurants, groceries, a printing press, a trucking business, a millinery establishment, and a factory where black dolls were made, and manufactured UNIA uniforms, among other things. It employed more than 1,000 people in Harlem. Divisions of UNIA in cities such as New York, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Toronto, and Montreal owned valuable real estate. *Negro World* was, in addition to everything else, a hugely successful business enterprise. In the Black Star Line Steamship Company, UNIA produced the most spectacular African American business undertaking of the period. The line’s three acquired ships (it paid down on a fourth) sailed between the eastern seaboard of the United States and the Caribbean and Central America. Thousands assembled to see the ships in such places as New York and South Carolina. In Port Limon, Costa Rica, workers stopped work for the day and showered a Black Star Line ship with fruit and flowers. Garvey collected more money from the shareholders of Black

Star Line than white-funded organizations such as the NAACP and National Urban League were able to dream of.

The spirit of self-reliance permeated every aspect of UNIA. A publishing house produced *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, although it became one of the casualties of Garvey’s imprisonment in 1925 and the consequent slow demise of UNIA.

The third major tenet of Garveyism was what Garvey called “nationhood.” Nationhood was essentially a quest for political self-determination. Despite his emphasis on African regeneration and his effort to relocate his headquarters to Liberia, Garvey did not advocate neglect of local politics wherever African people found themselves. He was acutely aware of the universal political powerlessness of African people and sought to address this in many ways. UNIA conceived of itself as a provisional prototype of a future African government. Delegates to a convention held by UNIA accordingly bestowed the title “provisional president of Africa” on Garvey. At its annual international conventions (the convention of 1920 attracted 25,000 people to the opening ceremonies), UNIA had a provisional parliament, in which delegates from many countries, such as England and South Africa, debated issues affecting the race.

The first convention, of 1920, was responsible for the adoption and popularization of several important symbols of nationhood. These included the “Universal Ethiopian Anthem,” composed especially for UNIA and designated the anthem of the race. Red, black, and green were declared the official colors of the race—red for blood and sacrifice, black for the sons and daughters of Africa, and green for the luxuriant land of their forebears. These colors have endured among the mass of Africa’s descendants in North America, the Caribbean, and elsewhere. They have also been incorporated into the flags of some independent African countries.

One of the most ambitious manifestations of nationhood coming out of the convention of 1920 was the important Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World. The assembled delegates produced a historically significant document outlining the main grievances of African people everywhere and also making demands for improved treatment. They declared in the document’s preamble:

Be it Resolved, That the Negro people of the world, through their chosen representatives in convention assembled in Liberty Hall . . . protest against the

wrongs and injustices they are suffering at the hands of their white brethren, and state what they deem their fair and just rights, as well as the treatment they propose to demand of all men in the future.

The document deplored racism in public transportation, including international travel by sea. It deplored the racism of court systems and the use of African and Caribbean soldiers in white people's wars. It condemned lynching as the most revolting barbarity visited on African Americans. It condemned the unusually cruel treatment of African people in prisons. It wanted Africa's descendants everywhere to be made "free citizens of Africa." It deplored Jim Crow and denial of voting rights in the United States. It called for the capitalization of the word "Negro" and the teaching of black history in schools. "We also demand," the delegates said, "Africa for the Africans at home and abroad." The document proclaimed the determination of the men of the race to defend their women from the depredations of white men.

All of these multifarious trappings of nationhood were reinforced by the UNIA's diplomatic service, which sent ambassadors and commissioners to Great Britain, Liberia, and the League of Nations, among other places.

For the United States, Garvey planned an ambitious foray into nationhood through his Universal Political Union (UPU). Like much else, UPU failed to reach maturity because of Garvey's imprisonment in 1925. It was an attempt to harness the vast following of UNIA for political ends. UPU would endeavor to control the votes of its constituency to reward those politicians who were good to African America. It would likewise seek to punish, by withholding support, those who reneged on their promises. For the few short months of its existence, UPU showed itself willing to oppose African American candidates and support white ones, when that seemed necessary to ensure its objectives.

Nationhood could also be seen in Garvey's view of Africa in general. He advocated the recovery of African independence, which had been comprehensively lost in the European "scramble for Africa" from the mid-nineteenth century to World War I. UNIA's own plan to relocate its headquarters from Harlem to Liberia was an effort to plant itself in almost the only African nation enjoying a semblance of independence at the time. (Ethiopia was the only other independent country on the African continent.) Everywhere that UNIA implanted itself, its advocacy of nationhood bore political fruit. The African National Congress in South

Africa, the Workingmen's Association in Trinidad and Tobago, and the Lagos Youth Movement in Nigeria were among the political entities permeated with Garveyites. In Cuba the British diplomatic representatives came close to formally acknowledging UNIA as a quasi-representative body for the large immigrant British West Indian population. After his deportation from the United States to Jamaica in 1927, Garvey founded Jamaica's first modern political party, the People's Political Party. Garvey served several terms on the Kingston and Saint Andrew Corporation Council.

That Garvey's message of nationhood was heard can be seen from the figures who claimed that he was their political inspiration. These include Kwame Nkrumah, first president of independent Ghana; Nnamdi Azikiwe, first governor-general of Nigeria; and Jomo Kenyatta, independence leader of Kenya. In the United States, Malcolm X and Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, the first African American woman in Congress, were children of activist Garveyites.

The ideology of Garveyism energized the largest pan-African mass movement of all time. Its appeal was as universal as the UNIA's name. Garveyism was propagated in Garvey's *Negro World*, in the spoken words of official and unofficial emissaries of the movement, in official or quasi-official publications and documents such as the *Universal Negro Catechism*, and through UNIA's *Constitution and Book of Laws*.

In the 1930s, after his deportation from the United States, Garvey distilled his wisdom into a secret course of lessons administered both by correspondence and in person in Toronto. These lessons, later published as *Message to the People: The Course of African Philosophy*, summarized the main ideas of Garveyism, together with practical advice for organizers on self-education, personal deportment, diplomacy, fund-raising, and other pertinent subjects. Prominently restated here was Garvey's concept of God, an important corollary of his ideas of "race first" and self-reliance. God, Garvey said, endowed all human beings equally and then left them to their own devices to fight the battle of life. Any race that fell behind could blame itself at least in part for not fulfilling its God-given potential to be the equal of other races.

The spread of Garveyism was nothing short of phenomenal. Within three years of his obscure landing in the United States, Garvey had started *Negro World* and the Black Star Line. One year later he had convened the largest convention to date in African American history. The spread of the idea and the movement that gave it concrete expression can be attributed to

many factors. Among these are Garvey's charisma as a speaker and writer and the fact that he was an indefatigable organizer. An important element in UNIA's success was also the clarity of Garvey's articulation of his ideology. Garveyism appealed equally to the Aborigines of Australia and the congregation of the local African Methodist Episcopal Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado, which formed the nucleus of UNIA in that city. Moreover, although undoubtedly a mass movement like few others, UNIA and its ideology of Garveyism also attracted many distinguished intellectuals.

As a successful ideology, Garveyism inevitably attracted opponents as well. The major organizational battles fought by Garvey and UNIA were in essence ideological battles against those who disagreed with, hated, or feared Garveyism. The integrationist elite, especially in the United States, were implacable foes and collaborated with the government to hasten Garvey's ultimate trial and deportation. W. E. B. Du Bois and other members of NAACP and other anti-Garvey organizations, wrote, either in concert or individually, to the attorney-general, the secretary of state, and other officials offering their services in the campaign against Garveyism. The United States and European colonialist governments feared Garvey's impact on the African masses as they became radicalized and decided that they needed to throw off their yoke. The Communist International resented Garvey's ability to organize the proletarians and peasants the communists coveted. The communists also opposed their doctrine of "class first" to Garvey's ideology of "race first." For a communist, the white worker was the best friend of his fellow black proletarian. For Garvey, class distinctions within the race were real but of less significance than the racial oppression that indiscriminately bound all African peoples together.

All of these adversaries took their toll on UNIA, but the organization might have survived as a major force if the state power of the United States had not been deployed against it. Despite Garvey's deportation in 1927, UNIA was still an influential, although not overwhelmingly important, entity into the 1950s in places such as New York, Toronto, Montreal, Philadelphia, and Detroit.

The slow demise of UNIA did not mean the demise of Garveyism, which remains an important expression of the African nationalism that has always been a major force in African America and elsewhere. The "black power" movement of the 1960s and 1970s was a peak manifestation of Garveyism and African na-

tionalism. This period brought Garvey to the forefront once again, both as an icon of the movement and as a subject of serious historical scholarship. His popularity has tended to grow on both fronts ever since.

After all is said and done, Garveyism was simply an expression of racial uplift for a downtrodden people who, Garvey asserted, had it within them to regain their God-given right to equality with the rest of the world. He summarized his ideology in the short and beautiful essay "African Fundamentalism." The subtitles proclaimed the Garveyism that the essay expounded: "A Racial Hierarchy and Empire for Negroes"; "Negro's Faith Must Be Confidence in Self"; "His Creed: One God, One Aim, One Destiny." Garvey began the essay as follows:

The time has come for the Negro to forget and cast behind him his hero worship and adoration of other races, and to start out immediately to create and emulate heroes of his own. We must canonize our own saints, create our own martyrs, and elevate to positions of fame and honor black men and women who have made their distinct contributions to our racial history.

Never, however, was his summary of Garveyism so succinct as in his poem "Blackman!" (1934):

What Is In Thy Bosom? Pluck It
Out—Is It Genius, Is It Talent
For Something? Let's Have It.

TONY MARTIN

See also Black Star Line; Emperor Jones, The; Garvey, Marcus; Harrison, Hubert; Hurston, Zora Neale; McKay, Claude; Negro World; Pan-Africanism; Robeson, Paul; Rogers, Joel Augustus; Savage, Augusta; Universal Negro Improvement Association; Walrond, Eric; Woodson, Carter G.; *other specific individuals*

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Gershwin, George

George Gershwin, a son of Russian Jewish immigrants, earned a reputation as America's first generally recognized great composer, a writer adept at long-form serious works, Broadway musicals, popular songs, and folk opera. A large part of the reason his oeuvre remains so vibrant, lasting, and controversial was that Gershwin incorporated black musical influences and devices more frequently and effectively than his peers. Classical music critics expressed discomfort that he studied and openly loved black musical forms and Tin Pan Alley pop as much as classical practice and theory, but the public embraced the amalgam, which helped shape the definition of serious American music and highlighted how it differed from European forms. During the jazz age of the 1920s, when blacks were almost entirely shut out of the most popular sectors of the radio and recording industries and white interpretations of jazz ruled the airwaves, primary innovators such as Bessie Smith and Louis Armstrong were relegated to appearances on "race records" and in segregated clubs. With his witty use, in his compositions, of African American musical devices from blues

and jazz, Gershwin recognized the centrality of the black contribution to American music and life. He did not water down jazz as much as other white bandleaders and composers of the day, and he helped create an eventual multiracial market for the black jazz and blues artists who would break through the segregation of the entertainment industry in the late 1920s and become internationally revered. There was also a significant amount of cross-pollination between Gershwin and jazz artists throughout the twentieth century: his compositions were among the most covered by them, and some of Gershwin's ideas, especially the chord sequence for "I Got Rhythm," became popular source material for new compositions by artists including Duke Ellington ("Cotton Tail," 1940) and Charlie Parker ("Moose the Mooche," 1946).

Gershwin's career began when he quit high school to work as a song plugger in the Tin Pan Alley publishing house of Jerome H. Remick. The work disillusioned him when he found that most songs he promoted were written to make a quick buck, rather than to match the sophisticated musical quality Gershwin admired in the songs Jerome Kern wrote for Broadway musicals. Gershwin's attempts to breathe interest into these hoary commercial pieces improved his piano and arranging skills, and by 1916 he was composing his own works while embarking on a successful side career as a performer on piano rolls. In early 1917, he left Remick and the song plugging business behind for a job closer to the world he wanted to inhabit, becoming a rehearsal pianist for a new musical by Kern. Within a year, Gershwin landed his first publishing deal. A year after that, four months before his twenty-first birthday, he composed his first full Broadway score, *La La Lucille*.

Al Jolson's over-the-top rendition of "Swanee" was Gershwin's first hit song; it earned Gershwin \$10,000 in royalties in 1920 alone. While he spent the next four years learning the mechanics of Broadway musical production by composing and arranging ten shows for Broadway and London stages, the money and fame he received from "Swanee" allowed him to begin composing and presenting long-form serious works. Although little known, *Blue Monday* (1922) was the first of these, an early unsuccessful attempt at a "miniature" American opera about black life. Gershwin and the lyricist B. G. DeSylva completed it in five days, and it played for only one night as part of *George White's Scandals of 1922*. This twenty-five-minute piece included actors in blackface and "an unabashed 'mammy song,'" according to Jablonski (1987), who

describes its “stereotypical racism” as “no worse than the standard treatment of the Negro by white writers” of the period. *Blue Monday* featured a gambler as the central character, and much of the action takes place in a bar. Critics mostly savaged it, although it was revised and restaged in later decades. The next time Gershwin attempted an opera based on the lives of black Americans, he would show more care and conduct more research. His next foray into more serious realms occurred on 1 November 1923, during a “Recital of Ancient and Modern Music for Voice” by the mezzo-soprano Eva Gauthier at Aeolian Hall in New York City. Gauthier had been searching for fresh material, and Carl Van Vechten suggested that she sample the best of the popular American songwriters whose works were informed by jazz. The program featured works by Bartók and Schoenberg alongside an “American” section dedicated to works by Irving Berlin, Kern, and Gershwin, with Gershwin providing piano accompaniment. The reaction of the audience and critics proved wildly enthusiastic. The new masters of American popular song had never been placed in such a rarefied atmosphere; the event marked the beginning of a highbrow respect for their craft that would increase during the course of the century.

The main event that transformed Gershwin into a major composer in the eyes of the American public was the premiere of *Rhapsody in Blue* at Aeolian Hall on 12 February 1924, as part of a program called “An Experiment in Modern Music.” The rapturous reception that greeted the composition overshadowed newspaper commentary concerning the show the next day, and transcended the somewhat crass publicity for the program. Paul Whiteman, the famous bandleader who concocted the event and conducted *Rhapsody in Blue*, had marketed the concert as an overview of American musical history, with judges from the classical field (such as Jascha Heifetz and Sergey Rachmaninoff) issuing opinions after the performances about what constituted the true identity of American music. Whiteman had so much enthusiasm for his idea that he had never asked Gershwin to participate before allowing newspapers to report that “Gershwin is at work on a jazz concerto.” Whiteman was lucky. Gershwin came through with what remains the most famous American concert composition.

Numerous theories have emerged to explain the excellence and continuing popularity of *Rhapsody in Blue*. Gershwin’s facility with melody and arranging, honed by his classical music studies, and his experience in writing memorable songs in the competitive

milieus of Tin Pan Alley and Broadway were certainly important. But, as is the case with much enduring American music (such as spirituals, bluegrass, and country music), the resonance of this piece had a great deal to do with Gershwin’s ability to fuse disparate black and white sources into a compelling whole. Within *Rhapsody in Blue*, Gershwin combined classical forms and textures with the syncopation and “blue” thirds and sevenths of African American blues and jazz, the frenetic rhythms of urban America of the 1920s, and the keening sounds and minor-key modes of Jewish and Russian music. The black bandleader and composer James Reese Europe had made forays into Carnegie Hall in the mid-1910s; but aside from those, American music, by whites or blacks, was rarely heard in major concert halls. *Rhapsody in Blue* marked the beginning of a trend toward considering American music worthy of such exposure. After the financial and artistic success of *Rhapsody in Blue*, Gershwin spent more time developing concert music and receiving instruction from classical music teachers. The acclaimed *Concerto in F* and *An American In Paris* followed, along with the more academic and less appealing *Second Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra* (1931).

Months after the premiere of *Rhapsody in Blue*, Gershwin and his brother and lyricist Ira Gershwin made their first success in establishing their own approach to the Broadway musical—*Lady Be Good!* The romantic plots and song themes of the Gershwins’ musicals during the 1920s differed little at first from the competition, but their musical and lyrical sophistication were usually well above average and kept rising throughout the decade. As the brothers assembled more successful shows, they grew more adventurous in their choice of settings. The original production of *Strike Up the Band*, with a book by the humorist George S. Kaufman, and a carefully integrated score that developed the plot, was a step closer to Gershwin’s dream of developing a great American opera. (Usually, Broadway musicals were more haphazard in their construction, adding new hit songs whether or not these songs coalesced with the plot.) *Strike Up the Band* playfully but sharply criticized aspects of the 1920s: the embrace of materialism, American jingoism, profiteering by big business in World War I, and the meaninglessness of the war for many Americans—all themes shared by prominent writers of the Harlem Renaissance. Yet audiences did not support this step away from Broadway’s usual escapism, even if it did include “The Man I Love,” one of the most enduring of the Gershwins’ songs; the brothers and Kaufman were

too far ahead of their time. A revival of the show in 1930, with the most controversial lyrics removed, did become a hit, though. *Of Thee I Sing* was a more auspicious attempt to bring the Broadway musical into new realms, winning a Pulitzer Prize for its book and libretto, which lightly satirized the American political system. While it did make some jabs at authority figures and included some talk of impending impeachment, its primary focus on presidential love and childbearing in the White House made for a far less threatening premise than *Strike Up the Band*. What was innovative about *Of Thee I Sing*, as Bowers (1995) has written, was the Gershwins' score: "a masterful progression of straight songs, recitatives, and extended musical scenes; it stormed the boundaries of conventional musical theater and charted new territory for the genre."

The lessons learned by the Gershwins in their Broadway years were brought to bear and heightened with their next production, the American "folk opera" (as Gershwin liked to call it) *Porgy and Bess*. It was based on a novel of 1925 by DuBose Heyward, who closely collaborated with the Gershwins on the opera. He viewed the project as a piece of folklore based on the experiences of poor blacks he knew well and studied extensively while working as a cotton checker for years on the wharves of Charleston, South Carolina. Like *Blue Monday* before it, *Porgy* dealt with themes of love and intense jealousy in the lives of gamblers, prostitutes, and other less-than-respectable blacks. In *Porgy*, however, an all-black cast played the roles, not whites in blackface, and the characterizations were deeper and more nuanced. The characters interacted in a community whose members were obviously devoted to one another and were hard workers attempting to do the best they could in a difficult environment. Heyward and Gershwin purposely sought to avoid the stereotypes of "Negro vaudeville" found in most depictions of blacks on American stages, including the stage play of *Porgy* (1927). Gershwin, at Heyward's urging, spent two months in Charleston, interacting with the black community. He found himself particularly inspired by the spirituals, as is heard in "Prayer," a piece using six different prayers sung simultaneously, in a revolving, hypnotic fashion similar to that of a black choir he heard in Charleston. Once again, Gershwin infused African American musical devices within a genre where they were usually not present—an operatic score. Many critics were initially put off by this hybrid, but the peculiarly American combination has been a main source of the appeal of *Porgy and Bess* through the generations.

Although *Porgy and Bess* is now considered a classic, its initial reception in New York was disappointing. After years of preparation, the three-hour opera had opened in Boston to a fifteen-minute ovation and glowing reviews, and the black composer and scholar J. Rosamond Johnson had declared that Gershwin was the "Abraham Lincoln of Negro music." The director and producers, however, found the length excessive and asked for cuts. Gershwin and his collaborators cooperated, shearing off one-quarter of the work, including many of the more challenging and intricate sequences. Two weeks later, the reviews in New York were mostly scathing, although some noted the power of the music and the historic nature of the production. *Porgy and Bess* closed prematurely, unable to earn back its principal. Besides the ill-advised cuts, which were restored in performances after Gershwin's death, another possible reason for the show's failure was the decision to use white opera stars to record the score for its initial release, instead of the black stars who had been carefully chosen by Gershwin. Lawrence Tibbett and Helen Jepson gave fine, if somewhat histrionic, performances, but they reflected too much of a European opera sensibility, whereas Gershwin had aimed for warmth and personality in his decidedly American opera by casting Todd Duncan and John W. Bubbles. Those in charge may have assumed that using the actual cast would have doomed the commercial prospects for the recordings, but five years later, when recordings of *Porgy and Bess* by the original cast were released, the opera finally began to catch on with the American mass public. Hundreds of recordings followed, by a multitude of artists in various genres.

Porgy and Bess engendered controversy over the decades, even as its reputation as the premier American opera solidified. The Gershwins and Heyward never insisted that it was an authentic portrait of black culture, but other observers suggested this, and some blacks expressed unhappiness that another major artistic success had risen from a vision of uneducated, morally suspect working-class blacks, no matter how much respect was paid to black culture and music in the construction of the show. The creators of *Porgy and Bess* had tried to avoid clichés from minstrelsy, but the subject matter still cut too close for some people, perhaps understandably. In 1953 the Eisenhower administration decided to send a state-sponsored tour of the opera to various foreign locales, including the Soviet Union, as an example of the positive state of American race relations, and this too angered many blacks. Some in the black musical community expressed resentment

as well: they knew that, since the early 1920s, no black composers could receive the backing to stage a similarly expensive production concerning black life in a major opera or Broadway venue.

Gershwin spent most of his last months writing for films in Hollywood. Studio bosses worried about his recent immersion in highbrow material, but Gershwin assured them that he was as anxious to write million-sellers as they were to promote them. Any concerns on the studio's part were unwarranted. As no less an authority than Irving Berlin declared a half-century later, "no one wrote greater songs than George and Ira did during the last year of George's life." The brothers once again reached for and attained new heights with compositions such as "Nice Work If You Can Get It," "They All Laughed," and "They Can't Take That Away from Me." With their relaxed swing, their sophisticated romantic patter, and their humor (in both words and music) based on the seemingly real-life trials of lovers, these songs are perennially charming expositions of high art on the jukebox. When Gershwin began his career, such notions of high art concerning American popular music were incongruous; by the time he succumbed to a brain tumor in 1937, this idea was well on the way to worldwide acceptance, thanks in large part to his contributions.



George Gershwin, 1938. (Library of Congress.)

Biography

George Gershwin (Jacob Gershvin) was born in Brooklyn, New York, on 26 September 1898. He studied at public schools and received musical instruction from Charles Hambitzer (1912–1914); Edward Kilenyi, Sr. (1919–1921); Henry Cowell (1927–1929); and Joseph Schillinger (1932–1936). Gershwin was a song plugger for Jerome H. Remick, a music publishing firm in New York City (1914–1917); a performer on piano rolls for various companies (1916–1926); and a rehearsal pianist and concert organizer and accompanist at the Century Theater (1917). He secured a contract with the Harms musical publishing company in 1918. His first full Broadway score was *La La Lucille* (1919). He composed the scores for ten shows on Broadway and in London, including five for the producer George White in 1920–1924. Gershwin was accompanist and composer for Eva Gauthier's program at Aeolian Hall featuring songs by European classical and American popular composers (1923). He composed and premiered several long-form serious works, including *Rhapsody in Blue*, 1924; *Concerto in F*, 1925; *An American in Paris*, 1928; and *Second Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra*, 1931. He composed the music for several highly successful Broadway musicals, with his brother Ira as lyricist, including *Lady, Be Good!* 1924; *Tell Me More*, 1925; *Tip-Toes*, 1925; *Oh, Kay!* 1926; *Funny Face*, 1927; *Treasure Girl*, 1928; *Show Girl*, 1929; *Girl Crazy*, 1930; *Strike Up the Band*, 1930; and *Of Thee I Sing*, 1931. He composed songs for major motion pictures, including *Delicious*, 1931; *Shall We Dance*, 1937; *A Damsel in Distress*, 1937; and *The Goldwyn Follies*, 1938. He hosted, performed on, and produced the nationally broadcast CBS radio program *Music by Gershwin*, 1934–1935. He composed the music for the folk opera *Porgy and Bess*, 1935. Gershwin died in Hollywood, California, on 11 July 1937.

HARVEY COHEN

See also Bubbles, John; Ellington, Duke; Europe, James Reese; Heyward, DuBose; Johnson, John Rosamond; *Porgy and Bess*; *Porgy*: Novel; *Porgy*: Play; Van Vechten, Carl

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An American in Paris. 1928.
"But Not for Me." 1930. (Lyrics by Ira Gershwin.)
"I Got Rhythm." 1930. (Lyrics by Ira Gershwin.)
Of Thee I Sing. 1931. (Lyrics by Ira Gershwin, book by George S. Kaufman and Morrie Ryskind.)
Porgy and Bess. 1935. (Lyrics by DuBose Heyward and Ira Gershwin, libretto by Hayward.)
"Nice Work If You Can Get It." 1937. (Lyrics by Ira Gershwin.)
"They All Laughed." 1937. (Lyrics by Ira Gershwin.)
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Gilpin, Charles

Charles Sidney Gilpin (1878–1930) began his acting career by performing in saloons and theaters at night, and as a temporary performer for traveling shows, to

earn extra money; he also sharpened his talents by working as a singer or dancer at fairs, restaurants, and variety theaters. Even in his early teens, his baritone voice was distinctive.

Gilpin moved with his mother to Philadelphia in the early 1890s. He continued to expand his talent for song, dance, and comedy while working with vaudeville and minstrel companies, including the Big Spectacular Log Cabin Company and Perkus and Davis Great Southern Minstrel Barn Storming Aggregation. After the latter folded in 1896, Gilpin moved back to Philadelphia and worked at several jobs. He joined the Canadian Jubilee Singers of Hamilton, Ontario, in 1903, and stayed with the group for two years.

Gilpin's first significant role arrived in 1905 in "The Two Real Coons," a vaudeville act starring Bert Williams and George Walker based on a scene from their musical *In Abyssinia*. Gilpin next worked for the Smart Set Company, a black minstrel group. In 1907 he performed with the Pekin Stock Company of Chicago and attracted attention for his work in a three-act musical, *The Husbands*. Gilpin engaged in blackface comedy and sometimes acted as white characters in white makeup during his tenure with Pekin. He worked sporadically with the Pan-American Octette from 1911 to 1913. Over the next few years he performed briefly in *The Girl at the Fort* with the Anita Bush Company and was one of the founding members of the Lafayette Players in 1916. Later that year, Gilpin resigned from the troupe, reportedly over a salary dispute. His pioneering work at the Lincoln and Lafayette theaters helped usher in an era of artistic presentations open to black audiences.

In 1920, Gilpin impressed audiences and critics with his spellbinding performance as Brutus Jones—a Pullman porter and former convict who becomes the dictator of a Caribbean island—in Eugene O'Neill's play *The Emperor Jones*. In this drama, Gilpin appeared alone in six of the eight scenes; and he was the first African American actor to star in a dramatic production in an all-white theater. The play had its debut in Greenwich Village in New York City, at what later became known as the Provincetown Playhouse. Because the audiences were so large, the production then moved uptown to the Princess Theater. On 4 November 1920, Heywood Braun wrote in the *New York Tribune* that Gilpin "gives the most thrilling performance we have seen any place this season" and underscored Gilpin's power to reduce stereotypes and racist perspectives: "if *The Emperor Jones* were taken elsewhere we have little doubt that the manager would engage a white

man with a piece of burnt cork to play Brutus Jones.” In 1921 Gilpin was received at the White House and was awarded the Spingarn Medal for distinguished achievement by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In February 1921 he attended the annual awards dinner of the Drama League of New York, despite protests by some whites, after being named one of ten people who had contributed most to American theater the previous season.

During the Harlem Renaissance, Gilpin used his fame to motivate black performers around the United States. In January 1922 he attended a rehearsal of the Dumas Dramatic Club in Cleveland, Ohio. Afterward, he challenged members to create one of the best black theater groups in the world and made a donation of \$50. Members recast themselves as the Gilpin Players and began several years of outstanding performances at the distinguished Karamu House.

Artistic differences among O’Neill, the production managers, and Gilpin led to the casting of Paul Robeson as Brutus Jones when *The Emperor Jones* was revived. Gilpin had changed some lines that he found offensive, and O’Neill was critical of this action and also

accused Gilpin of heavy drinking. Gilpin did play the role of Brutus again in a Broadway revival in 1926, however. Also in 1926, he starred in the film version of *Ten Nights in the Barroom*, produced in Philadelphia by the Colored Players Film Corporation. His final performance of Brutus Jones was in Woodstock, New York, in 1929.

After that, Gilpin was reported to have suffered an emotional breakdown, losing his ability to sing. He died on 6 May 1930, and was buried at Lambertville, New Jersey, in a quiet ceremony. His friends and former coworkers held a second ceremony—for a huge crowd—on 1 June 1930, at Duncan Brothers funeral parlor on Seventh Avenue in New York City. Gilpin’s body was exhumed, and he was reburied in Woodlawn Cemetery.

In 1941, Richmond’s first low-income housing project, Gilpin Court, was named in honor of Gilpin. Five years later, O’Neill delivered a belated accolade. During a reflective interview, he stated, “As I look back now on all my work, I can honestly say there was only one actor who carried every notion of a character I had in mind. That actor was Charles Gilpin.”

Biography

Charles Sidney Gilpin was born on 20 November 1878, in Jackson Ward in Richmond, Virginia, to Peter Gilpin (a laborer in a steel mill) and Caroline White (a nurse in Richmond City Hospital); he was the youngest of fourteen children. Gilpin attended the Saint Francis School for Catholic Colored Children until he quit at age twelve to become a printer’s apprentice; he also performed in saloons, at fairs, and in variety theaters. He moved to Philadelphia in the early 1890s and worked with theatrical companies and at other jobs; over his life he was an elevator operator, printer, barber, janitor, and trainer of prizefighters. In 1897 he married Florence Howard; they had a son, Paul Wilson, in 1903. In 1905 Charles Gilpin had a significant role in “The Two Real Coons”; he next worked for the Smart Set Company, a black minstrel group; in 1907 he performed with the Pekin Stock Company of Chicago; in 1911–1913 he worked with the Pan-American Octette; he then worked with Anita Bush’s company and was a founding member of the Lafayette Theater. He played Brutus Jones in *The Emperor Jones* (1920) and in some revivals (although the role was to become associated mainly with Paul Robeson). Gilpin was awarded a Spingarn Medal in 1921. In 1926



Charles Gilpin, c. 1920–1930. (Library of Congress.)

Gilpin, Charles

he starred in the film version of *Ten Nights in the Barroom*. He retired to Eldridge Park, New Jersey, c. 1929 and was cared for by his second wife, Alma Benjamin, until his death on 6 May 1930, at age fifty-one. He was first buried at Lambertville, New Jersey, but was later reburied at Woodlawn Cemetery.

R. JAKE SUDDERTH

See also Anita Bush Theater Company; Colored Players Film Corporation; Emperor Jones, The; Karamu House; Lafayette Theater; Lincoln Theater; Minstrelsy; Vaudeville

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"Godmother"

See Mason, Charlotte Osgood

God's Trombones

God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse is only fifty-six pages long, but this brief book reflects some of the issues that interested participants of the Harlem Renaissance: the preservation and appreciation of African American culture, the role of literature and the arts in shaping attitudes about African Americans, the incorporation of distinctive elements of African American culture into literature and visual art, and the complementary nature of literature and the arts. The main components of the book, published in 1927 by Viking, are an opening prayer and seven sermons transcribed into poems by James Weldon Johnson. But there is also a preface by Johnson in which he explains his intentions for the book, and each poem is accompanied by a black-and-white illustration by Aaron Douglas and a title page lettered by the calligrapher C. B. Falls.

In content, the sermons follow what Johnson identifies as a pattern often followed and innovated on by African American preachers. The cycle begins with an opening prayer, moves from "The Creation" through several Old Testament and New Testament stories, and ends with "The Judgment Day." Johnson, as he explains in the preface, wanted the book to draw attention to the importance of African American preachers as leaders in the African American community and as artists. He used his poems to preserve the sermons they delivered and to demonstrate the manner in which they delivered these sermons; he hoped that the book would increase the respect granted to the preachers.

The book was widely reviewed in the 1920s, attracting attention in *Crisis* and *Opportunity* and also in mainstream publications such as *Poetry*, *Nation*, and the *New York Times Book Review*. Reviewers were overwhelmingly positive, praising the quality of Johnson's poems and his tribute to the preachers. Only a few reviewers mentioned Douglas's contributions, but those who did, including W. E. B. Du Bois and Alain Locke, complimented them warmly. Since the 1920s, the book has inspired a range of adaptations, including numerous audiorecordings of performances by preachers and actors, many of them accompanied by music;

scores for choral dramas and orchestral performances; and even a claymation video narrated by James Earl Jones and Dorian Harewood. Scholarly attention to *God's Trombones* has been more limited, but it reveals aspects of the book that deserve further study.

Several literary scholars who have focused on *God's Trombones* have addressed Johnson's decision not to use dialect in these poems. In his preface, Johnson defends this choice, arguing that his diction reflects the preachers' technique of blending biblical language with black idioms. He also asserts that the conventions and ideas associated with black dialect made it too limited a form to express the complexities of African Americans' experiences, an argument he made repeatedly in the 1920s. Some critics of the book, such as Gates (1987), argue that Johnson's dismissal of dialect was misguided and shortsighted; others, such as Jones (1991), insist that Johnson was able to record a self-affirming black vernacular through his use of the imagery, syntax, and rhythms characteristic of the black preachers.

A related issue worth further exploration involves Johnson's transformation of these oral sermons into written poems. In his preface, Johnson discusses the difficulty of this act of transcription and explains his strategies. For example, he used several poetic techniques, including strategically placed line breaks and punctuation, to indicate the rhythm of the preachers' delivery. But, he admits, his transcripts are clearly unable to fully communicate the experience of hearing these sermons. In fact, Johnson argues that the sermons should be "intoned," rather than read, and he often demonstrated the preachers' delivery style at parties and on radio performances. His consideration of the potential and limitations of his written form and his discussion of his techniques invite consideration of the implications of transcription and of his stylistic choices.

Several art historians mention Douglas's contributions to *God's Trombones*, but often only in passing. The most extensive consideration of his illustrations is by Ater (1993) and Kirschke (1995). Each of them points out that these illustrations incorporate the posturing and facial features Douglas would have seen in Egyptian art and demonstrate his interest in modernism and cubism; they position these works as steps toward the mature style Douglas would use in the mural series he created in the 1930s.

The collaboration between Johnson and Douglas in *God's Trombones* also is worth analysis, particularly because it reveals parallels between literature and the other arts. For example, just as Johnson was experimenting

with form and language to capture the intricacies of preachers' oral performances, Douglas was developing a style that reflected both African and American aesthetics. Furthermore, Johnson's poetry and Douglas's illustrations also complement one another in content. For instance, Douglas modernized the setting of "The Prodigal Son." In the poem, Johnson describes a young man traveling to Babylon, where he squanders his fortune and becomes involved with women and gambling before returning to his father's house. In Douglas's drawing, dancers wear fashions of the 1920s, and a trombone, gin bottle, and playing card stretch from the corners of the picture. The downfall of Douglas's Prodigal Son could easily have happened in Harlem. By updating the tale, Douglas implicitly demonstrates the relevance of these biblical stories and the preachers' renderings of them to African Americans in the 1920s. Carroll (2002, the present author) analyzes in more depth the relations between the written and visual texts, arguing that they complement one another in important ways and that the implications of the book as a whole exceed those of either its written or its visual elements.

God's Trombones is an important but underappreciated part of both Johnson's and Douglas's oeuvre; it also is an important example of the collaboration between writers and artists during the Harlem Renaissance. *God's Trombones* was only one of many illustrated books produced during the Harlem Renaissance, and it suggests the value of studying the renaissance as a broad cultural movement involving many different forms of expression.

ANNE CARROLL

See also Douglas, Aaron; Johnson, James Weldon

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Grace, Charles Manuel

See Daddy Grace

Great Migration

"Great migration" refers to a massive exodus of African Americans from the South to the North, beginning in 1890 and culminating at the onset of World War I in 1914. During this period roughly 500,000 African Americans left their southern homeland for Baltimore, Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia, shifting much of the black population from rural settings to urban centers. The presence of African Americans in these cities had a significant impact on the changing political, economic, and social landscape; thus the great migration has been described as a pivotal time in twentieth-century American history.

The great migration, however, was not the first instance of black mobility. Since the forced migration of Africans to the Americas in the seventeenth century, people of African descent have been consistently on the move. Throughout the nineteenth century, the North represented hope and opportunity for both runaway and newly emancipated slaves. After the Civil War, more than 40,000 former slaves, known as "exodusters,"

headed to Kansas for economic and social opportunity. Still, at the close of the nineteenth century, the largest number of African Americans fled the South to begin new lives in the North.

While the motivations for migration were as varied and distinct as each of the migrants who made the journey north, there are, nonetheless, a few major themes. One such theme was safety. In the 1890s, the increasing restrictions of Jim Crow compounded with the lynchings and violence that ensued prompted many African Americans to leave the South in hope of finding a safer life in the North. For example, articles written by Ida B. Wells warned African Americans of the lynching spectacles that took place throughout the South; and cartoons depicted the North as a place of hope and the South as a place of terror. A second theme had to do with the environment. The late nineteenth century and the early twentieth were a time of severe environmental destruction. Floods and droughts destroyed the livelihood of many small farmers throughout the South, and the onslaught of the boll weevil devastated cotton production. As a result, tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and owners of small farms looked to the North for economic opportunity. A third, related theme was economics. African American farmers began to consider the North as a new place of settlement not only because of the environmental devastation that was sweeping across the South but also because of the industrialization that was developing in the North, because this created a demand for a black labor force. A fourth theme, related to the labor force, was World War I. During the war, restrictions were placed on immigration to the United States, leading to a labor shortage in many new factories in the North. Also, many American workers, virtually all of whom were white males, left their jobs and joined (or were drafted into) the armed forces; this exacerbated the labor shortage. Corporations responded by sending labor agents to the South; the agents actively recruited African American men to work and live in the burgeoning northern cities. A fifth theme was social equality, which seemed more likely in the North. In sum, African Americans were pushed out of the South by violence, Jim Crow, and the erosion of their farms and were pulled to the North by the promise of economic opportunity and social equality.

Relatively recent research on the history of African American migration to the North has not only explored the reasons why so many African Americans fled from the South but also uncovered provocative details about their experiences as migrants. A significant number of

southern migrants never made it to their northern destinations, but instead settled in urban parts of the South and in the Upper South. Many migrants found seasonal work while on their journey to the North and ended up following the seasonal labor patterns instead of traveling farther north. Other migrants never made it to the big urban centers, such as Philadelphia, Chicago, or New York, but instead settled in Pittsburgh, where they found jobs in the steel plants.

The emphasis on economic opportunity and labor as the impetus for migration has, according to some historians, obscured our understanding of who the migrants were. Although most migrants were African American men in search of work, there were also a significant number of African American women. Current research on issues relating to gender challenges our understanding of the migration narrative and provides us with more insight into the migratory experience of many southern African Americans. Women, like men, went north for economic opportunity, hoping to find jobs as domestics, department store clerks, and teachers. Yet because many of the opportunities were first offered to men, women were often last to leave the South. Also, as mothers and caretakers of the family, they often felt obliged to remain in the South until they had enough money to establish a new life in the North. Studies of boardinghouses, sororities, and personal diaries reveal that African American women created social networks connecting southern migrants to northerners, who helped facilitate their journey to and settlement in the North.

By taking their analyses in new directions, historians have been redefining our understanding of the great migration. As the new research indicates, to focus only on economic motivations would be to underestimate the social and cultural forces that influenced many African Americans' decision to move to the North. Settling in Chicago or New York was not only an economic matter but also a cultural and social matter. The *Chicago Defender*, a newspaper that circulated throughout the South, gave many African Americans their first glimpse of life in the North. Articles on the newly developing grassroots black community formed the bulk of the paper, but there were also articles on the cultural activities of the newly settled migrants; there were even reports on the black baseball team. Chicago certainly attracted a huge number of migrants to its emerging black community, and one can only imagine the incalculable effects that the blossoming world of music, art, poetry, and dance had on the many migrants who chose to come to New York City.

The influx of African Americans to New York as part of the great migration is a central component in the development of the Harlem Renaissance. For many migrants, Harlem represented the culmination of their artistic imagination, creative energy, and intellectuality; it was, therefore, a popular destination. In addition to its creativity and art, Harlem was for many migrants their new capital; they called it the "promised land" or the "mecca of the New Negro." In Harlem, there were black police officers, black doctors, a black basketball team, black millionaires, black intellectuals, and black political leaders. Artistic energy, combined with a new sense of pride and protest, contributed to a new identity that transformed rural southern migrants into the "New Negro." No longer would African Americans simply be perceived as sharecroppers and tenant farmers; the Harlem Renaissance, nourished by the great migration, radically altered their identity as citizens in the United States.

The dazzling artistic innovation in Harlem attracted southern migrants such as Zora Neale Hurston (who came from Florida) and Rudolph Fisher (who came from Washington, D.C.). Moreover, although the Harlem Renaissance certainly appealed widely to southern migrants, it was a unique destination in that it also transcended the traditional migratory pattern—south to north—and enticed people of African descent from all over the United States and the Caribbean. Billie Holiday came from Philadelphia; the poet Claude McKay and the political leader Marcus Garvey migrated from the West Indies. Their arrival in Harlem has not usually been considered part of the great migration, but it does reveal the migratory impulses that shaped and influenced the experiences of African Americans in the United States, and more specifically the Harlem Renaissance.

The new presence of African Americans in the North transformed the character of the United States. The migrants left their mark not only as laborers in northern factories and as domestics in other people's homes, but also—and indelibly—on cultural expression, such as Jacob Lawrence's painting *Migration of the Negro*, and a possible return hinted at in the lyrics of Gladys Knight and the Pips' "Midnight Train to Georgia." The great migration has perhaps not yet ended; it has just taken a different direction.

JAMES T. DOWNS JR.

See also Barnett, Ida B. Wells; *Chicago Defender*; Fisher, Rudolph; *Great Migration and the Harlem Renaissance*; Hurston, Zora Neale; Lawrence, Jacob

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Great Migration and the Harlem Renaissance

Following the Civil War and emancipation, southern blacks, mostly former slaves, forged new lives in the South. In the 1870s, however, race relations in the South began to deteriorate. By 1890 white voters had largely driven blacks from southern politics and had imposed a pervasive system of racial apartheid that reduced all African Americans in the South to servility. In the 1890s a prolonged agricultural crisis threatened the livelihood of all rural southerners, touching off a new wave of racial violence. Lynchings of blacks by white vigilantes became common and widespread throughout the rural South. The arrival of the boll weevil after 1900 undercut cotton production, the mainstay of southern agriculture, making life even more desperate for rural southern blacks. By 1910 tens of thousands of southern blacks, despairing of life in the South, left the region altogether, setting in motion the great migration. From 1917 to 1960 between three million and five million African Americans left the South for northern cities. Several hundred thousand of these rural southern

migrants came to Harlem, most from the South Atlantic states of Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, forming in New York the largest and most vibrant African American community in the nation. Before World War I, northern cities offered only marginal opportunities for African Americans. European immigrants and their children claimed most of the unskilled and semiskilled jobs in the nation's factories, and white labor unions systematically barred blacks from membership. In New York City most African Americans accepted low-paying, insecure menial work as cooks, porters, domestic servants, laundry workers, and day laborers. Only a few found well-paid employment on the railroads, in the post office and the civil service, and on the city's docks.

Northern working-class whites saw the growing tide of impoverished black migrants as a threat to their own precarious livelihood. White laborers treated blacks as racial inferiors who degraded their neighborhoods. Angry and afraid, in city after city, white mobs vented their frustrations on any and all nonwhites who crossed their path, setting off a wave of urban race riots as violent and destructive as the lynchings in the rural South. World War I momentarily moderated this violence and also offered unprecedented economic opportunity to southern blacks. The outbreak of war in 1914 cut off European immigration to the United States and created an enormous demand for American manufactured war material. The United States' entry into World War I in 1917 increased the demand for factory labor even as conscription forced millions of able-bodied males into military service, creating a labor shortage throughout the nation. Northern employers sent employment agents throughout the South, promising blacks good jobs in the North. By 1920 hundreds of thousands of southern blacks had come to northern cities.

The wartime migration of rural African Americans to cities changed American urban life. In the 1920s, for the first time, every American city contained significant numbers of African Americans. Before 1900, African Americans had been primarily a rural and southern people. In 1920 they had also become an urban and northern people. In most cities the arrival of thousands of poor black southerners destabilized residential patterns. With the end of unrestricted European immigration, African Americans became the fastest-growing ethnic group in the urban North. When black migrants pushed into new neighborhoods, working-class whites fought to contain them, often resorting to the southern

whites' strategy of racial segregation, enforced by police and mob violence. New York escaped the worst of this violence. Harlem's isolation from the rest of the city provided African Americans with a safe haven.

By 1920 about 21 percent of Harlem's African Americans were native New Yorkers, about 20 percent came from the British West Indies, and 55 percent came from the South. Ninety percent of the 180,000 native-born blacks who lived in Harlem in 1920 came from the five-state south Atlantic region. Southerners came to Harlem primarily to find work. The remaining native-born Americans were largely native New Yorkers, largely educated and middle-class. Most formed households of a husband and wife, several children, a relative or two, and, frequently, a boarder from back home. Nearly all were either illiterate or semiliterate and settled for low-paying menial jobs. About half of the women worked, most in the needle trades, in laundries, or as domestic help. A few found employment in beauty shops, in restaurants, and in department stores as stock clerks, and according to welfare agencies, several thousand resorted to prostitution. Males often worked as janitors, day laborers, porters, and elevator operators. About 5 percent obtained middle-class employment as undertakers, ministers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, and shop owners; 5 percent worked as skilled craftsmen such as masons, carpenters, barbers, cabinetmakers, and plumbers; about 5 percent worked either for the railroads or as postal clerks; another 5 percent worked in factories or at the Brooklyn Naval Yard; and about 10 percent worked on the West Side and Brooklyn piers.

Not all of Harlem's black migrants came from the South. About 20 percent came from the West Indies. In the 1890s the Ward Steamship Line established regular runs between the West Indies and New York. By World War I Jamaicans formed one of the largest immigrant groups in New York and by far the city's largest nonwhite immigrant community. In 1930 nearly 100,000 Jamaicans lived in New York, most in Harlem between Central Park and 115th Street, east of Lenox Avenue. The Jamaicans who arrived in New York were nearly all literate, spoke British public school English, belonged to the Anglican church, and included large numbers of middle-class professionals and merchants. They also brought with them a highly developed political consciousness and extensive experience with democratic politics, providing Harlem with much of its political leadership.

Many first-generation southern migrants tried desperately to assimilate to northern white culture. The

wealthiest individual in Harlem, Madame C. J. Walker, made her fortune by selling her hair-straightening formula to black southerners. She lived in a brownstone on West 136th Street in Harlem, elbow to elbow with Harlem's poor, but she also owned a palatial mansion on the Hudson River. Southern and West Indian migrants dreamed of becoming New Yorkers. The young, especially, dressed as New Yorkers, spoke urban slang, adopted new foods, applied bleaches to their skin, and patronized beauty and barber shops that promised to remake them into stylish urban people. The jazz clarinetist Garvin Bushell observed that in the 1920s most of the Negro population in New York either had been born there or had been there so long that they were fully acclimated:

They wanted you to forget the traditions of the South and were trying to emulate the whites . . . You weren't allowed to play blues and boogie woogie in the average Negro middle class home . . . You could only hear the blues and real jazz in the gutbucket cabarets where the lower class went. The term 'gutbucket' came from the chitterlings bucket. (1988, p. 19)

Still, African Americans retained important aspects of their southern and Jamaican identity: their cuisine, their music, important elements of style, their sense of racial identity, and most of all their religion. According to Bushell (20–21), "Gradually, the New York cabarets began to hear more of the real pure jazz and blues by musicians from Florida, South Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana and other parts of the South." Harlem and its music remained essentially African American; in the jargon of the era, "it swung." Bushell explained: "They called it 'shout' in those days, from the church when the Baptist minister would start preaching and the congregation would get all worked up emotionally. Negro church music had a great influence on jazz. They sang the blues in church; the words were religious, but it was the blues. They often had a drummer and a trumpet player there."

In the 1920s migration from Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina reached 400,000; in the 1930s it dropped to 230,000; in the 1940s it jumped to 477,000. In 1930 more than 75 percent of Harlem's African American migrants had come from the five south Atlantic states. One-quarter of Harlem's black residents were native New Yorkers, and 15 percent were British West Indians. In the depression years of the 1930s, southern migration to Harlem slowed, but beginning with World War II it accelerated again. The Census

Bureau did not compile figures specifically for Harlem. For New York City as a whole, however, the bureau calculated that in the 1940s the African American population in the city increased by 300,000, and that it increased by another 300,000 in the 1950s. Almost all of the increase derived from migration from the South Atlantic states, from natural increase, or from Puerto Rico. After 1924 restrictions on immigration barred most people of African descent from entering the United States. After World War II, however, large numbers of African Americans from the American territory of Puerto Rico immigrated to Harlem. In 1910 New York City's African American population stood at about 2 percent. In 1960 it exceeded 15 percent.

At the close of the great migration in the late 1960s, Harlem had become a southern and Caribbean city. Most of its people spoke with southern or Caribbean accents, they prepared and ate traditional southern and Caribbean foods, their worship services conformed to southern and Caribbean conventions, and their nightclubs, dance halls, and theaters offered the same fare as African American communities in the South and Puerto Rico. At the same time, Harlem's residents had also adopted many northern ways. Most noticeably, they had become an urban people. They worked at city jobs, not as farmers; they lived among neighbors, not relatives; the clock, not the calendar, governed their lives; and they answered to themselves, not to their community. These changes occurred slowly, one person at a time, day by day.

The rapid rise in the number of Pentecostal and Holiness churches in Harlem after World War II, and the increasingly southern, sanctified features of its old-line Protestant and Catholic congregations, reflected this influence. Even Harlem's formal institutions of culture—the Schomburg Library, the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations (YMCA and YWCA), the Urban League, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the *Amsterdam News*, and its socially prominent churches—increasingly defined their role in Harlem in the language of southern migrants' sanctified religion and music. But Harlem's migrants also carried back to their homelands Harlem's political militancy and city ways, sowing seeds of change in the South and in Puerto Rico. Appropriately, the legendary Harlem Globetrotters basketball team warmed up their worldwide audiences with down-home music: "Sweet Georgia Brown." By the 1970s Harlem and "Sweet Georgia Brown" had become interrelated pieces in a much larger, complex African American mosaic that

came from the South, the Caribbean, and Africa itself—an artifact of the great migration.

PETER RUTKOFF
WILLIAM SCOTT

See also *Anglophone Caribbean and the Harlem Renaissance*; *Great Migration*; Walker, Madame C. J.

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Green Pastures, The

As the framework for his play *The Green Pastures* (1929), which is a deliberately naive retelling of stories from the Old Testament, Marc Connelly depicts an elderly black Sunday school teacher explaining the mysteries of the Bible to a group of curious, fidgety black children in the deep South during the Depression. The play stresses the analogy between the children of Israel in the Old Testament and blacks in the rural South: God, the angels, and the biblical characters resemble the sort of adult figures that the children would recognize. As Connelly explained in the preface to the printed version of the play, "*The Green Pastures* is an attempt to present certain aspects of a living religion in the terms of its believers." For some readers now, as for the original audience, the sincerity, affection, and good humor of this play make it consistently

enjoyable; for its critics, it is sentimental, condescending, and racist. *The Green Pastures* opened on Broadway in February 1930, had a six-year run, and won a Pulitzer Prize for its author. But a revival in 1951 failed, partly because of the shift in racial attitudes after World War II.

The first act consists of a series of dramatizations of familiar scenes from the Old Testament, with poor southern blacks taking on the roles of God and the biblical characters. The stage directions explain that the angels “look and act like a company of happy negroes at a fish fry.” God, known throughout the play as “De Lawd,” has a taste for boiled custard and “ten-cent seegars.” The first act moves from the creation and Adam to Noah and the flood; the second act jumps briskly from the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to Moses and Exodus and a newly invented character, “Hezdrel,” who is about to be killed defending the Temple in Jerusalem from Herod’s attack. At the play’s conclusion, the angels comment sympathetically on the plight of an unseen Jesus, who is being sent off to his crucifixion.

The popularity of *The Green Pastures* among white audiences during the Depression is understandable. As in the American melodramatic tradition, the poor and humble are shown as keeping their dignity (Richards 1997), and sympathy for others is displayed in highly emotional situations (Mason 1993). Connelly, who had earned his reputation as the coauthor with George S. Kaufman of several successful Broadway comedies, provided his characters with charm and earthy good sense. The view of Miller and Frazer (1991) that the play’s “sincerely religious atmosphere” actually “overcomes the condescending view of ignorant folk” is open to question, as is the suggestion of Berkowitz (1992) that the play’s charm, humor, and emotional power cover the implicit racism. Craig (1980) cites a contemporary viewer who dismissed the play’s “inauthentic black folklore” and complained that it treated blacks as stereotypical figures.

A modern reading of the play reveals certain paradoxes. The structure of the play is loose and episodic, but anyone raised on these stories will find Connelly’s retelling fresh and amusing, with no knee-jerk piety. (God wearily admits to one of the archangels that “Even bein’ Gawd ain’t a bed of roses.”) To counter the charge of sentimentality, the play can be shown to contain a deeply pessimistic streak. God lives up to his Old Testament reputation of being bad-tempered and aloof. Outraged at human misbehavior but neglectful of injustice, De Lawd withdraws out of unhappiness

with his own creation: “I repent of dese people dat I have made and I will deliver dem no more.”

That the play adopts the racist attitudes of its time is undeniable. As in the “jungle” numbers that were featured in Duke Ellington’s programs at the Cotton Club in Harlem, the talented African American performers in the first production were asked to present a false impression of black life. The supposed dialect of poor blacks in Louisiana owes more to racist stage tradition than to observation of actual speech. (Audiences continue to forgive George Gershwin’s opera *Porgy and Bess* for using such unrealistic speech, but not *The Green Pastures*.) It also seems undeniable, though, that the play is sympathetic to the plight of impoverished blacks in the deep south during the Depression. Certain figures are deeply sympathetic, such as Adam, Hosea, and Hezdrel.

By making all the villains—such as Pharaoh and “Cain the Sixth”—black, as well as the other characters, the play forgoes the opportunity to put the blame for black people’s suffering outside the local black community. But as a measure of its dramatic sophistication, the play’s most admirable character is also shown to be its most defective. “De Lawd,” like the other characters, needs to learn the lesson of mercy as a reward for suffering, and in the course of the play, he learns to abandon wrath in favor of compassion. As the theologian Karen Armstrong explains in her study of Genesis (1996), the Old Testament God “is omnipotent but powerless to control humanity.” De Lawd has to come to terms with his own neglect of his creation. In the climactic scene, De Lawd is impressed



Scene from *The Green Pastures* showing Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh. (Photofest.)



Marc Connelly. (Library of Congress.)

by the steadfast faith of Hezdrel, who explains that he worships the God of Hosea the prophet, not the wrathful God of Moses. Pleased, but not a little discomforted by Hezdrel's earnest faith, De Lawd tells Hezdrel, "If dey kill you tomorrow I'll bet dat God of Hosea'll be waitin' for you." In the short final scene, De Lawd tells the archangel Gabriel that people on earth have earned mercy through suffering. "Did he mean dat even God must suffer?" he asks himself about his encounter with Hezdrel.

Like the stage versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the 1850s, *The Green Pastures* showed sympathy for the struggles of the African Americans depicted onstage (Richards 371). Although it is probably not performable today because of its racial stereotyping, *The Green Pastures* shows energy, wit, irreverence, and a willingness to ask difficult questions.

BYRON NELSON

See also *Cotton Club*; *Porgy and Bess*

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Green, Paul

Paul Green's black and white folk literature—written throughout 1919–1937, the years of the Harlem Renaissance—secured his place as a white writer who depicted black life in America. Green was the son of a southern white farmer and from childhood was aware of the ills that beset blacks; he used literature to express his ardent belief in freedom and equality for all. Green wrote controversial one-act plays focusing on southerners to illuminate harsh race relations. His inclusion of black themes and his presentation of black life offered a greater understanding of black culture. In literature earlier in the century, black characters were commonly portrayed as villains or relegated to the background; Green, by contrast, introduced blacks as humans who were as true to life as possible.

Although Green aroused much opposition and resentment, this reaction did not prevent him from attempting to fully represent the lives of people cast off by mainstream society, and he addressed humanitarian issues and social problems. Green did not write solely about blacks; he included in his works the people he knew most about, typically white tenant farmers, convicts, mill workers, field laborers, teachers, and poor blacks and whites. Common themes in his work include the social aspirations and fate of blacks, love between blacks and whites, malice and discrimination inflicted by whites, issues relating to mulattoes, freedom and equality, and religious conflicts. Green integrated vernacular speech, poetry, pantomime, and various forms of music into his literature.

Green's *White Dresses*, his first characteristic play centered on blacks, is the tragic story of a mulatto woman living in a black environment. It was produced in White Plains, New York, in 1923. In 1927 Green received a Pulitzer Prize for his play *In Abraham's Bosom*, a tragedy about a black educator who attempts to establish a school for blacks in North Carolina. *In Abraham's Bosom* was produced in New York by the Provincetown Players and staged by Jasper Deeter in

1926. Later in his career, Green became known for his symphonic dramas, plays that incorporated music for dramatic effect. His symphonic history plays took up events in American history and culture—for example, events involving the founding fathers. The four most popular of these plays were *The Lost Colony* (1937), celebrating the first British settlement in America, Raleigh's colony at Roanoke Island; *The Highland Call* (1941), about the Scottish settlement in North Carolina; *The Common Glory* (1948), about Jefferson's role as well as the state of Virginia throughout the American Revolution; and *Faith of Our Fathers* (1950), about George Washington. In 1941 Green worked with Richard Wright on an adaptation of Wright's *Native Son* for Broadway.

Green is largely unrecognized today, but he was a prominent figure throughout the Harlem Renaissance. His efforts to introduce blacks into realistic modern literature and theater helped pave the way for black actors. He also expressed progressive ideals and a sense of cultural pride during what was a delicate time for blacks.

Biography

Paul Eliot Green was born on 17 March 1894, in Lillington, North Carolina. He was educated at Buie's Creek Academy in North Carolina, graduating in 1914, and at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill (1921); he did graduate study in 1921–1922 and had a Kenan Philosophy Fellowship to study philosophy at Cornell University in 1922–1923. He was a school principal in Olive Branch, North Carolina, in 1914–1917; served in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1917–1919; was an instructor and then an assistant professor of philosophy at Chapel Hill in 1923–1936, and later taught in the department of dramatic arts in 1936–1944; was editor of the *Reviewer* magazine, Chapel Hill, in 1925; was a contributing editor at *Contempo* magazine in 1931–1932; and wrote for Fox, Warner Brothers, and others in Hollywood in 1932–1936. He married Elizabeth Atkinson Lay in 1922. Five one-act plays by Green were produced by the Carolina Playmakers in Chapel Hill in 1920. His characteristic Negro play *White Dresses* was produced in 1923. He completed his first music drama, *Potter's Field: A Symphonic Play of the Negro People*, in 1931; and two novels, *The Laughing Pioneer* and *This Body the Earth*, in 1932 and 1936, respectively. His symphonic plays include *The Lost Colony* (the most popular, first produced at Roanoke

Island in 1937), *The Highland Call* (1939), *The Common Glory* (1947), and *Faith of Our Fathers* (1950). He worked with Richard Wright on an adaptation of *Native Son* for Broadway in 1941. Green was president of the National Theatre Conference (1940–1942) and a member of the National Institute on Arts and Letters (1941), the U.S. Executive Committee, and the National Commission, UNESCO (1950–1952); he participated in the International Conference for the Performing Arts in Athens (1962). His awards included the New York City Belasco Cup for a one-act play, *The No 'Count Boy* (1925); a Pulitzer Prize for *Abraham's Bosom* (1927); and a Guggenheim fellowship (1928, 1929). Green died on 4 May 1981, at his home in Chapel Hill. The Paul Green Foundation was formed in 1982.

LISA A. CZERNIECKI

See also *Contempo*; Provincetown Players; Wright, Richard

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Greene, Lorenzo

Lorenzo Johnston Greene, an early promoter of black history, wrote the first scholarly history of blacks in colonial New England.

Greene entered Howard University to study medicine but became interested in history after taking courses with two notable African American historians: Walter Dyson, a Europeanist; and William Leo Hansberry, a pioneer in the study of African civilizations. Greene decided to pursue graduate training in history; and when he was initially rebuffed by Yale because he had taken so few history courses at Howard, he was encouraged to enter Columbia University to take additional courses. There, he met the Americanist Dixon Ryan Fox and developed an interest in the black colonial experience in the United States. Greene completed his M.A. in 1926, but in 1928 he encountered financial difficulties that interrupted his doctoral studies at Columbia. For assistance, he turned to a fellow alumnus of Howard, Charles Wesley, who had received a Ph.D. from Harvard and was an investigator for the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH). Wesley persuaded Carter G. Woodson, the founder of ASNLH, to retain Greene to assist in a national survey of the black church, and Woodson hired Greene as a part-time associate and field investigator. In this capacity, Greene assisted in the production of several seminal studies of the black experience.

Much of what we know about Greene's involvement with ASNLH during the Harlem Renaissance comes from a diary he kept between 1928 and 1930. Greene's entries were meticulous and provide valuable personal and professional insights into the organization's early years. In addition to recounting his work with the national church survey, Greene also detailed his contributions to several publications of ASNLH, including *African Myths*, *The Negro in Our History*, and *The Negro Wage Earner*. The diaries also

give us a glimpse of the inner workings of ASNLH. Greene noted his interactions with other investigators for ASNLH, such as Charles Wesley and Alrutheus Ambush Taylor. He described the quality of their scholarship as well as stories Woodson related to him. Most important, he revealed how exacting Woodson was with regard to the publication of scholarly work. Woodson often made Greene correct or proofread a work several times before accepting it. In the case of the national church survey, Woodson's criticism of the original draft led to the abandonment of the project, and Greene was reassigned to a project that culminated in the production of *The Negro Wage Earner*. Greene described the tabulation and interpretation of statistics that went into this work, as well as research at the Library of Congress and other institutions. He also described the national convention of ASNLH in 1928 and 1929, as well as Woodson's work with Negro History Week, instituted in 1926.

In addition to exposing the inner workings of ASNLH, Greene, in his second diary, covering 1930–1933, described his own role in promoting ASNLH and its work. He and four other men left Washington, D.C., in 1930 to sell books issued by Associated Publishers. This trip, which encompassed much of the upper and lower South as well as Pennsylvania, Oklahoma, Missouri, and Illinois, demonstrates the length to which the organization went to promote its work. Greene's diary also reveals much about the respect and admiration that Woodson's work stimulated in black communities throughout the United States. On several occasions, the mere mention of Woodson's name was enough to secure lodging, food, and assistance with transportation.

Although Greene is not as well known as many of his contemporaries, his contributions to the growth of African American history as a historical specialty are immeasurable. His early editorial work, his fundraising, and his scholarship helped define the mission of ASNLH in the first half of the twentieth century.

Biography

Lorenzo Johnston Greene was born on 16 November 1899, in Ansonia, Connecticut. He was educated in public schools; at Howard University in Washington, D.C. (A.B., 1924); and at Columbia University in New York City (A.M., 1926; Ph.D., 1942). Greene was a part-time research associate and field investigator for the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History

(1928–1933); taught history at Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri (1933–1972); and was an editor of *Midwest Journal* (1947–1956). He was chairman of the Subcommittee on Education, Missouri Advisory Committee to U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1959–1961); president of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (1965–1966); director of the Institute for Drop-Out Prevention and Teacher Orientation, Jefferson City, Missouri; and director of the Institute to Facilitate Desegregation in Kansas City Public Schools, Missouri (1972–1974). Greene died in Jefferson City on 24 January 1988.

STEPHEN G. HALL

See also Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and *Journal of Negro History*; *Black History and Historiography*; Woodson, Carter G.

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Greenwich Village

Renowned for its rich and diverse literary, intellectual, and artistic heritage, Greenwich Village—often called simply the Village—is an old residential neighborhood located in the lower section of downtown Manhattan that is bounded by First Street, Fourteenth Street, Houston Street, Broadway, and the Hudson River waterfront.

During the early nineteenth century, new institutions arose in Greenwich Village to serve the spiritual, educational, and cultural needs of the growing community. Religious denominations commissioned elaborately decorated buildings; New York University grew on the east side of Washington Square from 1836 on; and the neighborhood soon became the site of

art clubs, private picture galleries, learned societies, literary salons, and libraries. Fine hotels, shops, and theaters also flourished. However, the character of the neighborhood changed markedly at the close of the century, when German, Irish, and Italian immigrants found work in the breweries, warehouses, and coal and lumber yards near the Hudson River as well as in the manufacturing lofts in the Southeast corner of the neighborhood. Older residences were either subdivided into cheap lodging hotels and multiple-family apartment houses or demolished to build tenements. Plummeting real estate values prompted nervous retailers and genteel property owners to move farther uptown.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Greenwich Village—much like Harlem—was a quaintly picturesque and ethnically diverse neighborhood. By the time World War I began, it was widely known as a bohemian enclave with secluded side streets, low rents, and a tolerance for radical political views and nonconformist lifestyles. Attention became increasingly focused on artists and writers noted for their boldly innovative work: books and irreverent “little magazines” were published by small presses, art galleries exhibited the work of the avant-garde, and experimental theater companies ignored the financial considerations of Broadway. A growing awareness of its idiosyncrasies helped make the Village an attraction for tourists. Entrepreneurs provided amusements ranging from evenings in artists’ studios to bacchanalian costume balls. During Prohibition, local speakeasies attracted patrons from uptown. Decrepit rowhouses were remodeled into “artistic flats” for the more affluent residents, and luxury apartment towers appeared at the Northernmost edge of Washington Square by 1926—although the stock market crash of 1929 halted the momentum of new construction in this area of the city. During the 1930s, galleries and collectors promoted contemporary art. The sculptor Gertrude Whitney Vanderbilt opened a museum dedicated to modern American art on West Eighth Street, now the New York Studio School. The New School for Social Research, on West Twelfth Street since the late 1920s, inaugurated the “university in exile” in 1934.

From 1920 until about 1930, an unprecedented outburst of creative activity among African Americans occurred in all manner of artistic endeavors. Beginning as a series of literary discussions in lower Manhattan (Greenwich Village) and upper Manhattan (Harlem), this African American cultural movement became known as the “New Negro movement” and later as the Harlem Renaissance. African Americans were

encouraged to celebrate their heritage and to become the “New Negro,” a term coined in 1925 by the sociologist and critic Alain Locke. This movement was more than a literary phenomenon and more than a social revolt against racism. Adventurous participants in the Greenwich Village scene, most notably Carl Van Vechten, were very excited by the Harlem Renaissance. Also, many artists and writers in Greenwich Village found great inspiration in the formative years of the Harlem Renaissance because it exalted the unique cultural expression and racial heritage of African Americans and magnificently redefined African American expression.

JUAN FLOYD-THOMAS

See also Black Bohemia; Locke, Alain; New Negro Movement; Van Vechten, Carl

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Griggs, Sutton E.

The novelist, essayist, and minister Sutton Elbert Griggs (1872–1930) is important in the African American literary tradition as one of the earliest voices of black nationalism; he was also one of the earliest African American writers to establish a publishing company, Orion, in Nashville, Tennessee. He distributed his own thirty-three books primarily through Orion; and because they were distributed throughout the African American community, he probably had a larger African American readership than his contemporaries Charles Chesnutt and Paul Laurence Dunbar. Among Griggs's published works were five novels: *Imperium in Imperio* (1899), *Overshadowed* (1901), *Unfettered* (1902), *The Hindered Hand* (1905), and *Pointing the Way* (1908). Little is known about Griggs's personal life, but his professional achievements indicate his lifelong commitment to racial justice, racial solidarity, and self-determination.

His first novel, *Imperium in Imperio*, because of its radical nature and its emphasis on ideology, is especially pertinent to studies of the Harlem Renaissance. This protonationalist text advocates a violent overthrow of the U.S. government through the efforts of an underground black political organization, the Imperium. Bell (1987) describes this work as “one of the most thematically radical Afro-American novels of the nineteenth century” (61). Although it was published twenty-six years before *Survey Graphic* helped publicize the inception of the Harlem Renaissance, *Imperium in Imperio* prefigures ideological issues that were of extreme importance to artists of the renaissance era. The text is immediately concerned with the utilitarian purpose of early African American literature, the state of African American leadership, and the emergence of a new, militant concept of black masculinity. The novel is both sensationalist and didactic, and it anticipates the tension between aesthetics and ideology in many renaissance texts. The fantastic plot turns indicate that Griggs wanted to entertain his readers, but his primary aim is to impel them to pursue racial justice. Griggs's two protagonists, Bernard Belgrave and Belton Piedmont, are loosely modeled on W. E. B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington, respectively—representing the divergent methods of African American leaders.

The conflicted relationship that develops between them is a metaphor for the complexities of attempting to unite African Americans from diverse backgrounds under a single model of leadership. Perhaps most significantly, Griggs uses the “New Negro” to symbolize the growing militancy of African Americans at the turn of the twentieth century, prefiguring the association of this term with the literature of the Harlem Renaissance.

Griggs’s other four novels all center on the related issues of African American uplift and equality. His second novel, *Overshadowed*, focuses on the conflicted nature of the emergent black middle class. Griggs’s growing interest in international politics and the black diaspora is at work in *Unfettered* and *The Hindered Hand*; in both novels, Griggs focuses on the timely issues of imperialism and African Americans’ complicated relationship to the African past. By the time his last novel, *Pointing the Way*, was published, Griggs had begun to temper his radical ideology with the rhetoric of interracial cooperation. Accordingly, during World War I he spoke in the African American community in support of Liberty Bonds.

After publishing his final novel, Griggs devoted his attention to the ministry. He was secretary of the Education Department of the National Baptist Convention in Nashville, Tennessee, and in 1920 he became pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church in Memphis. The pastorate gave Griggs another venue for his interest in interracial cooperation; he remained active in the ministry and was president of the American Baptist Theological Seminary from October 1925 to January 1926. He then moved to Houston, Texas, to establish the National Religious and Civic Institute.

MICHELLE TAYLOR

See also Chesnutt, Charles Waddell; Dunbar, Paul Laurence; Survey Graphic

Biography

Sutton Elbert Griggs was born on 19 June 1872, in Chatfield, Texas. He studied at public schools in Dallas, Texas; at Bishop College, Marshall, Texas; and at Richmond Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia. He was the founder of Orion Publishing Company, Nashville, Tennessee; president of the American Baptist Theological Seminary; and pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee. Griggs died in Houston, Texas, on 3 January 1933.

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Grimké, Angelina Weld

Angelina Weld Grimké is important to the Harlem Renaissance both as a writer and as a member of an influential, aristocratic Bostonian family. Because she

did not produce much work after the mid-1920s, she is often overlooked in present-day critical analysis; however, her drama *Rachel* (1920) is significant as one of the first uses of the stage to directly confront the evil of lynching, and her poetry is significant for its artistry and its themes, including the sometimes repressed expression of lesbian desire.

Grimké was born in Boston in 1880; she was the only daughter of Archibald Henry and Sarah Stanley Grimké, who separated some time in her early childhood, around 1883. Archibald Grimké was the nephew of the famous abolitionist sisters Sarah Moore Grimké and Angelina Grimké Weld; he was an escaped slave and found these aunts after traveling north toward freedom and education. Scholars speculate that Sarah Stanley's prominent white family was against her interracial marriage and that this opposition might have contributed to the separation. After a brief time with her mother, Angelina Weld Grimké returned to her father, a lawyer who was prominent in Boston's elite black community, and never again saw her mother, who died in 1898.

Grimké was exposed to political activism at a young age, in her family circle. She was very much attached to her father and remained so throughout his life. A writer from early childhood, she composed poems dedicated to her family, including her aunt, Charlotte Forten Grimké; and when she was only thirteen years old, her "Tribute to Theodore Weld—On His Ninetieth Birthday" appeared in a local newspaper. After grammar school, she attended several elite academies before graduating in 1902. She started a teaching career at the Armstrong Manual Training School in Washington, D.C., but was unhappy teaching in her major field, physical education. She took classes in English at Harvard during the summers of 1904–1910, switched to teaching English, and in 1907 transferred to the M Street School, where she taught English until she retired in 1933. This school, which became Dunbar High School in 1916, was well known for its academic and artistic training of young black students; Grimké wrote a poem dedicated to it: "To the Dunbar High School," which was published in *Crisis* in 1917.

Grimké was older than many of the most significant writers of the Harlem Renaissance and is distinct in that she lived outside Harlem for most of her life and in that she was already established as a poet before the dates which are generally accepted as the flowering of the renaissance. She was embraced by the renaissance

literary community as a poet whose work had gained attention in local black journals, and her recognition escalated during the Harlem Renaissance: her work appeared in journals such as *Crisis* and *Opportunity* and in anthologies published during and after the renaissance, including *Negro Poets and Their Poems* (1923), *The New Negro* (1925), *Caroling Dusk* (1927), and *Negro Caravan* (1941). Perhaps because of her early success publishing poems in journals—according to Hull (1979, 1987), her elegy "El Beso" was called "as perfect as an antique gem in its genre"—Grimké had high hopes for her dramatic writing, most of which remains unpublished. The exception is her play *Rachel*, which is significant not only because of its poignant treatment of lynching but also because it was considered at the time to be the first use of the stage to directly confront racism. Grimké is perhaps best known for this play, which was sponsored by the drama committee of the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and was first performed on 3–4 March 1916. Even for its time the play was controversial; some critics held that *Rachel's* response, on learning that her absent father has been lynched, is exaggerated. *Rachel*—expressing Grimké's own position—vows never to have children of her own and breaks off her romantic relationship. Despite its dark tone, after its publication in book form in 1920, *Rachel* received many positive reviews and came to be seen as a tragic portrayal of the horror of lynching. In more recent times, the play's characters have seemed overly romanticized, although *Rachel* is still recognized as a historically significant work. Today's audiences tend to dislike the depressing plot and the conclusion—the play ends with a dark stage and a weeping child.

Besides *Rachel* and some nonfiction pieces, including a loving tribute to her father published in *Opportunity* in 1925, Grimké continues to be known for her beautiful, muted lyric poetry. She specialized in imagistic presentations of the natural world to present a mood or theme; and although some of her poetry—such as "Tenebris" and "Beware Lest He Awakes"—addresses racial themes, most of it is about love. Hull (1979, 1987) speculates that the hushed tones and muted colors of Grimké's love poetry, as in "A Mona Lisa" and "When the Green Lies Over the Earth," are a consequence of repressed lesbianism. Many of Grimké's unpublished or recently published works contain explicit references to female lovers and broken romances with women. This repression of her homosexuality appears to have been encouraged by her father,

and critics consider the silencing of Grimké's erotic life to have been an influence on the silencing of her artistic life.

Shortly after her father's death in 1930, Grimké retired from teaching and moved to New York City. Her letters indicate that she hoped to return to writing, but she never published again, although she did continue to be a public representative of the Grimké family. Letters indicate also that she became reclusive and somewhat asocial, distrusting even close friends. She died in 1958 after a long illness.

Biography

Angelina Weld Grimké was born on 27 February 1880, in Boston, Massachusetts. She attended public grammar schools in Boston and Hyde Park, Massachusetts, 1887–1994; and several private secondary schools, including Fairmount School in Boston, Carleton Academy in Northfield (Minnesota), Cushing Academy in Ashburnham (Massachusetts), and Girls' Latin School in Boston. She received a degree in physical education from Boston Normal School of Gymnastics in 1902; took summer courses in English at Harvard University, 1904–1910; taught physical education and later English in Washington, D.C., at Armstrong Manual Training School, 1902–1907; and taught English at the M Street High School (renamed Dunbar High School in 1916) from 1907 until her retirement in 1933. She died in New York City on 10 June 1958.

SHARON BARNES

See also *Crisis*, *The*; *Opportunity*; *Rachel*

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Gruenberg, Louis

The composer Louis Gruenberg, a European-American Jew of prodigious talent, training, and output, is rarely thought of as being part of the Harlem Renaissance. Whether by intent or coincidence, though, Gruenberg's use of jazz and Negro spirituals in his concert music paralleled the hot debates about such use among Harlem Renaissance intellectuals. Furthermore, his most famous work, the controversial opera *The Emperor Jones*, was based on Eugene O'Neill's 1920 play, which had starred the iconic African American performer Paul Robeson.

One of a now-forgotten generation of American "modernist" composers, Gruenberg was a pioneer in his efforts to energize American music through an infusion of rhythms and melodies derived from folk and popular musics of American blacks, whites and "Indians." He believed that a vibrant nationalistic style would result from the inclusion of these "primitive" elements, provided that they were handled with skill and sophistication. He expounded his theories in prominent interwar music journals such as *Modern Music*. He also wrote a good deal of music to prove his point.

Gruenberg was not alone in his attraction to "high-brow jazz." George Gershwin, John Alden Carpenter, Aaron Copeland, and William Grant Still among American composers and Igor Stravinsky, Kurt Weill, Paul Hindemith, Darius Milhaud, and Ernst Krenek among the Europeans were enchanted by the uses of jazz in concert music.

Beginning in 1923, Gruenberg wrote music in the "American idiom" for a wide range of instrumental and vocal forces. His setting of "jazz poet" Vachel Lindsay's poem *Daniel Jazz*, which spoofs the biblical tale of Daniel in the lion's den, was a critical success at its 1925 premier in Venice. *The Creation: a Negro Sermon* tells the familiar Bible story in a colloquial way using a male narrator and eight instrumentalists. Its text, by James Weldon Johnson, was published a year later, in

1927, part of *God's Trombones—Seven Negro Sermons in Verse*. The Gruenberg—Johnson collaboration created a bold and theatrical impact and launched the career of the hitherto unknown African American baritone, Jules Bledsoe.

The pinnacle of Gruenberg's popular success was the opera *The Emperor Jones*, based on Eugene O'Neill's play of a decade earlier. Gruenberg wrote his own libretto with the blessing of O'Neill. Although scheduled to be premiered in Berlin in 1932, it was deemed neither the time nor the place for an opera by a Jew about a black man. Instead, the 77-minute "monodrama" had its premier on 7 January 1933, on a double bill with *Pagliacci* at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, where *The Emperor Jones* had the longest continuous run of any opera in the Met's history. The white baritone, superstar Lawrence Tibbett, was the protagonist, Brutus Jones, in blackface. Despite that throwback to an American theatrical tradition despised by African Americans, the production did provide jobs, perhaps for the first time, to African American singers. Critical reaction was mixed. Olin Downes of the *New York Times* greatly admired the work, as did Paul Robeson; influential modernist critic Paul Rosenfeld hated it. The opera's reputation for politically incorrect language and plot—a black man's brutality toward other blacks—guarantees that the opera will not be revived often, if at all.

Biography

Louis Gruenberg was born on 22 July/3 August 1884, near Brest-Litovsk, Russia, and emigrated to the United States in 1885. He attended public schools in New York, quitting at age fifteen to become the sole support of his family. He was a child piano prodigy whose earliest music studies were with his father, then at the National Conservatory of Music, New York. He returned to Europe as a teenager to study at the Vienna Conservatory of Music, then at the Berlin State Academy of Music, 1905. He was a piano and composition student of Ferruccio Busoni in Berlin, starting in 1908, but his studies were interrupted by World War I. He made his European debut as a pianist in Berlin, 1912. He abandoned his career as a performer to devote his life to composing and championing modern music in the United States from 1919 on, eventually composing six symphonies, thirty-six other instrumental works, eighteen operas and operettas, and thirteen other vocal works. He helped establish

the American Music Guild in 1921 and the League of Composers in 1923. He conducted the American premier of Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, 1923. He was president of the U.S. chapter of the International Society for Contemporary Music during the 1920s. He achieved international fame as composer of the cantata *The Daniel Jazz*, 1925. His best-known work was *The Emperor Jones*, performed eleven times at The Metropolitan Opera, New York, 1933. He was chairman of the Department of Composition at Chicago Musical College, 1933–1936. He moved to California in 1937, where he composed nine film scores and was nominated unsuccessfully for Academy Awards for *The Fight for Life*, 1940; *So Ends Our Night*, 1941; and *Commandos Strike at Dawn*, 1942. He was commissioned by the violin virtuoso Jascha Heifetz to compose *Violin Concerto*, 1944. Awards he received include the New York Philharmonic Flagler Prize for *Hill of Dreams*, 1920; RCA Victor Prize for *Symphony no. 1*, 1930; Bispham Memorial Medal for *The Emperor Jones*, 1933; and Lake Placid Club Prize for *Piano Quintet*, 1937, an award he could not accept in person because the Club barred Jews as members and guests. Gruenberg died in Beverly Hills, California, on 10 June 1964.

HONORA RAPHAEL

See also *Emperor Jones*, The

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Guardian, The

In 1901, William Monroe Trotter began a weekly newspaper, the Boston *Guardian*, to add an editorial voice that would speak freely and courageously for the equality of Negro people. The *Guardian* reinvigorated a muted Negro press: editors of other Negro newspapers, who had recently abandoned their militant stances, were inspired and mobilized. The *Guardian* led to the establishment in 1908 of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

The *Guardian* was born during what has been described as an "era of reaction and adjustment (1877–1915)" that started when President Rutherford B. Hayes pulled Union soldiers from the South and became the "most dangerous and brutal period for Afro-Americans" (Hughes et al. 1983, 215). This period overlaps with what NAACP has called the "lynching era," from 1889 to 1939; during that period, 2,522 African Americans were lynched. As a result, many editors of the African American press, who had once been outspoken in favor of racial equality, chose to tone down their comments; those who did not were fired or run out of town. One exception was Ida B. Wells, who in 1889 became an editor of the newspaper *Free Speech and Headlight* in Memphis, Tennessee, and made it well known for editorial veracity. She wrote against lynching, but mob violence closed *Free Speech and Headlight* in 1892. The number of lynchings of African Americans reached 115 in 1900 and 130 in 1901, according to the Tuskegee Institute. While lynchings were taking place in the South, race riots broke out as a form of protest in the North. During this chaotic time for African Americans, Booker T. Washington disappointed other Negro leaders by professing "accommodation" and "conciliation," policies that effectively weakened the editorial vigor of the Negro press except for the handful of militant newspapers located in the North.

Trotter's *Guardian*, in a sense, freed the restrained Negro press. Trotter's editorials were scathing attacks on Booker T. Washington: "What man is a worse enemy

to a race than a leader who looks with equanimity on the disenfranchisement of his race in a country where other races have universal suffrage by constitutions that make one rule for his race and another for the dominant race" (Toppin 1971, 168). Trotter also attacked other Negro politicians and leaders, such as W. E. B. Du Bois, for failing to speak in unison with him against Washington's philosophy. At that time, Du Bois—a teacher, an author, and editor of *The Crisis*—was considered by many to be "the Negro leader," and he believed that Washington's philosophy of accommodation and patience would work if given adequate time. Less than a year later, according to some accounts, Trotter persuaded Du Bois to change that position and become opposed to Washington; although according to other accounts, Du Bois had concluded on his own that Washington's philosophy was not working. In any case, the *Guardian* had allies in the Negro press in its criticism of Washington: the *Cleveland Gazette*, the *Chicago Conservator*, the *Richmond Planet*, the *Washington Bee*, and the *Christian Record*. Trotter died in 1934, but the *Guardian* continued to be published into the 1950s.

GERI ALUMIT

See also *Antilynching Crusade*; Barnett, Ida B. Wells; Black Press; Du Bois, W. E. B.; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Trotter, William Monroe; Washington, Booker T.

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Guggenheim Fellowships

The Guggenheim Fellowships, sponsored by the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, are competitive grants (not scholarships) available to advanced professionals pursuing interests in the humanities, the creative arts, and science. A Guggenheim fellowship may be used for a span of six to twelve months and is determined according to the individual needs of the scholar and the scholarly project. These fellowships are intended to provide advanced scholars with financially assisted time to closely examine, do research on, or create an individual endeavor in order to, according to Simon Guggenheim, the father of John Simon Guggenheim, encourage "the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding and the appreciation of beauty." Other Guggenheim foundations also provide substantial monetary gifts: for example, the Solomon Guggenheim Foundation provides grants to support studies of nature and causes of aggression, and the Daniel Guggenheim Foundation provides grants to support aviation and rocketry.

The Guggenheim family has a tradition of humanitarian interests expressed through assistance to artists, scientists, and scholars. Meyer Guggenheim came to America from Switzerland in 1848 and acquired his wealth by importing lace and investing in silver mining in North and South America. John Simon Guggenheim, the grandson of Meyer Guggenheim, died suddenly while he was in college, and a fellowship was then established in his name by his parents. The John Simon Guggenheim foundation was incorporated on 16 March 1925, with an initial endowment of \$3 million by Simon Guggenheim. Initially, the Guggenheim fellowships were intended for American citizens only, but Simon Guggenheim expanded eligibility to include Latin Americans by providing additional funding for more fellowships in 1929.

Because of Guggenheim fellowships, several exceptional figures of the Harlem Renaissance were able to develop their talents fully and were able to complete specific artistic and scholarly endeavors. Some of the Guggenheim Foundation's most distinguished

fellows were participants in the Harlem Renaissance. Countee Cullen, the second African American fellow, received the award in 1928. He used the fellowship during 1928–1934 to travel back and forth between France and the United States, study, and write. In 1929, shortly after receiving the fellowship, he published *The Black Christ and Other Poems*. The folklorist, novelist, and playwright Zora Neale Hurston received a fellowship in 1936 and 1938 to complete research on folk religions in Jamaica and Haiti. A detailed account of her studies and experiences is represented in *Tell My Horse* (1938). The artist Jacob Lawrence was awarded a Guggenheim fellowship after serving as a steward's mate and combat artist for the U. S. Coast Guard during World War II; in 1946–1947, he painted a series called *War*.

GENYNE HENRY BOSTON

See also Cullen, Countee; Hurston, Zora Neale; Lawrence, Jacob; Philanthropy and Philanthropic Organizations

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Gumby Book Studio

In 1926, Levi Sandy Alexander Gumby strutted down Fifth Avenue with “fancy clothes, a perennial walking stick, pale yellow kid gloves, and a diamond stick-pin” (Nugent 2002, 223). Gumby—a onetime butler, bellhop, and songwriter, and at that time a postal clerk—had just moved to “the Avenue,” into an enormous second-floor studio between 131st and 132nd streets. Gumby needed a space to accommodate his growing collection of

“rare editions and manuscripts and items for my fast-growing scrapbooks” purchased with “the generosity of [a] staunch friend”—Charles Newman, a wealthy white stockbroker whom Gumby had known since 1910 (Gumby 1951, 5). Gumby’s “Book Studio,” decorated with a grand piano and Persian carpets, matched the grandeur he admired in things associated with the New Negro. Gumby’s salons attracted “friends who brought their friends, regardless of race or color—those who were seriously interested in arts and letters. . . . I daresay that [it] was the first unpremeditated interracial movement in Harlem” (Gumby, 5).

Gumby was also involved in another interracial movement: he and Newman were lovers. Their relationship was evidently tumultuous; in a letter of 1917 Gumby explains, “When I say you’re a bitch it’s only half what you are.” However, such outbursts seem to have complemented Gumby’s precise charm (Wirth 2002). Richard Bruce Nugent, whom Gumby called “the one person I don’t hafter [sic] pull my punches with,” explains that Gumby could “go into fits of rage, of majestic and pompous ire” just as easily as he could deliver one of his raucous, explicit sonnets to great applause” (Nugent 2002, 225; Wirth, 29). Gumby’s studio was a magnet for Harlemites, male and female, and their guests. Samuel Steward, a gay white writer and a friend of Gertrude Stein’s, remembered “being taken to Gumby’s one evening by a lesbian friend and enjoying a delightful evening of ‘reefer,’ bathtub gin, a game of truth, and homosexual exploits” (Garber 1989, 322).

Gumby was “one of Harlem’s reigning dandies”; however, he was also recognized for his meticulous scrapbooks, in which he gave accounts of aspects of black culture that were typically overlooked (Kellner 1987, 147). Aubrey Bower (1930, 20), the book critic of the *New York Amsterdam News*, lauded Gumby as an “indispensable” documentarist “whose patient and unselfish labors fertilize the soil from which grow the flowers of history and letters.” In September 1930, a “stag reception” for Countee Cullen, held to celebrate his return to the United States, was also reported in the *Amsterdam News*, complete with a list of attendees, as if they were “movable fixtures in his bright and social art collection” (Nugent, 225).

But this party was one of Gumby’s last. He had already sold several first editions because Newman had lost millions in the stock market crash of 1929 and could no longer bankroll soirees. Soon after Gumby closed the Book Studio, he contracted tuberculosis, and although he survived, after four years in the hospital,

not all of his collection did. A “gentleman’s agreement” to house the collection led to pilfering and partial damage: “two bottom cases were practically paper-mud” (Gumby, 8). Restoring what he could, Gumby continued the collection; he donated it to Columbia University in 1951.

SETH CLARK SILBERMAN

See also Cullen, Countee; Gumby Book Studio Quarterly

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Gumby Book Studio Quarterly

Gumby Book Studio Quarterly stands with *Fire!!* and *Harlem* as single-issue literary journals of the Harlem Renaissance appearing during the mid-1920s to early 1930s. The *Gumby Book Studio Quarterly* was a project of the avid bibliophile, scrapbook creator, and popular Harlemite personality Alexander Gumby. Contributors included George Schuyler, Arthur Schomburg, and Richard Bruce Nugent, who submitted the short fictional work “The Tunic with a Thousand Pleats.” Gumby was supported by a New York stockbroker who made it possible for him to enhance his book and scrapbook collections. However, that support evaporated after the stock market crash of 1929. This lack of funding, coupled with Gumby’s four-year hospitalization for tuberculosis, meant that the *Gumby Book Studio Quarterly* made it only as far as galley proofs, with no distribution. Gumby continued his voluminous scrapbook collection after recovering from tuberculosis, but he abandoned the idea of the journal.

HEATHER MARTIN

See also Gumby Book Studio; Nugent, Richard Bruce

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Hall, Adelaide

Early in her career, Adelaide Hall was a member of J. Homer Tutt and Salem Tutt Whitney's troupe, appearing in several of their original musicals. Her first appearance on Broadway was in Sissle and Blake's *Shuffle Along* (1921); she sang and danced as one of eight Jazz Jasmines, and also sang a solo in the up-tempo number "Bandana Days." Her success in that musical led to a featured role in Miller and Lyles's hit *Runnin' Wild* (1923), in which she sang James P. Johnson's "Love Bug," "Old-Fashioned Love," and "Ginger Brown." In 1925, Hall had a major success at the famous Club Alabam in New York City. She then joined the cast of Sam Wooding's *Chocolate Kiddies*, which toured in Europe for about a year and was especially well received in London. During her European tour, Hall met Bert Hicks, a Trinidadian who was an officer in the merchant navy; he became her husband and manager. On their return to the United States in 1926, Hall joined the cast of *Tan Town Topics*, where she appeared with Florence Mills's sister Maude, Ralph Cooper, and Thomas "Fats" Waller and his band. Hall's next show, *Desires of 1927*, with music and lyrics by J. C. Johnson and Andy Razaf, toured from October 1926 through early 1927 and reunited her with J. Homer Tutt. During the latter part of that year, she joined the RKO circuit and appeared with Duke Ellington and his band in *Jazzmania* and *Dance Mania*. Hall's first recording, a wordless obligato to Ellington's "Creole Love Call," was the result of her humming a counter-melody during a performance of the piece. Ellington liked her improvisation and recorded it several days later.

After the tragic and unexpected death of Florence Mills, Hall was chosen to star in Lew Leslie's *Blackbirds of 1928*, with a cast that included Bill Robinson, Mantan Moreland, Aida Ward, Tim Moore, and the Cecil Mack Choir. Hall sang several of Jimmy McHugh and Dorothy Fields's hit songs, including "Diga, Diga, Do" and "I Can't Give You Anything but Love." She toured with the show in Europe and remained in Paris after it closed, to star at the Moulin Rouge and at the Lido. Hall rivaled Josephine Baker as the leading African American entertainer in Paris. In 1930, she returned to New York to appear in *Brown Buddies*. On returning to Paris in 1936, she and her husband opened La Grosse Pomme, a club on Rue Pigalle. After they moved to London in 1938, they opened the Florida Club, which was destroyed during the blitz in World War II.

Hall appeared in several film shorts, including *Dancers in the Dark* (1932), *All Colored Vaudeville Show* (1935), and *Dixieland Jamboree* (1935). Although her later career was based mainly in London, she returned to New York to appear with Lena Horne in *Jamaica* (1957). On her return to London, she and her husband opened another club, the Calypso. During the last decade of her life, Hall toured in a one-woman show, which was seen in New York in 1988 and 1992.

Biography

Adelaide Hall was born in Brooklyn, New York, possibly on 20 October 1901. Hall's birth date is not certain; in 1991, in an interview, she said she was ninety years old, but several sources list her birth date as 1904. Her father was a German and African American

music teacher (he taught at Pratt Institute); her mother, Elizabeth Gerrard, was African American and American Indian. During the 1910s, the family moved to Harlem. As children, Hall and her younger sister, Eileen, sang at various events. Early in her career, Hall was a member of J. Homer Tutt and Salem Tutt Whitney's troupe; she made her Broadway debut in *Shuffle Along* (1921) and appeared in Miller and Lyles's *Runnin' Wild* (1923). She performed at Club Alabam (1925) and in *Chocolate Kiddies*. Her other shows included *Tan Town Topics* (1926), *Desires of 1927*, and *Blackbirds of 1928*. Hall performed and recorded with Duke Ellington and appeared in several film shorts. She was married to Bert Hicks. She died on 7 November 1993.

JOHN GRAZIANO

See also Baker, Josephine; Blackbirds; Ellington, Duke; Europe and the Harlem Renaissance: 3—London; Fields, Dorothy; Musical Theater; Shuffle Along; Singers

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Hallelujah

King Vidor and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer released the film *Hallelujah* (or *Hallelujah!*) in 1929, on the heels of *Hearts in Dixie*, the first musical from a major Hollywood studio that had an all-black cast. Writing years later, Vidor said of *Hallelujah*, "I wanted to make a film about Negroes, using only Negroes in the cast. The sincerity and fervor of their religious expression intrigued me,

as did the honest simplicity of their sexual drives." Both of these essentialist beliefs are readily apparent in the film. Nonetheless, *Hallelujah* broke away from the stock character roles generally reserved for African American actors, and this encouraged black leaders, including W. E. B. Du Bois, to comment favorably that the production had moved away from "buffoonery."

Hallelujah tells the story of a young man from the country, Zeke, or Zeke (played by Daniel Haynes), who goes to the city to sell his family's cotton crop. There he meets a slick city woman named Chick (Nina Mae McKinney), who—along with her lover, Hot Shot (William Fountaine)—conspires to relieve Zeke of the money he has just been paid for his family's cotton. A fixed crap game leads to a fight between Hot Shot and Zeke, culminating in the accidental death of Zeke's brother Spunk (Everett McGarity). Filled with remorse, Zeke repents and, with the guidance of his father (Harry Gray), a pastor, becomes a minister himself.

Zeke and his family take to the road, holding revival meetings and baptisms. When Zeke encounters Chick in the midst of his crusade, he convinces her of her own sinful nature. Chick repents, but her religious ecstasy is reminiscent of her sexual ecstasy, and Zeke again falls under her spell. Zeke attempts to escape his lust by proposing to a "good girl," Missy Rose (Victoria Spivey). Missy Rose's purity, however, is not enough to keep Zeke from Chick. During one of his own evening services, he runs off to the city with Chick. Months later, Chick is restless and attempts to leave with Hot Shot. In the subsequent chase, Chick is thrown from her carriage and dies; Zeke then hunts down Hot Shot and strangles him. Following his prison sentence, Zeke returns to his country home, where his family welcomes him with open arms and he is reunited with Missy Rose.

Vidor used several traditional songs—"Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "Let My People Go," "Ol' Time Religion"—as a musical backdrop for the film. The songs themselves usually echoed the onscreen action, but they rarely forwarded the plot. Vidor hired the Dixie Jubilee Singers to perform these standards. He relied on the leading actors, however, to sing two tunes by George Gershwin. Zeke sings "At the End of the Road" while waiting to gin his family's cotton, and Chick sings "Swanee Shuffle" in a local club. Only the youngest actors (Milton Dickerson, Robert Couch, and Walter Tait), playing Zeke's siblings, showcase their talent as dancers in a spontaneous celebration outside their home.

Vidor recruited the actors for his film in Chicago and Harlem. The *New York Times* found the subject

captivating enough to devote a story to the process of “Finding Screen Negroes.” Unable to secure Paul Robeson for the lead, Vidor turned to another actor, Daniel Haynes, who had graduated from Morris Brown University before appearing in several roles on Broadway. Haynes’s voice and physique fit Vidor’s conception of Zeke, and he was cast. For the role of Chick, Vidor had originally selected Honey Brown. When she became ill on the set of the film, Vidor sent for Nina Mae McKinney, his second choice. McKinney’s performance impressed Vidor, and she was retained by MGM.

Most of *Hallelujah* was filmed on location in Tennessee and Arkansas. Vidor captured footage of his actors in local cotton fields, cotton gins, and sawmills to provide the background for the story. He also utilized the human resources of his locations, calling on African-Americans to help him design and implement the mass baptism scene. Four pastors answered Vidor’s call and brought their congregations to serve as extras. Vidor also hired Harold Garrison, an African American employee of MGM, as an assistant director to help shape the production.

The actors and the film received generally positive reviews. W. E. B. Du Bois wrote of *Hallelujah*:

It is the sense of real life without the exaggerated farce and horseplay . . . which most managers regard as inseparable from the Negro character that marks *Hallelujah* as epoch-making. . . . The music was lovely and while I would have preferred more spirituals instead of the theme-song, yet the world is not as crazy about Negro talk songs as I am. Everybody should see *Hallelujah*.

The reviewer for the *New York Times*, Mordaunt Hall, said that *Hallelujah* was a “most impressive audible film” and in a separate article praised the “clever negro cast.”

Nonetheless, Vidor and MGM had difficulty finding theaters to show the film. Southern theater owners were hesitant to show the “all-black” musical, and northern theater owners were concerned that a “preponderance” of African-Americans might drive away white customers. Vidor offered to give the owner of a large theater chain in Florida a check for \$1,000 if the owner showed *Hallelujah* and it did not perform well. The owner agreed, and the film succeeded. Despite these small victories, MGM struggled to distribute the film, and the financial returns were limited.

Some of the religious and sexual themes Vidor explored in this film had previously been examined by

an independent black filmmaker, Oscar Micheaux. In his film *Body and Soul* (1924), Micheaux told the story of a corrupt minister. Micheaux’s film, however, was much darker than *Hallelujah*, and his minister (named Jenkins), in contrast to Zeke, is not misguided but evil. *The Green Pastures*, first as a play on Broadway (1930) and then as a Hollywood movie (1936), followed in the tradition of *Hallelujah* with its fascination with and romanticization of “Negro religion.”

DANIELLE BRUNE

See also Film; Film: Actors; Film: Blacks as Portrayed by White Filmmakers; Gershwin, George; Green Pastures, The; McKinney, Nina Mae; Micheaux, Oscar

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Hamid, Sufi Abdul

In 1932, Bishop Amiru Al-Minin Sufi Abdul Hamid—after having succeeded with a similar campaign in Chicago earlier that year under the alias Bishop Conshankin—formed the Negro Industrial and Clerical Alliance in Harlem and began once again to publicize the slogan “Don’t buy where you can’t work.” Hamid captured the attention of Harlemites with his outrageous dress, appearing beturbaned and in a mélange of national costumes; and he earned the appellation “black Hitler” in both the black and the white press with his rhetoric of black nationalism and virulent anti-Semitism. (According to some reports, “black Hitler” was a title he gave himself.)

Hamid achieved success in 1934 with his boycotts of jobs, which had the objective of procuring positions for black clerks in department stores and five-and-ten stores owned and operated by whites in Harlem. The same year, however, he lost control of the coalition of groups of activists that had been formed for these campaigns to the more respectable Harlem Citizens League for Fair Play. Shortly thereafter, in October 1934, Hamid faced charges of disorderly conduct,

brought against him by the Jewish Minutemen of America and the white Harlem Merchants' Association for allegedly advocating "war against the Jews" (McDowell 1998, 228). Although Hamid was cleared of these charges, he was unofficially blamed for a riot that took place in Harlem on 19 March 1935. Claude McKay (1935a) then took up Hamid's cause in an article in *The Nation*, "Harlem Runs Wild." McKay believed that the riot and the condemnation of Sufi Abdul Hamid indicated pressure points—points at which a combination of black and white liberals and radicals were attempting to suppress a positive, nationalist black labor movement. During the 1930s, McKay wrote often and passionately on Hamid and Hamid's cause.

Biography

Sufi Abdul Hamid was born in the shadow of an Egyptian pyramid on 6 January 1903—a fact for which his parole officer produced documentation at one of Hamid's many legal trials. Actually, his origins are obscure. Police at the scene of his death, a plane crash on Long Island on 31 July 1938, gave his real name as Eugene Brown and his address as Lombard Street, Philadelphia. Lewis (1981, 300) traced Hamid to Lowell, Massachusetts. In 1930, Hamid founded, in Harlem, the Universal Temple of Tranquillity; in 1932, he led a successful boycott of jobs in Chicago and began boycotting merchants in Harlem; in February 1934, as part of a coalition of activist groups, he organized a successful boycott of Blumstein's department store. However, he had legal woes, and among African American intellectuals he developed a reputation (perhaps deserved) as a charlatan and a racketeer; both his legal difficulties and this reputation effectively neutralized him as a force in Harlem's labor politics. During the late 1930s, he turned to experiences as a cultist, relying on the mystical and hoping to challenge Father Divine's standing as the premier cultic figure in Harlem.

MARK CHRISTIAN THOMPSON

See also *Father Divine*; McKay, Claude; Riots: 4—Harlem Riot, 1935

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Handy, W. C.

William Christopher (W. C.) Handy was born in Florence, Alabama, in 1873. His early musical education was exclusively in vocal music—traditional hymns and classical sacred works rather than Negro spirituals. Instrumental music was disallowed, but the vocal training gave him a very keen ear. By the time Handy finished school, he had secretly learned to play the cornet and found casual work with a local dance band.

In 1896, after various odd jobs, he joined the band of a white-owned black troupe, Mahara's Minstrels, that introduced him to the world of black minstrelsy, ragtime, and black popular music. Handy soon became an established bandleader in this field. Extensive travel brought him into contact with leading black musicians and entertainers and gave him an opportunity to visit Cuba, where he absorbed elements of local Latin music. He stayed with Mahara's Minstrels until 1903, apart from an interlude as musical director of the Agricultural and Mechanical College in Huntsville, Alabama, a forerunner of Tuskegee College.

Handy married Elizabeth Price in Kentucky in 1898. By 1903, with young children to support, they needed to settle down. Handy felt drawn to the South and settled, as musical director of the local black band, in Clarksdale, Mississippi, in the heart of the Delta region, a home of traditional blues.

Handy now considered himself a composer as well as a bandleader. He traveled widely in the region, and his sharp ear recognized a unique music style among nomadic blues singers of the Delta. He also observed the excitement that these “blues” aroused in people who merely listened politely to his own conventional music. He decided to use blues motifs in his own compositions, and he met with instant success.

His first blues piece, “Mr. Crump” (1909), was a satirical comment on a politician in Memphis, Boss Crump, who adopted it as the theme song of a successful mayoral campaign. Handy was inundated with requests for copies and had sheet music published in 1912 as “Memphis Blues.” It sold hugely, but he was duped into selling his copyright for a mere \$500. This experience taught him a lifelong lesson; one result was the establishment of the Pace and Handy Music Company, publishers of sheet music.

Handy had been friendly with the banker Harry Pace since 1907, and Pace had supplied words to several of Handy’s compositions. Their first publication, in 1913, was Handy’s “Jogo Blues,” later rewritten as the phenomenally successful “Saint Louis Blues.” Before long it was followed by “Beale Street Blues,” and then by many more works over the next decade. In 1917, Handy’s Memphis Orchestra went to New York for a recording session at Columbia.

New York was a growth area for black music, with pre-jazz orchestras like that of James Reese Europe. Harlem was its musical center, with stride pianists like James P. Johnson. Handy’s music was well known there. In 1918, Pace and Handy moved to Harlem, taking up residence in swanky Strivers’ Row. Handy played an active role in the musical life of Harlem and became a respected figure, but his business had its ups and downs.

In 1921, Pace was frustrated by the unwillingness of white-owned record companies to record black artists. He resigned from Pace and Handy to found Black Swan Records, intending to record black performers exclusively. Handy, who was not part of the recording company, re-formed the publishing company with his brother Charles. Handy Brothers Music Company had heavy debts, and Handy developed

serious eye problems that temporarily blinded him and left him severely visually impaired for the rest of his life. However, with his music rights, and with some help from friends, the company survived its problems.

Handy remained an active composer and performer. In 1926 he cowrote a book, the comprehensive survey *Blues: An Anthology*. In 1928 he presented a concert representing the “full spectrum of black music” at Carnegie Hall. In later years he turned to spirituals as a source of inspiration, publishing a *Collection of Negro Spirituals* in 1938.

Throughout the 1930s Handy toured and performed; he played at the Apollo Theater in Harlem in 1936. A concert was held at Carnegie Hall to commemorate his sixty-fifth birthday. In 1937 he became a founding member of the Negro Actors’ Guild. He published his autobiography, *Father of the Blues*, in 1941. In 1943 he suffered a fall on a subway in New York and was seriously injured; this injury reduced his activities. Handy died in 1958.

Handy was much honored during his lifetime and afterward. In 1931, Memphis constructed Handy Park on Beale Street, and a statue was erected in 1960. There was a film, *Saint Louis Blues* (1958), based loosely on his life; and a commemorative postage stamp was issued in 1969. The Blues Foundation established the W. C. Handy Blues Awards in 1980. Handy’s hometown—Florence, Alabama—built a museum in his honor.

Some lovers of blues question Handy’s credentials in this area, accusing him of copying and commercializing music that was already in the public domain. Although he adopted the title “father of the blues,” Handy never claimed to have “invented” blues. He always acknowledged that he had drawn on an existing folk heritage, considering himself a composer in that idiom. He adapted elements of traditional blues and transformed or embellished them—as in his subtle use of Latin motifs in “Memphis Blues” and “St. Louis Blues”—to create a blues-based variant of the American popular song.

Handy’s successful commercial exploitation of the blues idiom paved the way for later breakthroughs by black female blues singers. This development began with Mamie Smith’s recording of “Crazy Blues” in 1920 and culminated with the successes of Bessie Smith. By succeeding in business, Handy showed that black composers and artists could be masters of their own destiny in a world dominated by whites. He was a staunch champion of the talents of black musicians.



W. C. Handy, c. 1940s; the sheet music on the piano is "Saint Louis Blues." (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

In 1935, he wrote and published *Negro Authors and Composers of the United States*, and in 1944 he published *Unsung Americans Sung*, a tribute to underappreciated black musical figures. He contributed greatly to the status of black music as a major factor in American—and world—popular culture during and after the Harlem Renaissance. "Saint Louis Blues" is perhaps the world's best-known piece of American music.

Biography

William Christopher Handy was born on 16 November 1873, in Florence, Alabama, to Charles Bernard Handy, a minister, and Elizabeth Brewer, both freed slaves. He studied at the Florence District School for Negroes. He was a schoolteacher in Birmingham, Alabama (1892) and held various other jobs (1892–1896). He joined Mahara's minstrel troupe in 1896, married in 1898, and visited Cuba with the Mahara troupe in 1900. Handy was musical director at Agricultural and Mechanical College, Huntsville, Alabama (1900–1902), then rejoined Mahara as bandleader (1902). He was director of the Knights of Pythias Band in Clarksdale, Mississippi, in 1903. He moved to Memphis c. 1906. He established Pace and Handy Music Company in 1913; this company moved to New York in 1918. When Pace and Handy split up, Handy formed Handy Brothers Music Company (1921). He presented a concert of black music at Carnegie Hall in 1928. Handy Park was opened in Memphis in 1931. Handy was a founding member of the Negro Actors' Guild

(1937). His sixty-fifth birthday was commemorated at Carnegie Hall in 1938. Handy died in New York City on 28 March 1958; he is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery, Bronx, New York.

BILL EGAN

See also Black Manhattan; Black Swan Phonograph Company; Blues; Blues: An Anthology; Clef Club; Covarrubias, Miguel; Europe, James Reese; Hunter, Alberta; Jazz; Music; Music: Bands and Orchestras; Pace, Harry H.; Pace Phonographic Company; Saint Louis Blues; Smith, Bessie; Smith, Mamie; Still, William Grant; Strivers' Row

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Harcourt Brace

Harcourt Brace was founded on 29 July 1919, in New York City, by Alfred Harcourt and Donald Brace, both of whom had worked for Henry Holt and Company for fifteen years. Harcourt had managed to bring Carl Sandburg, Robert Frost, and W. E. B. Du Bois to Holt, but had struggled to do so in an environment that he felt stifled creativity. Having developed a contentious relationship with the Holt family and having become convinced that he would not be able to publish books exploring “new ideas” if he remained at Holt, Harcourt decided to leave. He was encouraged to start his own publishing house by Sinclair Lewis, whom he had known through Holt and whose novels became some of Harcourt Brace’s best-sellers during the 1920s.

Along with the publishing houses run by Alfred A. Knopf, Ben Huebsch, and Boni and Liveright, Harcourt Brace sought to rewrite American culture through the publication of texts that would move the seat of American literature from Boston to New York and counter the Anglocentricity that dominated the publishing industry, even in older New York houses. Because the editors at Harcourt Brace were committed to change and diversity, they embraced African American writing from the inception of the firm. Harcourt Brace had fewer connections with the avant-garde than Boni and Liveright or Knopf but nonetheless was committed to pushing the boundaries of current publishing trends.

Harcourt’s plan for developing a list of titles was based on the personal taste and connections of his top staff members. Each staff member would attract writers in his or her own area of interest, and these areas would eventually become focus areas for the house as a whole. Joel Spingarn, who served as vice president and literary adviser for Harcourt Brace, was instrumental in its development as a firm dedicated to publishing African American texts. Spingarn had been a professor at Columbia University, was a civil rights activist, and was a founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Promoting the works of new African American writers through Harcourt Brace fit well

with Spingarn’s personal mission of national cultural advancement through a multicultural agenda.

Notably, Spingarn’s vision of African American writing was not limited by the distinction between high art and propaganda that motivated the choices made by some other publishing houses. Spingarn did support the publication of books that excelled as propaganda, even if they were less than successful aesthetically, but under his guidance Harcourt Brace became known for publishing a wide variety of texts by black writers. James Weldon Johnson’s *Book of American Negro Poetry*, Claude McKay’s *Spring in New Hampshire* and *Harlem Shadows*, Arna Bontemps’ *God Sends Sunday*, and Sterling Brown’s *Southern Road* are among the books Harcourt Brace published during the Harlem Renaissance. However, as Hutchinson (1995, 377) comments, a listing of works published by Harcourt Brace during this period cannot adequately convey the extent of the firm’s intertextual commitment to African American art. More than any other firm, Harcourt Brace was committed to representing the rich intertextual diversity of the Harlem Renaissance.

AMANDA M. LAWRENCE

See also Boni and Liveright; Bontemps, Arna; Brown, Sterling; Johnson, James Weldon; Knopf, Alfred A.; McKay, Claude; Publishers and Publishing Houses; Spingarn, Joel

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Harlem: 1—Overview and History

On 17 February 1919, the black 369th Regiment (Fifteenth Infantry), returning home after heroic service in France in World War I, marched up Fifth Avenue and through Harlem to the cheers of thousands of Harlemites. African-Americans to a great extent had

taken the advice of W. E. B. Du Bois, who, in an editorial in *The Crisis*, had urged them to “close ranks” and support the war effort, with the idea that their country would no longer deny their claim to equal rights. For many African-Americans, their wartime sacrifices, their move into the heretofore middle-class white preserve of Harlem, and even the retaliatory self-defense of black communities attacked by white mobs signaled the birth of a “New Negro.” Many people in Harlem found cause for optimism during the ensuing decade, as white publishing houses discovered talented young black writers, Broadway discovered African American culture, and white tourists discovered Harlem’s nightlife.

Harlem was the unofficial political and cultural capital of Afro-America in the first half of the twentieth century, and especially in the 1920s. During this decade, Harlem became America’s most populous urban center; was the headquarters of black nationalism, embodied in Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA); and was a magnet for black artists from the southern United States, South America, the Caribbean, and other parts of the world. Its artistic productions generated audiences throughout the Americas, the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe, as they still do today; and the writers, musicians, and visual artists of the Harlem Renaissance have become part of the American cultural canon. In many ways, the period of the Harlem Renaissance, although it was filled with promise, could provide only partial deliverance from racial barriers, or from the stereotypes and oppressive conditions that were tolerated by what some people called “Old Negro” thinking. The glittering popular image of Harlem in the 1920s was a reality for some residents but a more complicated situation, or even a mirage, for many others, especially the ordinary working population. But blacks still came to Harlem. For southern black migrants seeking relief from segregation, political disenfranchisement, and grinding rural poverty, Harlem was an oasis. For the growing foreign-born black population of New York, Harlem held out the possibility of greater economic advancement than they could achieve in their various Caribbean homelands.

The African presence in New York dates back to the era of Dutch control and the naming of the city, New Amsterdam, in the 1620s; but blacks’ residence in Harlem was relatively new. By 1840, the center of the black population shifted from the lower tip of Manhattan between Cedar and Canal streets to the infamous squalor of the Five Points district. Twenty

years later, Five Points had become overwhelmingly Irish, and most New York blacks were living in the southern portion of Greenwich Village. By 1900, this part of the Village had become predominantly Italian, and most of its black population had continued to move northward up the West Side to the Tenderloin district, which extended from the West Twenties to the West Fifties; and to the San Juan Hill neighborhood, in the West Sixties. Then, black real estate agencies, like Philip Payton’s Afro-American Realty Company and Nail and Parker’s firm, seized the opportunity when landlords in Harlem needed to fill vacancies in their apartment buildings—a situation that was created by a housing boom in conjunction with the extension of the subway system to Harlem. Soon black churches, such as Abyssinian Baptist, were following their parishioners and acquiring or building edifices in Harlem.

It was a source of pride for African-Americans to move into a previously all-white area with housing stock far superior to what was available anywhere they had lived before in New York City. The writer James Weldon Johnson—who was also a diplomat and an official of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)—reflected the optimism to be gained from living in an area “situated in the heart of Manhattan,” which “is not a slum, nor is it a ‘quarter’ consisting of dilapidated tenements.” Harlem, according to Johnson, had “streets as well paved, as well lighted, and as well kept as any other part of the city.” This was a significant difference from earlier black neighborhoods in Manhattan. For blacks—to repeat—housing in Harlem was clearly an improvement over their previous living conditions. Yet although Johnson hoped that by moving uptown, blacks had left the slums behind, regression and stagnation would eventually create slum conditions in parts of Harlem too.

By 1920, 70 percent of the African American population of Manhattan lived between 118th Street and 144th Street, from the Harlem River to the Hudson River. Ten years later, half of the city’s black population would live in Harlem. The black community grew in numbers from 83,000 in 1920 to 204,000 in 1934. Between 1910 and 1930, while Manhattan’s white population decreased by 633,249, the black population increased by 154,135. Eventually, black New Yorkers found it extremely difficult to obtain housing outside Harlem; consequently, they would pay more for housing than their white counterparts. In Manhattan, the density rate for blacks was 336 people per acre—significantly higher than the rate for whites, 222 per acre. The high

population density in Harlem contributed to the deterioration of the housing stock, as apartments were cut into smaller units to accommodate demand and maximize the building owners' profits. By 1938, the median rental for vacant apartments in Harlem had reached \$30 per month, compared with \$18 per month for Manhattan in general.

Housing congestion took its toll on the health of Harlemites, who had higher rates of communicable diseases and higher mortality rates. For example, for New York City as a whole, the death rate from tuberculosis was 76 per 100,000 people, but the rate for Harlem was 183 per 100,000 between 1923 and 1927. For New York City, the mortality rate from pneumonia was 124 per 100,000; the rate for Harlem was 244 per 100,000. Thus health and life expectancy were considerably reduced for blacks in Harlem—as they had been in earlier decades for blacks in other parts of the city. No doubt, a lack of access to better health care and the exclusion of black patients and physicians from New York's hospitals, other than Harlem Hospital, contributed to this problem. Pressure from the black community had forced a reorganization of Harlem Hospital and the integration of its medical staff. But this change, like so many changes in Harlem, did not transform the delivery of health services, which remained inadequate and unequal.

For black migrants, wages and employment conditions in urban America were an improvement over their occupations in the South as sharecroppers, tenant farmers, and low-wage workers. Yet the situation in the North for many African-Americans proved ambiguous during the 1920s. The number of black professionals in New York doubled in the 1920s, and from 1910 through 1930, black males in Manhattan consistently had a higher rate of employment than their white counterparts. In 1930, 88.6 percent of black males living in Manhattan had jobs, compared with 87.1 percent of white males. In the 1920s, then, the lack of a job was not a great problem; rather, the low-paying jobs that many African-Americans found themselves in made it difficult to make ends meet and pay the rent. The people who held "rent parties" in Harlem in the 1920s, to raise money to pay their landlords, were often employed, but their wages were insufficient to meet the cost of housing and food.

As late as 1935, businesses owned by blacks constituted only 18.6 percent of the total number of businesses in Harlem. Black enterprises tended to be services such as barbershops, beauty salons, and funeral parlors, and they tended to be smaller and less profitable

than the larger individually owned white businesses or white chain stores. Department stores in Harlem's main business districts, such as 125th Street, did not hire black managers or even black sales clerks. African Americans were excluded from all but janitorial jobs with the city subways, bus companies, utility companies, and telephone companies; and blacks were nearly totally excluded from the police and fire departments. Thus many people came to regard black Harlemites as, in a sense, a colonized people banned from the colonizers' institutions and economic life.

Similarly, many residents of Harlem felt excluded from the political life of the city, and even from the political life of their own community. Black members of the Democratic Party in New York City had no significant influence. In 1898, the Democratic leadership—known as Tammany Hall—formed a segregated auxiliary exclusively for African Americans, called the United Colored Democracy. It was a citywide organization, however, and therefore was unable to compete for political power and patronage, which remained at the district level, in the hands of white district leaders. The Republican Party did not segregate blacks in a separate auxiliary, but neither did it allow any black district leaders to emerge in Harlem. African American Republicans, discontented with their exclusion, organized the United Civic League in 1913 to push for greater inclusion in the party and black candidates for elective office. Two of the league's candidates were elected to office: Edward A. Johnson, a black lawyer, was elected assemblyman from Harlem's Nineteenth District; and in 1918, another black lawyer was elected from the Twenty-first District. In 1919, Charles H. Roberts, a Republican, became New York City's first black alderman. However, not until 1929 did Charles Fillmore become Harlem's first black Republican district leader, and not until 1935 did Herbert Bruce become its first Democratic district leader.

Another response by blacks who felt alienated from a segregated society was radicalism. Black socialists included A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, editors of *The Messenger*, a socialist publication opposed to the United States' involvement in World War I. In 1918, Cyril Briggs began publication of *The Crusader*, a monthly periodical advocating black nationalism, Marxism-Leninism, and violent revolution. Also appearing in 1918 were two literary and cultural magazines, *Challenge* and *Negro Voice*, published by William Bridges and Hubert Harrison, respectively. *Negro World*, a publication of the Jamaican immigrant Marcus Garvey, captured the imagination of the masses

in Harlem and of blacks throughout the diaspora. Garvey was able to recruit numerous black followers in the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa—and in Harlem, where nearly one-quarter of the population was foreign-born blacks from the Caribbean, and where he had many devout black American supporters.

Garvey had his first speaking engagement before a large audience in Harlem in the summer of 1917 and quickly outdistanced his black radical competitors in attracting a mass following. In 1920 he spoke before thousands in Madison Square Garden at a huge convention of UNIA, after an enthusiastic parade through Harlem. He advocated a nationalistic agenda emphasizing the need for diasporic blacks to create their own economic institutions—black-owned retail businesses, factories, steamship lines, and so on—that would unite blacks in an international web of commerce and advancement, leading eventually to a decolonized, independent, united Africa. Garvey came to believe that blacks would never obtain either political or economic equality in the United States and sooner or later would have to repatriate themselves to Africa, rebuild it, and make it strong.

Eventually, UNIA—which had grown into the largest black mass movement in the world in less than ten years of existence in the United States—began to unravel, partly because of the petty jealousy of Garvey's rivals within and outside the organization. Moreover, UNIA had relied heavily on his charismatic leadership, and it declined rather rapidly when he was imprisoned for mail fraud (a charge that may have been based on a technicality). By the late 1920s, Garvey had been released but was in exile, and UNIA continued to decline.

The decline of Garvey's movement, however, did not diminish the reputation of Harlem as the capital of the black world. That reputation rested on the cultural developments of the "Negro Renaissance"—developments in literature, music, and the visual arts. White cultural critics discovered black themes and black artists as downtown audiences attended musicals such as *Dixie to Broadway* and *Blackbirds* or more serious dramas such as *The Emperor Jones* and *The Green Pastures*. Through the efforts of black scholars—including Charles S. Johnson at *Opportunity* magazine and W. E. B. Du Bois at *The Crisis*—black artists were put in contact with white publishing houses and editors. James Weldon Johnson and Walter White of the NAACP, along with Alain Locke, a professor of philosophy at Howard University, served as literary and artistic shepherds to a flock of young writers, painters, and

sculptors who flourished in the 1920s and 1930s and in many cases have become part of the canon. James Weldon Johnson said that their artistic achievements brought about an "entirely new national conception of the Negro . . . placing him in an entirely new light before the American people. Indeed they placed the Negro in a new light before himself." For Johnson and many cultural critics, the Harlem Renaissance was not simply a rebirth of black artistic production but the birth of a new identity and self-definition for African Americans. Locke said: "Harlem has the same role to play for the New Negro as Dublin has had for the New Ireland or Prague for the New Czechoslovakia."

However, black writers were by no means unified with regard to the role of Harlem—or their own role or that of their artistic products—in this redefinition. The works published during the decade reflected assimilationist and antiassimilationist themes, and bourgeois and antibourgeois values. Claude McKay praised the instinctive unassimilated black man in *Banjo* (1929). Langston Hughes heralded the black common man and the black working class in his prose and poetry. Jean Toomer praised the spirituality of rural southern blacks in *Cane* (1923). Other works focused on black bourgeois heroes and heroines; examples are Jessie Redmon Fauset's *There Is Confusion* (1924) and Nella Larsen's *Passing* (1929).

But despite the lack of thematic and stylistic unanimity—or probably in great part because of it—the Harlem Renaissance, like Harlem itself, had a dynamism and a diversity that were widely attractive. The Great Depression dried up private patronage for black creative artists, and in the succeeding decade, these artists embraced more leftist themes related to class and found a new patron in the Federal Arts Project. But the Harlem Renaissance had laid the foundation for black writers and artists for generations to come: from James Baldwin and Amiri Baraka to Alice Walker and Maya Angelou.

During its renaissance, Harlem was, in terms of class, a heterogeneous community; in the decades that followed, it would be transformed into a more homogeneous, low-income, working-class community as much of its former middle-class population became suburbanized after World War II. As of the present writing, Harlem was undergoing further change: Gentrification was attracting a new middle class to Harlem's affordable brownstones, and national chain stores were opening new branches in locations that had once been thought undesirable. Whether these changes would revitalize the economy and employment or merely

move the poor from one geographic area to another within the city remained to be seen. Yet Harlem continued to be the best-known black community in the world, and even its current changes were occurring, in great part, because of its historic reputation as the capital of Afro-America—a reputation established during the era of the Harlem Renaissance.

LARRY A. GREENE

See also Afro-American Realty Company; Briggs, Cyril; Crisis, The; Fifteenth Infantry; Garvey, Marcus; Harlem Hospital; Harrison, Hubert; House-Rent Parties; Negro World; New Negro; Opportunity; Owen, Chandler; Randolph, A. Philip; United Colored Democracy; Universal Negro Improvement Association; White, Walter; *specific artists and writers*

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Harlem: 2—Economics

At the apex of the Harlem Renaissance, Harlem experienced a rapid increase in population and business growth, a sign of a vibrant economy. The area received new capital, people, and ideas. Immediately before its renaissance, Harlem had been a large residential neighborhood populated by eastern European Jews and African Americans, who moved uptown after excessive residential capacity impelled landlords to recruit new tenants.

Increasing public transportation, federal spending on infrastructure, and foreign conflict perpetuated the boom. The rise of the stock market in the 1920s and mobilization for World War I created more efficient manufacturing and distribution throughout the United States. Harlem's proximity to Wall Street was advantageous, as the value of common stocks and railroad bond yields produced consistent returns. Harlem benefited from growth in jobs and from the disposable income that industrial professionals spent in the neighborhood.

Economic geography separated Harlem from other American urban neighborhoods. By marketing Harlem as a place, business leaders and boosters showcased the area's international flair, artistic heritage, and famous residents. This commodification of the area resulted in increasing returns during the Harlem Renaissance. The region drew aficionados of art and music, and visitors came to sites that were significant for the African American cultural heritage. In fact, Harlem has continued to draw capital resources (net benefits) to the City of New York for years for these reasons.

Before the residential boom in Harlem, local land was considered unproductive. During the 1840s and 1850s, many farms were deserted and used by Irish squatters. Horsecar lines and a steamboat that ran during the summer from 125th Street to Peck Slip were the only transportation links available for travel to New York's business district. In 1873, New York City annexed Harlem, and new, elevated rail service was proposed. Over the next twenty-five years, rail service was extended, and land in Harlem became valuable. Building trades and municipal officials infused the area with capital, subsidizing jobs and buying goods.

Because the Harlem River was a navigable eight-mile tidal straightaway between Manhattan and the Bronx, connecting the East River with Spuyten Duyvil Creek and the Hudson River, the waterway was considered valuable for shipping in the nineteenth century. The first section of the Harlem River Ship Canal (U.S. Ship Canal), a waterway designed to connect the Hudson and Harlem rivers, was completed in 1895. Afterward, Manhattan was successfully circumnavigated so that Long Island Sound was accessible to shipping traffic from the Hudson. By the end of the twentieth century, six swing bridges, one lift bridge, and three arch bridges spanned the river, which served as a transportation link joining the boroughs of New York City.

In Harlem, new apartment buildings were strategically placed to take advantage of this prime location, near rail lines, burgeoning roads, and waterways. However, extensive building in the late nineteenth century created excess capacity during sporadic recessions in the 1890s, so landlords in Harlem sought new tenants. Many eastern European Jews moving from tenements in lower Manhattan and African Americans willing to pay higher prices than their white counterparts were recruited. The former primarily moved into buildings between 110th and 125th streets; the latter moved near 135th Street. Many black New Yorkers arrived from the Tenderloin district of Manhattan after witnessing brutal race riots or being displaced by the construction of Pennsylvania Station in 1906–1910. Some longtime residents of Harlem fled as the newcomers arrived, but the new residents were determined to stay. Even as organizations like the West Side Improvement Association tried to exclude black residents, companies like Philip A. Payton's Afro-American Realty Company courted black tenants.

Before its renaissance, Harlem supported thousands of domestic and personal service jobs and employees, and some manufacturing employment, primarily in the garment and masonry industries. Professional service jobs, public employment, and trade and transportation jobs increased rapidly after 1900. Some local manufacturers and distributors specialized in finished and semifinished nondurable consumer goods such as clothing, printed materials, textiles, and leather. Sales of beauty-care products and professional services grew rapidly, as did retail businesses specializing in imported products. Harlem's economy gained measurably from a constant infusion of capital and people during the first twenty years of the twentieth century. The success of local proprietors transformed Harlem into a national headquarters for black businesses, a trend that continued for years afterward.

General migration to Harlem slowed immediately after World War I, when the large supply of unskilled European labor ceased to flow into New York City. When the U.S. Congress passed the Emergency Quota Act (1921), the nation's first quantitative immigration law, immigrants were restricted in number on the basis of their country of origin. The Immigration Act of 1924 made the quota system permanent. A growing need for labor in New York provided opportunities for vast numbers of African Americans recruited by agents to leave the American South and move to Harlem. These new arrivals further invigorated Harlem with people, ideas, and capital. Alain Locke

wrote in 1925: "The wash and rush of this human tide on the beach line of the Northern city centers is to be explained primarily in terms of a new vision of opportunity, of social and economic freedom, of a spirit to seize, even in the face of an extortionate and heavy toll, a chance for the improvement of conditions."

Jazz musicians and writers drew visitors "uptown" and transformed the neighborhood into a recreational destination. The Cotton Club (formerly Jack Johnson's Club Deluxe) and Connie's Inn were owned by whites and catered to a white clientele, but both clubs built Harlem's reputation as a neighborhood of entertainment during Prohibition. According to the census of 1920, there were approximately 152,467 people living in Harlem, up from 91,709 in 1910. Service employment remained constant. James Hubert of the New York Urban League published a study (*Living Conditions of Small Wage Earners*, 1927) of approximately 2,400 tenants in the neighborhood, which confirmed that this employment had persisted for years. Hubert's report also showed a trend in Harlem: Gainfully employed families were earning slightly less than four times the amount of their rent in gross pay. The average weekly income for a family was \$19.75, and the average monthly rent was \$41.14.

Harlem's growth as a business district during the Renaissance drew capital from across the nation, boosting local financial institutions. As Harlem gained new residents and capital, *New York Age* and *Amsterdam News* promoted the community's new business leaders. The Carver Savings and Loan Association and the United Mutual Life Insurance Company employed several local residents and were regionally powerful firms. Several funeral homes, law firms, and medical practices were founded during the 1920s, and Apple Bank for Savings, originally named Harlem Savings Bank, accumulated vast capital. Patrons of the arts, both black and white—including the wealthy A'Lelia Walker, who operated a popular salon, the Dark Tower, from her home—merged business interests and art.

The literature of the Harlem Renaissance promoted economic independence. Black residents no longer regarded themselves as subservient and sought grand economic projects in Harlem. However, a division emerged between more conservative black business owners and new leaders, who promoted a self-assertive image of what came to be called the "New Negro." This new philosophy was described in periodicals such as *The Crisis* (1910), published by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and edited by W. E. B. Du Bois with help from the novelist

and literary editor Jessie Redmon Fauset; and *Opportunity* (1923), published by the Urban League and edited by the sociologist Charles S. Johnson. Cultural independence was described as the ideal way to sustain economic independence: “Harlem’s New Negroes employed a strategy of self-empowerment through cultural ascendancy rather than direct economic or political protest” (Douglas 1995).

More radical publications in Harlem questioned the economic authority of contemporary American business leaders. *The Messenger*, established by A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen in 1917, held that the oppression of blacks was not racial but economic in origin. This periodical denounced the American Federation of Labor, which largely excluded African Americans, and black America’s involvement in World War I. In March 1922, Randolph began advocating the pooling of black business resources, citing an increase in bankruptcies in Harlem. His astute theories on cooperative economic power were proved in 1925, when he organized the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Randolph drew support from the numerous black fraternal lodges and social clubs that dotted Harlem. Economic independence movements began at Saint James Presbyterian Church, Abyssinian Baptist Church, Canaan Baptist Church, and Saint Philip’s Protestant Episcopal Church.

Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) was another example of an organization promoting economic independence, although Garvey went about this differently from most entrepreneurs in Harlem. Garvey sought to return Harlemites to their African homelands in a “back to Africa” program to restore worldwide economic equality. His weekly newspaper, *Negro World*, was widely read in America and abroad. In 1919, Garvey founded the Black Star Line Steamship Corporation in Harlem to achieve his goal. Shares valued at \$5 each were sold at meetings of UNIA and through mailed circulars; and nearly \$200,000 was raised in less than four months. Harlem was the headquarters of Garvey’s ventures; much of the capital came from the working poor of the Caribbean and the United States. Numerous owners of businesses and real estate in Harlem, and the labor leader Randolph, were critical of Garvey’s managerial skills and considered his behavior divisive. He was denounced as an opportunistic social and political leader who was promoting unrealistic economic development plans for Harlem for his own benefit.

Booker T. Washington and his close business associates had founded the National Negro Business League

(NNBL) in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1900, and many of the leaders of this organization cast their projects from Harlem. T. Thomas Fortune, editor and publisher of *New York Age*, was appointed chairman of the executive committee of NNBL and tirelessly encouraged black economic growth. The secretary of NNBL, Albon L. Holsey, founded the Colored Merchants’ Association (CMA); and the banker Richard Wright, a Philadelphian, established the National Negro Bankers Association and played a vital role in financing small bakeries, groceries, and cleaning firms in Harlem.

However, when the stock market crashed in 1929 and the Great Depression followed, Harlem’s economy was badly damaged. The Depression displaced millions of jobs, and in this regard, Harlem was particularly vulnerable. Thousands of the working poor lived in the district, and their jobs disappeared when infrastructure and retail sales suffered. According to federal data, Harlem had rates of unemployment three to four times greater than neighborhoods with primarily white residents. In the face of economic decline—and racism—few African American families prospered. Numerous adults in Harlem began working as street peddlers or vendors in order to survive. Neighborhood “cotton pickers” were famous for finding marketable goods by searching through refuse. Moreover, patrons of the arts reduced their financial support. Some writers in Harlem fell out of favor with publishers when their works were accused of promoting communist ideals; some performers also fell from favor because of their communist leanings.

Many workers and artists based in Harlem were eventually absorbed into other areas of American society, including universities and the U.S. government’s Works Progress Administration (WPA). But in the summer of 1934, more than 19,000 families were on relief. The unemployed would gather at the “Tree of Hope” (near the Lafayette Theater) at 132nd Street and Seventh Avenue to touch its trunk for luck. In March 1935, a riot resulted in widespread looting and symbolized the economic plight of the neighborhood. To combat the problem of scarce jobs, officials of the National Urban League in Harlem adopted a slogan, “Don’t buy where you can’t work,” that had been developed in St. Louis; its point was to boycott chain stores operated by whites.

In 1929, in an essay in *Modern Quarterly*, the sociologist E. Franklin Frazier argued that the Harlem Renaissance was divorced from the politics and economics of black culture as a group concept. This issue is debatable, but clearly the ideals and leaders of the Harlem

Renaissance influenced collective and group economic development across the United States. Harlem still remains a center of African American business. A survey by *Black Enterprise* in 2004 of the 100 largest African American businesses in the United States found that 29 percent were located in New York state, and several had germinated in Harlem.

SANDY SUMMERS HEAD
R. JAKE SUDDERTH

See also Abyssinian Baptist Church; Afro-American Realty Company; Amsterdam News; Black Star Line; Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; Cotton Club; Crisis, The; Fortune, Timothy Thomas; Frazier, E. Franklin; Garvey, Marcus; Messenger, The; Negro World; New York Age; Nightclubs; Nightlife; Opportunity; Owen, Chandler; Randolph, A. Philip; Riots: 4—Harlem Riot, 1935; Saint Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church; Universal Negro Improvement Association; Walker, A'Lelia

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Harlem: 3—Entertainment

The Harlem Renaissance is often treated as primarily a literary movement, but music and entertainment were at the center of the cultural productivity and social optimism associated with the period. Black migrants from around the country, a category that included many of the artists celebrated as key figures in the creative life of the renaissance, along with whites, flocked to Harlem to participate in the cultural milieu of the cabarets, nightclubs, and theaters as observers and participants. Music is often celebrated as a medium that transcends social divisions such as class and race, but the entertainment history of Harlem illustrates the extent to which such divisions determined the conditions of the culture being produced there.

The New Negro movement was primarily a middle-class phenomenon; its artists and intellectuals came mostly from educated, relatively privileged backgrounds. Secular music and dance were considered to be mere popular culture, often vulgar and distinct from the high culture—such as sculpture, painting, classical music, and literature—being produced in literary salons and artistic parlors. Nonetheless, it was the vernacular culture of the masses of working-class black people—their songs, dance, and music—from which the "talented tenth" drew inspiration. That said, class distinctions were not easily transcended. The affluent—W. E. B. Du Bois, Roy Wilkins, Walter White, and other renaissance leaders and artists—lived on Sugar Hill along with doctors, lawyers, and successful businesspeople. The up-and-coming and middle-class artists and writers, like Paul Robeson, Countee Cullen, Clarence Cameron White, W. C. Handy, and Fletcher Henderson, lived on Strivers' Row; and the black poor and working classes lived in "the Valley." Social circles were just as circumscribed by class as residential patterns were. For example, the upper classes congregated

in the “Dark Tower,” the third floor of A’Lelia Walker’s home, for intellectual conversation. In contrast, jazz musicians and entertainers gathered at the Rhythm Club to socialize and jam together. Elite fraternities and sororities held dances at the Renaissance Casino, while working people came together at basement parties to raise money to pay their high rents. At these informal gatherings, musicians such as Fats Waller and Duke Ellington honed their craft and proved themselves to their peers.

Although class distinctions clearly informed the creative outlets that particular entertainers pursued, the distinctions were also frequently blurred and crossed. George Gershwin was known to frequent Harlem rent parties, for example, and he invited jazz musicians to his own parties downtown, where they gained entry to and employment in mainstream musical productions. Moreover, although critics emphasize the “talented tenth’s” designation of spirituals as the classical music of black America, in contrast to what was then considered to be the more vulgar secular music, the status of spirituals as high culture did not gain widespread acceptance until composers and performers such as Harry T. Burleigh and Roland Hayes began to perform this music in public concerts and James Weldon and John Rosamond Johnson anthologized it. “New Negro” composers strove to elevate the race’s music, while establishing themselves within European musical traditions. In addition to Burleigh and the Johnson brothers’ compositions in both spiritual and secular traditions, other breakthroughs in African American concert music included Roland Hayes’ concert of lieder and spirituals at Town Hall in 1923, the organization of the Hall Johnson Choir in 1924, and the “First American Jazz Concert” at Aeolian Hall in 1924.

The strides made in musical concert halls were significant, but it is also true that most curiosity seekers flocked to Harlem to hear jazz and blues, musical forms that they believed expressed the sexual, exotic, and uninhibited. These characteristics of jazz and blues appealed to many people who had a new turn-of-the-century attitude toward modern society. Everyone, white and black, went to Harlem to hear black music. Racial and gender conventions were viewed—at least in lore if not in reality—as being more easily transgressed in Harlem. Just as important, Harlem was viewed as a hotbed of musical creativity.

Musical pioneers such as W. C. Handy, Ford Dabney, James Reese Europe, and Will Marion Cook made significant contributions in the early years of the

twentieth century, formalizing black music, orchestrating it, and paving the way for future generations of musicians. Bandleaders such as Fletcher Henderson and Duke Ellington popularized the music and went on to assume the title of jazz composers. Henderson’s orchestra worked as the house band at the Roseland Ballroom on Broadway, a segregated club that excluded blacks. Henderson is credited with initiating the transformation of ragtime from its roots in Dixieland into the more urbane sounds of the big band movement. He accompanied the blues singers Ethel Waters and Bessie Smith, and he collaborated with other musicians. His band’s hit “Sugar Foot Stomp” came to signify both “hot” and “sweet” styles of New York jazz.

Ellington moved from Washington, D.C., to Harlem in 1923 and worked his way up through the ranks until he and his orchestra were hired for a long-term gig at the prestigious Cotton Club in 1927. The four-year run at the Cotton Club gave Ellington national exposure—there were weekly broadcasts on the CBS radio network—as well as the opportunity to collaborate on compositions and arrangements that would become classics, such as “Black and Tan Fantasy” (1927) and “Black Beauty” (1928). By 1928, the Ellington Orchestra became the premier jazz ensemble. Its members had honed their characteristic styles, such as “growling” solos, blue notes, and hot rhythms, that helped define what would come to be known as the orchestra’s trademark “jungle” style. By the early 1930s, Ellington had gained fame as the composer of “Mood Indigo” and “Sophisticated Lady” and was living on Sugar Hill.

In 1930, Cab Calloway replaced Ellington’s orchestra at the Cotton Club, where he introduced “Minnie the Moocher” (1930), a song that featured the scat singing which that would become his trademark. Before that he appeared at Harlem’s Savoy Ballroom, as well as in the all-black Broadway revue *Connie’s Hot Chocolates*. Individuals such as Fats Waller played at rent parties and nightclubs and composed music for shows and revues throughout the 1920s.

The Savoy proved to be a central meeting place, because, unlike the Cotton Club, the Roseland, Connie’s Inn, and numerous other establishments, it did not discriminate against African Americans, and unlike A’Lelia Walker’s Dark Tower, it did not exclude the working classes. A cross section of people came together at the Savoy Ballroom, and many entertainers reaffirmed their allegiance to the black community by performing in black and integrated venues like the Savoy whenever possible. The heterogeneous

environment cultivated group creativity; in addition to the musical richness to be found there, many of the dances of the period were invented at the Savoy, including the lindy, black bottom, shimmy, truckin', snakehips, and Suzy Q. After long days of laboring hard for low wages, black people congregated at spaces like the Savoy, and especially in the more intimate places like the jook joints and rent parties, in order to reclaim their humanity. In such places, the cellar clubs and jooks, before a working-class clientele, Ethel Waters performed as a teenager and became known for her shimmy dance. Bill "Bojangles" Robinson showed off his footwork on Lenox Avenue, and in 1918, he premiered at New York's Palace Theater. At this performance, Robinson performed his trademark "stair dance," in which he tap-danced up and down a five-step staircase. The talented tenth may have associated vernacular dances such as these with stereotypical images of the lower classes, and such performances were certainly not regarded as theatrical art, but the dances created and performed in the cabarets and clubs, and at house parties, captured and embodied the optimism and escapism of the time.

If the early history of jazz in Harlem showcases the talent of men, the history of blues during the period puts the spotlight on women. Mamie Smith made the first blues recording by a black singer in 1920. The success of Smith's rendition of "You Can't Keep a Good Man Down" for Okeh records was quickly followed by the release of "Crazy Blues," which became a huge hit. Because of the trend set by Smith, record companies focused on developing the careers of female blues singers in the first decade of the commercialization of blues. During this period the recording industry played a central role in disseminating blues music, producing "race records" to market to an African American audience. Individuals such as Alberta Hunter, Ida Cox, Ethel Waters, Lucille Hegamin, Edith Wilson, Victoria Spivey, Rosa Henderson, Clara Smith, Trixie Smith, and Sippie Wallace all found success singing blues. Audiences could listen to these women singing not only in nightclubs and theaters but also on records, for labels such as Paramount, Columbia, and Black Swan, the only black-owned record company.

African American migrants from the rural South carried blues with them when they came, during the "great migration," to urban centers like Harlem. The recordings of classic blues singers such as Mamie Smith, Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, and Bessie Smith illustrate the extent to which the music reflected the new social

realities of its creators. Thus themes such as individual love, sexual and economic independence, alcoholism, drugs, and travel all figure prominently in the lyrics and speak in different ways of their makers' relatively recent emancipation. Moreover, because women blues singers—who came from poor and working-class roots—were assumed to deviate from the norms of appropriate female behavior, their lyrics dealt explicitly with topics such as sexuality that could not be openly explored in the middle-class narratives of most black women writers.

Whereas Ma Rainey recorded most of her songs in Chicago between 1923 and 1928, Bessie Smith was closely identified with Harlem during her recording career. She performed at nightclubs in Harlem and attended and performed at Carl Van Vechten's parties on the West Side, which brought together wealthy white connoisseurs of black culture, black entertainers and intellectuals, and white artists. Van Vechten, a chronicler of the Harlem Renaissance, wrote about and photographed Smith, creating some of the most enduring images of her.

If Smith was regarded as singing a more urbanized blues than Rainey, Ethel Waters was known for a style of blues that was even smoother, more precise, and therefore considered more "sophisticated" than the bluesy vocalizations of Rainey and Smith. Singers affecting this more urbanized style were thought to appeal more to whites, who frequented "sophisticated" cabarets run by mobsters, such as Connie's Inn and the Plantation Inn. Edith Wilson, like Waters, was one such performer. She opened at the Cotton Club in 1925 and also appeared at the Lafayette Theater, the Lincoln Theater, and other New York cabarets in song and comedy skits. Her style was polished and upbeat, and it traveled easily outside African American circles. Wilson also performed in the Broadway hits *Shuffle Along* and *Blackbirds of 1926*, among others.

About forty musical shows and revues were produced during the 1920s and 1930s, including *Shuffle Along* (1921), *Chocolate Dandies* (1924), *Runnin' Wild* (1924), and *Hot Chocolates* (1929). Many of these shows, which featured comedy sketches, singing, dancing, and rent-party skits, were produced in downtown theaters. Harlem did have some influential African American theaters, though. Chief among them was the Lafayette, between 131st Street and 132nd Street on Seventh Avenue. From its opening in 1915, the Lafayette catered to black audiences, often staging plays from Broadway at more affordable prices and tailoring them to suit the taste of the black audience. Its repertoire

consisted of a range of plays, such as *Othello*, *Madame X*, *The Servant in the House*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *On Trial*. The Lafayette was also known to feature wild shows that were memorialized by Arthur P. Davis, Regina Andrews, Arna Bontemps, and Langston Hughes. The company ran successfully and profitably for a dozen years.

W. E. B. Du Bois founded the Krigwa Players' Little Theater in 1926, and this troupe produced more sober fare in the basement of the New York Public Library's 135th Street branch. Du Bois and the playwrights featured by the Krigwa Players strove to produce dramas aimed toward Negro communities and to convey something of the truth of Negro life.

DAPHNE LAMOTHE

See also Blues; Blues: Women Performers; Cotton Club; House-Rent Parties; Jazz; Krigwa Players; Lafayette Theater; Lincoln Theater; Madame X; Music; Musical Theater; On Trial; 135th Street Library; Renaissance Casino; Roseland Ballroom; Savoy Ballroom; Servant in the House, The; Singers; Van Vechten, Carl; *specific entertainers, musicians, singers, and writers*

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Harlem: 4—Housing

Part I

A headline in the New York *Herald* in December 1905—"Negroes Move Into Harlem"—announced that Harlem was changing. A search for better housing

was the basic motivation for the move of African Americans to Harlem before the Harlem Renaissance. This move started in 1904 with the relocation of just a few black families to West 134th Street between Lenox and Fifth avenues.

Harlem had originally been a small, dispersed farming community. Then, in the late 1700s, New York City's wealthy, prominent citizens began to regard it as an ideal location for their estates. With the passage of time, Harlem was considered a suburb of the central city. By the early 1800s, the soil no longer supported farming, and many families had moved to better land. Some black slaves lived in Harlem as early as 1752. Once freed, many continued to live and work as servants in the Harlem area. The Village of Harlem was annexed to the rest of New York in 1873.

Although the building of a train line to Harlem spurred some development in the 1830s, much of Harlem was covered with shantytowns by the start of the Civil War. At the end of the Civil War, three more Harlem-bound elevated train lines were in operation. These in turn spurred development in the 1880s, which resulted in overbuilding that attracted new black residents.

Into this scenario walked the black real estate broker Philip Payton, who bought up five-year leases from white building owners and leased apartments to black tenants, beginning with a building on West 134th Street. White businesses and civic community organizations in Harlem protested against this infusion of black renters and home owners; they urged white owners to hold tight and not sell or rent to blacks. But for landlords who were facing financial ruin, renting to black tenants was too profitable a deal to refuse.

Following the "draft riots" of 1865, in which blacks were a target of violence, many blacks moved from Manhattan to Brooklyn. However, thousands of black families remained in shanties and tenements in two mid-Manhattan areas, known then as the Tenderloin (West Twentieth to West Forty-second or West Fifty-third Street between Sixth and Seventh avenues) and San Juan Hill (West Sixtieth to West Sixty-fourth Street between Tenth and Eleventh avenues). Another riot in 1900 made it easier to consider a move away. At that time, New York had 60,666 black residents.

When plans were announced to clear the area around Thirty-third Street in order to build the original Pennsylvania Station, black residents began to worry about where they would live. Their plight and desperation coincided with the overbuilding that

had taken place recently in Harlem. In addition to the black people who moved uptown from lower Manhattan, other blacks who had heard of Harlem or had family or friends already there began coming from the American South and from the Caribbean West Indies.

White flight did not occur seriously until 1920, as blacks started the move west across Lenox Avenue, breaking the color line that this avenue had marked. By 1925, blacks lived from West 110th Street up to West 145th Street. Black churches followed—or sometimes led—their congregations to Harlem. Saint Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church, which before 1911 had been located in the Tenderloin area, bought tenements along West 135th Street to rent apartments to black tenants.

For most of the new residents, the housing in Harlem represented an unprecedented improvement. Civil reformers, for their part, considered improvements in housing vital to overall improvement in the life of the city. Thus, beginning in 1901, they had passed “tenement house laws” that tried to address the worst ills of poorly designed urban dwellings—and of dwellings that had not been designed at all, such as those in the abandoned factory buildings and cellars inhabited by some of the poorest New Yorkers before 1900.

Part II

The housing that existed in Harlem at the time of the renaissance included mansions that had been built as much as a century before the move by blacks to Harlem; row houses, of which some of the finest examples were to be found in Harlem; brick tenements; apartment buildings, some of which were elegant, luxurious elevator buildings comparable to the best in the city; and various alternative kinds of housing. The most prevalent and distinctive form of housing in Harlem was the row house, in which the dominant visible building material was brownstone, limestone, or brick. By the end of the nineteenth century, builders considered tenements and apartment buildings more profitable to build, but African Americans were routinely denied occupancy in some luxury apartment buildings until after this period.

Although many of the early black migrants to Harlem were the wealthiest of the black populace, who could afford the steep rents, they represented just a small fraction of the black residents of New York who moved to Harlem. They were followed by working-class people who could not afford the exorbitant rents

found in Harlem. Often, therefore, several families would pool their money and live together as a huge extended family, dividing up the space to suit each nuclear family.

When real estate brokers realized what was happening, they would sometimes divide a building themselves, creating layouts in which each individual occupant got a single room with access to a toilet and cooking facilities on the same floor of the building, or on a nearby floor. Some row houses originally intended for one family were eventually subdivided to provide as many as twenty small rooming units.

Hotels such as the Libya at 149 West 139th Street and the Cecil at 210 West 118th Street represented one short-term alternative form of housing. Another alternative was the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). The nation's first black YMCA relocated from West Fifty-third Street to West 135th Street. At various times, it was the home of the writers Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, and Ralph Ellison.

Following are some examples of the various forms of housing.

Two mansions are the Morris-Jumel Mansion (1764), a Georgian house that George Washington used as his headquarters in 1776; and Hamilton Grange (1802) on Convent Avenue, a Federal-style house that was built for Alexander Hamilton.

Harlem's best-known row houses are those on Strivers' Row (1891), consisting of 106 luxurious brownstones on West 138th Street and West 139th Street between Seventh and Eighth avenues; they were first leased to African Americans in 1919. Numbers 330 to 336 Convent Avenue (1892) are a colorful array of Queen Anne-style row houses. Astor Row (1880)—a group of twenty-eight three-story brick semiattached houses on West 130th Street with large, graceful wooden porches and large front yards—was built by a son of the Astor family as working-class housing. Hamilton Terrace (1899) was a semiprivate street of three-story row houses. Sylvan Terrace (1882) had wood-sided working-class row houses, on a street that ran through the gardens of the Jumel estate. Numbers 133 to 143 West 122nd Street (1887) were distinctive terra-cotta row houses.

Apartment buildings included the Paul Laurence Dunbar Apartments (1928), built with financing from John D. Rockefeller Jr. as cooperatives for middle-class black families. The complex, which included 511 apartments, had its own savings bank. It was once the home of W. E. B. Du Bois, Countee Cullen, and Paul Robeson.

Graham Court (1901) at Seventh Avenue and 116th Street was built by William Waldorf Astor and was considered the most luxurious apartment building in Harlem; it was first leased to African Americans in 1933. Number 409 Edgecombe (1917), a twelve-story apartment building, was the most popular address in Sugar Hill for black leaders and artists.

The architects of most of the housing that black residents found on arriving in Harlem around 1904 had been hired by speculative developers. Although most of these architects were not well known, a few were among the most notable in New York. The famous firm of McKim, Mead and White (Stanford White, the architect of Pennsylvania Station) led the design of Strivers' Row. William B. Tuthill designed a series of handsome bay-windowed buildings at 4 to 16 West 122nd Street (he went on to design Carnegie Hall). Francis Kimball, who designed row houses on West 122nd Street, also designed one of New York's first high office buildings.

By the time the Harlem Renaissance started, most of the lots in Harlem's grid up to 145th Street were already built up. Thus most of the construction work in this area during the period of the renaissance involved the renovation of existing buildings and the occasional demolition of an existing large house to make way for apartment buildings.

Most architects working in Harlem during this period were not black. However, at least three African American architects were prominent and very productive. Vertner Tandy, who had been trained at Tuskegee and Cornell, was New York's first black registered architect. He and his partner, George W. Foster, one of the first black architects in New Jersey, designed the new Saint Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church on West 134th Street; they also undertook residential projects, including a house for Madame C. J. Walker at 108 to 110 West 35th Street. (Walker, America's first black female millionaire, who made her fortune through the manufacturing and distribution of black hair-care products, also commissioned Tandy to design a thirty-five-room mansion in Westchester County, New York.) John Louis Wilson worked for Tandy in 1924–1926, became the first black architecture graduate of Columbia University in 1928, and was licensed in New York state in 1930. Wilson undertook substantial renovation of dozens of houses during and after the Harlem Renaissance. He is best known as the only black among seven architects who were selected in 1934 to design the Harlem River Houses, a 574-unit redbrick building complex that is recognized as the first newly

constructed public housing project in New York City and in the United States.

Part III

By 1932, Harlem, like the rest of the nation, had slumped into the Depression; perhaps 50 percent of the families in Harlem were on welfare. Hard times, of course, impaired people's ability to pay for housing. Even though 60 percent of black women worked (compared with only 20 percent of white women), they still did not make enough to pay rent, or to buy food and clothing for themselves and their children. As early as 1927, according to a survey by the Urban League, 48 percent of families in Harlem were spending more than twice as much of their income for rent as comparable white families. This situation was exacerbated by the Depression. Rent parties, which became popular in Harlem during this period, were a necessity for hundreds of tenants—a way to raise money for the rent that was due on the first of the month. Also, 25 percent of 2,326 renters surveyed had at least one roomer within their space. Evictions became common. Even people in luxury buildings were hit by the Depression: Rockefeller foreclosed on the Dunbar Apartments in 1936.

At the time of the Urban League's report in 1927, real estate in Harlem was firmly in the hands of white absentee landlords. As had been the case before black people came to Harlem, black families looking for better housing were severely restricted by racial discrimination as to where they could move or live. The Harlem Tenants' League was formed in 1928 to fight rigid segregation and the lack of options available to tenants who had been presented with rent increases. The first protest by the Tenants' League was against the expiration of the Emergency Rent Laws, which controlled rent ceilings. The rent strike was one strategy used; such strikes were of limited value, but they did catch the attention of local politicians. By 1934, however, redlining of areas where most residents were black became a standard practice. This policy made it difficult or impossible for blacks and whites to refinance homes they owned in Harlem or to buy homes there.

The decline of housing in Harlem would continue into the late 1960s, when the population decreased drastically, many buildings were left abandoned, and—as a result of tax defaults—the city became the principal owner of residential properties in Harlem. From the 1990s on, though, the renovation of old residential

buildings and the construction of new buildings made Harlem a magnet for those in search of what was still fundamentally some of the best housing in Manhattan. Today, remnants of housing from the days of the Harlem Renaissance remain as witnesses to Harlem's most glorious era.

ROBERTA WASHINGTON

See also Afro-American Realty Company; Dunbar Apartments; House-Rent Parties; Saint Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church; Strivers' Row; Sugar Hill

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Harlem: 5—Neighborhoods

Negro Harlem's three broad highways form the letter H, Lenox and Seventh Avenues running parallel northwards, united a little above their midpoints by east-and-west 135th Street. . . . These two highways, frontiers of the opposed extreme of dark-skinned social life, are separated by an intermediate any-man's land, across which they communicate chiefly by way of 135th Street. Accordingly 135th Street is the heart and soul of black Harlem; it is common ground, the natural scene of unusual contacts, a region that disregards class. It neutralizes, equilibrates, binds, rescues union out of diversity. (Fisher, 1987)

By the 1920s, Harlem was identified as a "city within a city" (Johnson 1930) and as the "Negro capital of the world" (Locke 1925 / 1968). Migration to Harlem in the early decades of the twentieth century transformed an ethnically mixed community into an almost wholly African American community within a generation. Speculation in property before the construction of the Lenox Avenue subway in the first decade of the century had resulted in large numbers of apartments and not enough tenants. In an effort to protect (and ultimately maximize) profits, buildings were let to African Americans, who subsequently paid higher rents for poorer facilities than tenants in any other part of the city. The landlords got a return on their investment, and Negro Harlem was born. From 1910 to 1920, the African American population expanded by 66 percent (from about 90,000 to 150,000); and from 1920 to 1930, it increased by 115 percent (from about 150,000 to 325,000). The development of this community, as Rudolph Fisher noted, was as internally diversified as it was extraordinary. Outsiders saw Harlem as an entertainment capital characterized by bars, dance halls, and speakeasies; but in reality Harlem was a complex community with distinct neighborhoods organized according to use and class stratification. The descriptions that follow of famous locales that were recognizable by the mid-1920s suggest the class-driven intraracial organization of Harlem.

Lenox Avenue

Lenox Avenue from 125th Street up to around 147th Street represented the center of Harlem's street life, restaurants, and entertainment. In any number of accounts of life in Harlem during this period (such as Fisher's), emerging from the subway at Lenox and 135th Street is cited as the paradigmatic urban experience. Lenox Avenue was associated in the popular imagination with the most notorious aspects of life in Harlem; Fisher depicts it as "the boulevard of the unperfumed; 'rats' they are often termed." In part this was because of the economic conditions affecting housing in the area. Apartments built for a property boom that never happened were let at increasingly exorbitant rents, and tenants made ends meet by subdividing and subletting their space, often many times over. The problems attendant on this overcrowding included poor sanitation, bad services, criminality, and lack of employment opportunities. But the reputation of Lenox as the "low-down" section of Harlem has far more to do with the kinds of

services that were offered to Harlemites and to white visitors. As Anderson (1981) describes it, Lenox provided the most famous, the most outrageous, the best-loved, and the most notorious of Harlem's nightspots.

In an era when Harlem was recognized as the nightclub capital of New York, if not of the world, Lenox reigned supreme. To Lenox belonged the Lenox Club at Lenox and 143rd Street, which had a largely African American clientele; the Plantation Inn at 126th Street; and the Savoy Ballroom at 140th Street. The Savoy was the largest dance hall and the most significant mixed-race venue in Harlem; all of the major balls and other events were held there, and it was perhaps best known as the home of the lindy hop. Lenox's most famous nightspot, the Cotton Club, had white audiences only. Its reputation, built on the legendary performances of Cab Calloway and his band, Duke Ellington, Ethel Waters, Lena Horne, and Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, accounted for much of the stereotype of wild after-hours Harlem. The most famous of Harlem's nighttime venues was just off Lenox, on West 133rd Street between Lenox and Seventh avenues. This block had so many nightclubs that it was known as Jungle Alley. Here one could find Tillie's Chicken Shack for after-hours eating, Pod and Jerry's for stride piano from some of Harlem's most famous names, jazz contests at Mexico's, and the cross-dressing "mannish woman" Gladys Bentley singing at the Clam House.

Seventh Avenue

Seventh Avenue, often known as the "great black way," stood for all that was handsome and best about Harlem. It was the widest and most beautiful of Harlem's avenues, with an uninterrupted vista stretching from 125th Street up to 145th Street, and with a median that was given over to plantings of trees and flowers. It too was home to nightclubs and dance halls, including Connie's Inn at Seventh Avenue and 131st Street, which presented cabaret revues with music by Fats Waller and lyrics by Andy Razaf; and Small's Paradise at Seventh and 135th Street. Seventh Avenue was the site of many important theaters, including the Alhambra, the Lafayette, and the Roosevelt. Left-wing magazines such as the *Liberator* had their offices here, as did the Blyden and the National bookstores, which specialized in African and African American books. Harlem's best hotel, the Teresa, was at the corner of Seventh and 125th Street. The most prestigious churches in Harlem

were also located on Seventh Avenue (and a funeral procession up some part of Seventh was a mark of one's social standing).

Seventh Avenue was the prime location for both formal and informal parades. It was the route of parades by many of Harlem's fraternal organizations, protest marches, and celebrations. Parades by Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and the followers of Father Divine went along Seventh Avenue; and in 1947, there was a parade in honor of the boxer Joe Louis. The Easter parades and Sunday afternoon promenades along Seventh Avenue were famously recorded by James Weldon Johnson; on these occasions, all classes of Harlemites donned their best and most fashionable clothes and came out to stroll: "This was not simply going out for a walk; it is like going out for an adventure" (Johnson 1930).

135th Street

Fisher said that 135th Street was the "common ground" mediating between Seventh and Lenox avenues. In many ways this was the symbolic home of the "New Negro" and the New Negro Renaissance. Here one could find the Harlem Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), where Langston Hughes and other famous figures of the Harlem Renaissance lived for a time. The YMCA also provided rooms for literary groups; at their meetings, one might hear, for example, Hughes or Countee Cullen reading from his recent work. It was, and still is, an imposing landmark in Harlem. Even more important was the 135th Street Library (later renamed the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, after Arthur Schomburg deposited his extensive collection of materials on African Americans and Africa there). This library—which was the Harlem branch of the New York Public Library—provided a locus for many activities associated with the Harlem Renaissance: readings, meetings, and performances as well as research. At one time or another virtually every literary African American of note spent time writing or doing research at the 135th Street Library. In the 1920s and 1930s, the library sponsored and promoted diverse cultural activities by and for residents of Harlem. In the 1930s, it also commissioned for its own walls some of the most famous works of African American visual art—Aaron Douglas's murals *Aspects of Negro Life*. And 135th Street, as Fisher noted, had the lion's share of a rather more popular form of cultural capital; it was legendary

for its barbershops and beauty salons, which were recorded by photographers such as James Van Der Zee and Morgan and Marvin Smith. These shops and salons were an important community space, where information about parties, literary gatherings, and political meetings would be exchanged. They played a crucial role in the development of cultural self-esteem as well as making the fortune of more than one African American.

125th Street

If 135th Street was the locus of literary Harlem, 125th Street was (and to a considerable extent has remained) its commercial hub. At one end of 125th Street there was a stop on the Eighth Avenue elevated railway (another of Harlem's iconic, often photographed gateways); at the other end was a stop on the Lenox Avenue subway. African Americans came to 125th Street later than to the upper portions of Harlem; this street did not have a black majority until the mid-1920s. Once in residence, though, blacks took advantage of the department stores and other commercial outlets available there. Also on 125th Street were the Harlem Opera House, Loew's Victoria, and the Apollo Theater, which became perhaps the most important and most prestigious venue for black entertainment. Success at the Apollo became the sign of having arrived as an African American performer. Louis Armstrong and his orchestra, Billie Holliday, and Ella Fitzgerald all appeared there. Most notably, however, the Apollo was a resolutely populist institution. Its clientele, numbering in the thousands, were ordinary African



Harlem, 125th Street, c. 1915–1920s. (Brown Brothers.)

Americans whose approval or disdain could make or break a performer's reputation.

Sugar Hill and Strivers' Row

Sugar Hill and Strivers' Row were the antithesis of the populism represented by the Apollo Theater. These were two distinct residential areas of Harlem where one found the most desirable town houses and the wealthiest and best-educated African Americans. Strivers' Row consisted of two leafy blocks—138th and 139th streets—between Seventh and Eighth avenues. Its town houses were designed in 1891 by Stanford White, among others, for the developer David H. King Jr and were intended as homes for wealthy white Harlemites. The white clients evaporated as the surrounding areas were taken over by African Americans; and although the two blocks held out for some time against black tenants and owners, they became home to a largely upper-class black coterie by the mid-1920s. Writers such as Wallace Thurman railed against the snobbishness of this community, which was seen as slavishly imitating the white upper classes, and it is true that many of the residents manifested a class prejudice built on intraracial prejudice—nearly all of the residents of Strivers' Row were light-skinned.

Sugar Hill became a neighborhood to aspire to sometime later than Strivers' Row, but its location on a hill overlooking Harlem soon made it a metaphor of the good life for African Americans. It lay roughly between Amsterdam Avenue to the west and Edgecombe Avenue to the east, running northward from 145th Street to 155th Street. Like Strivers' Row, it had



Harlem Savings Bank at 124 East 125th Street, in the 1920s. (Brown Brothers.)

once been a white neighborhood, but as wealthy African Americans made inroads into the area, its luxurious brownstones and apartments became the choice of black celebrities, socialites, intellectuals, politicians, civic leaders, and churchmen. The journalist and writer George S. Schuyler, the painters Aaron Douglas and Hale Woodruff, Langston Hughes, Ralph Ellison, A'Lelia Walker, Duke Ellington, Paul Robeson, and Walter White were among those who made Sugar Hill their home.

MARIA BALSHAW

See also Alhambra Theater; Apollo Theater; Cotton Club; Douglas, Aaron; Father Divine; Fisher, Rudolph; Jungle Alley; Lafayette Theater; Liberator, The; Nightlife; 135th Street Library; Savoy Ballroom; Small's Paradise; Strivers' Row; Sugar Hill; Van Der Zee, James; *specific entertainers and writers*

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Harlem: 6—Public Health

Significant, rapid migration of blacks from the southern United States and the Caribbean before World War I radically changed what had been predominantly Irish, Jewish, and Italian communities in Harlem. This influx of black people—most of whom were poor—took place

against a background of racial prejudice supported by pseudoscientific theories of genetic inferiority, social Darwinism, and eugenics. The numbers and the health needs of the population created a severe strain on the medical services available in Harlem. Moreover, two other factors also contributed to inadequate health care: One of these was misperceptions about black culture; the other was the attitude of organized American medicine, which militated against government support for what were considered expensive state-sponsored medical programs. In this context, efforts to integrate the medical staff at Harlem Hospital—the only public facility in the community—and the founding of the Harlem Hospital Nursing School to train black women nurses were important innovations. Nevertheless, the quality and kind of medical services available to the black community were adversely affected by the distribution of funding for health care, by discrimination in the allocation of medical resources and personnel, and by racial prejudice that limited access to professional medical societies and research positions.

During the period of the Harlem Renaissance, most medical care was offered through various fee-for-service providers, including homeopaths, physicians, midwives, pharmacists, and purveyors of folk remedies. Although this range of providers did not differ from those used by European immigrants, poor blacks—as a consequence of both their race and their poverty—relied mostly on folk medicine or became patients at public facilities. Public outpatient facilities soon became inadequate to meet the needs of the black community, a population that increased by more than 300 percent between 1920 and 1932. Inpatient facilities at Harlem Hospital were also consistently unable to meet the demands of the community. Despite efforts by African American physicians who tried to draw attention to public health issues, preventive medicine was rare, poor sanitary conditions were widespread, and infectious diseases proliferated. There was an increased incidence of venereal disease, consumption, malnutrition, heart disease, and substance abuse. Psychiatric services were almost nonexistent and remained so until the founding of the Lafargue Clinic just after World War II.

Moreover, under a "justification for scientific research," many poor and ill-informed blacks became subjects of experiments (such as the infamous Tuskegee study of untreated syphilis), were subjected to unnecessary procedures, or were treated negligently because their complaints were routine or fell outside the scope

of research protocols. Middle-class black Harlemites sometimes adopted racial stereotypes, demanding white physicians, or they sought treatment in private clinics owned by blacks; both reactions encouraged a segregated system and deprived public institutions of important political support. For example, these attitudes among the middle class hampered the efforts led by Louis T. Wright, an African American graduate of Harvard Medical School, to integrate black physicians at Harlem Hospital. Another impediment was the attitude of private foundations, such as the Rosenwald Fund, that proposed to strengthen African American medical institutions. These foundations were well meaning, and they did achieve some practical success in funding programs to combat infant mortality, sexually transmitted diseases, and tuberculosis; ironically, however, they slowed the pace of integration and hindered well-trained black physicians from obtaining staff positions at largely white institutions. Instead of creating opportunities for black health care professionals, these foundations helped perpetuate a stereotype of black doctors and nurses as less well trained or less competent.

By 1923, most African American physicians earned their medical degrees at Howard University or Meharry; few blacks gained admittance to the predominantly white medical schools that received the most funding, benefited most from current scientific research, and largely supervised specialist training. There was a shortage of practitioners willing to treat inner-city patients, and so the ratio of black physicians to patient visits fell. The American Medical Association controlled the politics of medicine, although the black National Medical Association worked to raise standards and respect for black physicians. Nationwide, the medical establishment was characterized by “separate and unequal” health care for blacks and whites, and this situation obviously influenced health care in Harlem.

Extreme poverty and social dislocation exposed the need for psychiatric services based in Harlem. An epidemic of juvenile crime, thwarted aspirations, discrimination in housing and employment, and limited educational opportunities created despair; as a result, the black community in Harlem was afflicted by anxiety bordering on neurosis, but there were few openings for black physicians to receive psychiatric training in New York City. In 1946, after having worked for a decade on the project, Fredric Wertham, one of the nation’s most distinguished psychiatrists, organized the Lafargue Clinic in the basement of the parish house of

Saint Philip’s Church, with the encouragement and advice of Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, Earl Brown, Marion Hernandez, and Father Sheldon Hale Bishop. Wertham enlisted and trained a multiracial volunteer staff to establish this mental health clinic, dedicated to alleviating the “free-floating hostility” of many people in Harlem and to understanding the reality of black life in America—a reality shaped by oppression. The clinic, which was named in memory of Karl Marx’s son-in-law Dr. Paul Lafargue (a Cuban-born black French physician, social reformer, and politician), became one of the most noteworthy institutions in the United States, serving the poor and promoting civil rights.

JAMES E. REIBMAN

See also Ellison, Ralph; Harlem Hospital; Saint Philip’s Protestant Episcopal Church; Tuskegee Experiment; Wright, Richard

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Harlem Community Players

During the 1920s, Harlem was a magnet not only for African American artists but also for many white New Yorkers. Many middle-class Americans attended black

vaudeville shows, dramas, and Broadway productions and also expressed great interest in community-based “little theater” groups and amateur dramatic clubs of the day, such as the Harlem Community Players.

In the late 1920s, the Harlem Community Players produced Edward Smith’s drama *Release* in the Harlem Library Little Theater at the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library. This little theater space had been converted from a lecture room in the basement of the library and was active from the mid-1920s until the mid-1940s. The first resident group to use the Harlem Library Theater was the Krigwa Players, led by W. E. B. Du Bois (the founder of the group) and the artistic director Charles Burroughs.

Such dramatic societies served as a cultural resource for the community. The Lafayette Players, the first theater group in Harlem, was formed in 1916, and there were several other black theater groups during the Harlem Renaissance, such as the Krigwa Players, the Negro Art Theater, the Utopia Players, and the Harlem Community Players. Most of them were small amateur groups that produced classics or melodramas about middle-class life. Many of their plays dealt with black life and were performed by blacks, but had been written by whites.

FELECIA PIGGOTT-McMILLAN

See also Community Theater; Krigwa Players; Lafayette Players; Negro Art Theater; 135th Street Library; Utopia Players

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Harlem: A Forum of Negro Life

Harlem: A Forum of Negro Life (1928) was a literary journal edited by Wallace Thurman. He undertook this new publication two years after the demise of *Fire!!*, a magazine that in its single issue had devoted itself to artistic expression unfettered by racial propaganda. Thurman’s reasons for the new venture—which was intended as a successor to *Fire!!*—were, first, that

black artists in New York had no journal of their own and thus could not reach their primary audience (since few African Americans would consistently buy a white publication just for the sake of contributions by black artists); and, second, that the black editors of *The Crisis* and *Opportunity*, according to him, hampered artistic freedom. Thurman envisioned *Harlem: A Forum of Negro Life* as a way to make up for these deficiencies and give a voice to the young black artist, who was rebelling “against shoddy and sloppy publication methods, . . . against the patronizing attitudes his elders assumed toward him, . . . against their editorial astigmatism and their intolerance of new points of view” (Thurman 1928, 21).

As chief editor, Thurman carefully organized what turned out to be the only issue of *Harlem*, published in November 1928. He balanced the bohemian pieces of Richard Bruce Nugent, Roy de Coverly, and George W. Little with the more conservative contributions of Alain Locke, Walter White, and George Schuyler. *Harlem* lacked the fiery spirit of its predecessor, but, appealing to a wider audience and costing only twenty-five cents a copy, it seemed to have a better chance of surviving. During its short existence, it nearly achieved its goal of being “a wholly new type of magazine, one which would give expression to all groups” (Thurman, 21). It included illustrations by Nugent and Aaron Douglas; political advice from White, who was the chairman of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); discussions of theater by Theophilus Lewis and Nugent; poems by Helene Johnson, Alice Dunbar Nelson, and Langston Hughes; and short stories by Hughes, Schuyler, de Coverly, and Little. By presenting so many different opinions and values, Thurman was trying to sever any links between his new magazine and *Fire!!*, which had been a one-sided affair: “If you are in doubt as to which side of a public argument you agree with—look for both sides in *Harlem*.” In an editorial, he reassured the reader that *Harlem* was entering the field “without any preconceived editorial prejudices, without intolerance, without a reformer’s cudgel” (22).

After a single issue, and without having been reviewed in any other periodicals, *Harlem: A Forum of Negro Life* folded. There are no official records that reveal the specific reasons for its failure, but one explanation might be that the black public lacked interest in literary magazines and was unready to support yet another black periodical. Theophilus Lewis (1932) seems to believe that financial difficulties led to

the downfall of the new journal; another, and more probable, cause may have been the poor quality of the material in the first issue.

NIKOLAS HUOT

See also Crisis, The; Douglas, Aaron; Fire!!; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, Helene; Lewis, Theophilus; Locke, Alain; Nelson, Alice Dunbar; Nugent, Richard Bruce; Opportunity; Schuyler, George S.; Thurman, Wallace; White, Walter

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Harlem General Hospital

Harlem General Hospital emerged from the Harlem Dispensary (1868), a charitable foundation that had been formed to provide medical care for the poor of Harlem. The dispensary not only dealt with immediate medical issues but also became a pioneer in public health efforts against contagious and epidemic diseases. However, it was eclipsed by the foundation of Harlem Hospital on 18 April 1887.

Harlem General Hospital began as a twenty-bed facility; later, it was expanded to fifty-four beds. It was run by the Department of Public Charities and Correction in a rented wooden building at 120th Street

and the East River and served as a center for transferring patients to hospitals on Ward's and Randall's islands and as an emergency unit of Bellevue Hospital. Eventually, as a result of a population boom that included a large influx of Negroes, a new Harlem Hospital was built on Lenox Avenue between 136th and 137th streets. This new facility, which had 150 beds, was opened on 13 April 1907. In turn, it became too small, so in 1915 a nurses' wing was opened and an additional 240 beds became available.

In 1917, during World War I, Harlem General Hospital sent a medical unit—which served with distinction—overseas. Also as part of the war effort, the hospital trained army medical personnel, especially in the use of X-ray technology. In 1918, medical students at Fordham University rotated through the hospital, which had been recognized as a teaching hospital. In addition, its professional quality was attested to by the fact that several attending physicians also held positions in other medical faculties in the area.

Military service during World War I created a severe shortage of personnel in city hospitals and enabled black physicians to join the house staff at Fordham and Bellevue hospitals. This precedent provided an impetus for integrating hospitals in New York City. Because Harlem had a large black population that was gaining political power, and because there was evidence that blacks were being treated indifferently and inadequately at Harlem General Hospital, a demand arose to admit Negroes to its house staff. In 1919, Louis T. Wright, who was a veteran and a graduate of the Harvard medical school, was appointed as a provisional clinical assistant visiting surgeon, the lowest rung of the medical staff. Wright's appointment was greeted with discontent by the rest of the medical staff, and it became a cause célèbre in the growing black community of Harlem. As a result of widespread political pressure and a campaign in the black press, abuses suffered by black patients were revealed, as was a predominant racist animus among many white physicians. In 1920, several Negro physicians obtained affiliation with the outpatient staff. In 1925, after additional political and legal pressure, the derogatory designation "provisional" was removed from the appointments of these physicians.

Until 23 January 1923, when the nursing school at Harlem General Hospital opened, black women could be trained only at Lincoln Hospital School for Nurses in the Bronx. When black nurses and nursing students appeared at Harlem General Hospital, many white nurses either resigned or transferred to other hospitals; but a

notable exception was Sadie O'Brien, who lent her expertise as first principal of the School of Nursing and as superintendent of nurses for the hospital. The graduates of the nursing school encountered problems when they sought additional training or staff positions at other medical institutions. Finally, in 1937, training became available at Willard Park Hospital for communicable diseases and at Bellevue Hospital for psychiatry.

In 1930, there was a reorganization of the medical staff; this provoked bitterness, and a multiracial group of physicians led by Wright and John Fox Connors emerged. Thereafter, a policy of "full and equal opportunity" based on merit guided the appointments of both black and white physicians. Ties to the community of Harlem were strengthened, and by 1935 the hospital's census was nearly 85 percent black. However, although the hospital was the primary medical facility in Harlem, its outpatient and bed services were inadequate to meet the demands of the community; it faced continual underfunding that strained its resources, and it was also affected by persistent racism.

JAMES E. REIBMAN

See also Harlem: 6—Public Health; Wright, Louis T.

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Harlem Globetrotters

The Harlem Globetrotters were one of two exceptionally talented black professional basketball teams that began playing in the 1920s. At first, the Globetrotters were the less successful of the two teams; the New

York Renaissance Five (better known as the New York Rens) were considered the premier black professional squad until the late 1930s, playing before large audiences of both black and white fans. In time, however, the Globetrotters would become one of the best-known sports entertainment franchises not only in the United States but around the world—in part by relying on carefully orchestrated comedy routines during games.

Ironically, the original Harlem Globetrotters were neither from Harlem nor particularly well-traveled. The team was organized in 1927 by a twenty-five-year-old entrepreneur, Abe Saperstein, initially as a splinter squad of another team, the Savoy Big Five, which Saperstein coached in Chicago. Saperstein was a Jewish immigrant who had been born in London; he had realized, in the early 1920s at the University of Illinois, that he was too slight to play varsity sports, and so he had turned to coaching. By the mid-1920s, he was running a successful youth league team called the Chicago Reds. Impressed by his success, a former baseball star in the Negro Leagues—Walter Ball—hired Saperstein in early 1926 to coach an all-black American Legion basketball team. Later in 1926, the business manager of that team persuaded the owners of Chicago's Savoy Ballroom (modeled after the famous Savoy in Harlem) to sponsor evening basketball games, offering Saperstein's unit as the main attraction. The team was renamed the Savoy Big Five and began playing in November 1926. But disappointing crowds, coupled with an intractable salary dispute, led three of the Big Five players and Saperstein to leave the Savoy soon thereafter to form their own team.

This new team was first called Saperstein's New York, then simply New York, then Saperstein's Harlem New York. Although it would not officially be called the Harlem Globetrotters until the mid-1930s, these earlier names also implied cosmopolitanism. That was a deliberate strategy: Saperstein wanted midwestern spectators to think the team had, in his words, "been around" (Zinkoff and Williams 1953, 25). Saperstein also chose a barnstorming schedule rather than staying in Chicago, where he would have had difficulty booking large arenas regularly.

The team—consisting of Walter "Toots" Wright, Byron "Fats" Long, and Willis "Kid" Oliver (the three former members of the Savoy Big Five), plus Andy Washington and Bill Tupelo (who had been newly signed by Saperstein)—played its first game on 7 January 1927, in Hinckley, Illinois. According to Zinkoff and Williams, Saperstein and the players traveled in a

secondhand Model T, with Saperstein at the wheel. In these lean early years, Saperstein was simultaneously the team's driver, owner, coach, manager, and trainer, and an on-court substitute when a regular player was injured or fatigued. By the end of the first barnstorming season, the team had a total of 101 wins against only 16 losses, although steady profits were still many years away.

In 1929, Saperstein signed Inman Jackson to replace Andy Washington, signaling a shift from traditional basketball to a mix of serious play and gimmicky clowning. Jackson was the team's first "superclown," the predecessor of such famous later figures as Reece "Goose" Tatum, who joined the Globetrotters in the early 1940s, and Meadowlark Lemon, who arrived in 1954. The comedy routines first made popular by Jackson—which included no-look passing, bouncing the ball off his head into the basket, and lining his teammates up in mock football formations—accomplished three purposes: They entertained the crowd, gave the players a rest (because clowning, although often fast-paced, required less running), and kept the final score close. The score was crucial in getting future bookings: During this era, all such barnstorming teams understood that they should not completely dominate their opponents, although this feat could be easily accomplished by skilled professional athletes. Local fans wanted to believe that their amateur squad had a chance to defeat the professional touring club; otherwise, they would lose interest in staging rematches.

During the 1930s the Globetrotters extended their barnstorming, eventually playing throughout the upper Midwest and even, by the mid-1930s, as far west as Washington state. They were also now beginning to play in larger urban centers, including Detroit, where the Globetrotters often began their season with a game on Thanksgiving Day. The real competition with the New York Rens also began in the 1930s, as the Globetrotters gained a more national reputation. Despite the challenge of constant travel, often on poor roads (a strain exacerbated by the great physical distances between top teams), and the persistent exclusion of black squads from professional leagues, the black teams thrived during the Depression. According to Ashe, "the addition of the Globetrotters enhanced all of black basketball; fans took it more seriously and a sort of intra-racial rivalry began" (1993, 48). Despite their rivalry, or perhaps because of it—Robert Douglas, the owner of the Rens, was said to have resented the Globetrotters' clowning as racially demeaning—the Rens and Globetrotters



Early members of the Harlem Globetrotters. Standing, left to right: Abe Saperstein, Toots Wright, Byron Long, Inman Jackson, and William Oliver. Seated: Al Pullins. (Photofest.)

did not meet on the court until 1939 at the Chicago World Professional Tournament, when they faced each other in the second round. That year, the Rens defeated the Globetrotters 27–23 and went on to win the tournament title. However, the following year, the Globetrotters defeated the Rens in the semifinals and won their own first tourney championship. From 1940 on, Saperstein's team soared in popularity as the Rens declined. Today, the Globetrotters are the franchise best remembered for their association, however nominal, with Harlem.

WILLIAM GLEASON

See also *Professional Sports and Black Athletes*

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Harlem: Negro Metropolis

Claude McKay's *Harlem: Negro Metropolis* (1940) is a community study. McKay, taking a cross section of Harlem, provides a profound historical examination of the major movements and figures that affected Harlemites in the 1920s and 1930s. This study is a direct descendant of W. E. B. Du Bois' sociological studies of Philadelphia (1899) and blacks in the North (1901), and of James Weldon Johnson's history of Harlem (1930).

McKay takes a close look at both the famous and the notorious aspects of Harlem's social geography and concludes that Harlem is neither the shining star nor the scourge of urban Negro communities. He focuses primarily on group phenomena, describing activities that bring people together for some common goal or interest. The Marxist approach that he adopts precludes the excessive attention to an intellectual or monied elite so often found in accounts of Harlem in the early twentieth century. McKay's concern is with the life of the masses, and his lively prose makes their exuberance and originality leap off the page. For McKay, religion, individualism, and personal wealth have no intrinsic value; they exist to structure society and, in this case, to allow Harlem to express its public culture. Thus his study is not an organizational history of religious or political movements but rather a social history of ordinary people in which he traces the careers of specific figures.

The opening chapters chronicle Harlem's development into a black neighborhood. McKay describes the origins of sections such as Strivers' Row and Sugar Hill from the acquisition of property to the letting of overpriced rooms, and the mixing of diverse black immigrant groups, races, and classes in Harlem. McKay uses this introductory material to identify Harlem as a sort of melting pot whose challenge was to fit the "Aframerican" minority into American society.

McKay's study of Father Divine is of particular interest. With humor and contempt, McKay discusses the beginnings of Father Divine's mass movement and its inner workings as a religion, a community, a social program, and a real estate enterprise. What McKay finds most notable is Father Divine's system of communal living, sustained by doctrines such as the nonexistence of sex, race, color, and money. Father Divine's followers acquiesced in sexual segregation at home and at work; those who worked turned their earnings over to the organization, while those who were out of work shared the maintenance of its rooming houses. The organization looked out for the health and well-being of its members and also provided ten-cent meals to hundreds of Harlemites every day. Father Divine's followers—an interracial, multiclass group who believed him to be God—had independent churches around the country. McKay characterizes Father Divine as an odd little man who was a brilliant, if mysterious, capitalist.

McKay is also interested in African American occult religion, which he traces to the inherent "magic" of Africa. He describes the practices of occultists as similar to fetishism in Guinea and to West Indian obeah and voodoo. These practitioners met in homes and storefronts, burning incense, oils, and candles and selling various cures and talismans.

Cultists in Harlem were different from the voodooists, psychics, and soothsayers of the occult. They were more like the adherents of Father Divine, following individual leaders who developed, and traded on, a doctrine of themselves based on some form of Christianity. Many of these leaders were attractive and dynamic and had significant influence over the people of Harlem.

McKay also considers various efforts by propertied persons and businesspeople to stimulate black commerce in Harlem. Blacks' move into retail, service, and manufacturing was slow and sparse. Cafeterias, pushcarts, and laundries were representative of the small ventures; larger successful businesses included a Negro doll factory, the Brown Bomber Baking Company, and Madame C. J. Walker's beauty empire. McKay also describes the development of "the numbers"—a gambling game—explaining its complicated operation and appeal. The importance of trust and community in running the numbers in Harlem provided a lesson in black consumerism when outsiders tried to take over the operation. The numbers game promoted the numerology of the occultists, and bootlegging by

numbers runners stimulated the entertainment business in Harlem. Speakeasies and clubs provided recreation and social life for blacks, although few of these places were owned by black people. McKay mentions several popular clubs and the bands that played there, noting that cabaret acts were subjected to exploitation and received low pay.

In studying politicians, McKay names Harlemites in city government, education, medicine, and so on from whom political types could be drawn. This elaborate list reveals an infrastructure of professionals who served and supported the community in Harlem. McKay describes the arduous and complex efforts of blacks to infiltrate Tammany Hall, elect officials, and obtain appointive positions in government. In detailing political mobilization, McKay describes community politics between Puerto Ricans, immigrant blacks, and native-born blacks in Harlem. There were elaborate efforts to gain representation in city assemblies, in state government, on the board of education, and in the judiciary; McKay attributes these efforts to the independent spirit stirred up by Marcus Garvey's movement.

McKay describes the development and popularity of Garvey's controversial "back to Africa" movement in the United States in some detail. The account of Garvey's life and exploits indicates that despite his energy and imagination, he lacked organizational ability—a shortcoming that precipitated the failure of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Still, his movement cultivated racial pride, internationalism, and a sense of the potential of mass politics in black America.

A full third of *Harlem: Negro Metropolis* is taken up by the final chapter: "Sufi Abdul Hamid and Organized Labor." Hamid, a former cultist, attempted to bring his successful labor campaign—with its slogan "Don't buy where you can't work"—to New York from Chicago. Boycotts and picketing forced local businesses to pay attention to this campaign and actually to hire black clerks and other staff members. Hamid did politicize the notoriously blasé young people of the black middle class, but despite this, his efforts were largely unsuccessful. He and his supporters were wrongfully labeled anti-Semites in the press and were opposed by various groups, including the Communist Party, that were loath to see blacks organizing on their own. Hamid's program to provide service jobs for Harlemites crumbled, and Harlem was left with a dubious legacy of anti-Jewish sentiment. McKay, in describing how black labor activism was

thwarted, condemns the role of the Communist Party in the life and politics of Harlem. He believes that the pervasive, although unseen, power of the party was responsible for failures in Negro organizations and labor activism. He particularly notes the negative effect of the party's interracial policies on the Negro community and black political activism within the American social and political structure.

Harlem: Negro Metropolis is enjoyable to read: interesting, amusing, and full of surprising explanations and facts. McKay emphasizes that even though most of the major movements of the 1920s and 1930s failed, they had a lasting constructive effect on Harlemites' political sensibilities and sense of possibilities, and on other black communities; moreover, less organized versions of the various practices and belief systems often survived. Adopting a dry, critical tone throughout, McKay refuses to take his subject too seriously. He emphasizes his own theory of Harlem's status—that Harlem was merely a place in upper Manhattan, New York City, U.S.A., where black people managed to make a living within a complicated racist society.

STEPHANIE L. BATISTE

See also Black Manhattan; Communist Party; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Father Divine; Garveyism; Hamid, Sufi Abdul; Home to Harlem; McKay, Claude; Numbers Racket; Strivers' Row; Sugar Hill; Universal Negro Improvement Association; Walker, Madame C. J.

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Harlem: Play

Harlem (1929), a drama by Wallace Thurman and William Jourdan Rapp, was chosen as one of the best plays of the 1928–1929 season and was considered one of the most important plays of the Harlem Renaissance era. It was originally called *Black Belt* and was advertised under that title before its opening. As *Harlem*, it was first produced on Broadway at the downtown Apollo Theater, where it opened on 20 February 1929. After ninety-three performances, it went on the road; it then returned to Broadway for a short run. *Harlem* proved successful enough for a second company to produce it.

The plot concerned the devastating effects of adversity on a black family that migrated to Harlem from the South expecting to find a better life but discovered instead a den of debauchery, racketeering, prostitution, drugs, and murder. The play examined, especially, the experiences of a distracted migrant mother who was caught in the whirlpool of life on the streets and was struggling to save herself, her husband, and her children from being submerged.

The original cast of *Harlem* numbered sixty. It included Inez Clough, Lew Payton, and Isabel Washington, but the revival had a completely different cast. In general, the reviewers thought that the acting was quite realistic. A reviewer for the *New York Times* also mentioned the intense dramatic appeal of the play, noting its treatment of themes such as love and murder. Another critic mentioned its authenticity, which was a result of its frank portrayal of black life; in fact, *Harlem* is significant because it dealt with some of the less desirable political and social aspects of the city. *Harlem* relied to a considerable extent on strong language, and some audience members considered that offensive.

In addition to this play, Thurman wrote several novels that received considerable attention from influential



Harlem, scene from the stage production. (Billy Rose Theatre Collection, New York Public Library, New York City. © The New York Public Library / Art Resource, N.Y. Keysheet Box 44, Image 58. Photographer: White Studio, anonymous.)

figures of the Harlem Renaissance, including *The Blacker the Berry*, *Infants of the Spring*, and *The Intern*. He also contributed to some of the most popular periodicals of the Harlem Renaissance, such as *Fire!!*, *The Messenger*, and *The World Tomorrow*.

CARMEN PHELPS

See also Clough, Inez; Thurman, Wallace; Washington, Isabel

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Harlem Renaissance: 1—Black Critics of

The literary and cultural flowering of the Harlem Renaissance is a source of pride for many African Americans. However, the renaissance has also received its share of skepticism and criticism. Critics charged that the promoters of the Harlem Renaissance had an inflated sense of its significance or had vastly overestimated what arts and letters could achieve; such critics also charged that the renaissance was simply cosmetic or irrelevant, or that the early literature of the renaissance was too elitist and was devoted to proving that black people were just like white people.

One must bear in mind that the Harlem Renaissance passed through at least three phases. Lewis (1979) suggests that its first phase began in 1917 and lasted until 1923. In this period, whites began to take an interest in black life and subjects, and whites dominated publication. In 1917, Ridgely Torrence and Emily Hapgood (who were white) presented three one-act plays with all-black casts: *The Rider of Dreams*, *Simon the Cyrenean*, and *Granny Maumee*. Then, in 1919, came the poem “If We Must Die” by Claude McKay (1889–1948), an immigrant from Jamaica. In 1920, there was a production of *The Emperor Jones*, by Eugene O’Neill, starring the African American actor Charles Gilpin. Black creative energy was emerging into the open, and in 1922, McKay published a collection of poems, *Harlem Shadows*, and James Weldon Johnson (1871–1938) published *The Book of American Negro Poetry*. Also in 1922, the white writer Thomas Stribling published a novel, *Birthright*, about an African American physician, educated at Harvard, who returns to the South and is killed there. In 1923, Boni and Liveright published *Cane*, by Jean Toomer (1894–1967), a writer whose work had been promoted by Sherwood Anderson. These developments stimulated a desire by African Americans to take a greater role in shaping and controlling their own literary representation. Blacks wanted to write literature about black people rather than passively sitting back and leaving literature about black people to be written by white people.

That desire in turn ushered in the second phase of the Harlem Renaissance, from 1924 to 1926, presided over by Charles Spurgeon Johnson (1893–1956) of the

National Urban League and by individuals such as James Weldon Johnson (1871–1938) and Walter White (1893–1955) of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In March 1924, Charles Johnson arranged a dinner at the Civic Club in Manhattan, ostensibly to honor the publication of *There Is Confusion* by Jessie Redmon Fauset (c. 1882–1961). This dinner launched the term “Negro renaissance.” Alain Locke (1885–1954) also played a prominent role at this time. The second phase of the Renaissance was dominated by the optimistic premise that arts and letters could achieve or help achieve a breakthrough in the struggle for racial equality. James Weldon Johnson said the world does not know that a people are great until they produce great literature and art. Literary and cultural achievement would be a means to the end of promoting civil rights. Lewis calls this perspective “civil rights by copyright.” The approach of the Urban League and the NAACP, however, seemed to be based on the idea that in order to “win acceptance” by whites, black people had to prove that they were “just like” elite white people, sharing the same sense of propriety and convention. The result was a genteel literature about prim and proper light-skinned black people who seemed to be plastic imitations of elite whites, or about tragic mulattos struggling with racial ambivalence and the dilemmas of racial identity.

By 1926, the younger generation of African American writers rebelled against the censorship and “control” imposed by the older generation; these younger figures pushed the Harlem Renaissance into its third—populist—phase. The young insurgents reacted against what they perceived as an elitist, condescending view of black life, a view taken by people who were ashamed of the black working class, the ghetto, and the rural South. These younger writers of the renaissance included Claude McKay, Langston Hughes (1902–1967), Wallace Thurman (1902–1934), and Zora Neale Hurston (1891–1960).

Consequently, in discussing the Harlem Renaissance, it is crucial to specify what phase of the renaissance one is referring to. Furthermore, there were at least two different segments of the black community seeking to push or pull the renaissance in the direction they thought it should go: The “talented tenth” pulled in the direction of genteel culture as a means to the end of racial equality, and the young rebels pulled in the populist direction of art for art’s sake. And always, in the background, the publishing companies and the patrons who supplied the fellowships and paid the

bills were white—they had their own agendas, too. The result was a complex, many-sided tug-of-war, which gave rise to criticism of the Harlem Renaissance from many different quarters.

The most caustic critic of the Harlem Renaissance was George Schuyler (1895–1977). For the most part, he was criticizing its second phase. From 1923 to 1928, he served on the staff of *The Messenger*, edited by A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen. Schuyler married a white woman from Texas and was an integrationist. For many years he wrote a column called “Views and Reviews” in the *Pittsburgh Courier*. In June 1926, he published an article in *The Nation*, called “The Negro-Art Hokum,” ridiculing the pretensions of the renaissance. Schuyler rejected the thesis that there was any distinctive “Negro” culture, seeing “African” music and culture as simply black versions of white American music and culture. Schuyler described the spirituals as merely slave songs based on Protestant hymns and biblical texts. Blues was nothing more than work songs and secular songs of “sorrow and tough luck.” Jazz was but an outgrowth of ragtime. This music reflected the peasantry of the South and a caste of a certain section of the country, but it was foreign to northern Negroes and West Indian Negroes. The music and dancing were no more expressive or characteristic of the Negro race than the music and dancing of Appalachian highlanders or Dalmatian peasants were expressive of the Caucasian race. There was no distinctly African American culture or psychology. The African American was merely a “lampblack Anglo-Saxon.”

Schuyler’s criticism cut two ways. He rejected the idea of a unique African American culture. But he also condemned the apparent need of some Caucasians to write about black Americans merely to suggest that no matter how civilized the African American appeared to be, “it is only necessary to beat a tom-tom or wave a rabbit’s foot and he is ready to strip off his . . . suit, grab a spear and ride off wild-eyed on the back of a crocodile.” In 1931, Schuyler wrote a satire, *Black No More*, that parodied leading figures of the Harlem Renaissance. In this novel, Dr. Junius Crookman develops a method of turning black people into white people. The National Social Equality League (standing for the NAACP) is horrified because it no longer has a need to exist. The hair-straightening business is pushed to the brink of collapse. Schuyler mocked the preoccupation of W. E. B. Du Bois and the NAACP with the “Negro problem” and suggested that they made a living from continually agitating about the issue of segregation and race. If the issue of race prejudice and dis-

crimination were actually solved, Schuyler seemed to say, the NAACP would go out of business.

Schuyler also mocked the NAACP and the African American writers of the second phase of the Harlem Renaissance for striving so furiously to show that black people were “just like (elite) white people.” Apparently he had Jessie Redmon Fauset’s *There Is Confusion* (1924) in mind. In 1924, he described an African American fashion show held at Madison Square Garden. He described the crowd as consisting of mostly light-skinned people (“A genuine Negro was conspicuous”). They were doctors, lawyers, undertakers, dentists, members of college fraternities, all well-dressed, orderly, and cultured. He dismissed them as “manikins.” In effect, this polished assemblage of the talented tenth was little more than a black imitation of the white elite. Its great mission was to achieve respectability and present itself as educated, cultivated, and refined. By being as much like the white elite as possible, black people could “prove” that they were worthy of respect and deserving of equality, and that they should be accepted by the white community. This model behavior would also distance them from the stereotype that all black people were loud, vulgar, and ignorant. Schuyler dismissed the debutante balls and glittering social occasions as a make-believe fantasy world.

Schuyler’s observation about the light complexion of much of the African American intelligentsia of the 1920s, and some of the writers of the first and second phases of the Harlem Renaissance, was quite accurate. Jean Toomer, Jessie Fauset, and Nella Larsen (1891–1963) were light-complexioned people of African ancestry, and all three wrote about the dilemmas of mulatto or biracial identity. Toomer was the grandson of P. B. S. Pinchback, the biracial acting governor of Louisiana during Reconstruction. His “prose poem” *Cane* (1923) explores the theme of the tragic mulatto, caught between two worlds, black and white, and not fitting entirely into either one. The book seems to be a meditation on the meaning of racially mixed identity, or the search for identity, as if the author were trying to find (or understand) an enigmatic part of himself or his past or his ancestry. By 1930, Toomer would renounce his “blackness,” deciding that he was no longer a Negro but “simply an American.” He turned to the mysticism of Georgi Gurdjieff (and perhaps to the hope of a futuristic utopian society beyond race and color). In *There Is Confusion* (1924), by Jessie Fauset, the main characters are well-born black Philadelphians struggling against racism. Her second novel, *Plum Bun* (1929), also explores the problems of light-complexioned people who

can “pass for white.” Nella Larsen wrote *Passing* (1929), which directly confronts the choices made by biracial people who are light enough to “pass.” Like Schuyler, many other African Americans ridiculed what they saw as snobbery, elitism, classism, and pretentiousness on the part of the “black bourgeoisie” and some of the early writers of the Harlem Renaissance, as well as the obsession with the theme of mulattos and racial ambivalence.

Many of the critics of the Harlem Renaissance bear a complex relationship to it because they were participants. Thus they criticized some particular aspect or phase of the renaissance. For example, W. E. B. Du Bois initially felt that arts and letters could be used as propaganda, to advance the cause of breaking down negative stereotypes and promoting racial equality. However, Du Bois intensely disliked works such as *Nigger Heaven* (1926), by the white author and patron of the renaissance Carl Van Vechten. He also hated Claude McKay’s *Home to Harlem* (1928), which described ghetto life. Du Bois wrote that after reading *Home to Harlem* he felt “distinctly like needing a bath.” He warned that the renaissance was deteriorating into art without politics, no longer serving the cause of advancing the struggle for racial equality. It ran the risk of sliding into mere decadence and vulgarity. He proclaimed:

Thus all art is propaganda and ever must be, despite the wailing of purists. I stand in utter shamelessness and say that whatever art I have for writing has been used always for propaganda for gaining the right of black people to love and enjoy. I do not care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda.

Du Bois charged that some whites who praised the Harlem Renaissance had an ulterior motive for doing so: “The recognition accorded to Cullen, Hughes, Fauset, White and others shows that there is no real color line. Keep quiet! Don’t complain! Work! All will be well!” Thus the recognition and acclaim given to the literary movement could be used as proof of “progress” and could therefore be used to deny or minimize the reality of continuing racial oppression. In November 1926, Du Bois asked how the NAACP, as a radical, fighting organization, struggling for the rights of black people to be ordinary human beings, could turn aside to talk about mere art. He asked, “What have we who are slaves and black to do with art?” For Du Bois, art for art’s sake, devoid of political content, was useless and even counterrevolutionary. It was little more than an evasion.

From a very different direction, as early as 1926, younger writers rebelled against the confining strictures and the prim, proper, puritanical conventions of their elders. This rebellion ushered in the third (populist) phase of the Harlem Renaissance. Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Wallace Thurman, and Zora Neale Hurston were among those who rejected the strategy of “civil rights by copyright” and a literature of genteel, well-mannered, assimilated black people who were “just like” elite white people. The younger writers rejected a literature about “whitewashed” black people who seemed to feel that they were “better” than other black people because they were more “cultured” or lighter in color. The dissidents seem to have reacted viscerally to the hypocritical snobbery and elitism of a class of relatively privileged black people who felt entitled to judge and look down on and feel ashamed of and superior to other black people. After all, was this not precisely what racist whites had done to blacks as a whole for centuries?

Langston Hughes was one of the great populist rebels of the Harlem Renaissance. He defended art for art’s sake. He sought to describe the full range of black life, as it actually was, without shame or apology. Hughes relentlessly ridiculed the illusion that arts and letters would change the cruel realities of racial domination and subordination. In *The Big Sea*, he said:

Some Harlemites thought the millennium had come. They thought the race problem had at last been solved through Art plus Gladys Bentley. They were sure the New Negro would lead a new life from then on in green pastures of tolerance created by Countee Cullen, Ethel Waters, Claude McKay, Duke Ellington, Bojangles, and Alain Locke.

Furthermore, most blacks hadn’t heard of the Harlem Renaissance, and it hadn’t raised their wages any. Hughes’s most devastating critique is given by the fictional character Oeola, in *The Ways of White Folks* (1934):

And as for the cultured Negroes who were always saying art would break down color lines, art could save the race and prevent lynchings! “Bunk!” said Oeola. “Ma ma and pa were both artists when it came to making music, and the white folks ran them out of town for being dressed up in Alabama.”

Another defiant critic of “proving how white and proper we can be” was Wallace Thurman. His

relationship to the Harlem Renaissance is complex because he was novelist, editor, promoter, and critic all in one. He was a dark-skinned man, from Salt Lake City, Utah. As a novelist, he wrote *The Blacker the Berry* (1929) and *Infants of the Spring* (1932). The former explores the taboo subject of color stratification within the black community. The main character of the book is a dark-skinned black woman who is shunned and rejected by light-skinned black people and who struggles to find self-acceptance. The book reveals how color bias has been reproduced within the black community as internalized self-hatred. In November 1926, Thurman also founded and edited a literary magazine called *Fire!!*, a quarterly “Devoted to the Younger Negro Artists.” As an editor, he was a promoter of a new (third) phase of the Harlem Renaissance. *Fire!!* included the poems “Elevator Boy” by Langston Hughes, “From the Dark Tower” by Countee Cullen, and “Southern Road” by Helene Johnson. It also included the short story “Sweat” and the play *Color Struck* by Zora Neale Hurston, and Thurman’s own short story “Cordelia the Crude,” about a young prostitute. The most shocking and sensational entry was “Smoke, Lilies, and Jade,” by Richard Bruce Nugent. Nugent was controversial because he was openly homosexual, and the story describes an encounter between Alex and a man (Beauty) he meets on the street after a party in Greenwich Village. The story is written as if from an intoxicated haze, in which everything blurs together, and Alex’s fiancée (Melva) and Beauty also blur together in Alex’s mind. Readers have interpreted this as androgynous and homoerotic. It certainly scandalized the talented tenth, the guardians of the renaissance.

Thurman deliberately intended to shock traditional sensibilities and social conventions, and to portray all of African American life, warts and all. Thus he included literature about street life, ordinary working people, and sexuality. In November 1928, Thurman tried again with a new magazine; this successor to *Fire!!* was called *Harlem*. Thurman symbolizes the revolt of the younger generation against the censorship and snobbery of the older generation. At the same time, class dynamics appear to have been at work: The younger writers identified with the working class and the black urban masses rather than the elite. Thurman’s marriage to Louise Thompson ended in divorce, amid accusations that he was a homosexual. And he was, in fact, an alcoholic. Thurman was a manifold “outsider.” He was from Utah (not the Northeast or South). He was dark, not light. He had not attended one of the historically black colleges that educated the

children of the black elite. And he was gay (or bisexual). He seems to have been destined to be one of the great rebels of the renaissance even as he was a significant participant in it. He criticized the elitist, bourgeois wing and the second phase of the renaissance, while advocating a more egalitarian and unapologetic approach.

Like Thurman, Zora Neale Hurston was a member of the populist wing and the third phase of the Harlem Renaissance. She humorously referred to the white patrons and allies of the civil rights movement and the renaissance as “Negrotarians,” and to the writers, artists, and literati as the “niggerati.” She drew inspiration from the rural South and its folklore and dialect. She was not ashamed of what the “highbrow” crowd would consider to be the ignorant, embarrassing, or superstitious folkways of the South.

In the inevitable tug-of-war between generations, time is on the side of youth. The most enduring literary symbol of the Harlem Renaissance is Langston Hughes. He would become the most beloved poet of the period, the poet laureate of the renaissance. In the end, the loving criticism of the rebels prevailed, and it would go on to inspire later generations and the literary awakening of the black arts movement and the black aesthetics of the 1960s.

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See also Du Bois, W. E. B.; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; *Fire!!*; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Johnson, James Weldon; Larsen, Nella; Locke, Alain; McKay, Claude; Messenger, The; Nation, The; Nugent, Richard Bruce; Pittsburgh Courier; Schuyler, George S.; Talented Tenth; Thurman, Wallace; Toomer, Jean; White, Walter

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Harlem Renaissance: 2—Black Promoters of

Several African Americans, along with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Urban League, played a significant role in promoting the Harlem Renaissance. The involvement of African Americans in promoting literature by and about blacks began in earnest in 1924. It had been preceded, in 1923, when Jean Toomer's novel *Cane* was published by Boni and Liveright. Toomer's work had been promoted by Sherwood Anderson. Thereafter, African Americans consciously sought a greater role in shaping the representation of their own image to the wider public.

One of the foremost African American promoters of the Harlem (or African American) Renaissance was Charles Spurgeon Johnson (1893–1956). He was born in Virginia and earned a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Chicago in 1918. He came to New York as the director of research for the Urban League in 1921, and in 1923, he began to edit its magazine, *Opportunity*. In 1924, Johnson sponsored a literary gathering at the Civic Club in Manhattan. The event took place on 21 March 1924, and a week later the New York *Herald Tribune* referred to it as evidence that America was on the "edge . . . of a Negro renaissance." The idea of a Negro renaissance was born, and Johnson had been a midwife in the process. Beginning in 1925, *Opportunity* sponsored an annual literary competition, awarding prizes and steering promising talent to publishing houses (which at that time were owned entirely by Caucasians). Johnson compiled information on talented artists and writers who could be recruited and promoted. For example, he encouraged Aaron Douglas (1898–1979), an artist from Kansas, to come to New York. Johnson was one of the great middlemen in the process of linking black talent to white publishers and sponsors from 1924 to 1926. In 1926, Johnson left New York for Fisk University, where he served as chairman of the sociology department, and in 1946, he became the first African American president of Fisk.

The NAACP also sponsored a literary contest and awarded prizes. W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) was the

editor of the NAACP's magazine, *The Crisis* (beginning in 1910), and Jessie Redmon Fauset (1882–1961) served as literary editor (1919–1926). Fauset had graduated with honors from Cornell and had received an M.A. in French from the University of Pennsylvania. She was one of the first people to recognize the talent of Toomer and Langston Hughes. In 1921, Fauset published Hughes's famous poem "I've Known Rivers" in *The Crisis*. Funds for the NAACP's literary prize came from Amy Spingarn, the wife of Joel Spingarn. The Spingarn Award, begun in 1915, was not originally for literary, artistic, or creative endeavor, but four of the eight awards given from 1924 to 1931 went to performing artists or writers (Roland Hayes, Charles Chesnutt, the actor Richard B. Harrison, and James Weldon Johnson).

Walter White (1893–1955), the assistant executive director of the NAACP (1918–1930), also promoted the careers of promising writers and actors. For instance, he urged Paul Robeson to give up a career in law to pursue acting. Also, White was a friend of Carl Van Vechten and the publisher Alfred Knopf. Thus he was in a position to commend talented writers to the attention of Knopf. James Weldon Johnson (1871–1938), executive secretary of the NAACP (1920–1930), was another promoter of the Harlem Renaissance. In 1922, he published *The Book of American Negro Poetry*. He is most famous, perhaps, as the author of the song "Lift Every Voice and Sing" (1900).

The premier promoter of the renaissance was Alain Locke (1885–1954). Locke, a lifelong bachelor, was a graduate of Harvard and the first African American Rhodes scholar (1907–1910). He earned a Ph.D. from Harvard in 1918 and served on the faculty at Howard University beginning in 1912. Locke edited the special edition of *Survey Graphic* (May 1925) and the anthology *The New Negro* (1926). As an editor, he was in a unique position to select which authors and works to publish. He is credited with helping to advance the careers of Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, Richmond Barthé, Aaron Douglas, and Langston Hughes, among others. Locke was also influential because of his friendship with Charlotte Osgood Mason ("God-mother"), a wealthy white widow who used her fortune to become a patron of the arts. She was interested in preserving the "purity" of "primitive" peoples and cultures, uncontaminated by the corruption of modern Western civilization. Locke was in a position to recommend gifted writers and artists to Mason, and she could provide them with financial support. She served as benefactor to Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and Zora Neale Hurston.

Arthur (Arturo) Schomburg (1874–1938) was Puerto Rican, not African American. However, it should be noted that he collected literature, art, and material on Africa and Africans in the new world. Over time he amassed more than 5,000 books, 3,000 manuscripts, and several thousand etchings, drawings, and pamphlets. These items formed the basis of the famous Schomburg Collection.

Perhaps the most ostentatious of the African American promoters of the Harlem Renaissance was A'Lelia Walker (c. 1885–1931), daughter of the millionaire Madam C. J. Walker (who was famous for her hair treatment process and her empire of beauty salons). A'Lelia Walker inherited her mother's estate on the Hudson River and maintained residences on Edgecombe Avenue and 136th Street. Her apartment on Edgecombe Avenue has been described as a combination retreat and pleasure dome, where she threw lavish parties and entertained artists, writers, and dignitaries. Although she did not support the writers and artists financially, no account of the promoters of the renaissance would be complete without her.

Finally, as part of the effort to promote the renaissance, even a “numbers king” in Harlem, Casper Holstein (who came from the Danish West Indies), donated money for *Opportunity's* literary prizes.

It is crucial to ask, however, what the promoters of the Harlem Renaissance *believed* they were doing. What were their motives? What ends did they hope to achieve, and what means were they using to reach those ends? Although scholars debate these questions, the writings of some of the “promoters” suggest that they saw the production of “great” literary and cultural work as a way to elevate the status of African Americans and improve the treatment of blacks by the white majority. The individuals who expressed the view that the demonstration of artistic merit would help improve the position of black people within American society are sometimes referred to as the “arts and letters school.” James Weldon Johnson, who had studied literature at Columbia, wrote in *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922):

The final measure of the greatness of all peoples is the amount and standard of the literature and art they have produced. The world does not know that a people are great until that people produces great literature and art. No people that has produced great literature and art has ever been looked upon by the world as distinctly inferior. . . . And nothing will do more to change the mental attitude and raise

his status than a demonstration of intellectual parity by the Negro through the production of literature and art.

The African American literary critic Benjamin Brawley expressed to James Weldon Johnson the view that “we have a tremendous opportunity to boost the NAACP, letters, and arts, and anything else that calls attention to our development along the higher lines.” For Brawley, Fauset, Du Bois, and the so-called talented tenth, however, development along the “higher lines” seems to have meant development by the “right type” of African American: the college-educated, white-collar professionals, the middle class, the “bourgeoisie.” It meant activity by black people who were refined, educated, polished, and well-mannered. It probably did not mean the untutored masses—the rural peasantry, the sharecroppers, or the residents of the ghettos and slums.

In praising the ideal of the power of culture to promote the cause of racial equality, Alain Locke proclaimed that African Americans’ “more immediate hope rests in the revaluation by white and black alike of the Negro in terms of his artistic endowments and cultural contributions, past and prospective.” Furthermore, the writers and artists found themselves “acting as the advance guard of the African peoples in their contact with twentieth-century civilization.” In “Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro,” the special number of *Survey Graphic* (1926), Locke wrote: “Harlem has the same role to play for the New Negro as Dublin has had for the New Ireland or Prague for the New Czechoslovakia.” And W. E. B. Du Bois consistently defended art and literature as “propaganda” that should serve a cause.

Some scholars have interpreted these statements by James Weldon Johnson, Charles S. Johnson, Brawley, Fauset, and Locke as evidence that the promoters of the Harlem Renaissance hoped to achieve a breakthrough in civil rights and use culture for political purposes. They hoped to use culture as a political weapon, as a means to the end of achieving better treatment and conditions for African Americans. Somehow, if only African Americans could “prove” that they were talented human beings with a worthwhile culture, each poem or novel or sculpture would undermine the old images of black people as inherently and immutably ignorant, illiterate, and inferior. If only black people could prove how refined and cultured they could be or were becoming, their works of genius would change white supremacists’ opinions

and overturn racial prejudice. Racism would be overturned and broken down by means of displaying the cultural brilliance of Afro-America. Arts and letters would become alternatives to the blocked paths to the voting booth and the workplace. Lewis (1994) describes this approach as “civil rights by copyright.”

At worst, some promoters of the renaissance may have naively fallen into the trap of imagining that if only African Americans could show and prove that they were “just like white people,” could compose sonnets and rhyming couplets, and could create works of subtle beauty and elegance, “white people” would begin to regard them as human beings and not savages whose heathen ancestors swung (naked) through the trees in Africa. If only African Americans exhibited the same manners and “refined” sensibilities as the white elite, and spoke with proper diction and conjugated foreign verbs, Caucasians would abandon racism and begin to accept African Americans as fellow citizens worthy of all the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. This strategy of trying to show that black people could be “just like white people,” and thereby earn respect and win sympathy, would lead some individuals to a quest for assimilation and mindless imitation of the British-American elite and its culture.

Some African American promoters of the Harlem Renaissance had a second motive. They wanted to present positive images of black people. They were concerned that literature *about* black people was being written *by* whites. As an equal and opposite reaction, African Americans sought greater control over the literary representation of black people. They felt that black people were better qualified to provide a genuine, authentic, informed account of black life. They believed black people would benefit if they were in a position to present positive images that “uplifted” the race and presented its “best face.” One of the best examples of this perspective is Jessie Redmon Fauset. Describing her expectations of what might come of the renaissance, she wrote: “Here is an audience waiting to hear the truth about us. Let us who are better qualified to present that truth than any white writer, try to do so.” One might add that Fauset’s writing tended to focus on light-complexioned biracial African Americans who were educated and refined, struggling to win “acceptance” in the face of irrational and undeserved hostility from whites.

Charles S. Johnson exemplifies a third (and rather opportunistic) approach toward promoting the Harlem Renaissance. In contrast to those who adopted an

uncritical strategy of blind imitation, Johnson perceived that white America, at the time, was taking an unprecedented interest in black America. In 1917, Ridgely Torrence and Emily Hapgood had staged three one-act plays with all-black casts at the Provincetown Playhouse: *The Rider of Dreams*, *Simon the Cyrenean*, and *Granny Maumee*. In 1920, there was a production of *The Emperor Jones*, by Eugene O’Neill, starring the African American actor Charles Gilpin. In 1922, a white writer, Thomas Stribling (1881–1965), wrote the novel *Birthright*, about an African American who is a Harvard-educated physician and is killed after his return to the South. In 1923 (as noted previously), Boni and Liveright published *Cane*, by Jean Toomer, whose work had been championed by Caucasians such as Sherwood Anderson and Waldo Frank. Johnson realized that this interest by Caucasians in African Americans presented an opportunity for African Americans *to promote their own agenda*. Capitalizing on the interest of white publishers could be a way for African Americans to pursue their own quest for respect, civil rights, and improved opportunities and conditions. Thus the interest of white publishers in using black writers and their culture could be used by African Americans to advance the cause of resisting white supremacy. Johnson realized that the “game” was one of mutual use: use and be used. Far better that each side get something out of the exchange than that the exchange be entirely one-sided. Obviously this exchange was taking place in a context where the relationship of power was very asymmetric.

Some of the African American promoters of the renaissance may have overestimated what culture (arts and letters) could achieve. They may have had an inordinate faith in the power of poetry, novels, and pretty paintings of landscapes and sunsets to combat negative stereotypes about African Americans. Ultimately, some promoters of the renaissance may have expected more from arts and letters than arts and letters could achieve or deliver. There is no substitute for organized struggle, and one cannot realistically expect culture to do the work of politics. Nor will an elite movement be enough. There is no substitute for an organized *mass* movement, springing up from the grassroots.

But one must be careful not to imagine that all the promoters of the Harlem Renaissance bought into the idea of using arts and letters as an alternative means of advancing the political struggle for racial equality. Wallace Thurman (1902–1934), who was both a participant

(as a novelist and editor) and a promoter, illustrates a fourth approach to the renaissance. This approach may be described as populist. Thurman was one of the *enfants terribles* of the period. He was dark-skinned; had been born in Salt Lake City, Utah; had attended the University of Utah and the University of Southern California; and had worked at the Los Angeles post office with Arna Bontemps. Leaving California in 1924, he came east and worked with A. Philip Randolph's publication *The Messenger*. He was also circulation manager of *The World Tomorrow*, a liberal white monthly. Thurman rejected the bourgeois pretensions and respectability of the black middle class. In 1926, he founded and edited a short-lived journal called *Fire!!* that included works by Langston Hughes, Richard Bruce Nugent, and Zora Neale Hurston. It shocked the civil rights establishment by including depictions of prostitutes, street life in the ghetto, and even ruminations of an androgynous or bisexual nature. Thurman, whose marriage to Louise Thompson ended in divorce and accusations that he was a homosexual, reflected the views of the younger generation of artists. He rebelled against the elders and their snobbish sense of social convention, and he promoted art for art's sake. His novel *The Blacker the Berry* (1929) exposed the taboo subject of color stratification *within* the black community, with lighter-complexioned African Americans ostracizing and looking down on those who were darker. In "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1926), Langston Hughes, very much in accord with Thurman's defiant stance, insisted:

We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. . . . If colored people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either.

For inspiration, Thurman and Hughes looked to ordinary black people and to everyday life in the ghetto. Zora Neale Hurston looked to the folklore of the rural South. Thurman, Hughes, Hurston, and others like them represented a phase of the renaissance that refused to worship at the altar of arts and letters as a means to the end of improving racial conditions. They rejected the strategy of "sanitizing" black life and putting only the best foot forward at all times and trying to prove how much black people could mimic the image of (elite) white people. Instead, they articulated

the value of self-acceptance as they struggled to combat self-hatred within the black psyche and within the black community.

The Harlem Renaissance was a seed that would grow into a mighty tree, and eventually bring forth much fruit. It was also a stepping-stone or a bridge to—or a foundation for—later developments. It inspired African Americans, giving them a new sense of their own abilities and possibilities, and it helped create a psychological revolution. Only fifty years after the end of slavery, African Americans could take pride in the genius of Du Bois; the poetry of Cullen, McKay, Hughes, and Bontemps; the stories of Toomer, Fauset, Larsen, and Hurston; the art of Aaron Douglas and Palmer Hayden. These achievements, from a people who were supposedly incapable of producing literature or culture, proved that the ideology of inborn, immutable black inferiority was a lie. Although the renaissance is criticized for having been confined to a few (mostly) elite writers, this small cadre dared to raise its voice to defend the honor and aspirations of a despised and victimized people. It is remarkable that an oppressed people managed to produce so much beauty and talent despite the terrorism of lynching, serfdom, sharecropping, and incarceration in the ghettos.

The renaissance is also sometimes criticized as artificial and merely ornamental or cosmetic. After all, it did not change the grim realities of the ghetto, the high rates of infant mortality, or the lower life expectancy of African Americans. It did not raise wages or give jobs to the unemployed. It did not alter the relationship of domination and subordination. The relationship between the black promoters of the Harlem Renaissance, black writers, and the whites who financed them, patronized them, and owned the publishing companies was a decidedly unequal one. However, the renaissance was a stage in the development of a people. It was a rung on a ladder. The miracle is that it happened at all. Whatever its shortcomings, the Harlem Renaissance became a beacon of inspiration whose light illuminated a dark hour and whose legend endures to this very day.

WAYNE GLASKER

See also Anderson, Sherwood; Boni and Liveright; Brawley, Benjamin; Civic Club Dinner, 1924; Crisis, The: Literary Prizes; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; *Fire!!*; Holstein, Casper; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Johnson, James Weldon; Knopf, Alfred A.; Locke, Alain; Mason, Charlotte Osgood; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People;

National Urban League; New Negro, The; Opportunity Literary Contests; Schomburg, Arthur A.; Spingarn, Joel; Survey Graphic; Thurman, Wallace; Van Vechten, Carl; Walker, A'Lelia; White, Walter; *specific artists and writers*

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Harlem Renaissance: 3—Legacy of

Until the early 1970s, most students of the literature of the United States could not have been terribly concerned with the legacy of the New Negro or Harlem Renaissance. They were barely aware of this historical phenomenon, which had extensive implications for all Americans' understanding of culture, citizenship, artistic production, and the intricate ways in which they define one another. But since the 1970s, the Harlem Renaissance has gained prominence in our sense of social, cultural, and literary history, as well as in the college and university curriculum. One can approach the legacy of this movement and period from various angles, and perhaps the best way to gauge the range of possibilities is to recount the reception of the Harlem Renaissance in recent American cultural history.

In the 1970s, when scholars such as Nathan Huggins, James O. Young, Margaret Perry, and Amritjit Singh (the present writer) extended and revised the earlier surveys of the period by Sterling A. Brown, Hugh M. Gloster, and Robert Bone, they were concerned mostly with remedying the absence of the renaissance from books such as Hoffman (1962). Such scholars had

hoped to include the Harlem Renaissance in what Van Wyck Brooks, in the 1920s, saw as America's coming-of-age and to link their examination of this historical phenomenon to their new concern with shaping a multiethnic consciousness of American literature—a project we associate today with the beginnings and the impact on our curriculum and pedagogy of organizations such as the College Language Association (CLA), the Society for the Study of Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States (MELUS), and the National Association of Ethnic Studies (NAES) and with anthologies such as the two-volume *Heath Anthology of American Literature* (1990). In fact, Huggins (1971), in the first major study of the "black 1920s," regards black Americans' confusion over identity as uniquely American and describes it in the post-World War I context as symbiotic with that of white Americans: "White Americans and white American culture have no more claim to self-confidence than black. . . . Blacks have been essential to white identity (and whites to black). . . . They cannot be understood independently." Huggins notes that "whenever Americans do come of age, they will have gained true insight into themselves" by claiming their interdependence, but he also recognizes that blacks' willingness to be used for the sake of whites' "psychic dependency" defines "deep moral tensions" in American race relations.

Many scholars—notably Cruse (1967)—have argued that the Harlem Renaissance failed at precisely the project it had set out to accomplish: to extend the civil and human rights of African Americans by demonstrating the quality and quantity of their artistic contributions. Cruse, the harshest of the critics, blames the failure of the renaissance to define its own nationalist aesthetic on the "ludicrous" integrationist goals of its protagonists and on its dependence on white institutions. Huggins's seemingly simple statement—near the conclusion of his book—that "the true Negro renaissance awaits Afro-Americans' claiming their *patria*, their nativity"—militates against his more complex analyses throughout his book of the interrelatedness of black and white identities during the 1920s. In contrast to Cruse, who views the powerlessness and imitativeness of the writers and intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance as a direct consequence of their individualism, Huggins sees their obsession with group identity as a source of debilitating provincialism. Huggins places considerable faith in what he extrapolates as Wallace Thurman's point in *Infants of the Spring*: "Artistic production was an extremely personal, individualistic thing, not to be turned on or off

by nationalism of any kind." Singh (1976) describes Cruse's charges as having been made from the vantage point of the 1960s and 1970s and argues that "the failure or success of any literary movement cannot be directly related to the acceptance or rejection of a well-defined ideology." He finds that the patronage of the black middle class was "as mixed a blessing as the white patronage" and asserts that "the majority of Harlem Renaissance novels did not deal with issues central to the black masses." Baker (1987) notes that Lewis (1987), in focusing on the "tragically wide, ambitious, and delusional striving" of black intellectuals, takes a view of the failures of the renaissance that is contrary to Huggins's. For Lewis, as Baker puts it, "the architects of the Renaissance believed in ultimate victory through the maximizing of the exceptional. They deceived themselves into thinking that race relations in the United States were amenable to the assimilationist patterns of a Latin country."

So until well into the 1980s, the Harlem Renaissance was viewed mostly as an exciting period for the arts—a period that produced many fascinating works of poetry, fiction, music, painting, and sculpture but whose major promoters and participants made remarkably naive arguments about the sociopolitical possibilities of art and had naive expectations for American legal and political institutions. Baker attempted to interpret the period more positively and has been credited by Helbling (1999) and others with moving the discussion of its failure or success to a new plane. Baker sees as inadequate to the (discursive) history of Afro-American modernism any "histories that are assumed in the chronologies of British, Anglo-American, and Irish modernisms." Detecting a distinctively "Afro-American *sounding*" in the texts and figures of the Harlem Renaissance (his choices include Booker T. Washington, Charles W. Chesnutt, and W. E. B. Du Bois), he offers "what is perhaps *sui generis* definition of modern Afro-American sound as a function of a specifically Afro-American discursive practice." Hutchinson (1995), attempting to establish the Harlem Renaissance as a successful project, focuses on "interracialism" and underplays the often colonial nature of relations between American whites and blacks in the 1920s. Hutchinson chastises Baker for a lack of historical complexity and suggests that Baker, like Huggins, fails to notice that the writers of the Harlem Renaissance looked more to the "low modernism" of Whitman, Sinclair Lewis, Sandburg, Shaw, and Synge than to the "high modernism" of Eliot, Joyce, Yeats, Stein, or Pound—a point made earlier by Rampersad (1989).

An important aspect of the historiography of the Harlem Renaissance during the 1980s and 1990s is feminist scholarship, which has revised and expanded our sense of the renaissance. Feminist scholars of these decades examined how issues of genre, periodization, class, and gender had been treated earlier, during the 1970s, and also brought to the fore many neglected women writers of the 1920s and 1930s. For example, Hull (1987) argues that women writers are "tyrannized by periodization, the hierarchy of canonical forms, critical rankings of major and minor, and generalizations about literary periods." The new feminist consciousness allowed many black women scholars to offer a fresh, sometimes empathic examination of the challenges faced by women artists of the 1920s and 1930s regarding gender, race, and class. This scholarship is embodied in Hull et al. (1982) and in the cumulative work of dozens of other writers and scholars, such as Alice Walker, Audre Lorde, Mary Helen Washington, Barbara Christian, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Nellie McKay, Toni Morrison, Gloria Naylor, Gayl Jones, Sherley Ann Williams, Hortense Spillers, Cheryl Wall, Hazel Carby, Michael Awkward, Deborah McDowell, Gloria Hull, Thadious Davis, Maureen Honey, Karla Holloway, and Marcy Knopf. Walker, in particular, through essays such as "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens" and "Looking for Zora" (originally published in the mid-1970s in *Ms.*), helped establish Zora Neale Hurston as a central figure of the period. Walker argued for a radically new view of black female creativity while recounting her search for Hurston—her life; her grave in the marshes of Eatonville, Florida; and the meaning of her narratives, especially *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In these essays, which have inspired scores of other scholars, Walker made the point that Hurston had not received her due from other writers of the Harlem Renaissance or from later critics, primarily because of her strong individuality, her uninterest in becoming either white or bourgeois, and her devotion to black folk culture. Walker noted: "That Hurston held her own literally against the flood of whiteness and maleness that diluted so much other black art of the period in which she worked is a testimony to her genius and her faith." Walker also wrote forewords to Hemenway's biography (1977) and Washington's anthology (1978) of Hurston—two books that brought further attention to Hurston's importance in the Harlem Renaissance.

Since the 1980s, we have benefited immensely not only from the social and cultural histories of the period by Jervis Anderson, Cary Wintz, and David Levering

Lewis but also from the revisionist readings of the “modern” by Houston Baker Jr., James de Jongh, Michael North, Sieglinde Lemke, and others. There is also extensive and still growing new scholarship on music, theater, and the fine arts and on literary and cultural activity away from New York City, as well as several essays on gay and lesbian issues. Smith (1977) presaged much of the work by black feminists, and Nero (1991) took another new direction in African American literary study. Extending the arguments of Smith and Nero to the Harlem Renaissance, many scholars continue to offer important new readings and rereadings of texts and figures. With the availability of previously unpublished writings by Richard Bruce Nugent in *Gay Rebel of the Harlem Renaissance* (2002) and by Wallace Thurman in *The Collective Writings of Wallace Thurman* (2003), the interrelated processes of recovery and rereading are likely to accelerate.

The aesthetic legacy of the Harlem Renaissance is indicated best by latter-day understandings of the triangular relationship among the positions taken by Du Bois, Alain Locke, and the younger writers such as Langston Hughes, Thurman, and Hurston, most of whom were associated with the magazine *Fire!!* (1926). Sharing the optimism of white American cultural pluralists and progressive reformers, Locke recognized that “the conditions that are molding a New Negro are [also] molding a new American attitude.” In terms of art and literature, Locke saw no conflict between being “American” and being “Negro,” but rather an opportunity to enrich both through cultural reciprocity. In a way, Locke was reinterpreting Du Bois’s concept of “double consciousness” for aesthetic and cultural uses, and Locke’s view seems to have had room for many different talents to exist and thrive together. Locke did not see any direct connection between African American artists and the African arts that had influenced the works of many Europeans such as Picasso. For Locke, the most important lesson the Negro artist in the United States could derive from African art was “not cultural inspiration or technical innovations, but the lesson of a classic background, the lesson of discipline, of style, of technical control.” He wanted the younger writers to create a cohesive artistic movement that would—through a responsible and pluralistic exploration of “race”—contribute to Negroes’ struggle for civil equality. Like James Weldon Johnson, Locke stressed the importance of racial expression in African American writing, linking Negroes’ civil rights to their artistic output. And like Charles S. Johnson, he rejected cultural separatism

and endorsed a hybrid of black experiences and Euro-American aesthetic forms. Thurman and others often found Locke’s well-intentioned but overbearing views a challenge to their artistic independence, and they were even more vehemently opposed to the programmatic and promotional ideologies of leaders and intellectuals such as Du Bois, Allison Davis, Aubrey Bowser, and Benjamin Brawley. In fact, Thurman’s consuming passion was arguing against the older generation’s insistence on representational didacticism and idealism, which for him was indistinguishable from the bourgeoisie’s obsession with uplift and respectability. Thurman not only wrote more forcefully and persistently than others on these issues, but he also tried to organize the opposition of the younger generation through the publication of *Fire!!* and *Harlem*. These two magazines did, as intended, shock the older generation, but for financial reasons neither lasted beyond the first issue.

The central debate of the period—the incidence of racial expression in African American writing and art—is probably best summed up in Schuyler (1926) and Hughes (1926), two articles published in consecutive issues of *The Nation*, along with some further correspondence from these two authors. Schuyler considers Negro art simply an African phenomenon, rejecting the possibility of any such development among black Americans. He considers spirituals, blues, jazz, and the Charleston not racial expression but “contributions of a caste in a certain section of the country.” Otherwise, in literature, painting, sculpture, and drama, the American Negro has produced hardly anything racially distinctive, because “the Afro-American is merely a lampblack Anglo-Saxon.” Hughes, in turn, finds the taint of self-hatred in Schuyler’s view of black art and culture. In his own essay, Hughes projects a culturally pluralistic view of black art, emphasizing the integrity of the artist. He observes that for most blacks and black artists, “the word white comes to be unconsciously a symbol of all the virtues. It holds for the children beauty, morality, and money.” For Hughes, issues of racial expression converge on the issue of class within the black community. The “low-down folks,” he says, “furnish a wealth of colorful, distinctive material for any artist because they still hold their own individuality in the face of American standardizations. And perhaps these common people will give to the world its truly great Negro artist, the one who is not afraid to be himself.” As a black artist, Hughes welcomes a growing middle-class black audience for his work but regards this audience as a

potential threat to his artistic integrity. Using his own poems and Jean Toomer's *Cane* as examples of the kind of racial expression he approves and cherishes, Hughes asserts his artistic independence of both whites and blacks: "We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. . . . We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves."

As of the present writing, there had been no serious study of the effect of the Harlem Renaissance on later African American authors. It would appear, though, that what is important for latter-day culture and literature is the New Negro's insistence, in so many spheres, on self-definition, self-expression, and self-determination—a striving after what Locke called "spiritual emancipation." The many debates that took place during the Harlem Renaissance on art and propaganda, representation and identity, assimilation versus militancy, and parochialism versus globalism enriched the perspectives on issues of art, culture, politics, and ideology that have emerged on the African American scene since the 1930s, especially the perspectives offered by Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, and Toni Morrison. In the 1920s, journals such as *The Crisis*, *Opportunity*, and *The Messenger* helped interpret for their growing readership the powerful impact of World War I and the "great migration" on the African American masses. Since the late 1970s, Zora Neale Hurston has received wide recognition for her feminist consciousness. Sharing an interest in issues of class and color with male writers such as McKay, Hughes, Toomer, and Rudolph Fisher, women writers such as Hurston, Jessie Redmon Fauset, Nella Larsen, Dorothy West, Marieta Bonner, and Gwendolyn Bennett—each in her own way—explored female lives and the politics of gender. Today, the women writers of the Harlem Renaissance have become a major literary presence and a source of inspiration. Jean Toomer appears to have been read and admired by most African American writers since the 1920s. Langston Hughes, a major figure of the Harlem Renaissance, continued to support and influence the careers of many black writers until his death in 1967. The renaissance can certainly be credited with initiating discussions on many artistic and cultural concerns of African Americans that have caused heated controversy since the 1960s—such as the treatment of black themes and characters by white writers and the aesthetic criteria for black writing. The novelist John A. Williams has written: "For me . . . the

real meaning of the Harlem Renaissance was that it gave us an example, and having had that example, we do not need to make the same mistakes its members made" (Fuller 1970). From comments by Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison, it appears that they learned from the mistakes of their predecessors in the renaissance, especially in being aware of the dangers inherent in gearing their artistic impulses to the needs and demands of a primarily white audience. Also, the many clear-headed pronouncements on race, gender, and art by Hughes, Locke, Hurston, and McKay probably paved the way for Toni Morrison's unabashed rejection of false dichotomies between being a "black" and a "woman" novelist, as well as between being an "American" and a "global" writer.

Later African American writers have perhaps learned more from the failings of the Harlem Renaissance than from its achievements, but by the late 1920s, black authors in the West Indies and Africa were already taking inspiration from the spirit and individual works of the New Negro movement. Léopold Senghor of Senegal and Aimé Césaire of Martinique had read poetry and fiction of the Harlem Renaissance in translation while they were still students at the Sorbonne. Under its influence, these two poets developed their variant concepts of *négritude*, which, according to them, expressed the unifying essence of black experience and culture throughout the world. These and other African intellectuals such as Sembene Ousmane and Ousmane Soce, who have articulated African nationalism, were inspired by Claude McKay's *Banjo*. The South African writer Peter Abrahams has written in his autobiography, *Tell Freedom*, about how, as a teenager at the Bantu Men's Social Center in Johannesburg, he discovered writers of the renaissance such as Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Georgia Douglas Johnson, Countee Cullen, and W. E. B. Du Bois, and how they gave him hope for the future and faith in "color nationalism." In the 1990s, the Harlem Renaissance began to be seen as an important manifestation of nationalist stirrings in the early twentieth century that led to a fuller postcolonial consciousness in global literature and politics.

Many writers of the Harlem Renaissance who remained active after the 1920s—such as Hughes, Nugent, West, and Arna Bontemps—talked and wrote about the period, but Thurman provided, in his roman à clef *Infants of the Spring* (1932), the only detailed contemporary account of the movement. This work, a thinly veiled satire on the major figures of the renaissance, presents mediocre artists caught in a web of frivolity

and recalcitrance without purpose or privacy, unable to achieve anything worthwhile. Raymond, Thurman's protagonist, is disgusted at attempts to romanticize Harlem and offers a harsh judgment of himself and his colleagues, almost all of whom in his view are warped by either "propaganda" or "decadence." Although many people today would hesitate to accept Thurman's judgment uncritically, *Infants of the Spring* symbolized a coming-of-age of the renaissance literati. It demonstrated the ability of the movement to evaluate and possibly modify its direction. However, there was little opportunity for Thurman's criticism to be absorbed. The stock market had crashed in 1929, and white Americans' ability to sustain and enjoy the "Negro fad" had been severely hampered. Perhaps, as Ralph Ellison noted, the black writers of the 1920s "had wanted to be fashionable and this insured, even more effectively than the approaching Depression, the failure of the 'New Negro' movement." By the mid-1930s, exotic and genteel novels about black life were no longer popular with publishers and were being attacked by a new breed of black writers and critics. In early 1934, Eugene Saxton, who had handled McKay's work at Harper Brothers, bluntly informed McKay that his popularity had been part of a passing fad. In 1940, Langston Hughes spoke for many when he said of the Harlem Renaissance, "I had a swell time while it lasted. But I thought it wouldn't last long. . . . For how could a large number of people be crazy about Negroes forever?"

If Thurman's assessment is harsh and lopsided, it is equally unfair to evaluate the Harlem Renaissance according to the hindsight of Hughes, Nugent, and McKay—or according to the aesthetic criteria of Du Bois and Brawley or the theoretical constructs and reviews of Locke, who was accused by women writers such as Fauset of maliciously misreading their work. Intense intellectual and artistic activity created fruitful controversy over basic issues relating to art and its appreciation. The racial matrix of artistic expression received serious critical attention, and some later concepts—such as the "black aesthetic"—were prefigured in discussions among renaissance artists. This is an important part of the legacy of the Harlem Renaissance, even though the attitude of many individual artists toward these matters seems to have been characterized by ambivalence and tension, conflicting impulses as well as tentative solutions.

AMRITJIT SINGH

See also Bontemps, Arna; Brawley, Benjamin; Césaire, Aimé; Crisis, The; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Ellison, Ralph;

Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Fire!!; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Johnson, James Weldon; Harlem: A Forum of Negro Life; Harper Brothers; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; *Infants of the Spring*; Locke, Alain; McKay, Claude; Messenger, The; Negritude; Nugent, Richard Bruce; Opportunity; Schuyler, George S.; Senghor, Léopold; Thurman, Wallace; Toomer, Jean; West, Dorothy; Wright, Richard; *other specific writers*

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Harlem Renaissance in the United States: 1—Boston

Many commentators have described Boston as ambivalent toward its black citizens. On the one hand, Crispus Attucks died for American independence there, Phillis Wheatley wrote there, the abolitionist movement thrived there, and some of the nation's most important black writers and thinkers lived there. On the other hand, African Americans in Boston have over the course of centuries faced numerous obstacles to access to housing, education, and jobs. If the history of blacks in Boston is ambiguous, so too is the identity of the black community. On the one hand, the black community in Boston can be identified with a tradition of freedom predating the Civil War and with a level of sophistication rivaling that of any other African American community. On the other hand, this freedom and sophistication characterized a black elite representing only a small part of the community as a whole.

Regardless of its actual size, though, this black elite exerted a considerable influence on black intellectual and cultural life throughout the United States before the Harlem Renaissance. In 1914, Daniels noted that,

because of their educational advantages, Boston's black elite in some ways identified more readily with whites than with rank-and-file blacks. And yet in the first two or three decades of the twentieth century, the black upper class in Boston took a step away from identification with whites and began to agitate for real social change. Once this change took place, the black Brahmins of Boston—in the 1910s and 1920s—promoted some of the most progressive elements of African American political thought.

By the first part of the twentieth century, black Boston was moving from its traditional location in the West End (Beacon Hill) and into the South End. During these decades the cultural life of black Boston began to be dominated by social clubs, cultural organizations, and a few individual activists. The network of settlement houses (South End House, Robert Gould Shaw House) that had been developed to celebrate black civic pride and to provide social services was augmented by the work of groups such as the Woman's Era Club (founded in 1892), the Wendell Phillips Club, the Bachbends, Prince's African Masonic temple, and Greek-letter organizations. For example, the Aristo Club (founded in 1924) encouraged the teaching of African American history in the schools and increased educational and cultural opportunities for Boston's youth. At the same time that social groups increased civic-mindedness in Boston's black community, arts and cultural organizations led the way in terms of literature, music, and visual arts. Two of the most prominent—the Boston Literary and Historical Society (1901) and the Saint Mark Musical and Literary Union (1902)—promoted cultural activity and sponsored local writers and performing artists.

The most visible political activist in the early decades of the twentieth century was William Monroe Trotter (1873–1934), who founded the Boston Equal Rights League in 1901—nine years before the establishment of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). W. E. B. Du Bois, who received his Ph.D. from Harvard in 1895, was inspired by Trotter not only in developing the NAACP but also in developing his concept of the "talented tenth" and the New Negro movement. Trotter's newspaper *The Guardian* was a source of information and black progressive opinion in Boston. In 1903, Trotter and his followers disrupted a speech being delivered by Booker T. Washington. In 1915, Trotter organized a protest campaign against D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*. Black Bostonians such as William Henry

Lewis, William H. Ferris, Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, Angelina Weld Grimké, Maria Baldwin, and George Washington Forbes joined Trotter in extending the tradition of black activism in Boston (initiated by Attucks and running through the black abolitionists) into the twentieth century. Boston, then, was the home of an educated black elite that laid a social, cultural, and political foundation for insistence on equality for black citizens.

Art and literature within the black community in Boston took many different and sometimes competing forms. In theatrical circles, figures such as Ralf Coleman and his Negro Repertory Theater made a considerable impression on the community. The play *The Rider of Dreams* by Ridley Torrence was a great success in February 1927. In dance, Stanley E. Brown, Mildred Davenport, and Jimmy Slyde won national acclaim. The painter Allan Rohan Crite (b. 1910) was one of the most influential visual artists from Boston. Although recognition for Crite was slow in coming, his work—especially in the 1930s and 1940s—documents places and people that made the black community in Boston a thriving and productive cultural center.

The literature that came from Boston tended to be traditional—unlike that of New York (which was often experimental) or that of Chicago (which celebrated the working man). As early as in Wheatley's poetry, decorousness and shapeliness were hallmarks of Boston's literary taste. Boston produced a great many important black literary figures. Besides Wheatley, there were Lucy Terry Prince, the first black poet in the United States; David Walker, author of the famous *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*; and William Wells Brown, the first published black novelist and the author of *Clotel* (1853).

During the 1920s and 1930s, the main figures associated with Boston were the extremely influential poet and editor William Stanley Braithwaite; the protest writers Pauline Hopkins and Angelina Weld Grimké; and three writers of the younger generation: William Waring Cuney, Helene Johnson, and Dorothy West.

Braithwaite (1878–1962), who was largely self-educated, was a major force in American literature during much of the first half of the twentieth century as a poet and even more as an editor. He published two books of his own lyric poetry—*Lyrics of Life and Love* (1904) and *The House of Falling Leaves* (1908)—which adhered to nineteenth-century ideas concerning subject matter and form; and his *Anthology of*

Magazine Verse, a collection of the best magazine poetry of the year, was published annually from 1913 to 1929. These collections brought poetry into American homes and influenced the literary tastes of the public (Braithwaite is especially recognized for bringing Robert Frost into public prominence). Unlike some of his black contemporaries, Braithwaite was reluctant to treat racial experiences in his own poetry or to choose poems with this theme in his anthologies, feeling that such content interfered with the universality of the work and only accentuated the differences between whites and blacks. Braithwaite also published *The Book of Elizabethan Verse* (1906), *The Book of Georgian Verse* (1908), *The Book of Restoration Verse* (1909), the history *The Story of the Great War* (1919), and *The Bewitched Parsonage: The Story of the Brontës* (1950), a biography. In his long and illustrious career, he was one of the most influential editors of poetry in the United States. However, he had a tense relationship with many figures of the Harlem Renaissance. Claude McKay writes:

[Braithwaite] said that my poems were good, but that, barring two, any reader could tell the author was a Negro. And because of almost insurmountable prejudice against all things Negro, he said, he would advise me to write and send to magazines only such poems as did not betray my racial identity. . . . So, I thought, that was what Boston made of a colored intellectual.

Although Braithwaite has often been criticized for having no apparent interest in furthering the New Negro movement, it is an error to assume that Braithwaite did not identify with black writing. He served on the board of *The Crisis* for many years; he was the author of critical essays on black literature ("Some Contemporary Poets of the Negro Race," which appeared in *The Crisis* in 1919; and "The Negro in American Literature," which appeared in Alain Locke's *The New Negro* in 1925); and he left at his death an unpublished *Anthology of Negro Authors: Prose and Verse*.

The poet, playwright, and short-story writer Angelina Weld Grimké (1880–1958) is traditionally read as an adherent of the "black genteel" school of writing; she was raised in a elite family in Boston, and she grew up surrounded by intellectuals and activists. Nevertheless, her writing addresses some crucial themes and issues of her time. In the aftermath of the "red summer" of 1919, when lynchings of blacks rose

sharply, her stories “The Closing Door” (1919) and “Goldie” (1920) described lynching in harrowing detail and suggested very little hope for future generations. Her play *Rachel* (1916) examines the effect of lynching on family members who must live on after the horror of the event. Recently, her diaries have come under scrutiny because they reflect the frustration she felt as a woman who loved women in the early decades of the twentieth century. Her poetry, with its themes of death and unfulfilled love, is read today in light of the details of her life.

A forerunner of Grimké and of many aspects of the Harlem Renaissance, Pauline Hopkins (1859–1930) wrote for *The Colored American*—one of the first magazines aimed at African Americans. Her articles in the early 1900s and her “magazine novels” were important protest literature in which she addressed problems and issues of race relations that were thought to be unspeakable and were not touched by other journals. She used the form of the romantic novel to explore and challenge prevailing racial and gender representations that were foremost in the minds of middle-class African Americans in the early part of the twentieth century.

The *Saturday Evening Quill*, published from 1928 to 1930, was a product of Boston’s literary atmosphere that gained recognition among and attracted the interest of writers in Harlem. It was edited by Eugene Gordon, and its contributors included William Waring Cuney, George Reginald Margetson, Florida Ridley, Alvirah Hazzard, Helene Johnson, and Dorothy West. The *Quill* was a proponent of the New Negro movement. Unlike Braithwaite—but like their counterparts in Harlem—the young black intellectuals who wrote for the *Quill* wanted to depict racial experience, through which they felt black art distinguished itself and became meaningful for all its readers. Unlike Grimké, these writers were not so much interested in protest as in creating literary expressions of black experiences. In September 1928, in *The Crisis*, Du Bois praised the *Saturday Evening Quill* for its interesting content and consistent quality.

The poet William Waring Cuney (1906–1976) attended the New England Conservatory of Music (an institution whose first black student, Rachel Washington, graduated in 1876). While he was at school in Boston, he wrote for the *Saturday Evening Quill*. He had also attended Lincoln University, where he and Langston Hughes were classmates, and he maintained a friendship with Hughes for decades. Although Cuney’s poetry has been largely overlooked by scholars (his first

collection of poems, *Puzzles*, was published in 1960), he is a minor Harlem renaissance poet deserving of more attention. His poem “No Images” is a compact statement and analysis of the lack of positive racial images in American society.

The short-story writer and novelist Dorothy West (1907–1998) was raised in an upper-middle-class home in Boston. She is known widely for her reminiscences of Harlem in the 1920s and 1930s. West moved to New York in 1927 with her cousin Helene Johnson (1907–1995), and the two women soon became part of a group of younger writers and poets principally centered on Wallace Thurman. Johnson published several poems (including one in the single issue of *Fire!*) but stopped writing poetry after her marriage in 1933. West, after her arrival in New York, was a member of the cast in the traveling production of DuBose Heyward’s *Porgy* with Richard Bruce Nugent. West became involved in the film project *Black and White* and traveled to the Soviet Union with Langston Hughes and others during 1932 and part of 1933.

When she returned to the United States, West became the editor of *Challenge: A Literary Quarterly* (which later became *New Challenge*). Like the *Saturday Evening Quill*, *Challenge* published younger black poets and writers. *Challenge* is important, too, as a transition between the Harlem Renaissance and the generation of writers who emerged in the late 1930s and who found fault with the faddishness of the 1920s. The associate editor of the new journal, Richard Wright, would publish his “Blueprint for Negro Writing” in the first issue of *New Challenge* in 1937. West published her first novel, *The Living Is Easy*, in 1948. This novel was prized for its characterizations and for its depiction of life among Boston’s upper middle class, and social historians continue to read it as a source of information about the lifestyles of Boston’s black elite. West, who was still alive during the revival of interest in the Harlem Renaissance in the late twentieth century, provided valuable information about the 1920s and 1930s in Harlem and Boston through her letters, interviews, and memoirs. Her papers are a significant source of information about the Harlem Renaissance.

It is estimated that between 1899 and 1936, approximately 145,000 foreign-born blacks came to the United States, and many of them came to Boston. This shift in populations highlighted differences and exacerbated disagreements between native-born blacks and those from other parts of the world—a phenomenon included in many depictions of Harlem by

writers of the renaissance, such as Wallace Thurman, Eric Walrond, Rudolph Fisher, Claude McKay, and Langston Hughes. In the early decades of the twentieth century, too, the black community in Boston underwent considerable changes: An influx of immigrants from the South and Midwest (including the young Malcolm X) and from the West Indies and Cape Verde (islands off the coast of west Africa) meant that the community grew quickly and diversified considerably. By the 1920s, Boston's black community was expanding beyond the South End and into Roxbury. The city became a center of entertainment and culture for blacks, with nightclubs like the Storyville Café and the Hi Hat Club.

Diversified by immigration, more extended geographically than before, and no longer focused on the tastes and influence of the black elite, Boston's black community underwent tremendous alterations in the latter half of the twentieth century. Intimately involved with the very beginnings of the United States, the African American community in Boston has faced obstacles with intelligence and creativity. It is indisputable that Boston played a major role in black cultural expression in the years before, during, and after the Harlem Renaissance.

DANIEL M. SCOTT III

See also Black and White; Braithwaite, William Stanley; Challenge; Cuney, Waring; Ferris, William H.; Grimké, Angelina Weld; Guardian, The; Johnson, Helene; Rachel; Saturday Evening Quill; Trotter, William Monroe; West, Dorothy; Wright, Richard

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Harlem Renaissance in the United States: 2—California and the West Coast

California, and particularly the West Coast cities of Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Oakland, played an important if generally unrecognized role in the migrations that were fundamental to the New Negro movement. There were significant contributions in many fields, but the most important were in music.

Although African Americans participated in the exploration, conquest, and settlement of the American West, the actual number of blacks there remained relatively small until after the United States entered World War II, when the New Negro movement was mostly over. As late as 1940 San Francisco had about 4,800 blacks (this number rose to 43,500 in 1950), and Oakland had about 8,400 (it had 47,600 in 1950). The largest concentration of blacks in West Coast cities before and during the New Negro movement was in Los Angeles. The black population there generally doubled in each succeeding census, going from about 8,000 in 1910 to more than 64,000 in 1940 (there were 171,000 in 1950). Los Angeles was also the only city on the West Coast in which a clearly defined black neighborhood had developed before World War II. The black population was subjected to formal housing restrictions, limiting it mainly to the vicinity of the Central Avenue business corridor, in the late 1920s.

In addition to the relatively late formation of black neighborhoods, several other features are important for understanding the New Negro movement on the West Coast. Emigration to the West Coast was limited because it was much farther away and more expensive to reach than such cities as Chicago, Kansas City, or New York. The black population was relatively stable, prosperous, and conservative. Residential areas were shared with ethnic Mexicans, whites, and, to a lesser extent, Asians. (Overt racial hostility from whites often focused on ethnic Chinese and Japanese, who outnumbered African Americans in San Francisco, Seattle, and Portland.) Racially mixed schools were the rule. Literacy was more widespread than in black

communities in other parts of the United States. Although conditions were far from perfect, cities on the West Coast were seen as relatively less repressive than eastern cities throughout the New Negro period. Nevertheless, opportunities in the arts and literature for African Americans and other minorities were much more limited than opportunities for the white population.

Although this article concentrates on Los Angeles, individual blacks achieved distinction in other places as well from the mid-nineteenth century on. Judge Mifflin Wistar Gibbs, who came to California in 1850, published the first black newspaper in California and later became consul to Madagascar. Nelson Primus (1842–1916) and Grafton Tyler Brown (1841–1918) came to the West and worked as painters. In the New Negro period after World War I, Horace Roscoe Cayton Jr. (1903–1970), son of a newspaper publisher in Seattle and grandson of a U.S. senator, graduated from the University of Washington and studied at the University of Chicago; he became a distinguished sociologist, producing a memoir that eloquently sets forth his personal conflicts as a member of the “talented tenth” (*Long Old Road*, 1965) as well as important studies of Chicago’s black community. The sculptor Sargent Johnson (1888–1967) was born in Boston but made most of his career in San Francisco, where he created striking modernist figures of African Americans and taught at the California College of Arts and Crafts, important to the training of later generations of black artists. Ralph Bunche (1904–1971) went east from Los Angeles to Harvard and achieved distinction at the United Nations. The architect Paul Revere Williams (1894–1980) was born in Los Angeles and established his own firm there; he designed and built mansions for both white and black movie stars as well as commercial buildings. Wallace Thurman and Arna Bontemps are well-known writers of the Harlem Renaissance who were raised in the West and lived in Los Angeles for significant periods before they migrated eastward to Harlem. (Thurman’s *The Blacker the Berry*, 1932, set in Los Angeles, satirizes the destructive hierarchy of color he found within the black community there.) William Grant Still (1895–1978) used his Guggenheim fellowship to move permanently to Los Angeles in 1934. Early jazz musicians from New Orleans spent significant time in both San Francisco and Los Angeles. Many popular entertainers found their way to the film colony in Hollywood, where they struggled to maintain their personal integrity despite the white filmmakers’ expectation that they would

play stereotyped, often menial roles. Noble Johnson founded the Lincoln Motion Picture Company, one of the earliest and most successful of the black film companies, in 1916, although he abandoned it in 1921 in favor of a more economically viable career as a bit player in stereotyped black and Native American roles. Among the many well-known entertainers who remained in California were the arranger Will Vodery, the actor Clarence Muse, the dancer Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, and the Nicholas brothers.

Artists and writers who remained in the West but were not associated with Hollywood are much less well known. Artists often worked as amateurs and did not receive recognition until the 1960s. For example, Leonard Cooper (b. 1899) worked in Salinas as a painter and music teacher; and Alice Gafford (1886–1981), who had been born in Kansas, was a painter in Los Angeles. The more immediately successful painters Charles White (1918–1979) and Beulah Woodard (1895–1964) spent most of their careers elsewhere, but they had substantial influence, partly as teachers at the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles.

Mexican art was shown in Los Angeles in major exhibitions in 1923 (the first such exhibit in the United States), and again in 1925 and 1931, and it had both political and aesthetic influence on American artists. Diego Rivera and Jorge Juan Crespo (who taught at the Chouinard Art Institute from 1930 to 1938) were particularly influential. Their politics were far to the left of the generally more conservative black newspaper editors discussed as follows. The Mexican muralists Rivera and José Clemente Orozco executed influential works in San Francisco and at Pomona. Artists in the West were inhibited by a lack of a market for their work and even a lack of galleries for its display; when the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) presented Eugene Burk’s *The Slave Mother* to the Oakland Museum in 1931, it was a breakthrough for that institution. The various federal relief projects in the 1930s offered some slight change, especially encouraging the production of outdoor and indoor murals. This activity sowed the seeds for the blossoming of black art in the 1960s and later.

Fragmentary runs survive of at least fifteen black newspapers published in Los Angeles, and five published in Oakland, at some point in the 1920s or 1930s. Of the black writers who remained in the West, most that we know about were journalists. The self-educated, pioneering writer Delilah M. Beasley did research for her landmark history of blacks in California for eight years before publishing it in 1919. Later she provided

a column, "Activities Among Negroes," for the (white) *Oakland Tribune*, partly intended as a way to counter the negative stereotypes that were common in the white press. During most of the New Negro period, Charlotta Bass edited the dominant *California Eagle*, a black weekly published in Los Angeles that dates back to 1879; the surviving run of this paper (from 1914) provides invaluable coverage of black activity in southern California. *Flash*, a weekly literary magazine that survived for a little more than the year 1929, was edited by the writer Fay M. Jackson, an enterprising and outspoken graduate of the University of Southern California; Jackson later was the Hollywood reporter for the Associated Negro News Service. Harold Bruce Forsythe was the most important writer to emerge in *Flash*.

Music making was widespread in the black communities. Concert music had a prominent place. In Los Angeles, John S. Gray and William T. Wilkins operated music schools that trained generations of African Americans to read and perform so-called serious music. In 1936, Samuel Browne began teaching at Jefferson Middle School, which trained the generation of black studio musicians who emerged after World War II. There were large choirs in the churches and in the community; Jester Hairston, Hall Johnson, Eva Jessye, Freita Shaw Johnson, and Mrs. A. C. Billbrew (also an organist) were among their directors. Billbrew and Elmer Bartlett were prominent church organists. An independent gospel style developed, replaced after World War II by Thomas A. Dorsey's Chicago gospel style. Concerts and musicales were abundant; the famous tenor Roland Hayes performed in Los Angeles very early in his career—in 1918, before an integrated audience. W. E. B. Du Bois's pageant *The Star of Ethiopia*, first produced in New York in 1913, was produced at the Hollywood Bowl in 1925. Among other exceptional performers were the pianist Lorenza Jordan-Cole, the violinist Bessie Dones, and the singer Ivan Harold Browning. William Grant Still came to Los Angeles in 1934 (as noted previously) and composed most of his symphonies and all eight of his operas there; other works from his years in Los Angeles include film music, arrangements for radio and television, ballets, and chamber music. Alain Locke wrote to Still about his second symphony in 1937: "It is so strange that nowhere among Negro musicians do you find any really intellectual interest in new works and experimenting." Blacks' involvement with concert music in the New Negro period was vital but was, as Locke's words suggest, already being ignored by most intel-

lectuals. Harold Bruce Forsythe (whom Locke did not know) is an exception. Forsythe's extensive music training and writing skills led him to understand the challenge of expressing the African American experience in terms of so-called classical music.

The best-documented activity in the cities of the West Coast, however, was in jazz. Bert Williams had formed his partnership with George Walker in San Francisco in the 1890s; they reached stardom, bringing the cakewalk to Broadway in 1898. Black musicians from New Orleans and elsewhere found their way to San Francisco, at least by 1908. The so-called Barbary Coast—a few blocks along Pacific Street—became a center for dance music with a New Orleans flavor. The shimmy or shim-me-sha-wobble had originated there as early as 1900. After 1908, in short order, came the turkey trot, bunny hug, chicken glide, Texas Tommy, pony prance, grizzly bear, "and many other varieties of close and semi-acrobatic dancing, which swept the country during the half dozen years that preceded the world war" (Stoddard 1982, 127). Sid Le Protti's So Different Orchestra was the most active performing group on the Barbary Coast, gradually incorporating features of the new style. In San Francisco in 1913, the word "jazz" was first applied to the black dance music that had previously been known as ragtime. (The style was probably somewhere in between what we now think of as ragtime, which had crystallized in 1895, and Dixieland jazz, which emerged in the early 1920s.) A large proportion of the (relatively few) blacks listed as "professionals" in San Francisco in the census of 1910 were musicians and entertainers—an indication of the importance of these performance venues. (Labor unions excluded black workers for most of this period.) When the Barbary Coast was closed down in 1921, some of its musicians emigrated to the Central Avenue area in Los Angeles, which was already a center for black music.

In the relatively conservative atmosphere of Los Angeles, musicians were expected to read music with facility and perform in many styles, because most local musicians and much of the audience had some classical training. Many jazz leaders required their musicians to play from written arrangements. Of the New Orleans musicians who came to Los Angeles, formally trained musicians (many of them Creole) were more successful than the pure improvisers who did not read. Bill Johnson and Ernest Coycault had played in Los Angeles as early as 1908; Coycault remained and Johnson returned in 1912, possibly with Jelly Roll Morton. Freddie Keppard had arrived by

1914, when he formed the Original Creole Band, made up of six musicians from New Orleans. This group was “discovered” while entertaining at a boxing match in Los Angeles and hired to perform on the Pantages vaudeville circuit in that year. For the next four years, the Original Creole Band toured the United States, playing in vaudeville houses and making their version of the New Orleans style (still often called “ragtime”) known to a wide audience. In 1917, Jelly Roll Morton began what turned into a stay of five years, pursuing a variety of business interests as he discovered his forte as a composer and arranger. The trombonist Kid Ory, who arrived in 1919 and also stayed for five years (before joining Louis Armstrong in Chicago), organized a series of recordings on the Sunshine label in 1921. These are usually considered to be the first recordings of instrumental jazz by an African American band; their style is clearly Dixieland.

Several bands and musicians stayed in the Los Angeles area, anchoring the Central Avenue music scene and launching the careers of many well-known musicians. The Spikes Brothers ran a music business on Central Avenue from 1919 that served as a booking agency for black musicians. The black union (Local 767 of the American Federation of Musicians) was eventually integrated into Local 47, expanding opportunities and leading to the end of highly discriminatory pay scales, but this did not happen until 1953. (Black musicians worked for much lower wages than white musicians, whether they played for all-white, all-black, or racially mixed audiences.) One of Reb Spikes’s bands was the Legion Club 45. Other important bandleaders and bands included Mutt Carey, Harry Southard’s Black and Tan Jazz Orchestra, Sonny Clay’s Stompin’ Six, Charlie Lawrence’s Sunnyside Jazz Band, Paul Howard’s Quality Sereaders, Les Hite, and Curtis Mosby’s Dixieland Blue Blowers. Lionel Hampton, who achieved international fame for his vibraphone playing in the late 1930s, got his start as a drummer with Hite, Howard, and Mosby.

With the start of World War II, the black population of Los Angeles soared, bringing further change and a new set of issues. Whether there was a distinct, laid-back “West Coast style” associated with jazz in the years of the New Negro movement is still not clear. What is clear is that, in a lively jazz scene that fostered the early careers of many famous musicians, the groundwork had been laid for the emergence in Los Angeles of cool jazz, such as Miles

Davis’s “Birth of Cool,” and postwar rhythm and blues (R&B).

CATHERINE PARSONS SMITH

See also Bontemps, Arna; Forsythe, Harold Bruce; Hayes, Roland; Johnson, Hall; Johnson, Noble; Johnson, Sargent Claude; Lincoln Motion Picture Company; Morton, Jelly Roll; Muse, Clarence; Ory, Edward “Kid”; Robinson, Bill “Bojangles”; Still, William Grant; Thurman, Wallace; Williams, Egbert Austin “Bert”

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Harlem Renaissance in the United States: 3—Chicago and the Midwest

Although the Harlem Renaissance was centered in New York, it helped shape the lives and careers of people in literature, the fine arts, and the performing arts across the country during the 1920s and 1930s. In the Midwest, this was clearly evident among creative artists in Ohio, Illinois, and Missouri as well as other places. The work of these individuals continues to testify to the lively and significant discourse among artists nationwide.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Ohio was home to two giants of African American literature: Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1906) and Charles Waddell Chesnutt (1858–1932). Because both men focused on the experiences of African Americans, they served as important role models for many younger, nationalistic writers who would follow their example during the Harlem Renaissance.

Dunbar was the first African American writer to achieve national renown in the modern era. He was a

native of Dayton, Ohio, and was the son of former slaves. Dunbar was educated in the public schools of Dayton and became active in literary circles before he had earned his high school diploma. He went on to publish six volumes of poetry, beginning with *Oak and Ivy* in 1893; and several novels, librettos, and essays. He is probably best remembered—and has been alternately praised by both African Americans and whites—for his “dialect verse,” in poems such as “Little Brown Baby” and “When Malindy Sings.” Through both his dialect poems and his poems in “standard” English (including “Sympathy”—“I know why the caged bird sings”), Dunbar tried to capture the full range of African American experiences.

Chesnutt was a native of Cleveland, Ohio, and in his life and work we also find threads that weave together much of the story of early twentieth-century life among African Americans there and elsewhere. In addition to being a successful writer, Chesnutt was a successful businessman and engaged in benevolent and volunteer work. Because of his honest, forthright portrayal of life “along the color line” and his ability to deal with such controversial subjects as color and class prejudice among well-to-do “colored” Americans, his works were well received by African American and white readers. By the turn of the twentieth century, Chesnutt had several works in print, including *The Conjure Woman* (1899), *The House Behind the Cedars* (1900), and *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line* (1899). In his fiction, Chesnutt always dealt skillfully with controversial issues, but in real life he exercised caution before publicly supporting radicals who were calling for social, political, or educational reform. Information about his early life suggests that he was well aware of the injustices suffered by African Americans of his day because of their race, and by early adulthood he was well prepared to be a race leader. Most important, Chesnutt—like W. E. B. Du Bois—understood the value and limitations of self-help programs, through his work with the Cleveland Association of Colored Men and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In Cleveland, as across the nation, the NAACP was the primary organization through which African Americans would agitate for social and educational reforms. The NAACP also supported cultural programs during the Harlem Renaissance.

Langston Hughes was an alumnus of Central High School in Cleveland (class of 1920) and a longtime associate of the city’s Karamu House theater. Hughes frequently acknowledged that his writing was influ-

enced by Dunbar and Chesnutt. His early work reflected the nationalistic focus of Dunbar’s poetry; and long after leaving high school, Hughes corresponded with Chesnutt—and with Chesnutt’s daughter and biographer, Helen Chesnutt, who was an educator in Cleveland. Interestingly, Hughes’s poetry was also influenced by the free verse of another midwesterner, Carl Sandburg. Hughes came to New York to enroll in undergraduate courses at Columbia University, and to position himself, as he said, to become an active member of Harlem’s cultural community.

At this time, the work of the composer, lyricist, and bandleader Noble Sissle (1889–1975) was transforming popular entertainment for blacks and whites in Manhattan. Sissle was a native of Indianapolis, Indiana; he moved to Cleveland with his family in 1909 and graduated from Central High School in 1911. As a young man, Sissle formed a very successful songwriting team with Eubie Blake, touring America’s vaudeville circuit and Europe in the 1920s. They were the cowriters of the Broadway musical *Shuffle Along* (1921), which was a smash hit.

Chicago, Illinois, had a vibrant artistic community during this era, and writers in particular found a great deal of material there. Richard Wright, who moved to Chicago in 1927 (he had been born in Mississippi), experienced his most prolific period of publishing during the “Chicago renaissance” of the 1930s. Strongly influenced by the social, political, and economic movements of his day, he wrote “Blueprint for Negro Writing” (1937), a radical call for African American writers to free themselves from the restrictions imposed by the current dominant literary forms. His other celebrated works include *Uncle Tom’s Children* (1938) and *Native Son* (1940).

While working for the Federal Writers’ Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), Wright met and befriended Margaret Walker (1915–1998), who was then a student at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Walker too went on to become a celebrated writer; she won the Yale Younger Writers’ award in 1942 for her volume of poetry *For My People*, and she had a long teaching career at the postsecondary level before publishing her novel *Jubilee* (1966).

The poet and novelist Arna Bontemps (1902–1973) moved to Chicago and joined Wright, Walker, and others in the South Side writers’ group there. While he was living in Chicago, Bontemps completed *Black Thunder* (1936), *Drums at Dusk* (1939), and other works. After receiving his master’s degree in library science from

the University of Chicago in 1943, Bontemps became librarian at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee.

The African American community in South Side Chicago also provided many performance opportunities for budding and established musicians. In the 1930s, blues and jazz artists such as Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Billie Holiday, and the modern dancer Katherine Dunham, performed before enthusiastic crowds of recent migrants to the city; they also took their music to St. Louis.

In addition to these secular forms of African American music, Chicago was a center for some of the nation's most important sacred music. The gospel vocalist Mahalia Jackson and the composer-pianist Thomas Andrew Dorsey (the "father of gospel music") are examples. Jackson and Dorsey were both pioneering artists in a tradition known as gospel-blues—sacred music with secular influences. The presence of secular elements in Dorsey's music is not surprising: He was a former pianist for the blues singer Gertrude "Ma" Rainey. With support from the local Baptist churches and others belonging to the National Baptist Convention, Dorsey established a broad base of support for his choral music and eventually, in 1932, founded the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses.

In addition to organizations within and outside the religious and artistic communities, individual patronage and philanthropy were important sources of support for activities of the renaissance in the Midwest. One philanthropist was the entrepreneur and self-made millionaire Madame C. J. Walker, who established a phenomenally successful hair-care business in St. Louis and later Indianapolis. Until her death in 1919, she supported African American educational programs championed by Booker T. Washington and Mary McLeod Bethune, and the activities of the National Association of Colored Women. After Walker's death, the national headquarters of the family business was established in Indianapolis. Walker's daughter A'Lelia Walker, who had a home in New York, used the family fortune to become a popular patron of the African American arts community. She was the hostess of the short-lived "Dark Tower" gatherings, where literati, book lovers, and others engaged in numerous multicultural social exchanges in 1927 and 1928. Langston Hughes called A'Lelia Walker the "joy-goddess of Harlem's 1920s."

With the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, many sources of financial patronage dried up, but public arts programs—especially the Federal Arts Program, which was part of the New Deal—encouraged creative artists to continue working.

With few exceptions, most of the "younger Negro artists" described in Langston Hughes's essay "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1926) would not live to see the black arts movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Nevertheless, their legacy would live on in Harlem, Chicago, Cleveland, and other African American population centers and artistic communities.

REGENNIA N. WILLIAMS

See also Armstrong, Louis; Blake, Eubie; Bontemps, Arna; Chesnutt, Charles Waddell; Dunbar, Paul Laurence; Ellington, Duke; Harlem Renaissance in the United States: 4—Cleveland; Holiday, Billie; Hughes, Langston; Karamu House; Shuffle Along; Sissle, Noble; Walker, Madame C. J.; Walker, Margaret; Wright, Richard

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Harlem Renaissance in the United States: 4—Cleveland

The stage was set for the development of the arts in Cleveland as early as 1883, when Charles Waddell Chesnutt—who is considered the first African American

writer of fiction—settled there. Several artists in a variety of genres followed him, including the poet Langston Hughes.

Chesnutt was born in Cleveland. As a child, he moved to Fayetteville, North Carolina, with his parents; but as a young man he returned to Cleveland, passed his bar examination, and opened a court reporting business. Writing was his first love, and he developed into a recognized author of short stories and novels, publishing in the prestigious *Atlantic Monthly*. Chesnutt became a member of Booker T. Washington's "committee of twelve" in 1905 and helped establish the Playhouse Settlement when it came to Cleveland in 1914. Chesnutt's daughter, Helen, was Langston Hughes's English teacher at Central High School in Cleveland.

Russell Wesley Jelliffe and Rowena Woodham Jelliffe, who were associated with the settlement house movement of the 1920s, and particularly with Karamu House, had a profound impact on the arts in Cleveland; in the early twentieth century, black arts in Cleveland and the Karamu Theater were virtually synonymous. The Jelliffes had graduated from Oberlin College in 1910 and had undertaken graduate study in sociology at the University of Chicago. They did fieldwork at Chicago Commons, a local settlement house where they lived, as well as at Jane Addams's Hull House. In 1914, as newlyweds who had recently completed their master's degrees, they moved to Cleveland to conduct a survey and remained there. Significantly, at about that time—1915—Cleveland's Negro population included eight doctors, three dentists, two nurses with professional training, twelve lawyers, and thirty teachers, who contributed to a cultural milieu in which the arts could be introduced and could thrive.

P. Dudley Allen and the Second Presbyterian Church Men's Club provided seed money to establish a center for activities and recreation for the expanding African American population in the Central Avenue district, known also as the "Roaring Third." The center was incorporated in 1917 as the Playhouse Settlement Neighborhood Association and would become known, nationwide, as Karamu House. Karamu has been described as the nation's oldest multiracial metropolitan center for the arts, the outstanding Negro community theater in America, the oldest and best organization of colored actors in America, and the country's first interracial theater.

In Karamu's early days, most of its activities were geared toward children and the assimilation of new

immigrants to the city. The Playhouse Settlement was dedicated to helping all racial groups, but more blacks than others were settling in the neighborhood: In 1910, African Americans were 1.5 percent of the population of Cleveland; a decade later, they were 4.3 percent. Although Rowena Jelliffe aimed her arts program toward youngsters, a few young adults were soon drawn to the theater. The adult theater began as an informal group for reading and discussing plays but soon began performing onstage as the Dumas Players (named after Alexandre Dumas *père* and *fils*). Their first production was *The Little Stone House*, performed at Cleveland's Central High School in the autumn of 1921, and subsequently in nearby Oberlin.

The Dumas Players were not the only amateur black theater group in Cleveland in the 1920s. The Aldridge Players were formed through the Phillis Wheatley Association, and other groups were formed through the Cleveland Association of Colored Men, the Council of Women, and churches. Specific groups such as the Federal Theater and the Robeson Players, Harrison and Taylor Players, Vagabond Players, Charity Players, and Richard B. Harrison Players were active at various times during that period and later.

There was some dispute concerning the Dumas Players. For one thing, settlement houses in white neighborhoods tended to discriminate against blacks; for another, some blacks protested vehemently against the works the Dumas Players chose to perform. There were objections because works by white playwrights were being presented almost exclusively (this controversy began with a production of *Stevedore*); and more serious dissent developed in the spring of 1922, when Charles Gilpin, manager of the Lafayette Theater in Harlem, came to Cleveland to appear in *The Emperor Jones*. Harry C. Smith, editor of the Negro weekly the *Cleveland Gazette*, praised Gilpin's acting but attacked the play; he also attacked the Jelliffes, who were white. The Dumas Players were not swayed by Smith's review and in fact invited Gilpin to their rehearsal of *Wolves* by John Jay Bell. Gilpin's encouraging words and the \$50 he donated for future scholarships inspired the group to change their name to the Gilpin Players. Smith continued his attacks even after works by black playwrights were performed.

In 1927, some members of the Gilpin Players decided to change their name again, this time to Karamu, a Swahili word meaning "a place of joyful gathering." This name reflected the group's interest in Africa and seemed appropriate for an organization in the heart of Cleveland's black community; also, it was in

accordance with the philosophy of Alain Locke, who was encouraging American Negroes to reflect on their heritage. With the new name came a more intense focus on performing plays by African Americans, notably those of Langston Hughes, who was by then emerging as a luminary in Cleveland and who lived around the corner from Karamu. It is worth mentioning here that Hughes's experiences at Central High School had been very important to his early artistic development: He had been encouraged in grammar and literature by Helen Chesnutt and Ethel Weimer, and in art by Clara Dieke. Hughes had talent for the visual arts, and at the Playhouse Settlement he taught lettering and block prints to youngsters.

Most of Hughes's plays were previewed during the 1930s at the Karamu Theater; and his farce *Joy to My Soul*, set in Cleveland, had its world premiere there on April Fool's Day 1937. Silver (1961) notes that *Joy to My Soul* received mixed reviews, being described variously as "rollicking," "amusing," "lusty, lightly diverting burlesque," "boisterously slangy," "not Hughes at his best," and "the finest by Hughes." New York was the site of the world premiere of Hughes's *Mulatto* (an outgrowth of a poem with the same title), but he had first offered it to Karamu. The actors were busy with productions in other cities, and it was put off until 1939. Controversy arose when *Mulatto* opened in New York, and although Hughes thought that using the original version for the production in Cleveland would dispel the criticism, it did not. The play aroused such intense anger that the theater was destroyed by arson on 22 October 1939—but the Karamu and the Jelliffes carried on.

According to Silver, "*Mulatto* was the end of the Langston Hughes 'decade,' but not the end of his 'era.' He remains the 'king' of Karamu playwrights, with more of his works produced there than those of any other writer." During Hughes's lifetime, the mutual admiration between him, Karamu, and Cleveland was very evident. Western Reserve University gave Hughes an honorary doctorate in 1964. Hughes, for his part, said that the Karamu was "immensely valuable" both to him and to the community, and he wrote glowingly about the theater on several occasions. Also, in his autobiography, *The Big Sea* (1940), Hughes acknowledged Charles Chesnutt's influence, calling Chesnutt "my fellow Clevelander." On the centenary of Hughes's birth in 2002, Cleveland held a citywide celebration in his honor.

Two of Hughes's students in printmaking at Karamu were Hughie Lee-Smith and Charles Sallee Jr. In 1934, the Karamu Theater set aside a substantial

amount of money to establish an Art Scholarship Fund for a Karamu student to attend the Cleveland School of Art (later the Cleveland Institute of Art). Sallee was the first winner and Lee-Smith the second. Lee-Smith and Sallee organized a group known as the Karamu Artists and were praised by James A. Porter in his landmark book *Modern Negro Art*. Porter wrote that Sallee was "the leader of a powerful group of artists that would make a difference in the quality of WPA prints." The group, of course, exhibited at Karamu House; they also exhibited at other venues in Cleveland, and eventually on tour. When their show opened in New York at the American Artists' Gallery on 7 January 1942, the critic for the New York *Post* said that it was "the largest Negro art exhibition ever held in this city." It included work by twenty-five Karamu artists, in various media: painting, sculpture, ceramics, jewelry, and prints. Another venue for artists in Cleveland was the Cleveland Museum, which held annual May Shows.

Finally, Karamu was also a venue for musicians and dancers. Musicians such as Hale Smith (who composed settings of Hughes's poems) were influenced by, and contributed to, the programs at Karamu, and dance found strong artistic expression there.

Black art has continued to thrive in Cleveland, and Karamu House has continued to nurture talent. The unique atmosphere of this artistic community may be partly a result of the interracial foundation on which the Playhouse Settlement was created.

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See also Chesnutt, Charles Waddell; Emperor Jones, The; Gilpin, Charles; Harlem Renaissance in the United States: 3—Chicago and the Midwest; Hughes, Langston; Karamu House; Locke, Alain; *Mulatto*; Porter, James Amos; Stevedore

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Harlem Renaissance in the United States: 5—Kansas and the Plains States

In June 1925, Aaron Douglas, who had been born in Kansas, arrived to take his place in an artistic community recently acknowledged in a special edition of *Survey Graphic*—"Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro." Fifty years later Douglas recalled what had inspired him to leave a secure teaching job in Kansas City: "The most cogent single factor that eventually turned my face to New York was the publication of the spectacular issue of 'Survey Graphic' magazine with the splendid portrait of a black man on the cover drawn by Fritz Winold Reiss" (Patterson 1999, 2). Once in New York, Douglas set to work immediately, producing illustrations for both *The Crisis* (the magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, NAACP) and *Opportunity* (the magazine of the National Urban League). He reflected later: "I began to feel like the missing piece that all had been looking for to complete or round out the idea of a Renaissance" (Patterson, 7).

Alain Locke, one of the mentors of the Harlem movement, in his introduction to *The New Negro*—a subsequent book version of the special issue of *Survey Graphic*—speaks of the renaissance of the New Negro as a flourishing of cultural production by young artists self-consciously contributing to racial uplift. Although Locke refers to Harlem as the most important gathering of a growing movement of black artists and intellectuals, he recognizes, too, the influence of earlier migrations by African Americans from the rural

South to the more urban North and Midwest in creating this community of artists. Scholars often refer to this cultural moment as the Harlem Renaissance, thereby locating it geographically, whereas Locke locates it in a historically specific people, the New Negroes. For most artists who developed this new consciousness, sites far from Harlem nurtured their social and artistic activities. Individuals like Aaron Douglas grew up in Kansas and the surrounding plains states. Distinctive black cultures thrived outside Harlem in places like St. Louis, Kansas City, Minneapolis, Omaha, Topeka, and Wichita, and throughout Oklahoma, where considerable numbers of African Americans had previously settled.

During the closing decades of the nineteenth century, freedmen and freedwomen had been impelled to leave their homes in the South by several factors: Reconstruction ended; "Jim Crow" laws were passed; and the North promised greater economic opportunities. In Kansas, for instance, the flood of migration from the border states of Missouri, Kentucky, and Tennessee peaked in the summer of 1879; and the black population in Kansas swelled by about 26,000 people in the decade between 1870 and 1880. An estimated 6,000 black migrants, called Exodusters in contemporary newspapers, traveled through St. Louis, Missouri, during the one-month period of mid-March through mid-April 1879. These new immigrants created new towns; they also added to populations of African Americans already settled in midwestern cities. Some migrants founded black towns such as Nicodemus in Kansas and Langston in Oklahoma. Poor rural migrants settled into segregated communities in Omaha (Nebraska), Chicago (Illinois), and Tulsa (Oklahoma)—places that would erupt with violence in the early twentieth century.

Several factors shaped a New Negro renaissance in Kansas and other plains states well before Locke defined the renaissance in Harlem. The racial politics that divided some followers of Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois in the East influenced black midwesterners too, sometimes differently. Two factors—race consciousness and segregation—led to the creation of separate black newspapers, schools, and social clubs. Essays by Du Bois in local black-owned newspapers and in national magazines influenced readers. Aaron Douglas, for instance, was a regular reader of *The Crisis* (which was edited by Du Bois) during his college years in Lincoln, Nebraska. But unlike some national publications that strongly supported one viewpoint or the other, midwestern newspapers covered both Du Bois and Washington.

Black-owned newspapers such as the *Iowa Bystander* in Des Moines, the *Call* in Kansas City (Missouri), the *Black Dispatch* in Oklahoma City, and the *Negro Star* in Wichita (Kansas), brought news of Harlem and Chicago's South Side to local communities. Nick Chiles, a businessman in Topeka, began publication of *The Plaindealer* in 1899, just two years after Booker T. Washington had made a well-received speech in Topeka advocating racial support for black businesses. In 1914, black political leaders, influenced by Du Bois, formed the Topeka chapter of the NAACP; Aaron Douglas's future father-in-law was a founding member of this chapter. A year after its inception, protesters associated with the NAACP succeeded in having the film *The Birth of a Nation* banned in Topeka. (Forty years later, of course, Topeka would be a focus of national attention when members of the NAACP challenged segregated schools in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*.)

Black newspapers also communicated information about local social events and individual artistic achievements. Reports on educational and social clubs appeared regularly in the columns of such newspapers. Women's literary societies such as the Pierian Club in Kansas City and the Dunbar Society in Topeka flourished throughout the early twentieth century and beyond. Social and artistic events at elite black schools—such as Sumner High School in Kansas City, Kansas, and Lincoln High School in Kansas City, Missouri—also received considerable attention in these newspapers. Although these schools were segregated, their facilities rivaled those of neighboring white schools, and they employed excellent teachers who served as race leaders. Such schools functioned as centers of creativity and intellectual life in African American communities.

Families and the community both emphasized education, and this emphasis further supported the next generation of African American high school and college graduates. For instance, Langston Hughes (who moved to Harlem in 1924) lived from 1909 to 1915 with his grandmother in Lawrence, Kansas, where he excelled in elementary school. Early in life, Hughes developed a sense of family honor and community responsibility, on which he drew throughout his career. From his grandmother, Mary Langston, in particular he acquired a sense of responsibility to his family and to African Americans. Several of his ancestors had fought slavery and segregation; for instance, his grandfather Charles Langston—Mary Langston's second husband—had been an abolitionist and an active member of the community. (Mary Langston's first husband, Lewis Sheridan Leary, had died after being seriously

wounded when he joined the abolitionist John Brown's assault against the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Maryland, in 1859.) Hughes also learned an appreciation for theater from his mother, Carrie Langston, who shared her passion with her son and took him on trips to nearby Kansas City to see performances.

Aaron Douglas was born a few miles west of Lawrence in Topeka, Kansas, in 1899. Douglas attended a segregated elementary school and graduated from the integrated Topeka High School in 1917. While he was a high school student, Douglas established a reputation among his peers and teachers as an excellent artist and a serious student, forming an early taste for, in his words, the "heavy" literature of writers such as Emerson, Bacon, Dumas, and Shakespeare. In 1915 and again in 1917, Douglas designed the cover images for the high school yearbook. The caption under his image in the yearbook of 1917 noted: "He is one of the most talented artists in school and he has specialized in Art ever since he entered." Despite his poverty, Douglas graduated from the school of fine arts at the University of Nebraska in 1922; he was the first African American to receive such a degree there. Through his art, writing, teaching, and public speaking, Douglas challenged antiblack racism and the resulting barriers that the average African American faced in mainstream American society.

Education promised unique opportunities to young black women and men. In *Shadow and Act*, for instance, Ralph Ellison explains how a "frontiersmen" atmosphere in Oklahoma during the 1920s encouraged him to read and grow intellectually. Ellison recalled that this prevailing attitude of wide-open freedom offered him an opportunity to imagine himself in the roles of the figures—white, black, and other—he read about and saw in early movies. The writer, poet, and editor Frank Marshall Davis grew up combing the stacks of the library in Arkansas City, Kansas, and then studied journalism at Kansas State University in Manhattan before moving east to Chicago.

Like education, music—especially blues and jazz—was an important aspect and source of the cultural renaissance. In their later writings, Frank Marshall Davis, Ralph Ellison, and Langston Hughes all note how important it was for them to hear blues and jazz in local venues as they were growing up. Great jazz musicians such as Charlie "Bird" Parker (born in 1920 and raised in Kansas City) and Coleman Hawkins (born in 1904 in St. Joseph, Missouri, and raised in Topeka, Kansas) were part of coterie groups of musicians who had created their sound in Kansas City and Chicago.

In the 1920s and 1930s, clubs and theaters in Kansas City were centered on the jazz district at Eighteenth and Vine. Hot spots such as Club Reno, Gem Theater, and Lyric Hall earned national reputations. In Kansas City, as in Harlem during the renaissance, the jazz scene supported black artists who were expressing themselves in their own unique styles. The pianist William “Count” Basie came to Kansas City in 1927, and in 1935, he led the Barons of Rhythm, a group that included Walter “Hot Lips” Page, Lester “Pres” Young, Buster Smith, and, a year later, Eddie Durham. The saxophonist Charlie Parker—whose own nickname, “Bird,” initiated the name “Birdland” for the scene in Kansas City—joined Jay McShann’s band in Kansas City in 1938 and then toured throughout the nation, including New York. The talent and ambition of musicians in Kansas City led them to develop a regional cultural renaissance and also propelled them to success in Chicago and New York, the national centers of black culture.

Even before jazz gained broad popularity in the 1920s and 1930s, however, vaudeville acts with roots in the plains states had toured the country. George Walker, who was born in Lawrence, Kansas, c. 1873, performed throughout Kansas before taking his act on the road from San Francisco to New York. While he was in San Francisco, Walker teamed up with Bert Williams; these two men would bring the cakewalk to mainstream white audiences. Similarly, Hattie McDaniel, who was born in 1895 in Wichita, Kansas, left school in 1910 to perform on the traveling vaudeville circuit. (In 1940, McDaniel became the first African American to win an Oscar, for her portrayal of Mammy in *Gone With the Wind*.)

In expressing their talents, black artists had to overcome many obstacles. Langston Hughes’s white seventh-grade teacher, for instance, remembered him fifty years later only as a troublemaker with “no talent, much less promise” (Rampersad 1986, 17). Such a comment, half a century after the fact, suggests the difficulties many potential artists and scholars in Kansas and throughout the plains states must have faced at the time as they struggled for achievement. Yet Hughes, Douglas, and countless other African American artists contributed enormously to the flowering of black culture known as the Harlem, or New Negro, Renaissance.

CHERYL R. RAGAR

See also Blues; Crisis, The; Douglas, Aaron; Ellison, Ralph; Hughes, Langston; Jazz; Survey Graphic; Williams, Egbert Austin “Bert”

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Harlem Renaissance in the United States: 6—Philadelphia

Philadelphia’s contribution to the Harlem Renaissance has traditionally been defined in terms of cultural center (Harlem) versus periphery (Philadelphia). For instance, the landmark exhibition “Harlem Renaissance:

Art of Black America" (1987) positioned Philadelphia in opposition to Harlem:

Indeed, the artistic migration to Harlem would have been modest to negligible without the efforts of a half dozen or so prominent figures. Otherwise the Harlem cultural scene would have become little more than a larger version of Washington, D.C., or Philadelphia, places where arts and letters meant Saturday night adventures in tidy parlors, among mostly tidy-minded literati.

Recent scholarship has deemphasized the notion of Harlem as an exclusive site of this cultural phenomenon, instead viewing it as "a geopolitical metaphor for modernity and an icon for an increasingly complex black diasporal presence in the world" (Powell 1997).

Although less significant than New York, Philadelphia did play an essential role in advancing the black cultural movement of the 1920s. As the nation's first capital, as one of America's oldest settlements, and as Pennsylvania's largest city, Philadelphia was linked to the plight of African Americans, their cultural aspirations, and their quest for political emancipation. Also, its seaport and central geographic location on the eastern seaboard made it a center of commerce and trading where the arts, literature, and music could flower.

In the early twentieth century, Philadelphia, like other large cities, provided a community of increasingly mobile artists, musicians, and writers with an urban-centered experience of modernity. Philadelphia's impact on the Harlem Renaissance manifested itself in three areas: (1) in a spirit of tolerance and cultural experimentation stemming from the city's abolitionist heritage and deep-rooted religious traditions; (2) in a community of innovative artists, writers, and musicians whose works explored the nexus of modernity and African American identity; and (3) in the advancement of educational opportunities for blacks in prominent local institutions.

Philadelphia was one of the few American cities with significant black populations as early as 1790; and in Philadelphia (unlike, say, New York and Baltimore, which had a large number of slaves), most blacks were free. Quaker settlers had rejected the institution of slavery early on, although they maintained segregation. Also, Philadelphia had a long history of independent black churches that advanced cultural and social endeavors. Bishop Richard Allen's African Methodist

Episcopal (AME) Church in Philadelphia became the country's first black congregation. As early as 1831, Allen coordinated black conventions advocating literacy and education. Building on the abolitionist heritage and strong religious traditions, Philadelphia's black populace developed a resilient spirit of cultural autonomy and self-determination. Abolitionist patronage supported the production of art and material culture. Philadelphia was not a haven from racism, but its diverse ethnic communities and varied social composition differed from the harsh realities of segregation in the South. Its uniquely positioned black population is also evident in W. E. B. Du Bois's landmark sociological study *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899). Jones (1995) characterizes Philadelphia as "the artistic apex of 19th century African America in terms of its visual arts production, exhibits, collecting and documentary efforts. In this context, it also functions as a model of both the major accomplishments of, and obstacles to, African American artistic expression."

In the early twentieth century, Philadelphia offered African Americans the economic and political conditions that engendered the Harlem Renaissance. Blacks in Philadelphia, as in other industrialized cities of the Northeast and Midwest, experienced a series of demographic and social transformations. In the first two decades of the new century, the city attracted large numbers of blacks from a predominantly rural South. Philadelphia also functioned as a stopover for those continuing their artistic and intellectual journey to Harlem. Like New York, Philadelphia had an economic and social infrastructure to accommodate the influx of new migrants and the social and cultural impulses that accompanied them. Throughout the 1920s, then, numerous writers, artists, musicians, and performers lived or worked in Philadelphia, creating a convergence of artistic practice that has come to characterize the Harlem Renaissance. Some artists had been born and raised in Philadelphia; others had formative educational experiences there before moving away; still others spent their most productive years there.

Philadelphia's heritage of nineteenth-century black cultural associations fostered the emergence of literary societies during the Harlem Renaissance era. In the 1920s, various literary currents came together in *Black Opals*, a prestigious journal featuring prose, poetry, and reviews by local black writers who had formed a society of the same name. Contributors to *Black Opals* included Lewis Grandison Alexander (1900–1945), who was from Washington, D.C., but was based in Philadelphia and had studied at the University of

Pennsylvania; and Effie Lee Newsome (Mary Effie Lee, 1885–1979), who was a native of Philadelphia and had extensive educational experience at Wilberforce University, Oberlin College, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and the University of Pennsylvania. Newsome also contributed regularly to the children’s column in *Opportunity*.

Alain Locke (1886–1954) was also a native of Philadelphia, and he maintained close ties with the city even though he lived in Washington, D.C., and taught at Howard University for most of his life. His influential book *The New Negro* (1925) laid out the vision of the renaissance as a black contribution to American music, art, and literature that would simultaneously embrace a uniquely African American heritage. Another pivotal figure, the novelist, poet, biographer, and literary critic Jessie Redmon Fauset (1882–1961), had been schooled in Philadelphia; she received a scholarship to attend Cornell University as the first black woman there, before pursuing another degree in classical languages from the University of Pennsylvania. Fauset became the literary editor of *The Crisis* in 1919. Besides writing significant literary works about black middle-class life, she was a mentor to younger, more bohemian writers, including Jean Toomer, Langston Hughes, and Countee Cullen. Fauset was part of Harlem’s literary scene but kept up an ongoing involvement with *Black Opals* in Philadelphia—and also with the Saturday Nighters Club in Washington, and with other literary clubs, underscoring the mobility of figures of the Harlem Renaissance. The writer Idabell Yeiser was also based in Philadelphia and deserves mention for her insightful accounts of her extensive journeys in Europe and Africa.

A sizable number of painters, printmakers, and sculptors created a visual counterpart to the evolving body of literature during 1918–1935, the period associated with the Harlem Renaissance. Well-known artists whose work and legacies point to Philadelphia as a place of artistic formation include Henry Ossawa Tanner, Meta Warrick Fuller, Laura Wheeler Waring, Jacob Lawrence, and Dox Thrash. Philadelphia’s black artists owed much of their success to the city’s excellent art schools, universities, and museum collections, which provided opportunities for artistic inspiration, professional networking, and exchanges of ideas.

The Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition had recognized leading black artists such as Edward Mitchell Bannister and Edmonia Lewis as early as 1876, when Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859–1937) was beginning his studies at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

Frustrated by racial prejudice and harassment, Tanner later studied in France and became an expatriate there, but he remained an important figure at home. In 1899, the Philadelphia Museum of Art bought his painting *The Annunciation* (1897); this was the first acquisition of his work by an American institution. Tanner’s growing international success drew other Philadelphian artists to Paris, where they sought his advice and academic guidance.

The sculptor Meta Warrick Fuller (1877–1968), a native of Philadelphia, also went abroad for training; after attending the Philadelphia Museum School of Industrial Art (later the Philadelphia College of Art), she spent three years in Paris, where Tanner looked after her. Fuller returned to Philadelphia in 1903 as a fairly well-established artist. She exhibited frequently at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and earned a gold medal at the Tercentennial Exposition of 1907 for *Jamestown Tableau*, a sculptural ensemble recounting the settlement of the first black community in colonial America in 1607. Fuller moved to Massachusetts after her marriage in 1909 but left an influential legacy in Philadelphia. Her career, spanning several decades and two continents and embracing emancipation and liberation, anticipated the spirit of the Harlem Renaissance. Fuller’s well-known bronze sculpture *Ethiopia Awakening* (1914) foreshadowed the emergence of a new cultural consciousness among African Americans at the onset of the renaissance era.

The painter Laura Wheeler Waring (1887–1948), who was from Connecticut, arrived in Philadelphia in 1907 to attend the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. She moved on to found the art department at nearby Cheyney State Teachers College, where she would remain until 1945. During the 1920s, a scholarship enabled her to study in Paris, where Tanner introduced her to a group of expatriates constituting a who’s who of the Harlem Renaissance: the artists Palmer Hayden, Malvin Gray Johnson, Nancy Elizabeth Prophet, Augusta Savage, and Hale Woodruff; the writers Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, and Jessie Redmon Fauset; and the performers Lillian Evanti, Roland Hayes, and Paul Robeson.

The Philadelphian sculptor May Howard Jackson (1877–1931) also attended the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, between 1895 and 1902. Declining an invitation from Fuller to go to Europe for advanced academic training, Jackson instead accepted a teaching position at Howard University in Washington, D.C., where she continued to produce portrait busts of prominent African Americans such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Paul

Laurence Dunbar. She also produced an important series of sculptures representing women and children during the 1910s and 1920s; these works explored issues of racial identity, a subject at the heart of the Harlem Renaissance. At this time another sculptor, Augusta Savage, who was already working for the periodical *Fire!!*, exhibited her work at Philadelphia's Sesquicentennial Exhibition of 1926. The Philadelphian Allan R. Freelon (1895–1960), a painter and printmaker who was the artistic director of *Black Opals*, frequently exhibited at the Harmon Foundation; his works also appeared as covers and illustrations in *The Crisis* and *Opportunity*. Freelon was a graduate of the Philadelphia Museum School of Industrial Arts, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Tyler School of Arts, and later became supervisor of Philadelphia's art education program. Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000) spent part of his childhood in Philadelphia before moving to Harlem at age thirteen. His family's experience of the great migration from the rural South to the industrialized North later figured prominently in his sixty-painting work *Migration of the Negro* (1941).

Others artists—building on the legacy of Philadelphia's visual culture of the 1920s—began their careers during the mid-1930s, just as the Harlem Renaissance was declining. This new cohort of young and highly productive African American printmakers and painters worked under the auspices of the graphic arts division of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Federal Arts Project. Dox Thrash (1893–1965) experimented with the limitations print as a medium and consequently developed the carborundum print process, a technique that allowed for a wider range of tints and tonal variations. Thrash's expertise in technique complemented the powerful social commentary of the printmaker Raymond Steth (1916–1997). Other significant members of the graphic arts group included Claude Clark (b. 1915), Samuel Joseph Brown (b. 1907), and Humbert Lincoln Howard (1906–1990). Howard studied with James A. Porter at Howard University before transferring to the University of Pennsylvania. Like many other black artists in Philadelphia, Howard advanced his studies at the legendary Barnes Foundation. He frequently exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, the Philadelphia Art Alliance, and the Pyramid Club, a social organization for black professionals.

The architect Julian F. Abele is a captivating yet frequently overlooked figure of Philadelphia's Harlem Renaissance. He was the first black architecture graduate of the University of Pennsylvania (in 1902), and he then studied at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris with financial support from his patron, Horace Trumbauer.

Howard joined Trumbauer's architectural firm in 1906 and later became its chief designer. Abele and Trumbauer developed a symbiotic working relationship that compensated for their individual difficulties—Trumbauer lacked formal training; Abele, although outstandingly talented, was hampered by the racially charged climate of Philadelphia's architectural association—and they succeeded in obtaining important commissions, such as the residence of James B. Duke in New York City and the architectural master plan for Duke University.

Philadelphia was a principal center of music in the United States and had a range of excellent concert halls. Its role as a center of music publishing in the nineteenth century preceded its role as a site of popular music. During the 1920s, its black churches produced internationally successful gospel choirs such as the Clara Ward Singers. This was also the time when Philadelphia emerged as a center for jazz. Important figures included the pianist Sam Wooding (1895–1985), a native of Philadelphia, whose band played at hotels in Atlantic City in 1919 before moving on to New York. By the mid-1920s, Wooding's jazz band and dance revue *Chocolate Kiddies* conquered European stages. In 1921, the dancer Josephine Baker (1906–1975), who was then still unknown, arrived in Philadelphia with a traveling show; she met and married her second husband, William Howard Baker, there. The opera singer Marian Anderson (1897–1993) was a Philadelphian, although she first gained fame in Europe before receiving belated recognition at home. Other important figures with ties to Philadelphia include the singer and actor Paul Robeson (1898–1976), the singer Ethel Waters (1896–1977), and, later, the trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie (1917–1993). Still later, the tenor saxophonist John Coltrane (1926–1967) chose Philadelphia for studies: He attended the Ornstein School of Music and Granoff Studios during his formative years.

Another aspect of Philadelphia's role during the Harlem Renaissance era was its educational institutions. In addition to leading art schools and museum collections, the greater Philadelphia area had some of the nation's oldest black colleges and universities. Cheyney State Teachers College and Lincoln University, originally established by Quakers to educate free blacks and runaway slaves, attracted African Americans from Philadelphia and beyond. The celebrated art collection and educational foundation of Albert C. Barnes in Merion turned out to be another cultural magnet. Established in 1922 as a nonprofit organization to promote appreciation of and education in the fine arts, the Barnes Foundation contributed signifi-

cantly to the formation of Philadelphia's black cultural movement. Barnes's interest in both Western and African art proved particularly attractive to many black artists; and his belief in egalitarian causes, his commitment to education as a tool for social change, and his financial support created a welcoming environment for Aaron Douglas, Claude Clark, Horace Pippin, and others. In 1926, the Barnes Foundation established close ties with Lincoln University—a collaboration that epitomizes the cultural synergy of Philadelphia's black renaissance.

JÜRGEN HEINRICH

See also Anderson, Marian; Baker, Josephine; Barnes, Albert C. *Black Opals*; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Federal Programs; Fire!!; Fuller, Meta Warrick; Harmon Foundation; Jackson, May Howard; Lawrence, Jacob; Locke, Alain; Porter, James Amos; Robeson, Paul; Savage, Augusta; Tanner, Henry Ossawa; Waring, Laura Wheeler; Waters, Ethel; Works Progress Administration

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Harlem Renaissance in the United States: 7—The South

During the Harlem Renaissance, the South was not a place for African Americans to remain in, raise families,

and prosper but, as in the days of slavery, a "prison-house of bondage"—a place to leave. Actually, though, the South was a region of contradictions for its black residents. Patterns such as vigorously enforced race-based segregation, economic exploitation, suspension of civil rights, political disenfranchisement, and relentlessly brutal suppression of dissent existed alongside influential black institutions: newspapers, churches, and schools. These black institutions, formed by and within African American communities, nurtured a new leadership and new strategies for resisting oppression and effecting social change. Southern artists, entertainers, musicians, and writers mined black sacred and secular traditions in order to introduce new forms and themes to national and international audiences, meanwhile debating over the enduring value of these traditions and over daring pronouncements about legitimately African American aesthetics. Nevertheless, for about fifteen years during the "great migration," hundreds of thousands of black farm families did move to the North or West, leaving the boll weevil infestation and their own second-class citizenship and grinding losses as sharecroppers for a more prosperous urban life, factory jobs, and promises of social equality. The South, for its part, struggled to reconcile its dismal history of enslavement, and the aftermath of enslavement, with the new directions in religion, education, activism, and the arts that the Harlem Renaissance offered.

Religion

Because of the "black codes" that prevented slaves from gathering to worship communally, or that allowed services for slave congregations to be led only by ministers hand-picked to reinforce notions of racial inferiority, African American religion developed a subversive element throughout much of the South. Both free and enslaved blacks devised coded expressions of an African past manifested in the movements, sermons, spirituals, rituals, and icons of both Protestants and Catholics; thus religion became an expression of rebellion against bondage and an indicator of a distinctly African American culture. For example, in Louisiana—as in other states where large numbers of slaves had been imported from the Caribbean—*santería* flourished alongside Catholicism; and Catholicism and west African religions were reassembled into a new belief system. It thus is not surprising that during the Harlem Renaissance black churches in the South continued to represent the heart and soul of African American culture. They were incubators for

political and educational leaders, sources of relief and renewal to communities besieged by Jim Crow, and affirmative symbols to artists, regardless of race.

African American churches in the South were essential in educating black youth and organizing political assaults against racism. They raised money to send their brightest students to the segregated colleges and normal schools that served them, and created networks of families to house, feed, and pay teachers who traveled to their communities. W. E. B. Du Bois, in his *Souls of Black Folk* (1903), recalls such assistance when he finished matriculating at Fisk University in Nashville and began teaching in a one-room schoolhouse in rural Tennessee. Many students would return to their southern homes as ministers, to ask local whites for calm and humanity in times of racial tension, and to develop “bully pulpits” from which they called for immediate or gradual relaxation of racial apartheid. In addition to their spiritual functions, African American churches in the South performed services as mundane, and as specific to the region, as providing safe havens and meals for black travelers when all-white hotels and restaurants refused their patronage.

In rural as well as urban communities in the South, African American churches offered a release valve for pressures built up by racial stereotyping, financial hardships, and so on. Church members fraternized at picnics, weddings, funerals, ice cream socials, tent meetings, revivals, and other events; and they published newspapers disseminating political opinions as well as announcing the locations of places of worship and the hours of services. In all this, they found freedom from the surveillance by the master that had characterized the religious practices of an earlier generation. As the nation became urbanized and industrialized, some of the creative productions of the Harlem Renaissance—such as Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston’s play *Mule Bone: A Comedy of Negro Life* (1931) and Hurston’s novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)—celebrated southern black churches or satirized them, or both.

Education

During the Harlem Renaissance, the South was a site for the education of professional and working-class African Americans, despite the obstacles raised by the “separate and unequal” Jim Crow system, which impaired the quality of instruction, limited the availability of institutions, and weakened the power of black communities to define their own educational agenda.

Shoddy buildings, shortages of teachers, inadequate instruction, and poor equipment plagued segregated rural schools especially. Even when teachers could be found to accept the low or inconsistent pay that such communities offered, and these communities’ remoteness from cities, the pupils often stayed away from school to help in the fields or otherwise assist their families financially. Rural areas were dotted by Bible colleges, funded primarily by such denominations as the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Baptists, that developed pastors and teachers for such communities. However, the most visible symbols of black people’s educational progress in the region were industrial schools such as Booker T. Washington’s “experiment” in Tuskegee, Alabama, and Hampton Institute in Virginia.

The industrial schools were funded by a combination of contributions from white northern philanthropists (the Carnegies, Rockefellers, Rosenwalds, and Phelps-Stokeses, for example), religious organizations, and African American individuals and communities. The curriculum emphasized practical skills, discipline, hard work, and self-help, along with cultural awareness and racial pride. Whites who suspected that too much education and literacy would stir up restlessness and dissatisfaction among blacks in the region were reassured that the students would return to their communities with marketable trades such as carpentry, bricklaying, dressmaking, and laundering. With buildings constructed by the students and dining halls stocked with food that the students prepared, industrial schools modeled thrift, self-sufficiency, morality, persistence, deferred gratification, and cooperation—qualities that proved crucial to arguments for extending the full rights of citizenship to African Americans.

Yet these schools did have detractors. Many critics complained, for example, about the preponderance of white faculty members and presidents, although by the 1920s black administrators and instructors were being hired more routinely than had been the case in the nineteenth century. And the novelist Nella Larsen—after an unhappy experience living at Fisk with her husband, a physics teacher—invented a fictional institution, Naxos, in her novel *Quicksand* (1928), to skewer the industrial model for promoting conformity, snobbery, and self-hate. In response to such criticism, institutions including Fisk and Atlanta University added liberal arts tracks to their vocational offerings in order to prepare the best and the brightest to enter such professions as law, teaching, and medicine.

Despite such objections, southern black educational institutions at all levels were crucial to the establishment of a black middle class in the region and to the development of innovative individuals. For instance, the chemist George Washington Carver spent his career teaching at Tuskegee University, where he made internationally recognized discoveries regarding paint dyes and soybean, peanut, and potato production. James Weldon Johnson served as principal of the Central Colored Grammar School in Jacksonville, Florida, before he began his celebrated creative career in New York City. Similarly, African American women found opportunities to rise to leadership positions by establishing and directing all-female schools, such as—in Georgia—Spelman Seminary (later Spelman College) in Atlanta and Haines Normal and Industrial School in Augusta; or by taking positions as “lady principals” at coeducational schools. And black families in rural areas benefited from agricultural extension and community outreach services, libraries, health care programs, and primary schools staffed by the faculty and students of educational institutions.

Activism

Black southerners during the Harlem Renaissance confronted a hostile social and political climate and entrenched Jim Crow policies. They were subjected to literacy tests and poll taxes that denied them the vote; to sharecropping and low-wage agricultural labor that created economic inequities; and to a legal system that encouraged false arrests of law-abiding African Americans and the exploitation of convict labor by wealthy whites. Additionally, social control often took the form of mob violence. Particularly in rural areas, lynching was practiced indiscriminately; the victims were men, women, and children whose offenses were frequently more imaginary than real. In the cities, especially after black soldiers who had served in World War I returned from overseas to compete for jobs and agitate for social justice, angry whites incited riots that devastated African American communities and caused the death of many residents—most notoriously in Longview, Texas, and Washington, D.C., during the “red summer” of 1919.

The National Association of Colored Women (NACW) and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) responded to such oppression by campaigning through the legal and political systems. They pressed at the local, state, and national levels for antilynching legislation, increases

in teachers’ pay, and additional resources for public health and educational institutions in African American communities. Sometimes black citizens armed themselves against lynch mobs and rioters. As a final recourse, they could leave the South as part of the great migration—which thus was a way of actively resisting their disempowerment and of asserting their dignity as much as it was a way to find more lucrative industrial jobs or to find better housing and schools.

Culture

Southerners were central figures in the artistic flowering that African Americans initiated. The South as a romantic “land of cotton” was still quite prominent in the national imagination. However, African American artists of the Harlem Renaissance doubted that the region held pleasant associations for their people, and their artistic expression influenced mainstream popular and commercial culture.

Writers and visual artists stood at the forefront of a movement to remove stereotypes of black southerners and to assert the complexity and beauty of these black people’s lives. They also challenged the notion that Harlem was the only black space rich enough to produce enduring artistic contributions. The South inspired northern black artists to visit, live there, and produce honest portrayals, and it inspired native southern artists to capture their insiders’ views for posterity.

Jean Toomer’s experimental novel *Cane* (1923), for example, derived from his brief residence as a teacher in Georgia. It contrasted vivid landscapes, alluring mulatto beauties, and the haunting sounds of spirituals, work songs, and blues with the terrors of lynching and the stark economic hardships that characterized the rural black South. James Weldon Johnson, in his *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912), fictionalized the life of a light-complexioned protagonist in Georgia during the Jim Crow period. Langston Hughes’s poems in his *Weary Blues* (1926) relied on musical rhythms that could be traced to the days of slavery in the South. Zora Neale Hurston, in *Mules and Men* (1935), collected folklore from the region. Johnson’s sermons in *God’s Trombones* (1927), along with the spirituals he and his brother anthologized (1925, 1926), brought attention to additional creative forms. Walter White, a longtime official of the NAACP, could pass for white and occasionally infiltrated meetings of the Ku Klux Klan to gather information on lynching. Out of these experiences came his *Rope and Faggot: An*

Analysis of Judge Lynch (1929), as well as *Fire in the Flint* (1924), on African American life in Georgia; and *Flight* (1926), a portrait of mulatto life and the black middle class in Atlanta.

The painter Jacob Lawrence, who was based in Harlem, captured the many ways in which flight and its symbols—the train, the North Star—recur as motifs in black southern history. African American schools, most notably Fisk and Tuskegee, commissioned such visual artists to design and decorate buildings and to train students.

Singers such as Bessie Smith and Gertrude “Ma” Rainey and musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Joseph “King” Oliver, Sidney Bechet, and Jelly Roll Morton refined blues and jazz in cities like Memphis and New Orleans. Frequently, they resettled in the North to perform in larger venues and record for the nascent “race record” industry but would then come to the South again on the “chitlin’ circuit” to perform in black-owned vaudeville houses or traveling tent shows. These musicians further demonstrate the rich contribution of the South to the Harlem Renaissance.

BARBARA McCASKILL

See also Armstrong, Louis; Artists; Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man; Bechet, Sidney; Du Bois, W. E. B.; *Fire in the Flint*, The; God’s Trombones; Great Migration; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; Johnson, James Weldon; Johnson, John Rosamond; Jim Crow; Larsen, Nella; Lawrence, Jacob; Morton, Jelly Roll; Oliver, Joseph “King”; Quicksand; Rainey, Gertrude “Ma”; Riots: 2—Red Summer of 1919; Smith, Bessie; Toomer, Jean; Vaudeville; Washington, Booker T.; White, Walter

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Harlem Renaissance in the United States: 8—Texas and the Southwest

The Harlem Renaissance influenced and promoted creative efforts of African Americans in Texas and the Southwest, although output was sometimes more restricted in the Southwest (as in the western United States in general) than in New York. Many prominent participants in the Harlem Renaissance had grown up in the West before moving to Harlem. Many other black westerners were prevented from relocating to New York because of the distances and the expense involved, and because (especially in the case of black women) they were reluctant to break family ties; these creative artists participated in regional and local renaissances in their home communities, despite numerous obstacles that were often imposed by whites.

The Harlem Renaissance was manifested in an increase in the artistic productivity of blacks in Texas and the Southwest, and it took place in a more tolerant social climate than had existed in previous years. Blacks’ artistic endeavors and expressions were fostered by organized drama groups, theaters, nightclubs, galleries, schools, and newspapers. Avenues for artistic

expression were opened not only by the Harlem Renaissance but also by a growing middle class, better educational opportunities, and the growth of cities. The cities of the region—for example, Albuquerque, Amarillo, Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston, Phoenix, and San Antonio—served as vital outlets for black artistic expression during the renaissance.

But not all African American artists in the Southwest found a ready path to success. In white Texas, for instance, opportunities for black painters were limited; few black artists are recorded, and the works of those few were seldom given prominence. However, in September 1930, seventy-three examples of painting and sculpture, selected from more than 200 hundred nationwide entries for the Harmon Award, were exhibited in Houston. A black Houstonian, Samuel Countee, was one of the prominent exhibitors. Countee's painting *My Guitar*, a life-size portrait of a black man with a guitar, was later hung in the Negro Hall of Life at the Texas Centennial Exposition in 1936 and became a very popular piece in the collection. Frank Sheinall, an elevator operator from Galveston who was a self-taught painter in oils, also had a painting in the centennial exhibit, and the following year he was featured at the Fifth Annual Exhibit of the Negro Carnegie Branch Library in Houston.

Black dramatists in Texas also faced difficulties, because the opportunities that existed in theater were limited to actors rather than playwrights. Few, if any, plays written by black Texans of the period appear to have survived, but actors in the cities of the Southwest found new opportunities. Three examples are Clarence Brooks, Dick Campbell, and Arthur Wilson, who were all born in Texas. Campbell and Wilson both performed in Harlem during the renaissance: Campbell at the Cotton Club and Wilson in productions of the Lincoln and Lafayette theaters. In Houston, Texas, as early as 1919, the American Theater advertised that it would offer the best of colored professionals playing in colored houses. In 1931, blacks in Houston and San Antonio established Negro "little theater" troupes that presented shows throughout Texas. Black actors in Dallas organized the Dallas Negro Players, who gave their first performance in December 1928 to a racially mixed audience. The Dallas Negro Players experienced considerable financial difficulties, but in the autumn of 1930 presented *Jute*, a three-act play on race relations written by a white Dallasite, Kathleen Witherspoon.

It was in music—particularly blues, gospel, ragtime, and jazz—that Texan African Americans excelled and contributed most significantly to the national cultural

milieu during the 1920s and 1930s. Their music grew out of the unique experience of black Texans and became a permanent part of the national musical heritage. The musicians wrote, performed, and ultimately recorded their work. The most successful example during this period was Blind Lemon Jefferson, a blues singer from Dallas who recorded for Paramount; during the late 1920s he was the best-selling black musician in the nation.

The most versatile black Texas musician was Huddie "Leadbelly" Ledbetter. Leadbelly began singing early in his life; spent the years 1918–1925 and 1930–1934 in prisons in Texas and Louisiana, where he became the lead man, or caller, for the work gangs; and eventually gained national recognition with songs such as "Good-night Irene," "Midnight Special," and "Jail-House Blues." Leadbelly shared certain characteristics with many blues singers—intense vitality, a roving spirit, independence, and arrogance. Other talented black Texas performers included Texas Alexander, "Whistlin'" Alex Moore, Aaron Thibaux "T-Bone" Walker, Mance Lipscomb, Sam "Lightning" Hopkins, and "Ragtime" Henry Thomas. Beulah "Sippie" Wallace, who was born in Houston, combined boogie-woogie with gospel, blues, and jazz; she had a successful career singing throughout Texas and touring with Louis Armstrong. Another vocalist, Victoria Spivey from Houston, sang in clubs and shows, acted in films, and wrote songs, including "Black Snake Blues."

The career of the singer and writer Penman Lovinggood indicates the opportunities for educated, talented black Texans in music during the Harlem Renaissance. He was born in Austin, the son of the founder and longtime president of Samuel Huston College. By 1925 he became a noted tenor in New York; in the 1930s, he performed with John Rosamond Johnson's quartet and the W. C. Handy orchestra. Lovinggood also wrote an opera and the book *Famous Modern Negro Musicians* (1921).

As more blacks moved into Texas cities, outstanding black bands also emerged. The bands directed by Troy Floyd of San Antonio and Alphonso Trent of Dallas achieved a national reputation. In Fort Worth, King Holston and Frank Bonapartes led highly popular black bands. Other musical groups included the Blues Syncopaters in El Paso, the Real Jazz Orchestra of Laredo, and Gene Coy's Happy Black Aces in Amarillo. These bands toured the state, playing to enthusiastic audiences in major cities and in more remote areas.

The singer Julius Bledsoe, who was born in Waco in 1899 and was educated at Bishop College, left Texas

for New York in 1924. Four years later he was acclaimed for his rendition of “Ol’ Man River” in the musical *Show Boat*. Maud Cuney-Hare, who was also born in Texas, said in her book *Negro Musicians and Their Music* that Bledsoe was the most versatile African American singer on the current stage. The swing pianist Teddy Wilson was born in Austin in 1912, studied music theory at Tuskegee and Talladega colleges, joined the Benny Goodman Trio in 1935, and left the Goodman trio four years later to form his own swing band, which he reduced to a sextet in 1940. The contralto Etta Moten was a native Texan (although she left Texas early in her life) who studied at Paul Quinn College; she became a successful singer on radio and appeared in movies and onstage during the 1930s.

In 1925, the Texas Association of Negro Musicians was organized, with headquarters in Fort Worth (where it was host to a national convention of Negro musicians in 1929); it was an affiliate of the National Association of Negro Musicians, which had started in 1919. The Texas Association published a journal, *The Negro Musician*, whose editor (and the guiding hand of the association) was Manet Harrison Fowler. Fowler, a dramatic soprano, had been born and educated in Fort Worth; at one time she operated a school in New York, the Nawlimu School for the Development of African Music and Creative Arts, before returning to Texas.

During the period of the renaissance, Texas also had an articulate group of poets, most of whom were middle-class and college-educated. Their poetry ranged widely in content, philosophy, and approach. In 1925, Bernice Love Wiggins published a volume of poetry, *Tuneful Tales*, in El Paso, but she later moved to California and was heard from no more. In 1933, the folklorist J. Mason Brewer published his first book of poems, *Negrato: Negro Dialect Poems From the Southwest*. Brewer (who was the Texas counterpart of Alain Locke) also collected the work of other black poets in Texas during the renaissance, in *Heralding Dawn: An Anthology of Verse* (1936). In his introductory essay, he argued that Texas poets should use materials drawn from the life of the urban and rural masses and should focus on African American culture, superstitions, customs, and traditions. Most of the black Texans included in his anthology did draw from that traditional base.

Among these poets was Clarence F. Carr, who wrote “When Dad Cooks Soda Biscuits.” Carr had studied at Wilberforce University, where he came under the influence of Paul Laurence Dunbar. Another

poet in the anthology was Lawrence Carlyle Tatum, a resident of Limestone County who also lived for a time in Los Angeles, where he published two volumes of verse. Brewer also included his own poetry, such as “Deep Ellum and Central Tracks,” a vivid portrayal of the red-light district in Dallas. Some of the poets, such as J. Austin Love and Josie B. Hall, drew on the spiritual life of blacks in Texas. “The Will to Do,” a poem by J. W. Fridia (a physician from Waco who wrote poetry for the *Houston Informer*), expressed a middle-class belief in self-help. Black Texas poets also expressed some criticism of the black community. Hypocritical behavior is castigated in Richard T. Hamilton’s delightfully sarcastic “Sister Mandy Attends the Business League.” Hamilton was a native of Alabama who had earned a medical degree at Howard University and had come to Dallas in 1901.

Two poets—Malcolm Christian Conley and Laretta Holman Gooden—were openly critical of the segregated, racist society in Texas. Conley, who was from Tyler, began to appear in national publications in 1930: His “Four Walls” was published in *The Messenger* and his “Nineveh” and “American Ideals” in *The Crisis*. Gooden lived in Dallas, where she and her husband operated a grocery store. In “Questions to a Mob,” she inveighed against lynching. The writings of these black poets marked an increasing willingness by black Texans in the 1930s to speak out against the inequities of their position.

Although poetry in Texas was equal to that of other parts of the nation in output and nature, African Americans in Texas and the Southwest—with one notable exception—were less successful in fiction. Melvin B. Tolson (who was later to become an acclaimed poet) wrote a novel, *Beyond the Zaretto*, in 1924, but was unable to have it published. He did publish a short story in 1926, “The Tragedy of the Yarr Karr,” in the *Wiley Wild Cat*. Jennie V. Mills, a homemaker in Waco, also published a short story, “Doomed to Despair,” in the *Waco Messenger* in 1933. However, the predominant writer of fiction at this time was Anita Scott Coleman of New Mexico.

Coleman’s heritage was varied and unique. She was born in Guaymas, Sonora, Mexico, in 1890, the child of a Cuban man and a woman whom he had bought as a slave, most likely in order to free her. He later fought for the Union during the Civil War, and afterward he gravitated to Mexico and the Southwest. Anita Scott grew up in New Mexico, graduated from New Mexico Teachers College in Silver City, taught school, married, and later moved to Los Angeles. In

1920, in a biographical sketch for *The Competitor*, she was referred to as Miss Coleman from Silver City, so she seems to have been married and in New Mexico at that time; evidently her career as a teacher ended because of her marriage. She and her husband raised four children in Los Angeles, where she also managed a boardinghouse for children and continued writing. The impact of marriage on a working woman is reflected in her stories, especially “Peter and Phoebe Up North” and “The Little Grey House.” Coleman was a polished and successful author by the time she was in her mid-twenties; she received many awards, and her work was sought by editors such as Wallace Thurman. Her twenty-one short stories and essays were published in national magazines, including *Half-Century*, *The Crisis*, *The Messenger*, *The Competitor*, and *Opportunity*; they reflect concerns of women and African Americans during the early twentieth century. Until relatively recently, her work has been mostly ignored by critics, despite its initial favorable reception, but she was a significant participant in the Harlem Renaissance.

The Hall of Negro Life at the Texas Centennial Exposition of 1936 was a culmination of the activities of the renaissance. It was funded by the federal government and had some 400,000 visitors, approximately 60 percent of whom were white. The Hall of Negro Life contained four murals by Aaron Douglas; featured music, dance, and educational and economic programs; and included an exhibit of artists of the Harlem Renaissance sponsored by the Harmon Foundation. Thomas (1938) provides a valuable tool for understanding the role of blacks in Texas culture during the 1930s.

The Texas Centennial Exposition fostered a renewed interest in the history of African Americans in Texas. In 1935, L. V. Williams had published “Teaching Negro Life and History in Texas High Schools” in the *Journal of Negro History*. The following year, three short works were published either in connection with the exhibition or as a result of this renewed interest: Ira B. Bryant Jr., *The Texas Negro Under Six Flags*; W. E. B. Du Bois, *What the Negro Has Done for the United States and Texas*; and Charles E. Hall, *Progress of the Negro in Texas*.

Finally, to gain further insight into this period in Texas, it is useful to give some more detail about two figures previously discussed briefly—J. Mason Brewer and Melvin B. Tolson. Brewer, who compiled the anthology of poetry *Heralding Dawn* and published a volume of his own poems, *Negrato*, was born in Goliad, graduated from Wiley College, took a graduate degree at Indiana University, and taught at the high school and college levels. Brewer sought diligently to

portray black culture and (like his contemporary Zora Neale Hurston) included folklore in his work. His first published writing, in 1932, was forty folktales under the title “Juneteenth” in *Tone the Bell Down*, a publication of the Texas Folklore Society. The next year, 1933, the society published Brewer’s “Old Time Negro Proverbs.” He also published a historical-political study, *Negro Legislators of Texas and Their Descendants*, in 1935.

Tolson was the Texan scholar and artist with the closest personal ties to the Harlem Renaissance. He was born in Missouri in 1898, accepted a teaching job at Wiley College in 1923, and remained at Wiley for twenty-four years. During the summers, though, he visited New York City, where he became friends with leading renaissance writers such as Langston Hughes. Hughes traveled to Texas on numerous occasions, and one of his visits resulted in the poem “West Texas.” Tolson also attended Columbia University in New York, and in 1940 he completed his master’s thesis, “The Harlem Group of Negro Writers,” which was the first scholarly study of renaissance writing.

BRUCE A. GLASRUDE

See also Bledsoe, Jules; Brooks, Clarence; Campbell, Dick; Cuney-Hare, Maud; Douglas, Aaron; Harmon Foundation; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, John Rosamond; Lovinggood, Penman; National Association of Negro Musicians; Show Boat; Spivey, Victoria; Thurman, Wallace; Wilson, Arthur “Dooley”

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Harlem Renaissance in the United States: 9—Washington, D.C.

The 1920s marked a cultural awakening among blacks in which more of them were actively involved in the arts. Their creative endeavors extended to all realms of the arts—fiction, poetry, drama, music, dance, and the visual arts. This time was unlike any other period before the 1920s in that white American publishers began to recognize black self-expression and issue it in books, magazines, and journals. The 1920s also gave rise to all-black literary quarterlies and "little magazines" that became major vehicles for the expression of the New Negro.

This new literary genius was not confined to Harlem, a section of New York City widely considered to be the "mecca" of black culture in the 1920s. Black com-

munities in many cities experienced similar, although sometimes less extensive, literary and artistic activity. Washington, D.C., was no exception. Washington was the home of many cultural leaders, writers, musicians, performers, and visual artists. Some of them had been born there, and others were a part of the "great migration," in which an estimated 700,000 to 1 million blacks left the South between 1917 and 1920. According to the census of 1920, there were approximately 109,966 blacks living in the District of Columbia, making it the city with the third-largest population of blacks in the nation.

The rise of the "New Negro" movement in Washington brought an increased interest in the life and character of blacks. There was a new degree of frankness, openness, and self-awareness. The Harlem Renaissance transformed blacks as subject and artists from the old stereotype into the New Negro, who was more militant and embraced all facets of the black experience, including African heritage, social protest, folk songs, blues, jazz, lynching, race riots, and social injustice. Three writers—Langston Hughes, Jean Toomer, and Rudolph Fisher—effectively captured the spirit, energy, and experiences of the urban masses. Their imagery conjured up the moods of city streets filled with the naturalness of ordinary people.

During the early years of the twentieth century, an increasing number of blacks settled on and near Seventh and U streets in Washington. This neighborhood, which was populated by recent migrants, was a place where writers could gather rich material for stories. Washington had a dynamic social scene; and during the 1920s and 1930s, U Street—with its supper clubs, cabarets, jazz venues, and cafés—was the undisputed entertainment capital of black Washington. Bohemian Caverns, which opened in 1926, was the queen of U Street. In the early years, evening attire was mandatory—ladies wore gowns, and gentlemen wore tuxedos. Club Bengasi was upscale and a magnet for café society. At the Dance Hall at Ninth and V streets, one could regularly hear Louis Armstrong. Patrons at the Jungle Inn jived to the music of Jelly Roll Morton. Oriental Gardens, the oldest black cabaret in the city, catered to a racially mixed crowd, and Duke Ellington worked with the legendary Bricktop. Phoenix Inn also drew racially mixed audiences. Other points of interest in the general vicinity included the Casbah, Rocky's, Cecelia's, the Capitol Pleasure Club, the Rendezvous, and the Bali Club. The big three movie houses were the Lincoln Theater, the Booker T, and the Republic.

At Seventh and U streets, there was more of a “down-home” atmosphere, bustling and full of energy. Ninth Street divided the genteel and prosperous to the west and the poorer residents to the east. The action was on Seventh Street, especially for those who had migrated from points farther South. Noise and music from the traffic, pool rooms, storefront churches, barbershops, beauty salons, and liquor stores mingled together excitingly. In fact, the pool halls were second only to barbershops as important community gathering places. There was Club Off Beat, and just a few doors down one could hear the latest sounds at the University Record Shop. The Dunbar, at Seventh and T streets, was known as a family theater; it was black-owned and featured short subjects and universal news. There were evening performances at the Howard Theater, which had a seating capacity of 1,500 and was the first legitimate theater for blacks in the nation. Its location near Seventh Street placed it at a focal point in the black community. During the 1920s, the Howard Theater and the Howard University Players collaborated to present about two plays a year. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, programming gravitated toward big bands such as those of Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Jimmie Lunceford, and Earl “Fatha” Hines. Also, in the 1930s, the Howard Theater began its amateur-night contests. The winners included performers such as Bill Kenny of the Ink Spots and Billy Eckstein. During the period of the Harlem Renaissance, programming was geared toward jazz and blues, and there was an impressive schedule that included Ella Fitzgerald.

Langston Hughes was one of the major figures who were greatly influenced by Seventh Street. Hughes claimed that while he was living in Washington, the “cultured colored society” of the northwest section ignored him. Because he had a dislike of middle-class blacks in Washington, he explored Seventh Street for the themes and characters that he portrayed in his writing. He found inspiration in the dynamic and vibrant black life that was located there, and he incorporated the stories he heard into his own work, creating fresh, racially sensitive poetry. Most of the poems he wrote in Washington appeared in *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927). In Hughes’s poetry, as in that of others of the younger generation, black life was artistically celebrated. Because the subjects of Hughes’s works were simply themselves, he created a new racial consciousness that focused on everyday black life, elevating it to a new meaning.

The community just north of Seventh and U streets was a vast contrast to the happenings at that intersection. This community was home to Howard University, Freedmen’s Hospital, Miner Normal School, and LeDroit Park, a neighborhood of strong black middle-class standing. Howard University was fertile ground for a black renaissance in the Washington area. The dean of the Harlem Renaissance, Alain Locke, was a member of the philosophy department. Illustrious faculty members in other disciplines included Kelly Miller, Ralph Bunche, Ernest Just, and T. Montgomery Gregory. Locke played an instrumental role both locally and nationally. On a local level, he helped organize the art gallery and the music department at Howard University. He and Gregory, who was a member of the drama department, collaborated to put together a student writers’ group, which became known as the Stylus Society. There was a little magazine, *The Stylus*, which served as the organ for this group. As a student at Howard University, Zora Neale Hurston was a member of the Stylus Society, and she later said it had been an important part of her early writing career. Gregory also played a pioneering role at Howard University in developing drama as an art form in the lives of blacks and in black theater. Gregory’s interest in creating a national Negro theater movement was the seed for the establishment of the Howard Players, which became a renowned college theater troupe. As director of the drama department, Gregory inspired a national interest in black drama, and he collaborated with playwrights such as Willis Richardson, Paul Green, and Eugene O’Neill. In 1927, Gregory and Locke published *Plays of Negro Life*, which included works by several playwrights connected to Washington: Thelma Myrtle Duncan, Georgia Douglas Johnson, Jean Toomer, Willis Richardson, and Richard Bruce Nugent. On a national level, Locke served as guest editor for a special issue of *Survey Graphic* (March 1925) that was devoted to “Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro.” This special issue was organized and edited from Washington, and on its release it sold an unprecedented 40,000 copies. The success of this special issue led Locke to edit *The New Negro* (1925), in which perhaps sixteen of the thirty-seven contributors had some connection to Washington.

During the Harlem Renaissance, numerous social clubs and small cultural groups were active in and around Washington. Some of these were organized simply as literary study groups; others had a broader base that included the study of history and culture. The most inclusive of these groups that met on a regular basis

was the Saturday Nighters, which met at the home of Georgia Douglas Johnson. On Saturday nights, her home became the social hub for the Washington group of the Harlem Renaissance—established Washingtonians as well as younger writers and artists who would later make a name for themselves. These gatherings were especially popular among the young writers but were also frequented by older writers who served as their mentors. The Saturday Nighters Club began when Jean Toomer asked Georgia Douglas Johnson to “hold weekly conversations among writers in Washington.” The group met continually for about ten years and was still holding intermittent gatherings as late as 1942. In 1926, the Saturday Nighters Club was mentioned in Gwendolyn Bennett’s “Ebony Flute” column in *Opportunity* magazine. The Saturday Nighters, through their longevity and the contributions they made, demonstrated that a common interest in the arts and culture could create a community.

A small sampling of those who were involved in the scene in Washington includes Richard Bruce Nugent, Waring Cuney, and Rudolph Fisher. Nugent, a native Washingtonian with close ties to Alain Locke and Langston Hughes, was a true bohemian, a non-conformist who rejected middle-class norms. His short story “Smoke, Lilies, and Jade” was the first literary work on a purely homosexual theme to be published by a black. Although Nugent was a gifted writer and artist, little of his work is currently in print. He was known to present his writings to Locke on scraps of newspaper, paper bags, or anything else he could find. In fact, Langston Hughes rescued what became Nugent’s first published poem, “Shadow,” from the trash. Because Nugent wrote under many aliases, a compilation of his writings might be unexpectedly large.

Waring Cuney was known by his contemporaries as one of the favorites of the young writers. Cuney studied briefly at Howard University and eventually graduated from Lincoln University, where he was a classmate of Langston Hughes. Cuney did further study at the New England Conservatory of Music and at the Conservatory in Rome. His most frequently anthologized poem, “No Image,” was written when he was eighteen years old, and he won an award for it in *Opportunity*’s literary contest when he was twenty. This poem is considered a minor classic of the New Negro movement.

Rudolph Fisher was a true renaissance man—physician, novelist, short-story writer, musician, and orator. His short life (thirty-seven years) was filled

with many academic, oratorical, and literary accomplishments. By all accounts, Fisher is considered one of the major literary figures of the Harlem Renaissance. His stories appeared regularly in *Atlantic Monthly*, *The Crisis*, *Opportunity*, and *Story*, and he was said to be the wittiest of the New Negroes. In his works, Fisher gave the reader a glimpse of ordinary blacks living and working in their community. His *Conjure Man Dies* (1932) was the first black detective story.

To sum up, Washington’s role in the Harlem Renaissance was clearly defined by the activity that occurred in the city and by the number of literary figures and other creative artists who either were in the area or maintained ties to it as active participants in its cultural scene. In addition to Alain Locke and other mentors (T. Montgomery Gregory, Kelly Miller, Georgia Douglas Johnson, Edward Christopher Williams, and Carrie Williams Clifford), there were numerous creative spirits from the younger generation. These included Waring Cuney, Richard Bruce Nugent, Lewis G. Alexander, Rudolph Fisher, Langston Hughes, Jean Toomer, James L. Wells, Sterling Brown, Clarissa M. Scott Delaney, May Miller, Richard Goodwin, Albert Rice, Thelma Myrtle Duncan, and James A. Porter.

GEORGE-MCKINLEY MARTIN

See also Armstong, Louis; Bennett, Gwendolyn; Brown, Sterling; *Conjure Man Dies*, The; Cuney, Waring; Ellington, Duke; *Fine Clothes to the Jew*; Fisher, Rudolph; Green, Paul; Howard University; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; Johnson, Georgia Douglas; Locke, Alain; Miller, Kelly; Morton, Jelly Roll; Nugent, Richard Bruce; O’Neill, Eugene; *Opportunity* Literary Contests; Porter, James Amos; Richardson, Willis; *Stylus*; *Survey Graphic*; Toomer, Jean; Williams, Edward Christopher

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Harlem Shadows

Harlem Shadows (1922) was Claude McKay's first book of poetry published in the United States. This collection of poems follows rigid structures but also explores a variety of themes, including McKay's famous protest sonnets.

Many of the poems in *Harlem Shadows* were first published in the literary journals *Seven Arts*, *Pearson's Magazine*, and *Liberator*. This fact, as well as the beginning of McKay's autobiography *A Long Way From Home*, indicates that McKay was dependent on white editors. In contrast to this image of McKay, however, critics of the 1960s and later hailed McKay as a protester—an artist who was willing to confront white racist practices. Their evaluation challenges the idea of McKay's dependency and suggests that he was a pioneer because he was able to get published in such white literary journals without compromising his racial politics.

Before coming to New York City, McKay had published two volumes of dialect poetry in Jamaica: *Songs of Jamaica* and *Constab Ballads* (both 1912). In 1919, McKay went to England for three years; there, he published *Spring in New Hampshire* (1920). *Harlem Shadows* was an expanded version of McKay's poetry from *Spring in New Hampshire*, including many of the protest poems. McKay's most famous poem, "If We Must Die," was

excluded from the English publication but appeared in *Harlem Shadows*. "If We Must Die" is a militant poem urging black people to fight lynch mobs and dogs, so that if blacks must die, they will die with dignity. The reference to black people is only implied, though, and during World War II, Winston Churchill made this poem known to an international audience as a call to arms for British troops. In September 1971, the poem was circulated among inmates at Attica State Prison in New York before an uprising by these prisoners. Other poems excluded from *Spring in New Hampshire* also reflected McKay's militancy, but "If We Must Die" more than any other poem made McKay one of the most important poets of the Harlem Renaissance and established his reputation as a militant. Unlike McKay's novel *Home to Harlem*, *Harlem Shadows* was praised by most black intellectuals at its time of publication.

Interestingly, "If We Must Die" instigated a debate, which is still going on, about McKay's protest sonnets. The problem is how to reconcile the protest with the sonnet form. Sonnets consist of fourteen lines, with various rhyme schemes. In the early twentieth century, the sonnet was still closely associated with the romantic poets of the early nineteenth century. To most critics of McKay's poetry, the militant subject matter seems inconsistent with a form associated with love and beauty. For example, with regard to "The Lynching," another militant sonnet in *Harlem Shadows*, Giles (1976) thinks that the self-consciousness of the imagery of Christ interferes with the horror aroused by the lynchers. The final couplet reads: "And little lads, lynchers that were to be, / Danced round the dreadful thing in fiendish glee." In 1918, Frank Harris, the editor of *Pearson's Magazine*, had rejected this poem, arguing that it did not do justice to its historical parallel, the race riot of 1917 in St. Louis. However, Harris published "To the White Fiends," a poem that, according to Gayle (1972), casts the speaker as a Christlike figure and thus continues the powerless pleading of Dunbar's poetry. In the middle of the poem, the tone changes to humility and calm: "But the Almighty from the darkness drew / My soul and said: Even thou shalt be a light / Awhile to burn on the benighted earth." Keller (1994) sees the poem as a tour de force of restraint: The speaker offers the specter of violence but then withdraws it as a favor to those who mistreat him. However, Gayle prefers the militancy of the sonnet "The White House," which appeared in *Liberator* in 1922. In "The White House," the speaker is seething with anger, and only self-restraint keeps it from bubbling over:

Oh, I must search for wisdom every hour,
 Deep in my wrathful bosom sore and raw,
 And find in it the superhuman power
 To hold me to the letter of your law!

Alain Locke included five of McKay's poems in the groundbreaking anthology of the Harlem Renaissance, *The New Negro*. However, McKay selected only two of those poems—"Baptism" and "Tropics in New York"—for inclusion in *Harlem Shadows*, perhaps because Locke tended to favor the romantic poems of the spirit rather than the angry protest sonnets. In "Baptism," McKay uses baptism by fire as a metaphor for confronting racist oppression; such confrontation produces "A stronger soul within a finer frame." "Tropics in New York" highlights themes of migration, focusing on the tropical fruit available in New York that elicits a longing for home; the speaker says, "I turned aside and bowed my head and wept." McKay would turn to this subject—love and longing for Jamaica—again and again. In such poems as "Flame-Heart," "Home Thoughts," "North and South," "After the Winter," "My Mother," "In Bondage," and "Winter in the Country," McKay recalls the beauty of Jamaica and contrasts it with the manmade, stultifying industrial world. Virtually every critic who has written about his Jamaican-inspired poems has described them as nostalgic, romantic, or pastoral.

Other widely anthologized poems are "America," "Outcast," "Spring in New Hampshire," "Harlem Shadows," and "The Harlem Dancer." The last two of these focus on jobs available to black women in urban centers. In "Harlem Shadows," the job is prostitution. In the three stanzas of this poem, the speaker focuses on the "slipperd feet," "tired feet," and "weary feet" of these young women. "The Harlem Dancer" focuses on the spectacle of a black female dancer in a cabaret but ends with a denial of complete objectification: "But looking at her falsely-smiling face, / I knew her self was not in that strange place."

KIMBERLY J. BANKS

See also *Liberator*, The; McKay, Claude; *New Negro*, The; *Seven Arts*

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Harleston, Edwin A.

Edwin Augustus Harleston is best known for his many portraits of African Americans. He was born in 1882 in Charleston, South Carolina. Throughout his childhood he showed an aptitude for art (although also for science and singing) and was an avid draftsman. After graduating from Atlanta University in 1904, he studied medicine at Harvard University, but eventually he gave up that career path to pursue his interest in art.

Harleston went north and studied art at the school of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston from 1906 to 1912. While living in an African American neighborhood in Boston, he was surrounded by people who were willing and able to speak openly about racial injustice. Later, he would become an outspoken civil rights activist, perhaps as a result of this experience. He eventually returned to Charleston, where he lived for the rest of his life. Harleston was never able to earn a living from his painting, although he strove for many years to get publicity for his work and to obtain portrait commissions. In order to earn a living, he operated a funeral home in Charleston that his father, an undertaker, had started. As a successful African American businessman, he became an influential civic leader in Charleston. In 1916, he helped establish the Charleston branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); this was one of its first branches in the South, and he was its first president. He was active in efforts to improve education for African Americans in the South.

Harleston, Edwin A.

Harleston depicted African American business-people, professionals, artists, writers, and musicians. He also painted many portraits of poor rural African Americans. In addition to working in oil and charcoal, he was a photographer, and he took many portrait photographs over the years. Perhaps his most famous portrait is of the African American painter Aaron Douglas, which was done in 1930 and is now in the Gibbes Museum. His portrait *The Soldier* (1919) depicts a young African American man in military garb with arms folded across the chest and with a countenance of annoyance and disappointment directed at the viewer. This has been interpreted as indicative of what many African Americans felt about their service in the military during World War I—that their efforts, heroism, and risks were not appreciated, because of their race. In this and other paintings, such as *The Honey Man*, *The Charleston Shrimp Man*, and *The Old Servant*, Harleston's depictions of African Americans are noteworthy for the sense of humanity and dignity he conveyed.

Harleston died in 1932. His recognition as an artist increased in the years after his death. Because he created paintings of great sincerity and honesty and depicted African American people and life, he was an important precursor of the artists of the Harlem Renaissance before artists, who were a generation younger but founded their art on goals and ideals that were the same as his.

Biography

Edwin Harleston was born in 1882 in Charleston, South Carolina, the third of six children; his father was a rice planter and then an undertaker. Harleston was educated at the Avery Institute (graduating in 1900), Atlanta University (A.B., 1904), Boston Museum of Fine Arts School (1906–1912), and Harvard University. His awards included the Amy E. Springarn Prize, 1925, for *Crisis of Ouida* (a portrait of his wife); and the Alain Locke Portrait Prize, Harmon Foundation, New York, 1930, for *The Old Servant*. He died of pneumonia in 1932.

HERBERT R. HARTEL JR.

See also Artists; Douglas, Aaron

Exhibitions

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Harmon Foundation

The Harmon Foundation, or William E. Harmon Foundation, was the most important institution involved in promoting African American visual art during the Harlem Renaissance. Harmon, a real estate professional, created it in 1922 to encourage self-improvement among disadvantaged peoples by rewarding individual achievements. It had various programs but became best known for the Harmon Foundation Awards for Distinguished Achievement Among Negroes, which began in 1926 and received widespread press coverage in the late 1920s. During 1926–1930, the awards program was administered by Dr. George E. Haynes, chair of the Commission on Race Relations of the

Federal Council of Churches. The foundation was directed for many years by Mary Beattie Brady, who counted among her close advisers Haynes and also Alain Locke.

The foundation gave awards in eight categories: (1) literature, (2) music, (3) fine arts, (4) business and industry, (5) science and innovation, (6) education, (7) religious service, and (8) race relations. With regard to the fine arts, there was also, starting in 1928, an exhibition program of works entered by African Americans; separate prizes were awarded in conjunction with these annual exhibitions, which generated a good deal of interest among critics and others. From 1928 to 1933, largely because of the activities of the Harmon Foundation, African Americans emerged as a distinct presence in the American art world. After 1933 the awards program was discontinued, and the foundation devoted itself primarily to promoting African American artists through educational programs, publications, and exhibitions. By the time it closed down in 1967, the Harmon Foundation had acquired a significant body of work, some of which was dispersed to the art collections of historically black colleges. The archives of the Harmon Foundation, housed in the Library of Congress, remain a major repository of information on the development of early twentieth-century African American artists.

The Harmon Foundation encouraged discourse about the work of black American artists that shaped much subsequent criticism and scholarship, and its promotional materials and its policies regarding the exhibitions powerfully influenced viewers' response. The group shows opened in New York and traveled throughout the country. George Haynes was instrumental in organizing these shows, and he stipulated as a condition for bringing them into a particular community that the exhibition must be displayed in a place where both races could view it without discrimination. Exhibitions were thus typically sponsored by regional interracial councils and committees on race relations and displayed in black churches, libraries, public schools, and local branches of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). In 1930, the Federal Council of Churches sent questionnaires to the various organizations that had sponsored the show, asking for statistics on the number of white and black visitors. Host institutions were also asked to report on the effect of the show on white people who saw it and to note if there appeared to be any significant change in community race relations afterward. All this tended to encourage a sociological rather than an aesthetic

approach to African American art—a situation that continued to vex the artists for the remainder of the twentieth century.

Although the Harmon Foundation was not commercial, one of its stated goals was financial self-sufficiency among black artists, and works in the traveling shows were offered for sale. Nominally, the foundation was committed simply to excellence and to cultivating creativity, but the purity of these objectives was bound to be undermined by its multiple roles as museum, agent, benefactor, and critical authority. Its opponents, then and later, regarded such conflicts of interest in a non-black philanthropic agency as a hindrance to the artists' growth and development. This climate of trade stimulated (and to an extent controlled) by well-meaning advocacy characterized a great deal of the cultural activity of the Harlem Renaissance.

Recent scholarship suggests that with respect to African American art, the efforts of the Harmon Foundation, however commendable, contributed to critical confusion and contradictory values. The foundation's official promotional literature insisted that the works entered in the competitions were judged solely on technical and aesthetic criteria (separate juries of arts professionals were convened for the fine arts awards and the exhibitions prizes), but spokesmen associated with the foundation (such as Alain Locke) stressed conspicuous racial identity as a criterion. Similarly, Haynes rejected the frequent suggestion by progressive artists and critics that the most powerful, "authentic" racial expression would come from naive or unschooled black artists, but the foundation stressed that many of the exhibiting artists were nonprofessionals.

In a well-known essay of 1934, "The Negro Artist and Modern Art," Romare Bearden accused the Harmon Foundation of taking a patronizing attitude toward black artists by encouraging them to exhibit prematurely. This accusation may seem unduly harsh, given that the foundation was then involved in establishing the professional credentials of black artists seeking employment in the Federal Arts Project. Nevertheless, the condescension Bearden described was conspicuous in press coverage of the foundation's awards and of the traveling exhibitions. In 1928 to 1933, accounts of the awards in newspapers were filled with hard-luck stories about aspiring black artists who supported themselves through manual labor and who showed remarkable creative ability despite their inexperience. Press releases on award winners always included biographical information that the foundation called "human interest" material.

Sometimes the press repeated this material verbatim, but often the information was used selectively, with an emphasis on the artists' humble circumstances rather than their training or experience.

Historians have also asked to what extent the foundation deliberately promoted essentialist notions of black aesthetics. Haynes's own belief in universal artistic standards was evident in the makeup of the juries, but the foundation's literature sent mixed and even conflicting messages. Officials were concerned about the technical proficiency of African American art, or "Negro art," but were also aware that they could best stimulate interest in it by identifying it as distinctive. Thus some scholars have concluded that the foundation actively encouraged exhibiting artists to make characteristically racial art, and certainly Locke's close association with the foundation supports this belief. However, the foundation's catalogs and publicity represented both the universalist and the essentialist positions. Press packets for the traveling shows, for example, quoted reviews of past exhibitions in which the affirmation of characteristically racial artistic qualities and the mastery of prevailing conventions were both acknowledged.

The Harmon Foundation's group shows had their greatest success in the early 1930s, when the fascination with primitivism and black culture generated by Harlem Renaissance was in decline. In 1931, the foundation shifted the site of its shows in New York from International House, a kind of multicultural center, to the Art Center; this move resulted in a significant change in the press coverage and in the promotional materials. Before 1931, the foundation's catalogs had been essentially illustrated checklists, but in 1931 and again in 1933, Locke contributed substantial essays positioning the works in an explicit critical and historical context. Although Locke rehashed many issues that had emerged in his early treatises of the Harlem Renaissance, these catalog essays reveal a subtle but strategic new emphasis. In the context of the cultural nationalist rhetoric of the 1930s, it began to appear that the Harmon Foundation had reinforced traditional inequalities of race and power by constructing the black artist as a distinct category, who then was driven into the margins as the "Negro vogue" dissipated. During these years Locke, and also James Porter, worked to integrate black artists into a cultural mainstream preoccupied with the Depression and normative "Americanism."

Because the Harmon Foundation had a virtual monopoly on promoting black visual artists, it played a crucial role in the subsequent formation of the canon. Through its awards and exhibitions, the foundation systematically introduced a critical mass of black artists to the American public. The foundation carefully constructed a narrative of black artistic progress, which in turn created an informed public that could chart its course by following the activities of the foundation. Press releases each year speculated on the future promise of prizewinners and often mentioned that the prize money facilitated trips abroad for education and development. By 1930, critics in the mass media prefaced their reviews of the foundation's shows with comments implying that the names of the black artists had become household words. With a few notable exceptions, the Harmon Foundation launched—and to an extent managed—the career of nearly every African American artist who emerged in the years between the two world wars. The black artistic canon that emerged from the Harmon Foundation has endured a very long time; to this day, most of the African Americans represented in Harlem Renaissance art exhibitions were introduced to the general public through the foundation's shows, and many were prizewinners.

MARY ANN CALO

See also Cultural Organizations; Harmon Traveling Exhibition; Haynes, George Edmund; Locke, Alain; Porter, James Amos

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Harmon, Pappy

Pappy Harmon was a native New Yorker, born in Greenwich Village shortly after the mid-nineteenth century. He moved to Harlem after his wife and children died of influenza during the Spanish-American War. He had been in show business—as a ventriloquist—until 1910, when theater doors were closed to black performers. Needing work, he acquired a small wagon and a horse he called Maude and rode up and down 131st Street peddling vegetables, fruit, fresh fish, and assorted junk. He must have been quite a sight, with his long, lanky frame wrapped in a threadbare pair of old-fashioned overalls and topped by a shock of gleaming white hair against his dark black face. His beloved Maude was not his only pet; he also kept pigeons, which he called his children, on the roof of his apartment building. Although he was an entertainer by trade, many chose to label him crazy, eccentric, or just a “little too much” to take (Mitchell 1967, 73). In reality, however, Pappy Harmon was more than just an entertainer and crazy local junk dealer. He was a sort of street philosopher, a sage of Harlem.

Harmon was deeply interested in human psychology, current events, and cultural movements—in truth, he was simply interested in understanding human beings. He said that he enjoyed peddling junk and produce on the street because it afforded him an opportunity to be among the people. He told the young Lofton Mitchell, “You never know unless you’re out there among people just what’s going to happen next. You go and hide someplace and you can find yourself kicked right out of a lot of places—like the theatre” (74). It was said that Harmon’s two-room apartment was lined with books and the walls were lined with newspaper clippings telling the story of African American drama: articles about Bert Williams, Charles Gilpin, *The Emperor Jones*, and other contemporary developments in black theater. Once, Harmon happened on a street-corner conversation about Florence Mills’s place in American theater, and after listening for just a moment, he chimed in: “What’s the matter with you all? Someone here was just looking for a white person to compare Florence with? Why do we always have to

have a white person to remind us of ourselves? . . . Why can’t we say there ain’t no words for Florence Mills? Let’s just say—she’s Florence Mills,” and he stormed off (Mitchell, 78). Despite this kind of straightforward, insightful thinking, Harmon was often ridiculed or dismissed as a lunatic. However, for those who took the time to listen to him, he made perfect sense, and he left a lasting impression. Mitchell recalls, “In those days—like most kids on my block—I thought Pappy Harmon knew everything. If Pappy said the Yankees would win the pennant, that Babe Ruth would hit a homer, and that there’d be no war this year, I believed him” (77).

Biography

Pappy Harmon was born c. 1860 in Greenwich Village. He lost his wife and children to influenza during the Spanish-American War and thereafter moved to Harlem. He worked as a ventriloquist and all-around showman until 1910. He became a street vendor and junk dealer on 131st Street. Harmon died in the summer of 1929 in his apartment on Fifth Avenue.

STEPHEN CRINITI

See also Emperor Jones, The; Gilpin, Charles; Mills, Florence; Williams, Egbert Austin “Bert”

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Harmon Traveling Exhibition

In 1922, William E. Harmon began the Harmon Foundation, and by 1925 he teamed up with George Haynes of the Federal Council of Churches and Alain Locke of the New Negro movement to sponsor an awards ceremony. The Harmon Foundation awards offered both recognition and a monetary gift to Negroes who excelled in their field and who worked for the betterment of race relations in America. After the awards of 1927, which saw a significant number of

entries in the fine arts category, the director of the foundation, Mary Beattie Brady, suggested that it sponsor an exhibition of the fine arts submissions in conjunction with the annual awarding of medals. In January 1928, the first annual “Exhibit of Fine Arts Productions of American Negro Artists” opened at International House on Riverside Drive in New York City. Although International House was small and awkward, Brady chose it mainly because she wanted “a place where the two races would meet under the most harmonious circumstances” (Reynolds 1989, 34). The modest exhibit of 1928 lasted only about ten days, but a seed had been sown for the more extensive exhibitions to come.

Over six years from 1928 to 1933, the Harmon Foundation held five such exhibitions (there was none in 1932), giving 125 black artists an opportunity to display their work. These exhibitions were the first of their kind to showcase only black artists. Some of the notable artists featured (often in multiple exhibitions) were Palmer Hayden, Laura Wheeler Waring, William H. Johnson, Sargent Johnson, Richmond Barthé, Hale Woodruff, Malvin Gray Johnson, and Aaron Douglas. Beginning in 1929, the exhibition toured the country after closing in New York. By the end of 1930, it had reached almost twenty cities, including Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Nashville, Oakland, San Diego, Denver, Houston, Minneapolis, and New Orleans. Not only did the exhibition grow, but the accompanying catalog grew as well. The catalog began as nothing more than a glorified checklist, but it was expanded in 1931 to include essays by Alain Locke, Arthur Schomburg, and Alon Bemont, among others. As a result of the expanded catalog and the considerable attention the exhibits received in the press, the Harmon exhibition grew into more than simply a display of black artwork; it became the primary occasion for discussions of Negro art.

Each exhibition catalog included some form of the following statement of goals, which appeared in 1931: “It was hoped through this assembling to acquaint and interest the public more generally in the creative accomplishments in fine arts by Negroes, thereby assisting this group to a more sound and satisfactory economic position” (4). The original catalog, in 1928, had added to these two goals a third: “stimulating [the Negro] to aim for the highest standards of achievement” (quoted in Bennett 1928, 111). George Haynes echoed this sentiment when he referred to the exhibited works as “not ‘Negro Art’ but universal art” (quoted in Reynolds, 108). Such statements can easily be read as

a call for black artists to strive for a Eurocentric set of standards—in other words, they sound as if the Harmon Foundation had asked the entrants to “paint white.” There was some confusion, however, about the foundation’s standards, as the administrators not only called for a “universal” art but also—led by Locke—began to solicit art that would explicitly address Negro subjects and tap into a perceived vital primitiveness. These statements of goals as well as the somewhat confusing set of criteria for judging sparked considerable controversy among critics and raised serious questions about the definition and nature of “Negro art.”

Critics reacted strongly to the exhibition for a variety of reasons. One notable criticism was that the foundation’s administrators were showcasing artists who had not yet matured enough in their craft. The work of professionals often hung next to that of amateurs, causing the artists’ technical handicraft to be questioned. Describing the selection process, Aaron Douglas said, memorably: “Harlem was sifted. Neither streets, homes nor public institutions escaped. When unsuspecting Negroes were found with a brush in their hands they were immediately hauled away and held for interpretation. . . . Every effort to protest their innocence was drowned out with big-mouthed praise” (quoted in Dover 1960, 31). Another frequent criticism, notably voiced by Cyril Kay-Scott of the Denver Art Museum, was that without the exhibition title above the door, viewers might believe they were looking at an exhibition of white artists. But other critics argued that, on the contrary, the artists were trying too hard to draw on primitive roots, when they had never truly experienced this kind of primitivism in their own lives. Henderson (1928, 123) observed: “The Negro artist of today is likely to meet two chief dangers—that of self-consciously trying to return to the primitive art of his race and that of imitating the products of white artists. By either of these routes he fails to express himself as a modern Negro in a modern environment.”

The most scathing and most famous criticism of the Harmon Foundation’s exhibitions, however, came from Romare Bearden, in an article in *Opportunity*. Bearden essentially gathered all of the objections mentioned previously into one concentrated condemnation of the foundation: “First, we have no valid standard of criticism; secondly, foundations and societies which supposedly encourage Negro artists really hinder them; thirdly, the Negro artist has no definite ideology or social philosophy.” He went on to lament a lack of feeling in the black artworks and concluded: “An intense, eager devotion to present day life, to study

it, to help relieve it, this is the calling of the Negro artist" (1934, 372).

Still, the Harmon Foundation's exhibitions, however flawed, promoted the careers of nearly all of the artists of the Harlem Renaissance and thereby made a future for black art possible. Also, the criticisms leveled at these exhibitions were themselves necessary to the life of black art. The exhibitions provided, for the first time, a platform for vitally important conversations about the nature and role of black art in America—conversations that were long overdue and that continue to propel American art today.

STEPHEN CRINITI

See also Harmon Foundation; Haynes, George Edmund; Locke, Alain; Schomburg, Arthur A.; *specific artists*

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Harper Brothers

Harper Brothers publishing company began in New York in March 1817, when the brothers James and John Harper, who had both been apprentices for printing firms, joined to start their own printing firm, J. and J. Harper. Their two younger brothers joined them—one in 1823 and the other in 1825—and with all four working together, they began to see themselves as publishers instead of just printers. The Harper brothers' approach to publishing was innovative in several ways. They were the first to introduce to the United States the concept of a series of books, which were published as "libraries." They were also the first publishing house to deal in a general list. In 1833, the firm switched to a steam press and changed its imprint to Harper and Bros. The firm continued to change with the times, introducing British authors and titles and publishing respected names, so that by the end of the nineteenth century, Harper Brothers was the leading publishing house in America.

During the 1890s the firm began to experience financial difficulties and had to borrow large sums of money from J. P. Morgan and Company. In consequence, for the first time, the firm was not under family control. The change in control led to several unfortunate and nearly devastating choices that prolonged the company's financial struggles into the early 1920s. Ultimately, two vice presidents—Thomas B. Wells and Henry Hoyns—were able to implement a plan to relieve the company of its two-decade cycle of debt. This plan included moving the firm from Franklin Square to East Thirty-third Street and finally resolving the issue of control by instituting Douglas Parmentier as president of the company in 1924. With these changes, then, Harper Brothers began a new era.

In 1925, the company made several dramatic changes in order to keep up with new publishers such as Knopf, Boni and Liveright, and Harcourt Brace. For one thing, the firm revamped *Harper's* magazine, evidently in an effort to make it look more like Knopf's *American Mercury*. The changes included a new editor

with “modern” preferences and an updated look for the magazine, developed with the help of W. A. Dwiggins, who was chief designer at Knopf. The contents of the magazine were remodeled, and the cover also underwent a transformation so as to resemble *American Mercury*. This version of *Harper's* came out in September 1925, and circulation doubled quickly thereafter. All of this helped transform one of America's oldest publishing houses in such a way that it was in line with the new tastes reflected by other publishers in New York.

With regard to the Harlem Renaissance, one of the most significant changes made by Harpers at this time was to bring in Eugene Saxton as book editor. Saxton soon began to attract African American authors, including Countee Cullen. Harpers published Cullen's first volume of poetry, *Color*, and Frederick Lewis Allen, who was chief editor at the time, nominated the collection for a Pulitzer Prize. Harpers kept in close contact with Cullen after this first volume and supported him in other endeavors as well. Allen asked Cullen to represent the company at a book celebration week at the Jordan Marsh department store in Boston, and Harpers also assisted Cullen in negotiations to set several of the poems from *Color* to music. Additionally, Harpers arranged a lecture tour for Cullen and asked him to contribute poems to *Harper's* magazine. In 1927, Harpers published *Caroling Dusk*, an anthology of black poetry edited by Cullen. That year the company also published his second and third volumes of poetry, *Copper Sun* and *The Ballad of the Brown Girl*. In 1930, Saxton asked Cullen to write a book-length poem about the history of blacks in America. Cullen expressed interest, but this project was never undertaken, because he began to focus his efforts on a novel, *One Way to Heaven*. Nevertheless, Harpers remained Cullen's lifelong publisher.

Harpers also supported Claude McKay. The firm published his first novel, which was an expanded version of his short story “Home to Harlem,” as well as his next novel, *Banjo*, which appeared in 1929. Although there was a loss in the demand for McKay's works after the stock market crash of 1929, he and Harpers continued their relationship. However, Harpers lost money publishing McKay's collection of short stories, *Gingertown* (1932), and his novel *Banana Bottom* (1933); and Saxton then told McKay that he no longer wanted to publish a novel entitled “Savage Loving,” which he had earlier asked McKay to revise for publication in place of *Gingertown*. McKay's agent, Max Lieber, reportedly told McKay that this decision was based on Saxton's opinion that the Harlem Renaissance was

a fad and that people no longer cared about black authors. But it seems questionable that this was actually Saxton's opinion. Max Lieber was a member of the Communist Party, and the comment he attributed to Saxton was actually the party's position on the Harlem Renaissance; also, Lieber may have had political reasons for attacking McKay, because McKay had become disillusioned with the Communist Party. More probably, both Saxton and Lieber were reluctant to publish “Savage Loving” because of its overt homosexual content.

Whatever Saxton's opinion was regarding the Harlem Renaissance, Harpers continued to publish writings by African American authors. The firm published *The Medea and Some Poems* by Countee Cullen in 1935, Claude McKay's autobiography *A Long Way From Home* in 1937, and Richard Wright's *Uncle Tom's Children* in 1938 and *Native Son* in 1940. During the 1930s, the number of works by African American authors waned, but Harpers does not seem to have given up publishing black authors simply because the Harlem Renaissance was said to be a “fad.” Instead, Harpers maintained its relationship with the two prominent black authors it had begun publishing in the 1920s, and it took on Richard Wright, the next important African American author to emerge after the Depression.

APRIL CONLEY KILINSKI

See also American Mercury; Boni and Liveright; Color; Copper Sun; Cullen, Countee; Harcourt Brace; Knopf, Alfred A., Inc.; McKay, Claude; Publishers and Publishing Houses

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Harrington, James Carl “Hamtree”

Hamtree (James Carl) Harrington was born in 1889 and was one of many comedians of his generation

who aspired to take on the mantle of the great Bert Williams. Harrington joined a traveling carnival at age fourteen and soon established himself as a black-face comedian in Williams's mold; in fact, he was billed as "the vest pocket Bert Williams." The name Hamtree came from a sketch in which he hid a stolen ham in a tree.

An early romance with a chorus girl, Edna Murray, produced a son. By 1916, Harrington had teamed up with Maude Mills, the sister of Florence Mills. In March 1916, they were married onstage at Gibson's Standard Theater in Philadelphia. They toured the black vaudeville circuits with modest success until 1920. Reviewing their act in 1920, Sime Silverman of *Variety* found Harrington's imitation of Williams competent but "cold" beside the original.

In 1921, Harrington and Mills separated, and he found a new female partner, Cora Green. She had previously been a member of the Panama Trio singing group with Florence Mills. The new partnership was featured in the first black show to follow *Shuffle Along*, *Put and Take* (1921), a clever revue that was, however, panned for imitating white shows. Then followed Creamer and Layton's *Strut Miss Lizzie* (1922), which was not much more successful despite numbers like "Dear Old Southland" and "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans."

Greater success came when Harrington and Green spent a year with Florence Mills's *Dixie to Broadway* (1924–1925); audiences loved Harrington's haunted house scene, although sophisticates deplored it. Their success earned them a four-year contract on the prestigious Keith-Albee vaudeville circuit in 1925, starring in a show called *Nobody's Gal*. They made some records on the Brunswick label. In 1927, they were summoned to London to replace the ailing Florence Mills in the provincial tour of *Blackbirds of 1927*.

By 1930, Harrington was again on his own. He continued in black shows, *Change Your Luck* (1930) with Alberta Hunter, *Old Kentucky* (1932) with Clara Smith, and then with Ethel Waters in an otherwise all-white success on Broadway, *As Thousands Cheer* (1933). With vaudeville and live entertainment withering during the Depression, he found a place in black movies. These included *Rufus Jones for President* (1933), with Ethel Waters and a very young Sammy Davis Jr.; *The Devil's Daughter* (1934), with the beautiful Nina Mae McKinney; and *Keep Punchin'* (1938), a vehicle for the boxing champion Henry Armstrong.

Mainly these movies, plus some musical shorts, keep Harrington's name in the public memory, but his

stage career was not yet over. He played in Lew Leslie's last comeback attempt, *Blackbirds of 1939*, a flop that nevertheless helped launch Lena Horne's career. Harrington was a founding member of the Negro Actors' Guild in 1937. After he had retired to live in Harlem, he returned one last time in another unsuccessful revival, *Shuffle Along of 1952*.

Hamtree Harrington died in 1956. His career, spanning the era of the Harlem Renaissance, epitomized the opportunities available for black comedians of the time if they were prepared to occupy approved niche roles.

Biography

James Carl "Hamtree" Harrington was born in Columbia, South Carolina, in 1889. He left school at age fourteen, performed in vaudeville before 1920, and then performed in stage shows: *Put and Take* (1921), *Strut Miss Lizzie* (1922), *Dixie to Broadway* (1924), *Nobody's Gal* (1926), *Blackbirds of 1927* (England, 1927), *Harlem Girl* (1930), *Change Your Luck* (1930), *Old Kentucky* (1932), *As Thousands Cheer* (1933), *Blackbirds of 1939* (1939), and *Shuffle Along of 1952* (1952). His film appearances included *Gayety* (Vitaphone short, 1929), *His Woman* (1931), *Rufus Jones for President* (1933), *The Devil's Daughter* (1934), and *Keep Punchin'* (1938). Hamilton was a founding member of the Negro Actors' Guild in 1937. He died in Harlem in 1956.

BILL EGAN

See also *Blackbirds*; *Blackface Performance*; Film: Actors; McKinney, Nina Mae; Mills, Florence; Racial Stereotyping; Vaudeville; Williams, Egbert Austin "Bert"

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Harrison, Hubert

Hubert Harrison—a writer, orator, editor, educator, and radical political activist—lived in Harlem from 1907 until his death in 1927. A. Philip Randolph called him the father of Harlem radicalism; J. A. Rogers considered him the foremost Afro-American intellect of his time and the political leader with the sanest and most effective program; James Weldon Johnson considered him a “walking cyclopedia,” especially of history and literature.

Harrison played a major role in the largest class-radical movement (socialism) and the largest race-radical movement (the “New Negro” and Garveyism) in American history. In the 1910s and 1920s, when Harlem became the international center of radical black thought, he profoundly influenced people such as Randolph, Chandler Owen, Cyril Briggs, Richard B. Moore, W. A. Domingo, and Marcus Garvey. Many of his ideas became the stock in trade of the black left in the twentieth century.

Harrison was also a cultural and literary force who wrote book and theater reviews, articles, and editorials; lectured (his series for the Board of Education, “Literary Lights of Yesterday and Today,” is especially notable); edited five publications based in Harlem; aided black writers and artists (including Rogers, Andy Razaf, Walter Everette Hawkins, Claude McKay, Lucian B. Watkins, Anselmo Jackson, Solomon Plaatje, Charles Gilpin, and Augusta Savage); and helped develop the 135th Street Public Library into an international center for research in black culture.

In 1900 to 1910, Harrison was active in lyceums at Saint Benedict’s and Saint Mark’s churches; in educational programs at the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and the White Rose Home for Colored Working Girls; in literary societies, discussion groups, and workers’ circles; and with several small black periodicals. He worked with Arthur Schomburg, John Bruce, the actor and activist Charles Burroughs, the social worker and activist Frances Reynolds Keyser, and the bibliophile George Young. In this period Harrison broke from organized religion and was attracted to free thought, socialism, scientific humanism, and the protest philosophy of W. E. B. Du Bois.

From 1911 to 1914, Harrison was America’s leading black socialist writer, theoretician, campaigner, and speaker, and the initiator of the party’s first major effort at organizing African Americans, the Colored Socialist Club. In 1917 he founded the first organization and first newspaper of the militant “New Negro” movement: the Liberty League (which prepared the groundwork for Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association, UNIA) and *The Voice*. In 1919, Harrison edited the monthly *New Negro*; in January 1920 he became the principal editor of Garvey’s *Negro World*, which he reshaped into an international political and literary force with pointed editorials, regular book reviews, a magazine section devoted to poetry for the people, and later a column, “West Indian News Notes.” In the 1920s, after leaving the *Negro World*, Harrison lectured on literary, historical, scientific, and political topics for the Board of Education’s “Trends of the Times” series and other organizations; wrote book and theater reviews and articles; was an activist against censorship; and helped build the Department of Negro Literature and History at the 135th Street Public Library, the International Colored Unity League, and *Voice of the Negro*.

Politically and in his literary work, Harrison focused on the common people, and his race-conscious mass appeal marked a shift from the leadership approaches of Booker T. Washington and Du Bois. He rejected Washington’s reliance on white patrons and a black political machine and Du Bois’s reliance on the “talented tenth.” He was a candid critic of the creative arts who preferred objective assessments to the notion that blacks had to be presented in a favorable light, and he believed that the critic should not dictate to the artist. His mass-based “New Negro” movement preceded and was qualitatively different from the more middle-class, more arts-based, and more apolitical movement associated with the publication of Alain Locke’s *New Negro* in 1925. Harrison’s life and work suggest important issues about the Harlem Renaissance. He openly questioned the genuineness of the “literary renaissance,” the willingness to take “standards of value ready-made from white society,” and the claim of a significant new rebirth. He maintained that there had been an uninterrupted, although ignored, stream of literary and artistic products by blacks from 1850 into the 1920s and that what was called a renaissance was mostly a creation of whites who overlooked such contributions. He envisioned a true literary renaissance that would express the true values and

aspirations of black people, and he challenged the role of many prominent gatekeepers of culture who he felt depended on whites and were unable or unwilling to form their own opinions.

Harrison died unexpectedly at age forty-four, leaving a wife and five children. His funeral, in Harlem in December 1927, was attended by thousands, but within months of his death the Harlem activist Hodge Kirnon noted an ominous “concerted silence” about his life. Many prominent African American and leftist leaders, particularly those, like Du Bois, who had been stung by his criticism, were noticeably silent. This situation was intensified by the fact that Harrison had been poor, black, foreign-born, and from the Caribbean; had opposed capitalism, racism, and the Christian church; had supported socialism, “race consciousness,” racial equality, women’s equality, free thought, and birth control; and had been more of a “freelance” educator and activist than an “organization man.” As the twenty-first century opened, however, a rapidly growing interest in Harrison was evident.

Biography

Hubert Harrison was born on 27 April 1883, in Estate Concordia, Saint Croix, Danish West Indies, and emigrated to New York City in 1900 (he was naturalized in 1922). He studied in public schools in Saint Croix and New York City and was self-educated thereafter. He worked as associate editor, *Unique Advertiser*, New York, 1904; editor, *St. Mark’s Mirror*, New York, 1906; editor, *Fair Play*, New Rochelle, New York, 1906; post office clerk, New York, 1907–1911; public speaker, Socialist Party of New York, 1911–1914; editor, *The Masses*, New York, 1911; instructor, Modern School, New York, 1915; columnist, *New York News*, 1915; contributing editor, *Colored American Review*, New York, 1915; editor, *The Voice*, New York, 1917–1919; organizer, American Federation of Labor, Philadelphia, Atlantic City, and Washington, D.C., 1918; cochair, National Liberty Congress, Washington, D.C., 1918; editor, *New Negro*, New York, 1919; editor, *Negro World*, New York, 1920, then associate editor and contributing editor, 1920–1922; lecturer, New York City Board of Education, 1922–1926; columnist, *Boston Chronicle*, 1924; columnist *New York Inter-State Tattler*, 1924; speaker, La Follette for President Committee, Milwaukee, Chicago, and Indianapolis; speaker, American Negro Labor Congress, New York, 1926; editor, *Embryo of the Voice of the Negro*, New York, 1927;

and editor, *Voice of the Negro*, New York, 1927. He also wrote for numerous periodicals and founded several organizations. He died in New York City, on 17 December 1927.

JEFFREY PERRY

See also Briggs, Cyril; Domingo, W. A.; Garvey, Marcus; Johnson, James Weldon; McKay, Claude; Moore, Richard B.; Negro World; 135th Street Library; Owen, Chandler; Randolph, A. Philip; Rogers, Joel Augustus; Saint Mark’s Methodist Episcopal Church; Savage, Augusta; *other specific individuals*

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Harrison, Richard

Richard Berry Harrison is best known for his first and only professional theatrical role, which he secured at age sixty-five: De Lawd in Marc Connelly’s *The Green Pastures*. Harrison was reluctant to take the part, fearing that the play would be a version of Uncle Tom in heaven and that he would be betraying his race; but he overcame his doubts and dedicated the remaining five years of his life to portraying an anthropomorphic God made in the image of a southern black preacher for the 1,657 performances of the show on Broadway and the company’s three-and-a-half-year national tour.

A graduate of the Detroit Training School of Art (1887), Harrison was proficient in elocution and a talented actor but was prevented by the color line from developing a career on the legitimate stage. Supporting himself as a bellhop, Pullman porter, and dining car waiter throughout the 1890s, he took his public readings of poetry and Shakespeare on tour. He also teamed up with his good friend the poet Paul Laurence Dunbar, serving as a reader of dialect poems from the collection *Oak and Ivory* in an effort to sell Dunbar’s books. Eventually Harrison found employment as a reader with the Lyceum Bureau of Los Angeles and toured in Mexico, California, and the Midwest and throughout the South giving performances and lectures at colleges and in churches.

Noting that young African Americans had no access to theatrical training, Harrison began his career as an educator in dramatics at the start of World War I. This was the era of the “great migration,” and Harrison spent these years campaigning for funds to institute training programs for church schools, setting up summer lyceum courses in New York City, and teaching elocution and drama at Branch Normal in Arkansas, Flipper Key College in Oklahoma, and Haines Institute

in Augusta, Georgia. During the 1920s, he ran a summer-school dramatics curriculum for teachers at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College and served as a lecturer for the Greater New York Federation of Churches, directing church festivals, training church dramatic groups, and giving recitals. By the time he appeared on Broadway as a humane, dignified God who “walked the earth like a natural man,” he had trained more than 300 teachers and scores of students who otherwise would have had little access to formal education in theater and drama.

Although Harrison did not fit the usual profile of the New Negro as outlined by Alain Locke, it is clear that his commitment to racial pride and to providing access to the professional skills of theater and public speaking for young African Americans was in line with the movement. He, like Locke and Montgomery Gregory, determined that technique and training in the arts would become an important resource for successful race relations through which the acceptance of African Americans as equal and productive citizens could be secured.

Biography

Richard Berry Harrison was born on 28 September 1864, in London, Ontario. He attended the Training School of Art, in Detroit, from which he graduated in 1887. He founded the summer dramatic school for teachers at North Carolina Agriculture and Technical State University in Greensboro, which he ran 1922–1929. He performed in one-man versions of *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar* for the Lyceum Bureau; helped write and played the lead in Frank Wilson’s *Pa Williams’ Gal* (1923) for the Lafayette Theater; toured as Shylock and Othello in one-man versions of *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*, respectively; appeared in the films *How High Is Up* (1923) and *Easy Street* (1930); and played De Lawd in *The Green Pastures* for the Broadway productions and on the national tour (1930–1935), a role for which he won the Springarn Award in 1931. He received an honorary master’s degree from Howard University and a doctorate in dramatic literature from North Carolina Agriculture and Technical College and Lincoln University in 1934. Harrison was the first actor to be awarded the Sigma Society Key from Boston University. He died in Harlem on 14 March 1935.

ANDREA J. NOURIEH

See also Dunbar, Paul Laurence; *Green Pastures*, The; Lafayette Theater; *Pa Williams’ Gal*

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Hayden, Palmer C.

Palmer Hayden showed artistic talent at an early age, but after failing to set himself up as an artist, he joined two circuses as a roustabout; there he drew advertisements and portraits of the performers, and it was perhaps through this experience that he sharpened his powers of observation and developed the directness that would be characteristic of his later work. During World War I, in the army, he made maps. (His experiences in the army would provide the subject for a series of paintings in the 1960s and 1970s, and in 1973, he was awarded a Creative Arts Project grant in New York City to develop a series of paintings of the history of the black soldier in America.) After his discharge from the army in 1920, Hayden moved to New York City, where he studied painting and drawing at Columbia University and worked in the post office. He eventually settled in Greenwich Village. He supported himself as a janitor at Cooper Union and began working with Victor Perard, one of the teachers there; he captured his experience in *The Janitor Paints a Picture* (1936, National Museum of American Art). The city would become an important source for his paintings; he executed views of street scenes, the environs of New York City public housing, and landmarks such as

the Brooklyn Bridge. During the summers he worked at the Boothbay Art Colony in Maine with A. C. Randall, executing marine scenes that earned a Harmon Foundation Gold Award for painting in 1926. Along with the financial support of a patron whose identity has been lost to history, the Harmon Foundation award allowed Hayden to study in Europe.

He set up a studio in Paris and spent his summers in Brittany. In Paris, at the suggestion of the painter Laura Wheeler Waring, he visited Henry Ossawa Tanner; he also befriended Hale Woodruff—who described him as a bon vivant and dandy. (He introduced himself to Woodruff with the words, "A buzzard laid me and the sun hatched me.") Hayden and Woodruff associated with a group of expatriate African Americans; Hayden's watercolor *Nous à Quatre Paris* (c. 1930, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) shows Hayden, Woodruff, the poet Countee Cullen, and another member of the group, Ernest Dupré, playing cards in a café similar to the Café La Coupole, which Hayden painted several times.

In Paris, Hayden developed a figural style that shows the influence of current trends such as art deco and cubism and is related to the stylizations of Aaron Douglas and the posters and illustrations of French artists such as Paul Colin and Roger Perot depicting musicians and dancers in plush interracial social settings. Hayden studied at the École des Beaux Arts and constantly visited the Louvre. Like many of his contemporaries, he grappled with the notion of developing a uniquely African American art based on African art. Alain Locke, in the essay "The Legacy of Ancestral Arts" (1925), noted that "a younger group of Negro artists" were "beginning to move in the direction of a racial school of art." Although he admitted that African Americans experienced as much alienation and misunderstanding as Europeans when they first encountered African art, he said that "there is the possibility that the sensitive artistic mind of the American Negro, stimulated by a cultural pride and interest, will receive from African arts a profound and galvanizing influence." Hayden, who met Locke in Paris, would acknowledge that influence in *Fetiché and Fleurs* (1926, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee), in which a head from the Fang group is placed in a traditional still life arrangement. Hayden also produced witty depictions of reconstructed African villages and dancers at the Paris Exposition Coloniale of 1930, conveying the artificiality of fabricated reconstructions of "native" life but also the dignity of the "natives" caught in this anomalous situation. Hayden never visited

Hayden, Palmer C.

Africa, but in the 1960s he would return to African themes.

When Hayden came back to New York in 1932, he found employment in the Federal Arts Project and was assigned to paint scenes along the Hudson River. After leaving this project in 1940, he began to concentrate on various aspects of the life he observed around him.

Many critics have noted that Hayden's work eludes specific classification because he imitated no teacher or master. Usually, his art is characterized as naive, folkloric, or satiric—and the last characteristic has sometimes put him out of favor with serious-minded people. He developed an exceptional skill at narrative that draws us into a scene. He retains relatively flat color areas defined within strong, elegant linear elements, and his work now teases the distinction between so-called fine art and illustration. Hayden's approach is not unlike that of a photographer who captures people at unguarded moments. Whether it is a woman caught by a gust of wind lifting her skirt (*Gusting to Thirty-five Degrees*) or a little girl in her Sunday best admiring her new red shoes, the individuals respond to Hayden's scrutiny with an unself-consciousness, ease, and trust that any photographer would envy. In *Gusting to Thirty-five Degrees*, the woman's knowing smile as she struggles against the wind tells us that she is fully aware of being observed at an embarrassing moment. Hayden's portrayal is exact in all details, letting us see a bit of lace panty and a shapely leg framed by the curve of the woman's billowing coat.

Biography

Palmer Cole Hayden (originally named Peyton Cole Hedgeman) was born in Widewater, West Virginia, on 15 January 1890. By age four he showed artistic ability. At age sixteen he left Widewater for Washington, D.C., working as a drugstore errand boy and porter and enrolling in a correspondence course in drawing. After failing to set himself up as a professional artist, he joined the Buffalo Bill Circus and then the Ringling Brothers' Circus as a roustabout. Members of the circus had him do portraits of themselves and advertisements for the show. With the outbreak of World War I, he joined the army; he was stationed in the Philippines and later at West Point. He moved to New York after his discharge in 1920 (eventually settling in Greenwich Village); he worked in the post office and as a janitor at Cooper Union, studied art at Columbia

University, and worked at the Boothbay Art Colony in Maine during the summers. He won an award from the Harmon Foundation in 1926 that enabled him to study in Europe, and he set up a studio in Paris. In 1932, having returned to New York, he worked for the Federal Arts Project. Hayden married Miriam Hoffman, a schoolteacher, in 1940. They settled on West Fifty-sixth Street in midtown Manhattan, where he spent the rest of his life. He died in New York City in 1973.

LOWERY STOKES SIMS

See also Artists; Douglas, Aaron; Federal Programs; Harmon Foundation; Locke, Alain; Tanner, Henry Ossawa; Waring, Laura Wheeler; Woodruff, Hale

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Hayden, Robert

Robert Earl Hayden (1913–1980) was a poet and educator influenced by the Harlem Renaissance. His early writing, in particular, evinces an apprenticeship to poets like Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen; but even in his later writings and outlook, Hayden, like many artists inspired by the Harlem Renaissance, believed that the cultivation of a shared aesthetic and humanity would help remove the color line.

Hayden's original name was Asa Bundy Sheffey; at the age of eighteen months, he was taken in and renamed by William and Sue Ellen Westerfield Hayden after first his father and then his mother abandoned him, although he maintained a relationship with his mother. He was raised by the Haydens in an impoverished area of Detroit, Michigan, nicknamed Paradise Valley. Severe myopia precluded a physically active life, but the young Hayden found a refuge in reading and writing.

After majoring in Spanish at Wayne State University, but still one credit short of his B.A., Hayden found employment during the Great Depression with the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress



Robert Hayden. (Library of Congress.)

Administration (WPA). His research into the settlement of African Americans in Michigan would later find expression specifically in poems such as “Runagate Runagate” and, more generally, in his overall engagement with history in his poetry.

In time, Hayden’s conversion to the Baha’i World Faith in 1942 also found expression in the themes of his poetry. Baha’i tenets, such as the belief that humankind’s quest for truth is cyclical but progressive, permeate the poetry in *Words in the Mourning Time* (1970). Initially, however, Hayden’s poetry was beholden to Cullen and Hughes. His first published poem, “Africa” (*Abbot’s Monthly*, 1931), was in many ways a response to the question posed by Countee Cullen in “Heritage”: “What is Africa to me?” Hayden’s speaker replies: “Dear Africa, you’re more to me / Than reeking jungle. / In thee I take undying pride.” On meeting Cullen in 1941, Hughes was delighted to learn that his mentor had read and enjoyed his poetry. However, Langston Hughes’s earlier response to Hayden’s poetry had been less flattering: Over a lunch, Hughes had encouraged Hayden to find his own voice—Hayden’s first published poetry collection having been pervaded by Hughes’s voice in its use of dialect and blues.

Evidently, Hayden followed Hughes’s advice as a graduate student in English at the University of Michigan where, under the tutelage of W. H. Auden,

he cultivated a restrained, economical style that is poignant without being maudlin. This approach is best exemplified in “Those Winter Sundays,” one of Hayden’s most lauded and most frequently anthologized poems.

In 1966, at the first Black Writers’ Conference held at Fisk University, Hayden was attacked for being critical of the black nationalist school of writers, but Hayden, like Cullen before him, preferred to be a poet rather than a black poet. He was redeemed when that same year an international panel of judges, including Langston Hughes, awarded him the Grand Prix de la Poésie for *A Ballad of Remembrance*. During the last decade of his life, Hayden achieved recognition: He gave frequent poetry readings, received numerous honorary degrees, and was twice appointed the poetry consultant for the Library of Congress, an unprecedented honor.

Biography

Robert Earl Hayden (originally named Asa Bundy Sheffey) was born on 4 August 1913, in Detroit, Michigan; he married Erma Inez Morris in 1940. He was educated at Northern High School in Detroit (1930); Wayne State University (B.A., 1942); and the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (M.A. in English, 1944). He was a writer and researcher for the Federal Writers Project, Works Progress Administration, in Detroit (1936–1939); director of Negro Research, Detroit Federal Writers’ Project (1939–1940); researcher, Federal Historical Records Survey, WPA (1940); professor of English, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee (1946–1969); appointed poetry editor, *World Order* (1967); poet in residence, Indiana State University, Terre Haute (1967); visiting professor of English, University of Michigan (1968); Bingham professor, University of Louisville, Kentucky (1969); visiting poet, University of Washington, Seattle (1969); professor of English, University of Michigan (1969); writer and editor for Scott, Foresman (1970); on the poetry staff, Breadloaf Writers’ Conference, Middlebury College, Vermont (1972); and visiting poet, Connecticut College, New London (1974). His awards included the Hopwood Minor Award for Poetry (1938); the Hopwood Major Award for Poetry (1942); a Rosenwald fellowship in creative writing (1947); a Ford Foundation grant for travel and writing in Mexico (1954); the Grand Prix de la Poésie, First World Festival of Negro Arts, Dakar, Senegal (1966); a nomination for a National Book Award

(1970); the Russell Loines Award for Poetry, National Institute of Arts and Letters (1970); election as a fellow of the Academy of American Poets (1975); appointment as consultant in poetry, Library of Congress (1976–1978); membership in the Academy of American Poets and Institute of Arts and Letters (1979); and an invitation to President Jimmy Carter's "White House Salute to American Poetry" (1980). He recorded poetry for the Library of Congress archives (1968). "A Tribute to Robert Hayden" was held on 24 February 1980, at the University of Michigan. Hayden died in Ann Arbor, Michigan, on 25 February 1980.

VALARIE MOSES

See also Cullen, Countee; Federal Writers' Project; Hughes, Langston

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Hayes, Roland

The distinguished and distinctively brilliant African American tenor Roland Hayes (1887–1976) was known not only for his artistry but also for his unique way of fighting racism and bigotry in America and in Europe. He was the first African American concert artist to achieve international prominence, and he had many other "firsts" in his long career. He was hailed as one

of the great voices of the twentieth century, and he mastered the music of not just America but much of the world. In order to perform the music of other nations, he made a point of learning to sing in the language of each country he visited and in which he concertized. His preparation for this monumental task was supplemented by intensive study with several prominent teachers and coaches; he always seemed to be able to find just the right person to train him or guide him. The important teachers and coaches with whom Hayes studied in Europe were George Henschel in London, Theodore Lierhammer in Vienna, and Gabriel Fauré in Paris. His association with Henschel—who had studied with Johannes Brahms—led to a lifelong friendship, and it was through Henschel that Hayes polished his art and solidified his singing technique. Because of his concept of universality as well as his vocal art, Hayes falls easily into the category of the “New Negro” of the Harlem Renaissance.

Hayes was in a sense a self-made man and artist. He had been rather late in developing academically; he arrived at Fisk University, and was allowed to enroll, with the equivalent of only a sixth-grade education. He soon encountered personal problems that eventually cut short his studies at Fisk; one reason for these problems was that he was performing with the famous Jubilee Singers, which were not actually associated with the university’s music department. However, he remained loyal to Fisk and often returned there to perform. (The present writer had the good fortune to hear Hayes in recital at Fisk in the early 1960s.)

After his experience at Fisk, Hayes moved from Nashville to Louisville, where he met Arthur Calhoun, one of many white associates who would assist him with his training and help him to get gainful employment. Eventually, he went to Boston, where he had a summer residency with the Jubilee Singers in 1911. He then began serious study with Arthur Hubbard, meanwhile supporting himself by working as a messenger at the John Hancock Life Insurance Company. (His many supporters from this company contributed much to the success of his professional debut at Symphony Hall in Boston.) After settling in Boston, he sang at every opportunity, to demonstrate his vocal artistry.

In 1914, Hayes was chosen to go on one of Booker T. Washington’s lecture tours to sing with the noted baritone Harry T. Burleigh, who was the first African American concert artist and a close friend of Washington’s. Not only was this a great boost for the

aspiring young Hayes, but Burleigh also became an inspiration to him as well as a conduit to sources of indigenous American music. Moreover, news of this tour reached Nashville and, at Fisk University, reached a Miss Robinson—a teacher from whom Hayes had been estranged. She wrote to Hayes, suggesting a reconciliation, and his response was to go back to Fisk and sing the tenor role in Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*, with Burleigh singing the baritone lead. On this trip to Nashville, Hayes also visited his cousin Helen Alzada Mann, who would become his wife in 1932.

From the time when he first began to sing in public, Hayes realized that he had a unique talent; he believed that this talent was God-given and that it was something to be nurtured and shared with the world. He also realized that his beloved mother, Fannie, whom he called Angel Mo, had given him a special upbringing. (The title of Hayes’s autobiography is *Angel Mo and Her Son Roland Hayes*, and Chapter 2 is called “I Worship My Mother.”) Although his mother was a former slave, on one of his tours when she traveled with him, she was able to critique his performance—telling him how important it was not only to hear but also to understand the message he wanted to impart to his audience. Hayes described Fannie as “an indomitable woman whose high standards of personal honesty and dignity had exerted” a profound effect on him. He said that “next to our souls, Mother Fannie cherished our minds. She wanted us to have an education so that we could do good in the world.”

But in the early twentieth century, despite his talent and his inspirational upbringing, Hayes, as an African American, could not find professional sponsorship or management. He tried to engage as his manager William H. Brennan of the management staff at Symphony Hall in Boston—this was an audacious move for a black man at the time, and the attempt failed. (Not until 1923, when Hayes returned from Europe as a celebrity, would Brennan accept the position of his manager.) Hayes was not deterred from persisting with his career; he decided to be his own manager and promoter. He did hire a secretary, and between them they compiled mailing lists and other promotional literature. Also, Hayes had an entrée to the news media, which he used. Against the advice of his friends and his teacher, Arthur Hubbard, he pursued his dream of renting Symphony Hall for his professional debut in 1917. This debut recital drew an overflow crowd and earned him a \$2,000 profit. (In retrospect, though, there had already been a minor debut: Hayes had

sung the tenor arias in a performance of *Messiah* at Howard University c. 1910.)

Early on, tours were important in Hayes's career. He planned and managed them carefully and felt that overall they were successful. In 1915, for example, in order to earn money for his future endeavors, Hayes made a tour of several southern cities, singing in Negro churches with the aid of the American Missionary Association (AMA); in later years, he would reciprocate with a benefit performance for AMA. Early in 1918, Hayes and his accompanist, Lawrence Brown, set out on a tour that extended all the way to the West Coast. Hayes's mother went with them and took a liking to Brown. (Brown, who came from Charlestown, South Carolina, was later an accompanist for Paul Robeson.) There was a second transcontinental tour late in 1918, covering basically the same territory but with some additions and under "Negro auspices."

One factor in the success of Hayes's tours was the distinctiveness of his art. He recounted that "an elderly gentleman of aristocratic bearing came to me and said, 'Mr. Hayes, you seem to me to sing with all the art of the master singers I have heard and yet with some new emotional quality of your own. I wish you would tell me how you have come by that special quality.'" Hayes was a masterful communicator and a masterful interpreter of song. He has been described as an "expressor of the soul in song" (Carter 1977)—"soul" being understood here as deep inner expressiveness and genuine conviction. Hayes considered his voice a tool for a mission that was more important than art: racial harmony. Hayes pursued this mission in his own unique manner, which was quiet but strong. An example is a concert he gave in Vienna to a hypercritical audience that greeted him with hisses; called him, with blatant disrespect, the *Negertenor*; and seemed to be asking, Who gives him the right to sing our music? Hayes waited patiently for about twenty or twenty-five minutes, then nodded to his accompanist. They began a rendition of a piece that was a favorite of the Viennese, Schubert's *Du bist die Ruh*. Hayes sang in perfect German and with solid artistry, and he finally silenced the audience. By the end of the concert, he had won the audience over and received tremendous bravos of acclaim.

Work and studies abroad were also important to Hayes. The \$2,000 he earned from his debut recital in Boston made possible a trip to Europe "in search of the roots of French and German art songs." He had studied the French and German languages and French and German art songs assiduously, and he was already

familiar with the singing of Enrico Caruso—in fact, while Hayes was in Louisville (where, as noted previously, his benefactor was Arthur Calhoun), he had learned many arias and other works by listening to Caruso's recordings. In addition to his most important teachers and coaches (Henschel in London, where he spent most of his time; Lierhammer in Vienna; and Fauré in Paris), Hayes met and became friends with many international artists who recognized his genius; these figures included Pablo Casals, Ignacy Paderewski, Myra Hess, and Fritz Kreisler. Kreisler urged Pierre Monteux to engage Hayes for an appearance with the Boston Symphony on 16 November 1923—perhaps the first time that an African American was engaged to sing with a major American orchestra. Furthermore, during the three years that he spent in London (1920–1923), Hayes came into contact with his roots. There were many black residents in London at the time, including some who were British, some from the Caribbean, and some from West Africa, and Hayes benefited from the assistance of these primary sources. He studied their folklore and also learned to sing in their native languages. With the help of the West African community in London, for instance, Hayes studied and performed the folk music of West Africa. (Hayes's father, William, was of black and Indian heritage and may well have also been an influence in this regard.)

A source of support for Hayes—and subsequently a source of information about him—was the news journal *West Africa*, which was founded in early 1917 in London for a black and white readership in Britain and in Africa; Albert Cartwright was its editor and music critic. *West Africa* strongly promoted Hayes's career in London, reporting on all of his recitals and performances in Europe; and Hayes would usually list in this journal his programs as well as reviews of his recitals and other performances. In addition, he announced a command performance at Buckingham Palace for the king (George V) and queen in April 1921. Cartwright chided the London *Times* and other news media for their cool response to Hayes, and the *Times* later changed its stance.

Hayes's ability to sing in many languages—such as those of West Africa, as mentioned previously—was significant. Hayes was a fast learner; he had a command of French, German, and Italian, and he also sang in Russian on his tour of Russia. He knew several languages before coming to Europe and continued his study of languages during his stay there. This mastery of languages was one aspect of his general versatility: He was very universal in his approach and presented



Roland Hayes, photographed by Carl Van Vechten.
(Library of Congress.)

a marvelously varied repertoire. For instance, his recital programs included some works dating back as early as the fifteenth century.

Hayes was the first of his race to make a comfortable living as a concert artist. During the 1920s, he made seven hugely successful transcontinental tours of the United States; and in 1924, the *New York Times* reported that Hayes had earned \$100,000. Hayes bought a villa in France and a 623-acre farm in Georgia, where his mother had been a slave. He also had a residence in Brookline, Massachusetts, where he spent the end of his life with his wife and his only child—his daughter, Afrika, who sang recitals with him in Boston.

Hayes was an impeccable artist and a rare human being, a humanitarian with a universal spirit and a remarkable personality. One friend may have touched the essence of Hayes's spirit: "Roland has achieved great things. But he's one in a million. He could have been anything he put his mind to, because he has that kind of intelligence and drive." At the peak of his career, Hayes was said to be the only concert artist who could

fill both Carnegie Hall in New York and Symphony Hall in Boston three times in the same season. The *Boston Post* called him "the greatest recitalist in the world."

Biography

Roland Hayes was born in 1887 in Curryville, Georgia; his mother was a former slave. He was educated at Fisk University; performed with the Jubilee Singers (summer 1911) in Boston, Massachusetts; and began serious study with Arthur Hubbard in Boston. Hayes made his professional debut at Symphony Hall in Boston in 1917. He made several coast-to-coast tours in 1916–1919 and went to London in 1920–1923 (his debut in London was at Aeolian Hall in 1920). On his return to the United States, his recital of 2 December 1923 began his long, illustrious career, throughout which he would tour internationally. Hayes received numerous honorary degrees and, in 1924, the Spingarn Medal. He was probably the first black artist to sing with a major symphony orchestra (Boston, 1923) and one of the first blacks to make a good living through a concert singing career: He was able to buy a French villa, a large farm in Georgia, and a beautiful home in Brookline, Massachusetts. Hayes died in Boston in 1976.

MALCOLM BREDA

See also Burleigh, Harry Thacker; Singers; Washington, Booker T.

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Haynes, George Edmund

George Edmund Haynes was a pioneering black sociologist and social worker, a passionate advocate of education and self-improvement, and a founder and first executive secretary of the National Urban League (NUL).

The child of a domestic worker, Haynes was born in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, in 1880. He earned a B.A. at Fisk in 1903 and an M.A. in sociology at Yale a year later. Over the next six years he studied at the University of Chicago, the New York School of Philanthropy, and Columbia University, all while supporting his mother and sister by working as secretary of the Colored Men's Department of the International Committee of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). In 1912, he became the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Columbia University. His dissertation, *The Negro at Work in New York City: A Study in Economic Progress*, was published the same year.

At a time when most political leaders, black and white, urged African Americans to remain in the rural South, Haynes saw black urbanization as an inevitable by-product of modernization. He stressed the need for careful, nonpartisan investigation of the actual conditions of black urban life, including health, housing, vice, family life, and above all employment. He also stressed the vital need for a cadre of trained black social workers, to aid new southern migrants in their "adaptation" to the demands of urban life. Both convictions were embodied in the Committee for Improving Industrial Conditions of Negroes in New York, which he and Ruth Standish Baldwin, a wealthy white philanthropist, founded in 1910. A year later, he and Baldwin engineered the merger of their committee and several other social welfare agencies to create the National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes, which became known as the National Urban League. Haynes became its first executive secretary. In 1918, he accepted a position as director of the Department of Negro Economics, a wartime agency within the U.S. Department of Labor. At the same time, he held a professorship at Fisk University, where he introduced the first program in social work at a black university.

Haynes played little of a direct role in the Harlem Renaissance. His commitment to scientific investigation,

incremental reform, and "interracial cooperation" was distinctly out of step with the temper of the "New Negro" movement, with its emphasis on bold self-assertion and social transformation through art. He did contribute an essay, "The Church and the Negro Spirit," to *Survey Graphic's* special issue on Harlem in 1925, but the essay was one of those that Alain Locke excised in preparing *The New Negro*.

Over the remaining decades of his life, Haynes devoted his energies to numerous liberal social welfare agencies, including the Federal Council of Churches, the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, and the YMCA. In 1930, he traveled under the auspices of the YMCA to South Africa, whose problems of urbanization and "race friction" seemed to resemble those he had confronted in the United States. He returned to Africa in 1947, undertaking a continent-wide survey, the fruits of which appeared in his final book, *Africa: Continent of the Future*. He died in New York in 1960.

Biography

George Edmund Haynes was born in 1880 in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. He studied at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee (B.A., 1903); Yale University (M.A., 1904); the University of Chicago; the New York School of Philanthropy; and Columbia University (Ph.D., 1912). He was a cofounder of the Committee for Improving Industrial Conditions of Negroes in New York (1910) and the National Urban League (1911) and the first executive secretary of the National Urban League; a professor of education and sociology at Fisk University; and director of the Department of Negro Economics, U.S. Department of Labor (1918–1921). Haynes was a member of the President's Commission on Unemployment (1921), the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, the Federal Council of Churches, and the World Committee of the Young Men's Christian Association. He died in Mount Vernon, New York, in 1960.

JAMES CAMPBELL

See also National Urban League; New Negro, The; Survey Graphic

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Hearts in Dixie

Hearts in Dixie (1929), directed by Paul Sloane II and released by Fox Films, was the first feature-length Hollywood film with an almost exclusively black cast. Previously, most black roles in films were played by white actors in blackface, a long-standing theatrical tradition that gained popularity in the nineteenth century with the development of the minstrel show. *Hearts in Dixie*, by contrast, eschewed the use of blackface. By employing black actors, its makers sought to achieve a more realistic depiction of black life in the South.

With a script written by Walter Weems (a former southern minstrel performer), *Hearts in Dixie* narrates the story of an old black farmer named Nappus. His daughter Chloe is married to Gummy (played by Stepin Fetchit), a ne'er-do-well who suns himself by day and dances by night, leaving Chloe to perform all of the housework and manual labor. When Chloe and one of their two children fall ill, Gummy calls a voodoo woman instead of the white doctor, and both die. Determined to make a better life for his surviving grandchild, Nappus sells his mule and farm to raise enough money to send the boy north to become a doctor. The film ends with Nappus's wish that someday his grandson will return to the South to help their people.

On its release early in 1929, *Hearts in Dixie* was lauded by the mainstream white press. Mordaunt Hall, reviewer for the *New York Times*, described the



Eugene Jackson and Clarence Muse in *Hearts in Dixie*, 1929.

(Photofest.)

film as "a talking and singing production that is gentle in its mood and truthful in its reflection of the black men of those days down yonder in the cornfields" (1929, 30). However, the film met with a lukewarm response in the black press. A reviewer for the *Chicago Defender*, an important African American newspaper, was ambivalent about the depiction of black life, complaining that the film "dragged" and referring sarcastically to its "occasional spark of darky humor" ("*Hearts in Dixie*" 1929, 6).

Despite its historical significance, *Hearts in Dixie* has attracted little critical attention in recent scholarship. Much of the criticism that does exist has focused on the ideologies the film seems to endorse. First, the film participates in what has been called the "plantation myth," which painted an idealized and nostalgic vision of slavery. Furthermore, by depicting the voodoo woman as impotent, the film values white science and medicine over African or folk tradition. Bogle argued that because the film was written and directed by whites, "the actor becomes a black man in blackface" (1973, 27), depicting black life as it was imagined by whites. Some commentators would argue that this is particularly true of Stepin Fetchit. The first African American actor to receive top billing in the movies, he was at once a talented performer and an embarrassment to some blacks who felt that the role of the "plantation coon" (Bogle, 28), which he perfected, reinforced white stereotypes of blacks. Still, despite the flaws in *Hearts in Dixie*, Cripps maintains that Nappus has a "quiet patriarchal dignity" and that the action "flows from black ambition, not white instigation" (1993, 239). *Hearts in Dixie* remains a milestone

Hearts in Dixie

in the vexed history of African Americans in Hollywood cinema.

ALISON LANDSBERG

See also Fetchit, Stepin; Film

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Hegamin, Lucille

The blues singer Lucille Hegamin was most prominent in the early 1920s. She began her professional career around 1909, touring with a Leonard Harper revue. In 1914 to 1918, she was a cabaret and café singer in Chicago, billed as the "Georgia peach." She worked extensively with the legendary New Orleans pianist Tony Jackson at the Elite No. 2 Theater on Chicago's south side, popularizing his classic song "Pretty Baby" and W.C. Handy's "Saint Louis Blues." She also worked with Jelly Roll Morton and others before marrying the pianist Bill Hegamin, who then became her accompanist.

In 1918 to 1919, the Hegamins traveled to Los Angeles; they worked there and also in San Francisco and Seattle. Around November 1919, they moved to New York, where they worked at cafés in Harlem (the Dolphin, Connor's) while Lucille Hegamin established herself in New York. By the spring of 1920, she had graduated to singing at major events, such as the spectacular dances put on by Happy Rhone's Orchestra at the Manhattan Casino. The Manhattan Casino was a large room, unkind to singers, and Rhone's ensemble often numbered thirty players or more. Hegamin's voice, although not large, had an edge that penetrated; she proudly recalled her ability to "wail."

Voices of this type were much in demand during the early commercial fad for blues, and Hegamin soon became a popular recording artist, the second African American woman blues singer to record. Her initial recordings, on the Arto label, featured her husband on piano and several fine jazz musicians, and sold well. Among the most important was "He May Be Your Man but He Comes to See Me Sometimes." After touring extensively to support her record sales, she began a stint at Harlem's Shuffle Inn on 131st Street. In January 1922, she took part in a legendary four-way blues contest in New York, placing second behind Trixie Smith. Around February to May 1922, she toured the eastern United States with the number-two company of the show *Shuffle Along*. In the autumn of 1923, she appeared in the musical comedy *Creole Follies* in New York and Washington, D.C.

From December 1923 through 1926, she worked primarily as a solo act, now with the pianist Cyril Fullerton, her marriage and partnership with Bill Hegamin having failed. She briefly led her own jazz band from November 1925 to February 1926. She continued as a prolific recording artist, making more than forty sides for Cameo Records from September 1922 to the autumn of 1926 (she was dubbed the "Cameo girl"). In early 1925, she performed frequently on the radio station WHN, broadcasting from the Cotton Club with Andy Preer and his Cotton Club Syncopators. From January to March 1927 she was active primarily in Philadelphia.

After the late 1920s, Hegamin's career began to fade. She eventually found work as a nurse and put show business behind her, but she was rediscovered during the blues revival of the 1960s; in August 1961, she recorded alongside Alberta Hunter and Victoria Spivey, accompanied by an old-timers' jazz band, for the Prestige "Bluesville" label. Although these were her first recordings in almost thirty years, they found her in good voice and were well received. She made a few personal appearances in clubs during the early 1960s, as a revered elder of the blues.

Biography

Lucille Nelson Hegamin was born in Macon, Georgia, on 29 November 1894. She had no formal musical training; she sang in church and local theatricals as a child and entered professional show business c. 1909, touring with a Leonard Harper revue. She became a cabaret and café singer in Chicago. She married the

pianist Bill Hegamin, who became her accompanist; they worked together on the West Coast, then moved to New York c. 1919. She worked in cafés in Harlem and then moved up to major venues and recordings. After her marriage to Bill Hegamin failed, she worked mostly solo (1923–1926), continued recording, and did radio broadcasts. When her performing career faded (late 1920s), she became a nurse; she was rediscovered during a blues revival in the 1960s. She died on 1 March 1970, in New York City.

ELLIOTT S. HURWITT

See also Blues: Women Performers; Cotton Club; Handy, W. C.; Hunter, Alberta; Manhattan Casino; Shuffle Along; Singers; Spivey, Victoria

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Henderson, Fletcher

James Fletcher Hamilton Henderson, known as Fletcher Henderson and as Fletch Smack Henderson, is among the most important figures in the emergence of jazz during the 1920s and 1930s. As musical director for Black Swan Records, piano accompanist for hundreds of early blues recordings, leader of an innovative ensemble that began as a polished dance orchestra and became crucial to the development of big band jazz, and chief arranger for Benny Goodman during the height of his popularity in the mid-1930s, Henderson helped shape many elements of American popular music between the world wars. He had a remarkable eye for talent, hiring and shepherding the careers of numerous sidemen, soloists, and arrangers who profoundly influenced the direction of jazz. Although his upbringing made him an unlikely candidate to help develop and popularize a revolutionary new musical form, he came as near as any black jazz musician to the “New Negro” ideal as established by the leaders of the Harlem Renaissance, providing a model for the talented, striving, professional black musician that many African Americans could follow.

Fletcher Henderson was born into an upstanding middle-class family in Cuthbert, Georgia. His grandfather James, born a slave, served as a delegate to South Carolina’s Constitutional Convention of 1868 and in the state legislature during Reconstruction. Both his parents were college-educated and were respected teachers at the Howard Normal School, where his father was also principal. Young Fletcher Henderson grew up surrounded by music, but exclusively in classical rather than popular forms. Even after his success in jazz, his parents forbade the playing of jazz in their house. His well-rounded childhood education included compulsory piano lessons, which he reportedly resented, from age six to thirteen.

While earning a B.S. in chemistry at Atlanta University, his father’s alma mater, Henderson played the organ for university church services, performed in several musical stage shows, and led the Georgia Student Army Training Corps band during World War I. Although he earned money playing piano at a resort in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, during the summers while he was in college, he as yet showed no signs of a professional interest in music.

In June 1920, Henderson traveled to New York intending to enroll at Columbia University for graduate work in chemistry, but from his first days in the city he found himself drawn, by chance and a lack of financial resources, toward work in New York’s vibrant music scene, and increasingly toward popular music styles. After playing piano on a riverboat orchestra, he was hired by Pace and Handy Music Company as a song plugger, performing tunes the company published to increase sales of its sheet music. When the coproprietor Harry Pace, a fellow alumnus of Atlanta University, split from Handy to form the Black Swan Phonograph Company in 1921, he hired Henderson as music director, recording manager, and piano accompanist.

The years 1921 through 1923 were vital in Henderson’s musical development. Black Swan’s determination to record both classical and popular music brought Henderson, as pianist on many of the label’s early recordings, into contact with a wide variety of music, including blues and dance styles. The success of the blues singer Ethel Waters also prompted Black Swan to send Waters and Henderson on tour with a small ensemble, the Black Swan Troubadours, in 1921 and 1922. The sophisticated Henderson was so uncomfortable at the prospect of touring with a blues singer that he felt compelled to obtain permission from his family beforehand. Ultimately, however, Waters’s influence on Henderson in 1921 and 1922 was

crucial. Frustrated at his lack of a feel for blues and jazz rhythm, Waters coached Henderson in left-hand technique, even buying him piano rolls by James P. Johnson as a model. Henderson quickly absorbed the new blues and dance styles, and his versatility, talent, reliability, and organizational skills made him one of the most sought-after piano accompanists in New York. By 1923, he had performed on more records than any other African American artist, accompanying singers such as Bessie Smith, Rosa Henderson, Trixie Smith, and Turner Layton.

Fletcher Henderson formed his first dance orchestra late in 1922. The musicians were primarily a recording ensemble until Club Alabam, an elite white-only downtown dance venue, hired them for steady work in January 1924. When a dispute with the management led them to quit in June, they were quickly hired at the Roseland Ballroom (the "Home of Refined Dancing") on Broadway, where they would make their home until 1928. A live radio broadcast from the Roseland Ballroom on WHN increased their exposure, and Henderson was on his way to national prominence.

With these engagements and recording contracts on numerous labels, including the prestigious Columbia, the Henderson orchestra became one of the premier black ensembles in New York in the mid-1920s. Henderson's unit was the only black orchestra competing directly with white dance bands such as Sam Lanin's and Paul Whiteman's for work in elite, whites-only downtown clubs and for market share among both black and white consumers of recorded music. His success in these venues was based on several factors. The Henderson orchestra was a disciplined, sophisticated, musically educated unit of young black instrumentalists who could read virtually any music put in front of them. Their talent and versatility made it possible not only to play "sweet music" (waltzes, foxtrots, and other "refined" dances) for their audience, but also to adapt quickly to trends, such as orchestrating increasingly popular blues songs into a polished, danceable form, or including "hot" jazz and blues-inflected solos in an otherwise "sweet" repertoire. Thus the Henderson band of 1923 and 1924 was not a jazz ensemble but a dance ensemble that could perform at the highest levels of the profession and attract black and white audiences alike.

Nevertheless, in this early ensemble there were two men who would move Henderson toward the new jazz style in the mid-1920s and significantly influence the direction of jazz. Coleman Hawkins, a brilliant young soloist who would become the most important

tenor saxophonist during the first half of the twentieth century, joined the band in 1923. More important, that same year Don Redman, a college-educated multi-reed player from West Virginia, began his four-year stint as chief arranger with Henderson. Redman laid the foundation for jazz arranging by his inventive use of call-and-response patterns between brass and reed sections and his ability to integrate ensemble playing and improvised solos.

In the autumn of 1924, the Roseland Ballroom gave Henderson money to expand his orchestra to include four brass and three reeds. The additions allowed Redman to experiment with a larger ensemble and brought to the band the clarinetist Buster Bailey and the cornet player Louis Armstrong, both from King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band in Chicago. Armstrong's effect was immediate and profound, for both the commercial and the musical fortunes of the band. Both men, especially Armstrong, were wildly popular with the crowd at Roseland. From the first night, dancers and even people passing on the street stopped to listen to Armstrong's brilliant sound. When Henderson introduced his orchestra with Armstrong to Harlem at the Lafayette Theater later that year, Armstrong established himself as the new trumpet king of New York. The demand for the band grew nationally, and Henderson began touring one week per month during the autumn of 1925. Moreover, Armstrong's melodically innovative and driving jazz improvisations influenced virtually all who heard him. Trumpet players tried to imitate his fire and style. Coleman Hawkins and other instrumentalists moved toward more modern jazz performance, and Don Redman incorporated Armstrong's ideas into his arrangements for the ensemble.

Armstrong's departure in the autumn of 1925 did not at all hinder the band's musical or commercial development. Henderson added new musicians who were more familiar with jazz improvisation and began increasing the number of jazz pieces, as opposed to popular dance numbers, in the repertoire. This indicated not only musical maturity but also an increased interest in jazz among consumers of popular music, both in nightclubs and on records. By 1928, the Henderson orchestra had shifted from a versatile dance ensemble with "hot" jazz soloists to becoming one of the top jazz bands of the era. Although Redman left in 1927, Henderson attracted some of the best talent in the business, including the trumpeters Rex Stewart, Tommy Ladnier, and Cootie Williams and the saxophonist Benny Carter, who soon became principal arranger. While the band maintained a home base at

Roseland, frequent tours took it across the East and Midwest. The demand for the Henderson orchestra was such that Henderson established a band under his brother's leadership to cover any dates for which he was already booked.

Fletcher Henderson and his orchestra, at their peak, represented the closest approximation to "New Negro" ideals found in jazz. After his marriage in 1924, Henderson and his family moved to Strivers' Row and often took in young, aspiring musicians as boarders. He consistently demonstrated a commitment to improving his race, performing benefits for African American charities, including the Defense Fund of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Brotherhood Fraternity, which raised funds for the education of young black men. Also, following the example of the Clef Club (a black musicians' union that had been formed in 1910), Henderson insisted on discipline, professionalism, and excellent skills in reading music, none of which had been associated with the improvisatory, bawdy, "uncivilized" nature of early jazz. Henderson had filled his orchestra primarily with young, professional, educated black musicians of middle-class origins who shared his aspirations for musicianship and respectability, aspirations that included work in the elite downtown dance clubs. It was a model of a striving, professional, musical organization that many others, including the young Duke Ellington, would follow.

The reaction among African Americans to the Henderson orchestra, however, was mixed. It was a great source of pride for most, and in 1927 the Chicago *Defender* identified Henderson's outfit as "the greatest orchestra of the Race." Members of Ellington's band feared battles with the Henderson outfit, knowing that their defeat was virtually preordained. Yet its success among white audiences and its more polished sound led to charges that its music was "adulterated" and was meant "for the white man's consumption" after Henderson opened the Savoy Ballroom in 1926. For the "talented tenth," embarrassed by the cultural and musical rough edges of jazz, Henderson's more composed music and sophisticated image were a comfort; the African American professional was assured that he could, in the words of David Levering Lewis, still enjoy the jazz of the Henderson band "at the Savoy without being downright savage about it."

After 1928, the band's fortunes began to decline. Following a serious automobile accident in August



Fletcher Henderson. (Brown Brothers.)

1928, Henderson lost interest in the business of running an orchestra, and he began to fall into debt in 1930. Forced to disband in 1934, he reconstituted his outfit the next year, attracting but failing to hold several of the most talented young jazz musicians of the period. A six-week stand at the Grand Terrace Ballroom in Chicago, including a contract with NBC radio, provided the band with one final commercial success, a release of the song "Christopher Columbus" in 1936.

In 1930, Henderson began to write arrangements for his orchestra; and when Benny Goodman needed jazz material for his big band's radio program "Let's Dance" in 1934, the producer John Hammond introduced him to Henderson, who sold twenty-seven of his arrangements to Goodman. These pieces formed the foundation of Goodman's repertoire during his rise to stardom in 1935. In all, Henderson probably contributed between 300 and 400 arrangements to Goodman's orchestra, and many bandleaders, including Count Basie, Chick Webb, Ray Noble, and Tommy Dorsey, performed Henderson's music. At the height of the swing era, Henderson was recognized as among the greatest arrangers in jazz.

Henderson's work behind the scenes in helping Goodman, a white clarinetist, become the "king of

swing,” and his competition with the bandleader Paul Whiteman, known as the “king of jazz,” a decade before has been central to the academic debates over the place of African American music in twentieth-century America. Caught among competing visions of African American culture in a racially divided America, however, Henderson and his orchestra responded as so many other jazz musicians did—by simply revolutionizing American music above the din of academic arguments.

Biography

James Fletcher “Smack” Henderson was born in Cuthbert, Georgia, on 18 December 1897. He was educated at Atlanta University College Prep (1911–1912, 1913–1916) and Atlanta University (as a chemistry major, 1916–1920). He was a song plugger for Pace and Handy Music Publishing Company (1920–1921); was musical director and pianist for Black Swan Records (1921–1923); toured with Ethel Waters and the Black Swan Troubadours (1921–1922); made recordings with Waters, Rosa Henderson, Alberta Hunter, Turner Layton, Bessie Smith, Trixie Smith, Lena Wilson, J. Arthur Gaines, and Ravella Hughes (1921–1924); made recordings on the Black Swan, Paramount, Emerson, Brunswick, Columbia, Victor, Vocalion, and Decca labels; led the Henderson Dance Orchestra (1922–1923); was featured at Club Alabam (1924); had Louis Armstrong in his orchestra (1924–1925); performed at Roseland Ballroom (steadily, 1924–1928; intermittently, 1929–1936); had a contract with WHN radio (1924–1930); made regional and national tours (1924–1934); played at the grand opening of the Savoy Ballroom (March 1926); had a six-week engagement at the Pompeii Room, Congress Hotel, Chicago (1927); conducted the orchestra for the musical *Great Day* (1929, but never made it to Broadway); had a contract with WABC radio (1930–1932); moved from Roseland to Connie’s Inn (1930–1931); disbanded his orchestra because of financial difficulties (1934); formed a new orchestra (1935–1939); had his last commercial success, the song “Christopher Columbus” (1936); began arranging for Benny Goodman (1934); was a staff arranger with Goodman (1937–1941); was a pianist with the Benny Goodman Orchestra (1939); performed in the concert “Spirituals to Swing” (December 1939); formed another new band, which played intermittently (1941–1947); and appeared in reunion concerts with

Ethel Waters (1948–1950). Henderson died in Harlem on 29 December 1952.

WILLIAM J. NANCARROW

See also Armstrong, Louis; Black Swan Phonograph Corporation; Clef Club; Music: Bands and Orchestras; Jazz; Lafayette Theater; Pace, Harry H.; Roseland Ballroom; Savoy Ballroom; Waters, Ethel; *other specific musicians*

Selected Recordings of the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra

- “The Dicky Blues.” 1923.
- “Go Long Mule.” 1924.
- “Shanghai Shuffle.” 1924.
- “Copenhagen.” 1924.
- “Sugarfoot Stomp.” 1925. (Arranged by Henderson, 1931.)
- “The Stampede.” 1926. (Composed by Henderson.)
- “Henderson Stomp.” 1926. (Composed by Henderson.)
- “Whiteman Stomp.” 1927.
- “Variety Stomp.” 1927. (Co-composed by Henderson.)
- “King Porter Stomp.” 1933. (Arranged by Henderson.)
- “Down South Camp Meeting.” 1934. (Composed and arranged by Henderson.)
- “Wrappin’ It Up.” 1934. (Composed and arranged by Henderson.)
- “Christopher Columbus.” 1936.

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Herskovits, Melville

In 1896, nine years after his arrival from Germany, Franz Boas received a permanent appointment in anthropology at Columbia University. Almost immediately, he became the leading anthropological voice in America, and his students Melville Herskovits, Margaret Meade, Ruth Benedict, Alfred Kroeber, and Edward Sapir would become dominant authorities as well far into the twentieth century. Boas was important for his criticism of the "scientific racism" that dominated European and American thought and his argument that cultures (the "genius of a people") were diverse, were independent, and had an internal integrity of their own. As a result, such prominent black intellectuals as W. E. B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, Walter White, Carter G. Woodson, Charles S. Johnson, Arthur Schomburg, and Zora Neale Hurston all sought his counsel throughout the 1920s and 1930s. As Hutchinson (1995) has noted, Boas's concepts "became bedrock assumptions among 'New Negro' authors of virtually every persuasion." Melville Herskovits had nearly the same importance, especially in his relationship with Locke and Hurston. Whereas most of Boas's students focused their attention on Native American cultures, Herskovits devoted his life to the study of Africa and the transmission of African culture to the new world.

In 1924, after completing his dissertation "The Cattle Complex in East Africa," Herskovits met Locke in New York City; the two soon became friends as well as intellectual collaborators. Herskovits's anthropometric studies in Harlem (the measuring of African Americans to help disprove the argument that race was a fixed and unvarying constant) and such articles as "The Cultural Approach to Sociology" (1923) helped clarify for Locke theoretical distinctions between race and culture that he would make in "The Concept of Race as Applied to Social Culture" (1924). As a result, it was now possible for Locke to turn his attention to the symbolic dimensions of racial identity. Thus the genesis of Locke's *The New Negro* (1925) was, in part, in this understand-

ing that race "determines the stressed values which become the conscious symbols and tradition of culture." At the same time, Locke was of assistance to Herskovits, helping him obtain a teaching position at Howard University in Washington, D.C., where he gave the course "Introduction to Physical Anthropology" and was able to continue gathering anthropometric evidence to extend his studies of race. Also, at Locke's invitation, Herskovits contributed to *The New Negro* an essay called "The Negro's Americanism," in which he argued that Harlem was "essentially not different from any other American community" but was "the same pattern, only a different shade." Locke was not entirely pleased with this argument; he structured *The New Negro* to emphasize that culturally and temperamentally, blacks were distinguished from whites and that Harlem was not just like any other American community.

As a result of his relationship with Locke and Ernest Just at Howard, the vitality and diversity of *The New Negro*, and his own observation that blacks were consolidating as a social group, Herskovits began to revise the assimilationist emphasis he had made in "The Negro's Americanism." In *The American Negro* (1928), Herskovits argued that a race was not so much a homogeneous biological group as a cultural group. This shift in point of view eventually led to his classic work *The Myth of the Negro Past* (1941), in which he explored the African cultural heritage of African Americans. As a consequence, Herskovits increasingly turned his attention to cultural factors to help explain what science had revealed but could not fully explain. In 1926, Herskovits outlined to the National Research Council his hope of tracing the cultural roots of African Americans by returning to "the great African collections of the major European ethnological museums." Later, with the help of Boas and Elsie Clews Parsons, he did research in West Africa (Dahomey, Nigeria, and the Gold Coast), Suriname, and the Caribbean (Trinidad and Haiti). His work in the Dutch colony of Suriname on descendants of runaway slaves, the Saramaka, led to *Rebel Destiny* (1934), an almost novelistic rendering intended to help capture the "temperamental base" that Locke had emphasized, and *Suriname Folklore* (1936). Throughout these years Herskovits kept in touch with Locke. Their shared interest in Africa and African culture had long been a major strand of their friendship.

When Herskovits first began measuring in Harlem in 1924, Zora Neale Hurston was one of his



Melville and Frances Herskovits. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

assistants. For the next ten years, however, they saw little of each other. During that time, Hurston had been doing fieldwork in the South and in the Bahamas and kept in close contact with Boas and Ruth Benedict, and Herskovits had taken a position at Northwestern University in 1927. Then Hurston was persuaded by Boas that she should study with Herskovits for a Ph.D. in anthropology, so she and Herskovits were once again in contact. Although Hurston's plans for graduate work failed to materialize, Herskovits would play a significant role as an adviser and personal friend as she expanded the research she had begun in the American South into the Caribbean. As their correspondence suggests, her interest in African American culture and in the African diaspora—in particular, the complex spiritual world of the African maroon communities in Jamaica and Haiti—was what she shared most directly with Herskovits. In *Tell My Horse*, her study of these two islands, she praised him as the one person who had written about voodoo (in his *Life in a Haitian Village*) and actually knew something about it.

Herskovits taught at Northwestern until the end of his life. He became the first chair of the Department of Anthropology in 1938, and ten years later he established the program of African studies. In 1961, he was appointed to the chair of African studies, the first position of its kind in the United States.

Biography

Melville Jean Herskovits was born on 10 September 1895, in Bellefontaine, Ohio. He studied at the University of Chicago (A.B., 1920), Columbia University (Ph.D., 1923), and the New School of Social Research in New York. He taught at Columbia University (1924 and 1927); Howard University, Washington, D.C. (1925); and Northwestern University (1927–1963). Herskovits was a founding member and first president of the African Studies Association (1957–1958) and an officer in other organizations, including the American Anthropological Association, American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Folklore Society, International Anthropology Congress, and First International Congress of Africanists, 1962. He was an adviser to the Mayor's Committee on Race Relations (Chicago, 1945) and the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee (1959–1960). He died on 25 February 1963.

MARK HELBLING

See also Boas, Franz; Hurston, Zora Neale; Locke, Alain; New Negro, The

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Heyward, DuBose

DuBose Heyward was an unlikely figure to become associated with the Harlem Renaissance, but his novel *Porgy* (1925) was the first major work of fiction by a white southerner to depict African Americans in non-stereotypical ways. It won him the respect and admiration of James Weldon Johnson, Nella Larsen, Jean Toomer, and many others in Harlem's intellectual circles.

Heyward was born in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1885, into a once aristocratic southern family that had been dispossessed and wrecked financially by the Civil War. His widowed mother, Janie, did what she could to keep the family afloat, taking in piecemeal sewing work, operating a boardinghouse on a nearby barrier island, and eventually becoming a local-color writer of some repute. Her subject was the lives and lore of the Gullah Negroes—an ethnically homogeneous subculture that thrived on the sea islands in the Southeast. The Gullahs were said to have originated in Angola (hence, "gullah") and to have been imported as a tribe to Georgia and South Carolina rather than split up as most slaves at the time were; thus the Gullahs more than other slaves retained an unusually strong sense of their customs, origins, and tribal bonds. Speaking a glittering metaphorical language that brought to life their myriad folktales and folk songs, the Gullahs appealed to Janie Heyward as a subject for art. She subsequently wrote several books, transcriptions of Gullah tales, for white audiences and later performed them orally as a parlor-room speaker for ladies' afternoon teas up and down the eastern seaboard.

Janie Heyward and John Bennett, who was a local author of children's books and an avid researcher into the ways of the Gullahs, urged Heyward in the early 1920s to give up the work for which he had had to settle—that of an insurance agent—and pursue his dream of a life in art. Together with Heyward's new

wife, Dorothy Hartzell Kuhns, they collectively pointed him toward the rich storehouse of untapped artistic material in the Gullah culture of Charleston.

Thus was born *Porgy*, a critical and popular sensation in 1925 because of its honest and undiluted view of the African American—not as the ignorant or shifty darky of nineteenth-century writing, but as a person with the same aims and dreams, thoughts and emotions, as white people, simply emanating from a different culture. Reviewers in both the North and the South uniformly applauded the novel, seeing it as revolutionary for its time.

Heyward was mildly ostracized by some quarters of Charlestonian society for his progressive views. He began to spend less time in Charleston and more time in the mountains of western North Carolina, where he did the bulk of his writing, and in New York, where his wife, a professional playwright, got him interested in theater. Dorothy Heyward drafted a script for a play of *Porgy*, Heyward helped her refine it, and the resulting work was performed in New York in October 1927, once again to great critical acclaim. Many reviewers said that the lush Negro spirituals, which set the emotional mood of the play, were worth the price of admission alone, and the Heywards found themselves adopted by wealthy white New Yorkers and the elite of Harlem as well. Most important, the play *Porgy* helped energize the nascent black theater movement at the time, for the Heywards insisted that the cast be all-black, not white actors in blackface as was the custom. As a result, more headlining roles began to open up for black actors.

Heyward, now famous, continued to pursue this vein of then-new material—the white modernists' interest in primitivism—in his next major novel, *Mamba's Daughters* (1929). This book, a longer and more complex work than *Porgy*, tells the story of three generations of Gullah women and the successive generations' striving to rise above their social and cultural destiny. In this novel, Heyward abandoned the somewhat aloof voice of the white outsider in *Porgy* and adopted instead a much more sympathetic narrative voice, one that clearly champions the attempts of the Gullah women to better their lot in life.

Much of Heyward's fame resulted from the stage dramatizations of his work. In 1939, *Mamba* was performed on Broadway, where it made a star of Ethel Waters in her first major dramatic role. And *Porgy*, of course, became *Porgy and Bess* in 1935—the first American folk opera. Heyward collaborated with George Gershwin and Ira Gershwin in all possible

ways on this production. He wrote the libretto single-handedly, carving it out of the play version of the story. Either by himself or in collaboration with Ira Gershwin, he wrote half the arias for the opera. And he also scouted for talent, assisted in rehearsals, and performed other production chores. *Porgy and Bess*, however, was a relative failure, commercially and critically, when it first opened: Black critics objected to what they considered to be the stereotyped portrayal of African Americans; white critics carped over whether the work was a legitimate opera or a Broadway musical.

Despondent and embittered by New Yorkers' insensitivity to *Porgy and Bess*, into which he had poured nine years of labor and love, Heyward beat a retreat from the glitterati and returned to his roots in Charleston. He published some more novels, taking a more overt social-critical angle; and he involved himself in local



DuBose Heyward, 1931. (Library of Congress.)

historic preservation efforts and in a playwriting group that had attached itself to a newly restored eighteenth-century theater.

Heyward died of a heart attack at age fifty-four in 1940, just three years after George Gershwin's death. Both men died thinking that *Porgy and Bess* had been a failure, but it was actually their greatest success; it has since achieved literary and musical immortality.

Biography

Edwin DuBose Heyward was born on 31 August 1885, in Charleston, South Carolina, and studied at Boys' High School there. He was a cofounder of the Poetry Society of South Carolina (1920), was editor of its *Year Book* (1921–1923), was elected its president in 1924, and resigned in 1925. He toured Europe in 1927. He received a D.Litt. from the University of North Carolina in 1928. He took a second trip abroad, to the Mediterranean and the Holy Land, and was made an honorary doctor of letters by the College of Charleston in 1929. He attended the Southern Writers Conference in Charlottesville, Virginia, with Faulkner, Glasgow, and others (1931). Heyward was the first South Carolinian elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters. He was awarded an honorary degree from the University of South Carolina and cruised to the Virgin Islands in 1937. He was named resident director of the Dock Street Theater in Charleston in 1939. Heyward died at age fifty-four in Tryon, North Carolina, on 16 June 1940.

JAMES M. HUTCHISSON

See also Gershwin, George; Johnson, James Weldon; Larsen, Nella; *Porgy and Bess*; *Porgy: Novel*; *Porgy: Play*; Toomer, Jean; Waters, Ethel

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Higher Education

Ever since Alain Locke's seminal essay "Enter the New Negro" (1925), the term "New Negro" has usually been reduced to its linkage with the authors and literature of the Harlem Renaissance. As used in the 1920s, however, the term referred to more than the active writers of the Harlem Renaissance: it also included the African American masses and especially the young. "For the younger generation," Locke wrote, "is vibrant with a new psychology" (1969, 3). This new spirit, which Locke attributed to a renewal of self-respect and independence, was nowhere more evident during the 1920s than on black college and university campuses.

The 1920s represented the real beginnings of modern public as well as private black higher education, although that aspect of the decade is usually overlooked in most discussions and analyses. These years witnessed the first significant growth in the population of African American as well as African college students in the United States, ongoing efforts at the modernization of the curriculum, the emergence of modern intercollegiate spectator sports such as football, and increased personal freedom for students on campus. The decade also witnessed the appearance of students who were not only better prepared academically for the academic rigors of college, but also more mature, assertive, expressive, and militant

at black institutions of higher education—all traits that characterized the New Negro of the Harlem Renaissance.

The new confidence that characterized students of color specifically and members of their race generally in the 1920s resulted from many forces. Before World War I, militant new leaders, such as W. E. B. Du Bois, had emerged, demanding full civil rights and an immediate end to racial segregation and thereby inspiring greater self-assertiveness among African Americans. The "great migration" to the urban North further disrupted old patterns of life and created new hopes as well as new problems. The fight abroad to make the world safe for democracy during World War I led to greater expectations at home, despite the bloody race riots of 1919. As African Americans entered the 1920s, it was clear that their long journey down the desert years of history had strengthened, not weakened, their resolve to improve their lives.

Important changes occurred in black higher education during the decade. An essential characteristic of black colleges and universities during the 1920s was their first emergence as institutions of higher education after nearly half a century as poverty-stricken elementary and secondary schools. The chief factor that brought them into existence was the growth of a system of public education for African Americans in the South. This system, by creating a demand for teachers, made their preparation the focus of the black colleges' mission. The education of teachers set in motion a complex supply—demand chain in which the availability of teaching positions drew students into the colleges to qualify for these positions. The growth of this total system of racially segregated public education not only was responsible for the development of black higher education but also ascribed to it an indispensable role as the source of manpower for black education and, ultimately, placed it in intellectual and pedagogical control over that system—defining the content, establishing methods, setting standards, and, as the sole outlet for the system, serving as a criterion for its success.

Many forces converged to make this happen. Among these was a change in the economic fortunes of black higher education after 1900. This is attributable to the appearance of two large and purposeful private philanthropic agencies—the Rosenwald Fund and the General Education Board—which were concerned with the improvement of educational opportunities for African Americans. Moreover, there was some improvement in public support for black schools as a

result of the positive effect that World War I had on the nation's economy. In educational terms, this meant that the demand for education rose and more public money from rising taxes and private charitable dollars went into schools. As the demand for teachers rose, the educational requirements for teachers rose too, and public funds had to be used to improve teacher training—some of which was directed toward the African American community. These conditions led to the growth of black colleges and an improvement in both physical plants and faculties as well as the academic quality of students who enrolled in these institutions.

Improved economic conditions also made higher education a goal for more African American young people during the 1920s. Between 1919–1920 and 1929–1930, the undergraduate enrollments at fifty-seven four-year black colleges and universities grew from 9,589 to 16,392. During this period, the largest increase in enrollments occurred at thirty black four-year colleges, more than doubling from 4,473 to 10,222. Significantly, the total undergraduate enrollment at these schools was about equally divided among male and female students: 5,116 and 5,110, respectively. This growth in enrollment at private black colleges would continue uninterrupted until 1953. A similar increase occurred at twenty-seven black public colleges, where enrollments grew from 3,720 in 1919–1920 to 6,170 by 1929–1930—an upward trend that would continue uninterrupted to the present day (Bowles and De Costa 1971, 52, 55).

The publication of the Phelps-Stokes Fund's *Jones Report* in 1916 also helped bring about the demise of many marginal and substandard black institutions, which were colleges or universities in name only, and led to the termination of many of the elementary and secondary education divisions in black colleges. As a result, the average age of students at these institutions increased. Thus, by 1920, the average age of the student body at black colleges began to approach the modern norm of seventeen to eighteen years for college freshmen. Moreover, because of the great migration, a larger proportion of students not only came from urban areas and from improved public school systems but also were high school graduates and so were better prepared for the academic rigors of college. Finally, a higher number of students came from families in which one or both parents had received some postsecondary schooling. All of these changes had, by the 1920s, created a type of student who was less willing than his or her predecessors to tolerate the all-encompassing petty restrictions on stu-

dent life on campus that characterized the traditional system of discipline at black colleges.

The 1920s were also noteworthy for the appearance of African Americans on the scholarly scene, in the pages of *Journal of Negro History*, *Opportunity*, and *Survey Graphic*, who would contribute to the future intellectual growth of black higher education as well as the modernization of its curriculum and mission. Their names read like a who's who of twentieth-century scholars. They included the director of Tuskegee University's Bureau of Records and Research and editor of *The Negro Yearbook*, Monroe N. Work; the historians Luther P. Jackson, Lorenzo J. Greene, William Leo Hansberry, and Rayford Logan; the English professor Benjamin Brawley; the folklorists Miles Mark Fisher and Lorenzo D. Turner; and the sociologists E. Franklin Frazier and Charles S. Johnson.

Alain Locke, who is usually credited with playing a major role in defining and promoting the Harlem Renaissance, began his career as a scholar at the nation's premier black educational institution of the 1920s—Howard University. At Howard, Locke was accepted and acclaimed by its dean of arts and sciences, Kelly Miller. Along with his former classmate Montgomery Gregory, Locke organized the Howard Players. In addition, African American scholars organized into a group known as the Sanhedrin under the joint leadership of Locke and Miller. Locke organized Howard's first literary journal, *Stylus*. He helped in the organization of Howard's art gallery and the music department, for he believed strongly that general and cultural education was a desirable goal for African American students. Locke devoted much of his own teaching to the new science of anthropology, social conflict, and social theory during this period.

Before the 1920s, the system of rules and regulations governing students at black colleges and universities was an all-encompassing web of Victorian paternalism that intruded on nearly every aspect of student life. Students were told when to rise in the morning, when to retire at night, and even what to wear. Daily attendance at campus convocations or chapel services was mandatory. Students and their dormitory rooms were required to be neat and clean. The use of alcohol and tobacco by students as well as card-playing, dancing, and whatever else teachers and administrators considered immoral or opposed to true culture was forbidden. Fraternities and sororities were also prohibited.

Some African American students had naturally objected to the regimentation imposed by these

campus rules and regulations even before the 1920s, but such discipline was tolerable in the late nineteenth century, when it was thought to be prompted by Christian piety and was applied to white and black students alike. Yet the tradition of piety remained in force at black institutions of higher education long after the leading white colleges deemphasized their concern for the moral uplift of students and began to stress secular scholarship. African American students suspected that the continuation of the strict discipline governing their lives at black colleges during the 1920s was prompted by the belief that Africans were especially sensuous beings who lacked self-discipline and restraint and were incapable of exercising free will. Behind this view, they believed, lay the fear that if African Americans were allowed to exercise personal freedom, they would become a threat to white civilization.

The spirit of W. E. B. Du Bois—editor of the magazine *The Crisis*—hovered over the black college rebellions of the 1920s. He instigated the confrontation at Fisk University and publicized and celebrated African American student protests nationwide. Throughout the 1920s Du Bois wrote editorials and articles excoriating the so-called corrupt bargain between philanthropists and the white South, which forced black institutions of higher learning to compromise both their mission and their principles in return for money. He lamented the fact that African Americans' dependence on the rich for donations to absolutely necessary causes made it increasingly difficult for them to exercise intelligence, apply frank and honest criticism, and achieve freedom and self-respect. African Americans' fear of retribution for challenging the system, in Du Bois's opinion, sapped the manhood of the race, bred cowards and sycophants, and crucified honest men and women. For Du Bois, therefore, black college student protests of the 1920s involved nothing less than the tremendous question of whether African American young people were to be trained as they and their parents wished or as white southerners and their northern allies demanded.

Yet Du Bois believed that African American students of the 1920s had come of age. They should no longer tolerate the sort of petty dictation that had seemed natural in the early days of black higher education when African Americans were no more than a generation removed from slavery. Du Bois considered African American students free men and women. While acknowledging that African American parents wanted their children reared under all necessary con-

straints, he noted that at the same time they demanded for young people the equally necessary freedom and self-respect which were essential to the development of responsible adults.

The challenge to parietal rules and regulations governing student life at black colleges broke forth with unprecedented force following World War I. In the spring of 1920, students at Wilberforce University boycotted classes to protest a faculty resolution restricting social intermingling between male and female students on campus. Two years later, students at Storer College struck to protest the expulsion of three males who had been involved in an altercation with local whites. In 1923, most of the student body at Livingstone College went on strike during much of May; some students left the college for good. Demanding more "freedom of choice," students at Howard University went on strike in 1925 to protest compulsory Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) for males and overly strict enforcement of military requirements by university officials. That same year students at W. E. B. Du Bois's alma mater, Fisk University, began a classroom boycott to demand fewer social restrictions and demonstrate support for fellow students who had been expelled for allegedly participating in an earlier campus protest. In 1927, students at Hampton Institute staged a bitter and protracted boycott to protest the arbitrary enforcement of parietal rules and regulations, which led to the expulsion of sixty-nine undergraduates and to probation for hundreds more. Student unrest at Wilberforce, Howard, Fisk, and Hampton received the most attention in the African American press, but there were reports of at least ten additional student protests and boycotts at black institutions of higher education, including Knoxville College, Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, Shaw, Alcorn A&M, Lincoln University in Missouri, Saint Augustine, and Johnson C. Smith.

Another correlative of the mentality of the New Negro, which manifested itself at black colleges and universities during the 1920s, was an increased demand for competitive sports. Although attempts to develop intercollegiate athletics in black higher education had begun in the 1890s, such efforts did not bear real fruit until after World War I. By the 1920s, nearly every black college and university sponsored teams in football, baseball, basketball, and track and field. The jubilation and pageantry of these contests were exemplified in a ritual unique to football games at black colleges in the 1920s that was known as the "rabblies," in which well-dressed students poured out

of the stands at halftime and—to the accompaniment of music provided by some of their peers—danced around the field in a free-flowing exhibition. Significantly, female students at black colleges began participating in intercollegiate basketball and track contests during the 1920s; in this regard, black colleges not only afforded women more opportunities to compete but also accorded more prestige to their accomplishments than white institutions of higher education (P. Miller 1995, 119–120). Thus, as a response to prevailing notions of blacks' and women's inferiority, organized athletics at black colleges constituted a telling assertion of pride and accomplishment.

The 1920s were also noteworthy for the appearance of an appreciable number of African students in the United States, many of whom were enrolled at black colleges and universities. In a program initiated by the Phelps-Stokes Fund, Hampton and Tuskegee institutes were selected as hosts for African students from British colonies in Africa in the early 1920s. Although the goal of the program was to train Africans who would passively accept colonial rule in their homelands, the results were quite the opposite. At Tuskegee, the African history classes of Professor Simbini M. Nkomo—who was variously described as being from present-day Madagascar, Zimbabwe, and South Africa—deliberately attempted to communicate the spirit of incipient nationalism or racial self-evaluation, which he regarded as the foundation of true progress for Africans. One observer of Tuskegee's African students remarked that all of them displayed a pan-African consciousness, an attitude assisted, in no small part, by the African American milieu in which African students could immerse themselves. Nkomo's efforts led to the founding of the African Student Union of America (ASU). The agenda of the organization's fourth annual conference at Tuskegee Institute included items ranging from misrepresentations of African life and history to cooperation between African and African American students. "The ASU presented its members with the concrete need to prepare themselves for leading their own people, and inspired them with the determination to take independent action if need be" (King 1971, 221). In 1925, the future leader of independent Nigeria, Benjamin Nmandi Azikwe, arrived in the United States to begin his undergraduate studies. As a student, Azikwe not only learned everything he could about political science from his American professors but also participated in a brief student protest at Lincoln University.

Although most African and African American youths attended black institutions of higher education, a small number were enrolled at northern white private and public colleges and universities during the 1920s. The exact number of students of color who attended these institutions will probably never be known, but it is possible to identify some of them. The historians William Leo Hansberry, William M. Brewer, Alrutheus A. Taylor, and Charles H. Wesley received bachelor's or graduate degrees or both from Harvard between 1919 and 1925. The first African American cabinet member and secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Robert C. Weaver, graduated from Harvard University in 1929. The teacher and anthropologist Caroline Bond Day, the composer and writer Marieta Bonner, the singer Lola Wilson Hayes, and the future chairman of Howard University's French department, Theodora R. Boyd, all received bachelor's degrees from Radcliffe College. Both Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes attended Columbia University. Hughes left after a year, finding the atmosphere uncongenial to his tastes, but Hurston remained at Columbia, where she was a student of the anthropologist Franz Boas. Under Boas's guidance she began research on African American folklore and religion, much of which was later incorporated into her novels, such as *Mules and Men*, *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Countee Cullen attended New York University, from which he graduated in 1923, and received a master's degree from Harvard University. The African American educator William Allison Davis attended Williams College; he graduated summa cum laude in 1924 and was the class valedictorian. Wallace Thurman, author of *The Blacker the Berry* (1929) and *Infants of the Spring* (1932), attended the University of Utah and the University of Southern California.

The matriculation of African American students at white colleges was, at best, only tolerated during the 1920s. "A dozen little discriminations annoy you," one African American undergraduate confessed in 1927, "discriminations that you have known all your life, but you hoped to escape" at college. You can "never hope to play" on your college's team or "belong to literary societies or pep organizations or any other extracurricular activities," he complained. The white students "shun you except when they want something." Nor could they "refer to you in the singular." An African American student was "always addressed as one of 'you fellows.' You can't understand why you can never be an individual" (L. Miller 1927, 138). In

what was perhaps one of the most egregious instances of racial harassment during the decade, Halston V. Eagleson, an African American undergraduate at Indiana University–Bloomington, was kidnapped by three white students in 1922 and taken to Spencer, Indiana. There he was arrested and jailed briefly to prevent him from earning his letter in band. Despite efforts by the Eagleson family to press charges against the perpetrators, the case was dismissed for lack of evidence (Halsell Gilliam 1985, 41).

African Americans of the 1920s stood in opposition to the tradition of paternalism that characterized black colleges and the unapologetic racism of white institutions of higher education. Prompted by a growing racial consciousness and greater ambition, African American students demanded greater respect and independence for themselves as well as a better quality of life on their campuses. They discarded past notions of what type of education was best suited for them and demanded a greater say in their own lives as well as the educational institutions that were supposed to prepare them for the challenges of modern society and advance the race. They wanted to escape from the backwaters of American life and join the mainstream. In their struggle to do so, students and faculties not only helped reform the curriculum of black institutions of higher education but also transformed the extracurricular activities of these schools. African American students attending the nation's white colleges put those schools on notice as well that they were no longer willing to accept racial discrimination in silence. In these and countless other ways, black colleges, students, and faculty members both reflected and contributed to the mythos of the New Negro during the 1920s.

MONROE LITTLE

See also Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and Journal of Negro History; Boas, Franz; Brawley, Benjamin; Crisis, The; Cullen, Countee; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Frazier, E. Franklin; Greene, Lorenzo; Historically Black Colleges and Universities; Howard University; Hurston, Zora Neale; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Locke, Alain; Miller, Kelly; Opportunity; Stylus; Survey Graphic; Thurman, Wallace; Work, Monroe Nathan

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Historically Black Colleges and Universities

In 1927, 13,580 students were enrolled at predominantly black colleges and universities, while another 1,500 black students were enrolled at predominantly white colleges. This was a sixfold increase over the 2,132 African Americans who had been enrolled in college only a decade earlier ("Enrollment" 1928). As their numbers increased, the black college students and alumni of the 1920s demanded a different and higher type of education. These demands were manifest in many student strikes and alumni revolts.

These rebellions should be understood in context. The "New Negroes" on campus were responding to the

growing racial consciousness and the larger ambition that also gave rise to the Harlem Renaissance. This new consciousness was also influenced by a more assertive ethos that developed as a result of blacks' participation in World War I, and it came to the fore against the background of the "great migration" of blacks from the rural South to urban areas. Looming in the more distant background was a long-simmering revolt against the paternalistic spirit and the industrial emphasis that had characterized much of black college education in the past.

Part I

During and after the Civil War, northern benevolent societies and denominational bodies, the Negro church, and the Freedmen's Bureau began the heroic task of educating the freedmen. These missionaries rejected southerners' demands that they begin with industrial and manual training to prepare blacks for skilled work, later add the sequence of elementary and secondary schools, and still later add colleges. They thought they would be wasting money if they established elementary or vocational schools without also providing a college education for teachers. Hence they founded colleges—Fisk, Howard, Hampton, Talladega, Atlanta, and others—which together trained a few thousand teachers who then instructed the masses in the fundamentals of reading, writing, arithmetic, and life.

Yet many white southerners feared that any education of blacks beyond the vocational level would lead to increased dissatisfaction with the inferior status accorded to African Americans in the South. The editor of the New Orleans *Times-Democrat* warned that "the higher education of the Negro unfits him for the work that it is intended that he shall do, and cultivates ambitions that can never be realized" (quoted in "A Blow" 1904). Throughout the South, planters feared that college education would undermine the willingness of blacks to work in the fields and would make African Americans less deferential, submissive, and dependent. Some of them heartily endorsed the contention of Senator James K. Vardaman of Mississippi: "What the North is sending South is not money but dynamite; this education is ruining our Negroes. They're demanding equality" (quoted in Baker 1964).

Many white southerners also said that the missionary teachers had ignored the limited aptitude and capabilities of the Negro. At a time when social Darwinism was in vogue, even some black people thought that the races were at different stages of cultural evolution

and that the educational curriculum should be adjusted accordingly. "The educational requirements of the people who are only a few hundred years out of the jungle are not the same as those of people who have had thousands of years of civilization," the black president of Georgia Normal College explained. "The great mass of our people need to be trained in agriculture, the mechanical arts, the trades and industries, and in the art of homemaking" (Holley 1948).

Given the prevalence of these views, many black colleges proceeded cautiously. Following the example set at Hampton and Tuskegee institutes, they renounced agitation and added vocational courses that promised to make black students more efficient workers. This vocational emphasis was then reinforced with support from secular northern philanthropists associated with the Slater, Jeanes, Phelps-Stokes, and Rosenwald foundations; the Southern Education Board; and the Rockefeller General Education Board. The secular philanthropists took care to avoid alienating the white South. Rather than follow the egalitarian example of the Yankee missionaries, the secular philanthropists fostered vocational training as especially suited to a predetermined, subordinate role for black people in American society.

The trend in this direction was heightened when Congress, through the Smith-Lever and Smith-Hughes acts of 1914 and 1917, rounded out the program of vocational and agricultural training and established a county-agent bureaucracy. The county agents then assumed responsibility for seeing that the land-grant colleges, and especially black institutions, did not stray from the gospel of vocationalism. Together the combination of secular philanthropy and federal aid altered the course of the black colleges and initiated a vocational phase in the history of Negro higher education.

In retrospect it seems inevitable that black college students, even those trained at vocational institutes, would eventually challenge the subordination of their race. Segregation, after all, required that blacks provide their own leaders, and this meant that a critical minority of African Americans had to be trained in medicine, law, journalism, theology, and other professions. Moreover, as it happened, teaching eventually became the most reliable source of employment for black college graduates. Thus even the land-grant A&M colleges, while offering a veneer of vocational courses, enrolled most of their students in teacher-training programs that resembled the studies then in vogue at most white colleges. The black students were

segregated, of course, and generally received inferior training, but the ideal of aspiration was preserved.

As a result of World War I and the great migration, many blacks of the 1920s also enjoyed larger social and economic opportunities, and consequently felt a greater need for higher education and professional training. Far from being grateful for the financial aid that the government and secular philanthropy had showered on vocational schools, many black students, professors, and alumni feared that the higher aspirations of the race had been sacrificed in order to obtain money from the ruling powers. They were not prepared to adjust to a subordinate status but instead demanded the right to full participation in American life.

The challenge to subordination broke forth with unprecedented force when blacks returned from the “war to make the world safe for democracy” with a fierce determination to battle against discrimination in their own land. The rising tide of Negro protest was manifest in many ways—in the warfare of the “red summer” of 1919; in Marcus Garvey’s black nationalist movement; in the resurgence of black pride celebrated by the artists of the Harlem Renaissance; and in the growth of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Urban League, and the black press. It was evident during the 1920s that “New Negroes” were ascendant in the black community, and they were determined to enjoy all the rights and privileges of American citizens.

The wave of rebellion that engulfed most of the leading black colleges was one of the most significant aspects of the New Negro protest movement. It began at one of the leading vocational institutes. In 1922, when the governor of Florida shifted the emphasis at Florida A&M from teacher training to trade training, students not only went on strike but also burned down the Mechanical Arts Building. Similarly, at Lincoln Institute in Missouri, there was a decade-long struggle between one faction that emphasized vocational training and another that stressed the importance of traditional liberal arts and sciences. And at Hampton Institute, several hundred students were suspended in 1927 after demanding that more emphasis be given to academic subjects. “The complaints with regard to education are possibly unique in the annals of student strikes,” the Hampton administration noted, “demanding as they did more and better education” (“The Strike” 1927). One of the suspended students explained that the students had a “Du Bois ambition” that would not mix with a “Booker T. Washington education” (Robert A. Coles, quoted in Baltimore *Afro-American*, 1927).

“Du Bois protest” was also on display at Fisk University, the nation’s most prominent liberal arts college for blacks. In 1925, students at Fisk took exception to the suspension of the student newspaper, the *Fisk Herald*, and to the denial of a request for a campus chapter of the NAACP; they also complained about the university’s sponsoring of segregated Jim Crow entertainments, and they protested against a draconian code of student discipline that was rigorously enforced and was justified with statements to the effect that black young people were particularly sensuous beings who would abandon themselves to indulgence if they were not subjected to firm control.

To Du Bois it seemed that Fisk had devised a plan that was intended to persuade the elite of black youth to accept a subordinate status, to make them know “their place.” He was delighted when, in February 1925, more than one hundred students from Livingstone Hall ignored the ten o’clock curfew and instead sang, yelled, smashed windows, and told the faculty that it would not be safe for any authorities and that they were “going to keep up this sort of thing until the President’s hair was white.” According to the dean of women, “The disorderly students overturned chapel seats, broke windows, . . . all the while keeping up a steady shouting of ‘Du Bois!’ ‘Du Bois!’” (Scriber 1925). Police were called to the campus to restore order, but this precipitated a student strike of ten weeks’ duration. Eventually, a new administration was inaugurated, after the trustees conceded that it was impossible to operate a college without students.

Part II

The black students and alumni of the 1920s aimed at control of their colleges. This did not necessarily mean that the colleges had to be headed by African Americans. In 1925, the rebellious students and alumni at Fisk had demanded only that their white president be ousted, because they thought he had compromised too much with white segregationists and supremacists; they accepted another white man as a replacement, because they found him in sympathy with their basic ideals. The same scenario was repeated at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania in 1926. In each instance, however, the protests on campus elicited elements of racial pride and confidence that some Negroes were capable of presiding over the college.

Going beyond their brothers and sisters at Fisk and Lincoln, who had demanded only that they be given a larger role in the management of their schools,

the faculty and alumni at Howard University insisted that an African American should be in charge of their school. They did so because they, like some of the artists of the Harlem Renaissance, were stirred by a new sense of racial pride and self-consciousness. Thus the historian Carter G. Woodson of Howard was convinced that the absence of black leaders, along with the presence of textbooks that emphasized the primitive quality of the African background and the servile character of the black American experience, left many African Americans with the conviction that they were inferior and should accept an underprivileged status. If elite black students were given the impression that the Negro race and its leaders would never amount to much, Woodson said, they would not be prepared to uplift the group. Such students could “hardly find delight in undertaking what [their] education has led [them] to think impossible” (1933).

Similarly, Alain Locke, who was then a professor of philosophy and literature at Howard, concluded that blacks must take control of the university if the students were to develop the confidence needed for leadership. In scores of articles and especially in a remarkable anthology that gave its name, *The New Negro*, to the black arts movement of the decade, Locke celebrated black poetry, fiction, drama, scholarship, music, and art as the necessary foundation for building a self-confident race that could face whites with equanimity (1925a). He feared that if whites remained in control of black colleges, African American young people would succumb to an atmosphere of “spirit-dampening condescension” and would leave the campus as a talented tenth committed not to group service but to bourgeois individualism (1925b).

Like Woodson and Locke, Howard’s dean of arts and science, Kelly Miller, and its most prominent sociologist, E. Franklin Frazier, also insisted that the university needed black leaders to inspire its students with enthusiasm for racial service and uplift. They thought that white leadership left many black students with the impression that the Negro race would never measure up and that black collegians consequently would settle for the “materialistic individualism of middle-class American life.” They lamented that, instead of preparing “for the uplift of a downtrodden people,” black students were “preparing themselves for the professions as a means to wealth and enjoyment” and not as a prerequisite for racial uplift.

Thus these professors joined with the leaders of the Howard Alumni Association in 1925 and 1926 and demanded that James Stanley Durkee, the eleventh in an



Howard University, 1942. (Photograph by John Collier. Library of Congress.)

almost unbroken line of white clergymen-presidents, should be replaced by an African American. Eventually, Mordecai W. Johnson was chosen in 1926 as the first black president of Howard University—a choice that the journal *Christian Century and Christian Work* hailed as “a new milestone in the long pilgrimage of a race” (quoted in “Howard’s New President” 1926).

The New Negroes on campus were in revolt against both the industrial emphasis and the paternalistic spirit that had characterized an earlier era of black college education. Prompted by a larger ambition and a growing racial consciousness, the black students and alumni of the 1920s demanded a higher type of curriculum and a greater degree of control over their colleges. They turned their backs on the limited educational program of trade training and, as Du Bois (1921) put it, proposed “to speak for ourselves and to be represented by spokesmen whom we elect. And whenever in any case this policy is contravened we are going to fight that decision in every civilized way, and to the last ditch.”

RAYMOND WOLTERS

See also Du Bois, W. E. B.; Frazier, E. Franklin; Garveyism; Higher Education; Howard University; Locke, Alain; Miller, Kelly; Riots: 2—Red Summer of 1919; Woodson, Carter G.

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Hobby Horse

Douglas Howe opened the Hobby Horse bookstore in Harlem some time around 1928, at a time when interest by both blacks and whites in African American literature was at a zenith, yet there were few avenues for making this literature available to the public.

At the time, Harlem was considered the national hub of black culture and artistry. African Americans who were seriously interested in becoming writers, performers, and musicians were eventually likely to make their way there. In Harlem, they found a supportive group of other writers and artists with whom to share their work and ideas. And in the cultural mosaic made up of blacks who had migrated from the South and the Caribbean, they found characters and images that would inhabit their work.

The Hobby Horse, considered the nation's first African American bookstore, was a combination bookstore and tearoom. It was a place where young African American writers and artists could congregate and publicly share their work and where many of Harlem's noted black society matrons met for lunch and afternoon tea. These social gatherings were often

reported in black newspapers such as the *Chicago Defender*.

The Hobby Horse was originally located at 205 West 135th Street. This site was in the heart of Harlem's social activity, and Howe had access to many of the established literary and artistic luminaries of the Harlem Renaissance, as well as up-and-coming figures. Not only did the Hobby Horse stock and display books by African Americans, but Sunday evening book discussions were also held there, and—more important—black writers and poets gave readings from their own work. At the Hobby Horse, poets and writers such as Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston found a public venue for both their published works and their works in progress. Howe also exhibited paintings and photographs by many popular visual artists of the day at the Hobby Horse. Among these artists was James Allen (b. 1907), whose photographic portraits of African American and white celebrities of the Harlem Renaissance were often reprinted in the popular black press.

Howe had not been the first to conceive of a bookstore featuring the works of African American writers: Many other literati of the Harlem Renaissance had also sensed a need for such an enterprise and contemplated the idea. Among them was Nella Larsen (the author of *Passing* and *Quicksand*), who began to seek financing for a bookstore in 1926, two years before Howe opened the Hobby Horse. Like Howe, Larsen envisioned a bookstore that would do more than just sell books—a place where Harlem's fashionable set could gather, buy books, and discuss literature, and where black authors could read from their work. Larsen was especially concerned about the scarcity of venues for public display and promotion of the works of African American writers, because she was nearing completion of her own first novel. Larsen sought financing for her venture from her friend Carl Van Vechten, but he was unable to supply it.

Howe's Hobby Horse was in operation until 1930.

JANICE TUCK LIVELY

See also *Chicago Defender*; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; Larsen, Nella; Van Vechten, Carl

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Holiday, Billie

Billie Holiday’s triumph was to take the American popular song and use it to claim her place in the world. She was probably the most complete, unadulterated jazz singer of all time, although that fact has been overshadowed because of a quirk in the human condition that makes us fascinated with those who gamble with life and lose. But even if her life was like a long, tortuous sentence struggling to express itself, to attempt to reconstruct it as that of an ordinary woman beset by trials and tribulations is to misunderstand her with a degree of perversity equal to her own.

Many of the personality problems Holiday grappled with throughout her life could well have had their roots in her traumatic childhood. She was continually abandoned to friends and relatives, and her rape at age eleven wrought emotional havoc; these experiences could have contributed to the diminished sense of self that those close to her spoke of. This feeling of rejection would also go some way toward explaining her abnormally dependent personality, her desire to attach herself to someone who would love and care for her—and then, once she was in a relationship, her willingness to do anything and accept anything to maintain it. Equally, a lack of parental supervision might have had a bearing on her shaky moral discipline, expressed at an early age through truancy and uninterest in academic activities. Yet such calm after-the-fact rationalization can never fully explain the dark, destructive forces that inhabit human nature. From her early teens, Billie Holiday associated marijuana and alcohol with good times. As

a young woman, she lived it up with a vengeance. Yet she found something within herself that enabled her to create some of the great classics of jazz during the 1930s, in the company of some of the finest jazz musicians of the day.

In pickup bands led by the pianist Teddy Wilson, her songs included “I Wished on the Moon,” “What a Little Moonlight Can Do,” “I Cried for You,” “Summertime,” and “This Year’s Kisses.” With Teddy Wilson and under her own name she also created a series of recordings with Lester Young on tenor saxophone that convey a degree of mutual inspiration epitomizing jazz at its highest level of creativity—“Sun Showers,” “I’ll Get By,” “Me Myself and I,” “A Sailboat in the Moonlight,” “He’s Funny That Way,” “When You’re Smiling,” “Back in Your Own Backyard,” and “All of Me.” These recordings reveal a singer of broad emotional range able to narrow her focus at will, able to seize the pressure points of a song to reshape the music so profoundly that once heard it goes on to enjoy a second life, a life within memory; many of her songs from this period are truly unforgettable.

Although she enjoyed considerable success and admiration for her recording of “Strange Fruit” (1939), which portrayed a southern lynching, few listeners realize how Billie Holiday took the tradition of the previous generation of female blues singers and applied it to the American popular song. By careful use of material, she performed these songs in a way that invoked a blues mood without actually being blues. Bessie Smith and her contemporaries all sang in the first person about sex, infidelity, and broken relationships. Billie Holiday carefully chose sophisticated popular songs with lyrics that dealt with similar issues, often expressing yearning and pain. In effect, she created a character part for herself that evolved directly out of the blues tradition, without being a blues singer per se. The “character” she chose to portray was a woman unlucky in love whose experience of life appeared to be mirrored in the text of her songs. Even when singing in the big bands of Count Basie and Artie Shaw, she refused to perform songs that did not conform to the role she created for herself. Frequently she sang “I” songs, addressed to “you,” but changed the “I” from positive to negative: “I Cover the Waterfront,” “The Man I Love,” “I Can’t Get Started,” “My Old Flame,” “I’ll Get By,” and so on. In the 1940s, she created a series of enduring classics for the Decca label that included “Lover Man,” “Good Morning Heartache,” and “That Old Devil Called Love,” the latter two especially written to frame her great talent to considerable

effect. Through the mediation of her “character” with the songs she performed, audiences gradually began to read her real-life history into her performances. In the late 1940s, when she never seemed far from the clamor of the tabloid headlines, she chose songs that interacted with her real-life image, such as “Tain’t Nobody’s Business If I Do.” This song, recorded a year after she was released from prison after being convicted of possessing drugs, triumphantly reinforced her notoriety while defiantly justifying her indulgence of the self.

As her voice deteriorated in the 1950s, it ironically became the source of her authenticity on albums for Norman Granz’s Clef and Verve labels (1952–1957), and in the album *Lady in Satin* (1958), in which the dues she had paid, the wrong associations she had made, and the collapse of a promising career all seemed to be refracted in the flaws of her latter-day voice. Even today the way her image interacts with her music remains the least understood aspect of her art. But



Billie Holiday. (Library of Congress.)

equally, this image of Billie Holiday as an all-purpose victim, part a romantic martyr and part a heroine of excess, has gradually tended to overwhelm her artistry. When in November 1956 she performed a concert in which readings from her autobiography *Lady Sings the Blues* (ghostwritten by William F. Dufty) alternated with songs that had become associated with her, she was consciously erecting the legend into which she would finally step, closing the doors behind her, when she died in 1959. Yet the essential truth about Billie Holiday is that she was a great artist, not because of her hedonistic and much publicized lifestyle, but despite it.

Biography

Billie Holiday (also Eleanora Fagan, Eleanora Gough, Eleanora Monroe, Eleanora McKay, Eleanora Gough McKay, Lady Day) was born on 7 April, 1915, in Philadelphia (although her birthplace has long been given as Baltimore). She was the illegitimate daughter of Sarah Julia “Sadie” Harris and Clarence Holiday, who would later play banjo and then guitar and become a member of the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra (1928–1933). For the first eighteen months of her life, she was raised by Martha Miller in Baltimore. She began her education at Public School 102, the Thomas Hayes Elementary School, at 601 Central Avenue in Baltimore, in 1920. That year her mother married Philip Gough, but by 1923, the marriage was over and the daughter returned to Martha Miller. In 1925, persistent absence from school resulted in her being sent to the House of the Good Shepherd, a juvenile house of correction; after nine months she was paroled to Sadie Gough. On 24 December 1926, Wilbert Rich was arrested for raping her, and she was returned to the House of the Good Shepherd as a witness for the prosecution. (Rich went on trial on 18 January 1926 and was convicted.) She was returned to the custody of her mother on 2 February 1927. Around this time, while employed as a cleaner at a brothel, she discovered jazz through recordings and a wind-up Victrola and was attracted to the singing of Louis Armstrong. In 1928, her mother went to Harlem, leaving her once again in the care of Martha Miller. She had now begun singing in public for tips. Her mother—who was then a prostitute at 151 West 140th Street—sent for her at the end of the year. On the night of 2 May 1929, mother and daughter were arrested for vagrancy, a charge then associated with solicitation. Sadie Gough was discharged, but the daughter was

sentenced to 100 days at Blackwell's Island. She was released in October 1929 and moved with her mother to Brooklyn. The mother was now employed as a domestic, and the daughter began singing with the saxophonist Kenneth Hollon in clubs. Around this time she changed her name to Billie Holiday. She worked as a waitress in Mexico's on 133rd Street in Harlem in 1930, singing for tips while serving customers. An audition with Charlie Johnson's band at Small's Paradise ended in failure. Around this time, Holiday began smoking marijuana. She opened at Covan's on West 132nd Street in 1932; the following year she was spotted by the entrepreneur John Hammond. Her other admirers included Paul Muni and Charles Laughton. She sang at Pod's and Jerry's and then at the Hot Cha Restaurant at 2280 Seventh Avenue; next, she worked the "bar and grill" circuit. In November 1933, she made her recording debut with Benny Goodman's pickup unit. In 1934, she began a friendship with Lester Young, then a member of the Fletcher Henderson band. She made her debut at the Apollo Theater on 125th Street on Friday, 23 November 1934; she was then in a relationship with the pianist Bobbie Henderson, with whom she performed. Through John Hammond, she was given a role in Duke Ellington's *Symphony in Black* (1935). She had stints with the Mills Blue Rhythm Band and Ralph Cooper's band, and while she was working at Clark Monroe's Uptown House, Hammond negotiated a record deal with Brunswick, whereby Holiday was to be vocalist for a series of sessions under the leadership of the pianist Teddy Wilson, beginning 2 July 1935. She worked at the Famous Door on Fifty-second Street in September 1935. Joe Glaser became her manager, and from October 1935 to January 1936, she appeared in the musical *Stars Over Broadway*, starring Louis Armstrong. She appeared with Eddie Condon in Sunday afternoon jam sessions at the Famous Door in February–March 1936, and briefly with Jimmie Lunceford and Fletcher Henderson. Her records with Wilson led to a contract in her own right in 1936 with Vocalion, although she continued to work with Wilson. She worked with a band led by the trumpeter Louis Metcalfe that included her father and Lester Young in October 1936. She joined Count Basie on 13 March 1937, and had an affair with Basie's guitarist Freddie Green. She left Basie in February 1938. She joined Artie Shaw's orchestra on 9 March 1938, and left on 19 November 1938, having made one record—"Any Old Time"—with the band. She opened at Café Society in Greenwich Village on 22 December 1938, and was an immediate hit with the café crowd. She became

associated with a song by Abel Meeropol (who wrote under the name Lewis Allen) called "Strange Fruit." Columbia refused to record it because the lyrics depicted a lynching in the South, but it was put out by Commodore Records and became a minor hit (1939). Holiday had an affair with the pianist Sonny White, then met James Monroe (Jimmy, b. 1911), the brother of Clark Monroe (of Monroe's Uptown House). In April 1940, she opened at Kelly's Stables on Fifty-second Street with a band led by Roy Eldridge, then at Café Society with Art Tatum. She married Jimmy Monroe on 25 August 1941. She played at the Apollo with Lionel Hampton and had a season at the Famous Door with Benny Carter. Her final session for Columbia was on 10 February 1942. She made a theater tour with Benny Carter and orchestra. In May 1942, Jimmy Monroe was arrested on the West Coast for drug smuggling. To pay for his defense, Holiday traveled to Hollywood and opened at Trouville with Lester Young, but Monroe was convicted (receiving a one-year sentence), and lawyers' fees took much of Holiday's money. She recorded with Paul Whiteman on 12 June 1942, "Trav'lin Light." She opened in Chicago in August 1942 with Red Allen. In February 1943, she opened at Kelly's Stables on Fifty-second Street; by now she was becoming known as the "queen of Fifty-second Street." Her marriage to Monroe was effectively over, and he took a job at the Douglas plant on the West Coast. Holiday became a mainstay at the Onyx Club on Fifty-second Street throughout 1943 and 1944. An affair with the bassist John Simmons ended in 1943. At this time, Holiday became a heroin user. She recorded with Commodore records, toured to Chicago, returned to New York, and opened at the Downbeat Club. She signed with Decca records on 7 August 1944. She recorded classics such as "Lover Man" and "That Old Devil Called Love." She had a relationship with the trumpeter Joe Guy, an early swing-into-bebop musician. In January 1945, she appeared in the Second Annual Esquire Magazine Jazz Concert. She toured widely at this time. Her mother, Sadie, died on 6 October 1945—many people say that Holiday never recovered from this blow. She spent most of 1946 at Downbeat. She performed in a concert at Town Hall in February 1946; *Downbeat* magazine called it "a startling success." In May 1946, she played with Norman Granz's Jazz at the Philharmonic. She appeared in the film *New Orleans*, but her drug addiction created problems during the filming. She returned to Fifty-second Street. She was made to confront her addiction by her manager, Joe Glaser, and

spent a period of rehabilitation in a private nursing home, but she continued to use drugs at the behest of Joe Guy, her boyfriend. Glaser betrayed her to the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, and she was arrested after a week at the Earle Theater in Philadelphia, on 16 May 1947. The prosecution had only flimsy evidence, but Glaser refused her legal representation. Joe Guy, who had legal representation, was freed; Holiday received a sentence of a year and a day on 27 May 1947, and was sent to the Federal Reformatory for Women in Alderston, Virginia. She remained in custody until 16 March 1948, and then gave a concert at Carnegie Hall on 27 March 1948. Because of her prison sentence, she was denied a cabaret card. She played in the revue *Holiday on Broadway* in April 1948, then at the Ebony Club, where she became involved with the owner, John Levy (not the bass player). Her life was now beginning to collapse around her; without the prestige of playing at New York clubs, her asking price began to drift down. She played on the West Coast at Billy Berg's club. An incident with a knife was reported in the newspapers, and then she was arrested for possession of narcotic drugs. She was acquitted in May 1949 and continued to tour extensively outside New York, but she was dropped by Decca in 1950. That year, she made a film short with Count Basie. Her life was now a daily round of club work and a daily struggle to get drugs. In 1951, she began a relationship with Louis McKay. In 1952, she began recording for Norman Granz's Clef label. In early 1954, she toured Europe with the group Jazz Club USA. In 1955, the West Coast became the center of her activities. She was arrested while playing in Philadelphia on 23 February 1956, for possession of drugs. In the summer of 1956, her ghostwritten autobiography, *Lady Sings the Blues*, was published, and there was a concert at Carnegie Hall in November to relaunch her career. On 28 March 1957, she married Louis McKay in Chihuahua, Mexico. She continued to record for Norman Granz, creating what many critics claim are latter-day classics, but in 1957 he decided not to renew their contract, because she had become increasingly difficult to work with. An appearance on television in *The Sound of Jazz* in December 1957 provided an indelible picture of Holiday at work. In 1958, she recorded *Lady in Satin* for Columbia, but it was clear that the ravages of her lifestyle had caught up with her. In September 1958, she played at the Blackhawk Restaurant in San Francisco; on 5 October, she played at the Monterey Jazz Festival. In November 1958, she made a brief European tour. In February 1959, she flew to London for an appearance on television. Her final

album, *Billie Holiday* (March 1959), was a very sad affair. On 30 May 1959, she collapsed and was admitted to a hospital in New York. Holiday died on 15 July 1959. A requiem mass was held at Saint Paul's Roman Catholic Church on Columbus Circle on 22 July 1959.

STUART NICHOLSON

See also Armstrong, Louis; Blues: Women Performers; Ellington, Duke; Henderson, Fletcher Jazz; Nightclubs; Nightlife; Singers

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Holstein, Casper

Casper Holstein—a staid, abstemious businessman and investor—owned the elite Turf Club in Harlem (at 111 West 136th Street), apartment buildings, a stable of horses in Canada, a farm in Virginia, and a house on

Long Island. He was also involved in “the numbers,” or policy, a form of gambling that was popular in Harlem. An individual could place a bet with a local numbers runner, for as little as ten cents, on a combination of three numbers (e.g., 709); the runners were employed, and the winners were paid by a “bank” or “banker.” Holstein was one of the “big six” policy bankers in Harlem during the 1920s and was known for his reliability in paying bettors who had “hit” the winning number. According to Redding (1934) and Hansen (1996), tradition credits Holstein with the idea of getting the three winning digits from the daily Clearinghouse totals of the New York Stock Exchange; this method assured bettors that the winning number would not be fixed.

Holstein came to the attention of the American public when he was kidnapped by white gangsters in September 1928 and held for ransom (\$50,000). The public also became aware that the numbers game, which white gangsters had derisively dismissed as “nigger pennies,” was actually a gold mine and that some black policy bankers were rich. Later, when Prohibition was repealed (1933) and their bootlegging operations ceased, white gangsters such as Dutch Schultz took control of numbers gambling in Harlem. Judge Samuel Seabury’s commission exposed corruption in the numbers (including bribery or fixes for numbers operators), and numbers bankers were investigated for tax evasion. Holstein left the numbers when he saw circumstances turning against it; however, as late as 1937, he was convicted of operating a numbers game.

Holstein became a patron of the Harlem Renaissance by donating \$1,000 for cash prizes for the second literary contest held by *Opportunity* (1925–1926) and another \$1,000 for the third contest (1926–1927). In his honor, the prizes were called the Casper Holstein Awards. The Holstein awards were given for essays, plays, poetry, personal narrative sketches, art, and musical composition. Holstein’s financial support enabled the managers of the contests to seek out more talented applicants and to give more prizes. Charles S. Johnson, the editor of *Opportunity*, wanted to introduce the creative works of African Americans to the American public and to get publishers interested in them. He also wanted talented African Americans to be able to express Negro life in their own terms, and he hoped to use black culture to promote interracial understanding. Contest applicants (who did not have to be American citizens) were expected to focus on subjects relating directly or indirectly to Negro life.

Holstein served as an “angel”—that is, a financial backer—for Johnson and for the Harlem Renaissance at a critical moment, when the movement was just getting off the ground. As a “race man,” Holstein had faith in the abilities of the Negro, and he demonstrated this faith by using his money to support the uncovering of creative talent. In this regard, he and Charles Johnson were in accord. Holstein favored Johnson’s goals, as he noted in a letter that Johnson read at the awards dinner for the first contest and published in *Opportunity* in 1927: “I honestly think [the contest] will go far towards consolidating the interests of, and bridging the gap between the white and black races in the United States today, and particularly will it encourage among our gifted youth the ambition to scale the empyrean heights of art and literature.”

Holstein’s philanthropy took other forms as well. He was unstinting in giving funds for the education, at colleges and technical schools, of young people from the Virgin Islands and the United States. He also donated money to historically black colleges in the United States. He sent money, clothes, and food to people in the Virgin Islands and set up a relief fund of \$100,000 when the islands were devastated by hurricanes in 1924; he also sent lumber and workmen to help the islanders rebuild. After the U.S. government bought the islands in 1917, Holstein used his position as president of the Virgin Islands Congressional Council and his personal wealth to get the United States to redress certain social and political ills there.

Despite his successes, Holstein made some enemies in political circles. Law enforcement officials watched him constantly, and he was arrested in 1937 for operating a small-time numbers game. He was convicted, received an indeterminate sentence, and remained in prison for about a year.

Holstein died penniless in 1944, in New York City. Thousands attended his funeral at the Memorial Baptist Church in Harlem, and he was buried at Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, New York. The University of the Virgin Islands established a scholarship in his honor, and a library collection, with books by and about black people, was named after him. An annual celebration commemorating his philanthropy and his achievements was decreed in the islands.

Holstein and Charles Johnson have been called midwives of the Harlem Renaissance. Johnson said of Holstein: “There is a faith and service deserving of more than casual appearance. A Negro who is by no means a millionaire has faith enough in the future



Casper Holstein, 1926. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

of his own developing race to give of his means to support it.”

Biography

Casper Holstein was born on 6 December 1876, in Christiansted, St. Croix, Virgin Islands. At age twelve he came to the United States with his mother. He graduated from Boys High School in Brooklyn, New York, served in the U.S. Navy, and then worked for a prominent stockbroking family, the Christies (or Chrysties). He became engaged in business, real estate, and investing, and in “the numbers” as a “banker.” He was kidnapped in 1928 and held for ransom. Later, when conditions became unfavorable, he left the numbers racket. In 1925–1927, he donated money for prizes in *Opportunity's* literary contests. In 1937, he was arrested, convicted, and jailed for operating a small-time numbers game. Holstein died penniless in New York City on 5 April 1944.

MARVIE BROOKS

See also Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Numbers Racket; Opportunity Awards Dinner; Opportunity Literary Contests; Organized Crime; Race Men

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Holt, Nora

Nora Holt was one of the most fascinating personalities of the Harlem Renaissance, as well known for her musical abilities as she was for her vibrant, adventurous personal life. She was a good friend of Carl Van Vechten and other luminaries of the period.

Nora Lena Douglas was born in Kansas. The exact year of her birth is unknown; it was either 1895 or 1890. Her parents encouraged her musical talent, and she studied at Chicago Music College, becoming one of the first African Americans to receive a master's degree in music. In January 1921, she began editing her own periodical, *Music and Poetry*, a "monthly music magazine of high standard" that also offered her an opportunity to publish her own compositions and spotlight new artists. Holt cofounded the National Association of Negro Musicians, an association that is still active as of the present writing. She was the music critic for several African American newspapers and was one of the earliest African American women to produce her own radio show.

Holt was intelligent, witty, and fashionable, and her personal life attracted the public eye. She married at least five times, and she was known for her rendition of the sexually suggestive song "My Daddy Rocks Me (With One Steady Roll)." Van Vechten used

Holt as a model for the character Lasca Sartoris in his controversial novel *Nigger Heaven* (1926). This novel offers one of the best descriptions of Holt:

The nose was delicate, the mouth provocative and sensual. Pear-shaped pearls depended from the lobes of the tiny ears. The black, wavy hair was combed severely back from the forehead, above the ears, and shingled. The lady was dressed in the smartest mode of the moment; moreover, . . . she wore her clothes with that manner which is rare with women of any race or colour. (79–80)

On 29 July 1923, Holt married the wealthy Joseph L. Ray, a secretary and attendant to Charles Schwab, head of Bethlehem Steel Corporation in Pennsylvania. Three years later their divorce made the headlines of several black newspapers. Ray charged his wife with infidelity, but according to Holt, Ray disliked being known as "Mr. Holt" and wanted to retrieve the money and real estate he had given her on their marriage (Dannett 1966). Holt demonstrated her poise in



Nora Holt, photographed by Carl Van Vechten. (Library of Congress.)

her public response to the charges, reprinted on the front page of the *Chicago Defender* in 1926:

I have never, to any person or newspaper, made a statement against Mr. Ray and there is plenty I could and may have to say, but I maintain that only crude and uncultured people fight out their domestic differences in public. In the divorce court, yes; in newspapers, never.

Nora Holt was the embodiment of contradictions, and as other commentators have noted, her life resists easy summarization. Gracious and assertive, artistic and attractive, she exhibited many of the feminist qualities associated with other women of this period, yet she has not been as frequently studied.

Biography

Nora Holt (Nora Lena Douglas) was born 1895 (or 1890) in Kansas City, Kansas, to Rev. Calvin N. Douglas, an African Methodist Episcopal minister, and Gracie Brown Douglas. She studied at Western University in Quindaro, Kansas (1915), and at Chicago Music College (B.A., 1917; master's, 1918). She was married five or more times. Holt was a music critic for the *Chicago Defender* (1917–1921) and for the *Amsterdam News* (1943–1956). She cofounded, with Nathaniel Dett and Clarence White, the National Association of Negro Musicians (1919) and was its vice president (1919–1922). She was editor and publisher of *Music and Poetry* (1921); a music teacher in public high schools in Los Angeles, California (1937–1943); owner or operator of a beauty parlor in Los Angeles (1940s); and producer of *Nora Holt's Concert Showcase*, a weekly classical radio program on WLIB, New York (1953–1964). Holt was a member of the New York Music Critics Circle (1945). She died in Los Angeles on 25 January 1974.

MIRIAM THAGGERT

See also National Association of Negro Musicians; *Nigger Heaven*; Van Vechten, Carl; White, Clarence Cameron

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Home to Harlem

Claude McKay's novel *Home to Harlem* (1928)—his first venture into fiction—was a best-seller when it was released. However, it received a mixed reaction from the black community. Langston Hughes praised it as the first fruit of the Harlem Renaissance, basing his evaluation on McKay's willingness to represent urban working-class black life. W. E. B. Du Bois, by contrast, found the book disgusting and said that he felt in need of a bath after reading it. He associated its focus on sex and sensuality with a controversial novel by Carl Van Vechten, *Nigger Heaven* (1926); moreover, he thought that both novels perpetuated stereotypical images of blacks.

Home to Harlem opens with its protagonist, Jake Brown, abandoning a tour of military duty in Brest, working his way to London on a ship, and then deciding to go back to Harlem after a two-year absence. He returns to Harlem and spends the night with a part-time prostitute, Felice, who returns his money in the morning with a note. Ostensibly, Jake spends the rest of the novel searching for Felice, having forgotten her address, but his journeys in Harlem and the Northeast provide occasions for reflecting on black urban life. The scenes of the novel take place in cabarets, saloons, and boardinghouses, and among dock and train workers. Jake tries to maintain a sense of honor and

nobility as he encounters employers who try to exploit him and women who want to take care of him. Memorable characters include Zeddy, Rose, Miss Curdy, Susy, Billy Biasse, and Ray. Zeddy is an old friend of Jake's but becomes his enemy at the end of the novel because Felice—who was Zeddy's girlfriend—prefers Jake. Zeddy threatens to reveal that Jake is absent without leave from the army, so Jake and Felice leave for Chicago. Rose is a bisexual singer who wants to take care of Jake and wants him to beat her as a sign of his masculinity. Jake escapes from Rose; this escape is similar to a later escape by Zeddy from Miss Curdy and Susy, who live in Brooklyn and give parties with free alcohol in the hope of finding sexual partners. Billy Biasse owns a saloon where Jake keeps his suitcase for two years and is part of the male company to which Jake constantly retreats.

In *Home to Harlem*, Ray vies with Jake for importance. The second section opens by introducing Ray and closes with his departure from the United States and from this story, although Ray became the protagonist of McKay's second novel, *Banjo*. Traditionally, Ray's intellectuality has been understood as the opposite of Jake's physicality, but more recently Ray and Jake have been seen as complementary, learning from each other and growing through their relationship. Ray, a Haitian immigrant to the United States, raises questions about the United States as a colonial power and about images of Africa in the Western imagination. At the same time that he brings a critical perspective to bear on racial and colonial relationships, he also envies the physical and sensual aspects of Jake's life and the lives of most people. Ray sees working-class people as animal-like in their simplicity, working and loving without caring about the hows and whys of the world. Many critics interpret Ray as a fictional projection of McKay's own sensibility and philosophy. Ray's thoughts about the world occasionally interrupt the development of the novel for several pages at a time; that is, McKay sacrifices the plot for reflections and ideas that are not integral to it. Although Ray envies working-class people, his attitude toward them and the black middle class moves between stereotypes, challenges to stereotypes, and seeming disdain. The ambiguity of McKay's language and especially his doubtful use of irony have made it difficult, despite numerous attempts, to settle Hughes's and Du Bois's debate over whether the novel is pathbreaking or tawdry.

The complexities of *Home to Harlem* have led to analyses of widely varied elements such as its homoerotic subtext, its cosmopolitanism, its primitivism, its

critical use of racist vocabulary, and even its punctuation. Throughout *Home to Harlem*, McKay uses devices such as ellipses and exclamation marks, and critics have tried to relate them to meaning in this novel. Ramchand (1970) takes these punctuation devices as reflective of jazz and argues that McKay intended them to create rhythm and texture but did not always succeed; but Spencer (1998) argues that many of the ellipses in *Home to Harlem* appear at points where McKay is implying unspeakable homoeroticism. Ramchand initiated a discussion of cultural dualism that other critics, such as Chauhan (1990) and Nelson (1992), have built on. These critics call attention to McKay's heritage as a Jamaican educated under an English system, who then migrated to the United States; to England; back to the United States; to Russia, France, Spain, and Morocco; and then again to the United States (where he died). Huggins (1971) argues that *Home to Harlem* (unlike Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven*) represents an insider's view of black life and enmeshes the reader in the confusion and struggles of the characters. Priebe (1972) argues that rather than being a happy-go-lucky character, Jake is alienated, and that his alienation accounts for his continual wanderings. Some critics have offered discussions about primitivism and masculinity in the 1930s. Lively (1984) argues that McKay uses primitivism as a form of protest against racial and colonial oppression. McCabe's study (1997) is part of a fairly widespread effort to reevaluate the importance of primitivism in the development of modernism and its aesthetics. Hathaway (1999) suggests that McKay should be understood as someone who resisted categories of race, class, nationality, and political affiliation. In general, the criticism has become more varied as manhood becomes less important and issues of sexuality, gender, interracial relationships, and colonialism become more important.

KIMBERLY J. BANKS

See also Du Bois, W. E. B.; Hughes, Langston; McKay, Claude; *Nigger Heaven*

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Homosexuality

Many scholars regard Richard Bruce Nugent's short story "Smoke, Lilies, and Jade" (1926)—about a vagabond artist named Alex who beds a Latino man late one night after a literary salon—as the first extant publication by an African American to "openly depict" homosexuality, even though Alex is technically bisexual. They assert that Nugent is one of the few beacons of what the gay black poet Essex Hemphill calls "evidence of being," proof of black gay men's experiences; or what Garber describes as "a homosexual subculture, uniquely Afro-American in substance, [found] throughout the so-called Harlem Renaissance" (1989, 318). Woods says that "Nugent was the exception," cautioning: "When reading the writers of the Negro Renaissance we should not expect, nor be disappointed by the lack of, the kind of openness we now reasonably demand of gay writers" (1993, 139). Nugent, however, never understood "what the fuss was about. Even today some ask him: 'How could you write anything gay in 1926?' His reply is "I didn't

know *it was gay* when I wrote it'" (Smith 1986, 214). Nugent "wore his bohemianism and homosexuality like a badge of honor"; he felt that "everybody he met was 'in the life,' especially if he found them physically attractive. He [had] the belief that 'if you can't take me the way I am, it's your problem. It's certainly not mine'" (Smith, 209). Nugent's attitude was by no means singular; it reflects the attitude of many black men and women "in the life." One of these, Nugent reveals, was the "truly named" Philander Thomas, a fellow actor Nugent met in 1927 during the Broadway production of *Porgy*. Thomas embodied the free attitude toward sexuality, including homosexuality, that characterized Harlem's nightlife. Thomas's talent was finding "bed-mates": "People who came to Harlem did so to vent their pleasures. Everybody thought that they could and Philander saw to it that they did. . . . He was much more outgoing than I. I liked his random freedom" (Smith, 216). The "random freedom" of philandering Thomas and Nugent are but two contributions made to bohemian Harlem's language and network of institutions sustaining its community "in the life."

The relative freedom of Harlem's bohemians can be overlooked by those reading for contemporary gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered communities. During the Harlem Renaissance, black men and women did not always use the word "gay," "lesbian," or "homosexual" to reflect what is now a distinct identity. Sexuality, Nugent assures us, was just one part of black peoples' lives:

Harlem was very much like [Greenwich] Village. People did what they wanted to do with whom they wanted to do it. You didn't get on the rooftops and shout, "I fucked my wife last night." So why would you get on the roof and say, "I loved prick." You didn't. You just did what you wanted to do. Nobody was in the closet. There wasn't any closet. (Kisseloff 1989, 288)

Regardless of the degree to which black men and women publicly proclaimed their sexuality, the *laissez-faire* attitude Nugent identifies can be found in how Harlem's own *did* express bohemian experiences through black vernacular. Although words naming homosexuality had been used since 1862, different ones were needed to reflect black men and women "in the life." As Jeanne Flash Gray, who lived in Harlem in the 1930s, remembers, "There were many places in Harlem run by and for Black Lesbians and Gay Men, when we were still Bull Daggers and Faggots and only

whites were lesbians and homosexuals" (Garber, 331). Numerous blues songs revel in this black bohemian vernacular: They include Lucille Bogan's "B. D. Women Blues," in which she warns "B. D. women sure is rough / They drink up many a whiskey and they sure can strut their stuff"; Gertrude "Ma" Rainey's "Sissy Blues" and "Prove It on Me Blues"; and George Hanna's "Freakish Blues" and "Sissy Man Blues," in which he confides, "If you can't bring me a woman, bring me a sissy man." Writers, in turn, used blues as a kind of homosexual shorthand. For example, Claude McKay first refers to homosexuality in *Home to Harlem* (1928) with Bessie Smith's "Foolish Man Blues": "And there is two things in Harlem I don't understand / It is a bulldyking woman and a faggoty man." Another word used by Harlem's writers is "queer," applied since the 1910s by cosmopolitan male New Yorkers "who identified themselves as part of a distinct category [based on] their homosexual interest" (Chauncey 1994, 15). The writers McKay, Eric Walrond, Wallace Thurman, Zora Neale Hurston, and Jean Toomer—as well as others—used "queer" because it could also mean "different" or "odd." Such double meanings define black vernacular, which historically has been contextual rather than direct, in order to conceal meaning from potentially hostile outsiders. Harlem's bohemians, Chauncey maintains, crafted their vernacular for protection as well: "The visibility of bulldaggers and faggots in the streets and clubs of Harlem during the late 1920s and early 1930s does not mean they enjoyed unqualified toleration throughout Harlem society" (253).

How Harlem society tolerated bohemian culture fluctuated. Harsh reactions to Nugent's story, to other queer literature, and to bawdy blues songs were simply a public defense, reflecting Nugent's admonition against proclaiming "I love prick" on the rooftops. Sometimes these defenses came from people who were participating in the bohemian culture they presumably condemned. For example, Alain Locke, who is often called the intellectual godfather of the Harlem Renaissance, argued strongly that any black literature highlighting sexuality would only confirm racist, reductionist ideas of blacks as promiscuous. Locke wrote negative reviews of work by McKay and of *Fire!!: Devoted to Younger Negro Artists* (1926), the publication in which Nugent's story first appeared. Still, Locke was known in some circles for taking more than a literary interest in Langston Hughes, and he contributed to Harlem's bohemian network like any other "in the life." His written reprimands are not necessarily

hypocritical, though. Locke felt that black art which reached a reading or viewing public should not air private affairs. Moreover, such art should not revel in "sexual taboos" that whites publicly damned. The black artists should forgo references to black bodies (as sexual, or as violent) so that black art could be aesthetically appreciated just like white art, away from racism. According to Locke, social appreciation of black people would follow from aesthetic appreciation of black art. Because of this focus on the social potential of art, Locke, W. E. B. Du Bois, and others confined themselves mainly to aesthetics in their public criticism of art, never trespassing on an individual's private life. In a review, Du Bois wrote that he needed to take a bath after reading *Home to Harlem*, but he "spent heavy days regretting" firing Augustus Granville Dill, a close associate and business manager of Du Bois's magazine *The Crisis*, after Dill was arrested for having sex with a man in a public rest room (Silberman 2001, 258). In the editorial column of *The Crisis*, Du Bois briefly mentioned Dill's departure but without explaining the reason for it. A similar silence followed Wallace Thurman's arrest for the same "offense"; Ma Rainey's arrest for running an "indecent party" at her home, an orgy involving the women in her chorus; and the dissolution of the poet Countee Cullen's marriage to Du Bois's daughter, Yolande. Publicly, she made sure that "the Harlem press reported Cullen was infatuated with another woman, but she confided to her father that Cullen's homosexuality was the problem" (Chauncey, 265).

Not a problem was Harlem's bohemian nightlife. Notwithstanding the minister Adam Clayton Powell's "scathing and bitter denunciation of perversion" and other reproaches published in *New York Age*, Harlem's evening bohemians were well known and celebrated. One of the most visible was Gladys Bentley, "'huge, voluptuous [and] chocolate colored,' according to one fan" (Chauncey, 252). Bentley was as famous for her notorious shows at Hansberry's Clam House on 133rd Street, in which she performed in a white tuxedo and top hat, as she was for her girlfriends; she ad-libbed popular ballads, turning the Broadway tunes "Sweet Georgia Brown" and "Alice Blue Gown" into odes for anal sex. She inspired the writer Blair Niles to create Sybil, an openly lesbian singer, in *Strange Brother* (1931). Also famous was the drag queen Gloria Swanson (originally named Winston), who was "so perfect a woman [people] came and left never suspecting his true sex" (Chauncey, 251). As Dr. Herman Warner remembered:

Gladys and Gloria were extremely popular. Gloria Swanson used to sing a song called "Hot Nuts." . . . As soon as you would enter [the club], he would make you sing the song: "Hot nuts, tell it to the peanut man. You see that man walking there in green? He has good nuts but he won't keep 'em clean. (Kisseloff, 323)

Such participation was not limited to those in one of Harlem's many bohemian institutions, like 267 House on 136th Street, Edmond's Cellar on 132nd Street and Fifth Avenue, or Lulu Belle's on Lenox Avenue near 127th Street. As Howard "Stretch" Johnson, a dancer at the Cotton Club, recalled, bohemian culture spread farther:

There was another place, where they had a chorus of all homosexuals, who used to come out and dance in drag. That was the 101 Ranch [on 140th Street], which is where they invented a dance called the Shim-Sham Shimmy, which became a kind of a national anthem for dancers. Practically every dancer in Harlem could do the Shim-Sham Shimmy. (Kisselhoff, 323)

The 101 Ranch—or the Daisy Chain, as it was also called—became so well known that both Fats Waller and Count Basie commemorated it in songs. Harlem's bohemian culture became so popular that many black performers "in the life" such as Bessie Smith, Alberta Hunter, Josephine Baker, Ethel Waters, and the comedienne Jackie "Moms" Mabley, who regularly wore men's clothes, flirted with bisexual imagery in their work.

However, it was at private parties that "flirting" became more forthright. As the dancer Mabel Hampton explained, "We used to go to parties every other night. . . . The girls all had the parties" (Garber, 321). The hostess of one of these parties on 137th Street described it as a "freakish party, everybody in here is supposed to be a bull dagger or a c—" (Chauncey, 280). Parties thrown by A'Lelia Walker, Clinton Moore, and others were as notorious and as well attended. Moore's parties were said to have attracted Cole Porter and Cary Grant, and boasted sexual entertainment. Another famous gathering place was Alexander Gumbly's studio on Fifth Avenue between 131st and 132nd streets, known as Gumbly's "bookstore" or "book studio" for the many books lining its walls. A white author, Samuel Steward, recalled "being taken to Gumbly's one evening by a lesbian friend and enjoying a delightful evening of 'reefer,' bathtub gin, a game of truth, and homosexual exploits" (Garber, 322).

In Harlem, bohemian parties were one setting for interracial mixing, and the white gay writer and patron Carl Van Vechten—whose articles in *Vanity Fair* are often credited with introducing the Harlem Renaissance to the white public—became Harlem's interracial ambassador. Like Locke, Van Vechten had more than a literary interest in many black writers he helped publish. Van Vechten's parties were legendary, and his photographs document many of Harlem's bohemians. According to Garber, interaction between whites and blacks "in the life" at Van Vechten's parties and elsewhere came from an "identification and feeling of kinship [which] may have been the beginnings of homosexual 'minority consciousness'" (329).

Another interracial meeting place was Harlem's most public bohemian institution, the Hamilton Lodge drag ball held at Rockland Palace Casino on Eighth Avenue and 155th Street, "the largest annual gathering of lesbians and gay men in Harlem—and the city" (Chauncey, 257). It soon became known as the "Faggots' Ball," and its complex spectacle and public presence provoked negative reactions in the press, which nonetheless praised the queens' beautiful and sometimes astonishing outfits. Even writers celebrating it, like Langston Hughes in *The Big Sea* (1940), are careful to position themselves as observers of, not like, the "faggots." Its interracial character led some writers to blame blacks' homosexuality on infiltration by "the discarded froth of Caucasian society" (Chauncey, 260). But the race of the ball's winning queen reflected racial divisions despite any "minority consciousness." The *Amsterdam News* noted that "considerable rivalry exists between the ofay chicks and the Mose broods"; and Bonnie Clark, the first black contestant to win (in 1931 and again in 1932), complained that the ball was "arranged for the white girls to win. They never had no Negro judges" (Chauncey, 263). Nonetheless, the social networks reflected in the Faggots' Ball and other Harlem institutions were a sometimes ignored but hardly hidden aspect of being "in the life."

SETH CLARK SILBERMAN

See also Baker, Josephine; Black Bohemia; Cullen, Coulee; Fire!!; Gumbly Book Studio; Hughes, Langston; Hunter, Alberta; Locke, Alain; Mabley, Jackie "Moms"; McKay, Claude; New York Age; Nugent, Richard Bruce; Rainey, Gertrude "Ma"; Smith, Bessie; Thurman, Wallace; Van Vechten, Carl; Walker, A'Lelia; Waters, Ethel

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Horne, Frank

Frank Smith Horne (1899–1974) was an optometrist, a public administrator, and an important minor poet of the Harlem Renaissance. He is best known for "Letters Found Near a Suicide," a set of short poems that he worked on throughout the 1920s; it won second prize in 1925 in the Amy Spingarn contest of *The Crisis* magazine. Although Horne was influenced by the racial consciousness of his contemporaries, much of his work focuses on more general themes—in particular, the fear that God might be absent from the modern world and the difficulty of maintaining faith.

Horne was born and grew up in Brooklyn. He received a bachelor's degree from City College in 1921, and he was made a doctor of optometry by the Northern Illinois College of Optometry. He practiced in New York and Chicago until 1926, when he was stricken by a severe illness. The exact nature of the condition is not clear, but Horne called it his "mean illness," and many

of his later poems speak of having difficulty walking and having restricted use of one arm. On medical advice, Horne moved to Georgia, where he taught at the Fort Valley Normal and Industrial School from 1926 to 1936. He was very successful, coaching the track team and advancing from teacher to acting president.

Early in his life, Horne was interested in writing, but he did not begin to publish until he was urged to do so by Gwendolyn Bennett and Charles S. Johnson. Throughout the late 1920s, Horne appeared frequently in *Opportunity*, reviewing books and providing anecdotes for Bennett's column "The Ebony Flute." "Letters Found Near a Suicide" was first published in *Opportunity* in 1925, and then added to in 1929. Parts of it also appeared in *Caroling Dusk* (1927), Countee Cullen's anthology of poetry by black Americans. "Letters Found Near a Suicide" is written in a sparse, stripped-down style, but in "Harlem" (1928), Horne also experimented with the jazz style then in vogue among young poets. In 1932 he won honorable mention in *Opportunity's* literary contest for his essay "Concerning White People."

In 1936, Horne went to work for the U.S. Housing Authority in Washington. There he was a participant in President Franklin Roosevelt's "black cabinet," an advisory group led by Mary McLeod Bethune. In 1938, he returned to New York, where he worked for the City Commission on Inter-Group Relations and for the Housing Redevelopment Board.

Horne had no book published until his *Haverstraw* was issued by an Englishman named Paul Bremen in 1963. That volume has additions to "Notes Found Near a Suicide" but dates these changes back to the 1920s. The new section in *Haverstraw* is largely autobiographical, ending with a poem addressing God as uncaring, and showing much concern for the pain and difficulty of living with a disability. *Haverstraw* was kept to an extremely small printing of 300 numbered copies and so seems to have been meant for an elect few rather than as a serious attempt to establish a reputation for Horne. By the time of his death in 1974, Horne had once again returned to writing and had published additional poems in *The Crisis* in 1965, 1966, and 1970.

Biography

Frank Smith Horne was born in Brooklyn, New York, on 18 August 1899. He attended the College of the City of New York (B.S., 1921); Northern Illinois College of Optometry (earning a degree in 1922 or 1923); and the University of Southern California (A.M., c. 1932). He

practiced optometry in Chicago and then New York City (1922–1926). He was at Fort Valley High and Industrial School from 1926 to 1936, beginning as a teacher and ending as dean and acting president. From 1938 to 1955, he served in various administrative capacities for agencies of the U.S. Housing Authority in Washington, D.C., and then New York. He was on the New York City Commission on Inter-Group Relations (executive director from c. 1956–1962) and the New York City Housing Redevelopment Board (consultant, c. 1962–1974). He was a member and board member of the American Civil Liberties Union and a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), National Housing Conference, and National Association of Inter-Group Relations Officials. Horne died in New York City, on 7 September 1974.

STEVEN NARDI

See also Bennett, Gwendolyn; Bethune, Mary McLeod; Crisis, The: Literary Prizes; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Opportunity; Opportunity Literary Contests

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Hot Chocolates

Hot Chocolates (1929), originally titled *Tan Town Topics*, helped define an important era in musical theater and confirmed the shift from vaudeville formulas to jazz-centered productions. It was one of the most piquant Broadway shows of the late 1920s. Connie and George Immerman, proprietors of the famous Harlem cabaret

Connie's Inn at 131st Street and Seventh Avenue, produced *Hot Chocolates*; and their former delivery boy, Thomas "Fats" Waller, wrote the music, along with Harry Brooks and Andy Razaf, who also wrote the lyrics. The crowd at Connie's Inn was white; the only blacks allowed in the establishment were waiters and entertainers. Many black Harlemites railed against this practice; an article in *The Age* deplored the Immerman brothers' policy of selling cheap liquor and banning even the most elite blacks from a club in their own neighborhood while admitting all types of white patrons, including disreputable sorts. Still, the black musical revue found an early home here, with productions such as *Hot Feet*, *Connie's Inn*, *Harlem Hotcha*, and *Hot Chocolates*. Even after *Hot Chocolates* moved to the Hudson Theater on Broadway, where it had a run of 219 performances, it kept its hot Harlem nightclub flavor, and the opening number, "At Connie's Inn," re-created the uptown scene. (When *Hot Chocolates* first moved to Broadway, each night after the performance, members of the company would trek back uptown to Connie's Inn to perform the same numbers. Eventually, however, this proved too much for the cast, and they stopped doing it.)

There were eighty-five performers in *Hot Chocolates*, which starred the singers Baby Cox and Edith Wilson. Leroy Smith's orchestra provided the music, and the dancing was highly praised. *Hot Chocolates* was an early success for the show's trumpeter, Louis Armstrong, who, although he did not receive billing, was praised by reviewers. He (and later Fats Waller) played during intermission. Billy Higgins was a singer, composer, and blackface comedian. Leonard Harper was a dancer, choreographer, and producer. Jazzlips Richardson had been a carnival comedian; he danced as a filler in *Hot Chocolates* and became one of the show's smash hits. His routine was filled with gymnastics (especially splits and back flips), eccentric dancing, rubbery contortions, and minstrel comedy. Baby Cox's snakehips routine along with Louise "Jota" Cook's gyrations stopped the show. At one point, the Immermans tried to get Bill "Bojangles" Robinson to join the show, but he was too busy with vaudeville; instead, they booked Roland Holder to perform a clean, sophisticated soft-shoe routine in top hat and tails to the tune of "Swanee River." Paul and Thelma Meeres were in their heyday as good-looking, sophisticated waltz dancers; bronze-complexioned Bahamians, they were considered to be the most beautiful couple in Harlem. Their elegant performance was a contrast to the blue humor, suggestive lyrics, double entendres, and scantily attired show-girls, all of which raised a few eyebrows. On the

whole, though, audiences and critics did not seem to mind the raunchy material. After all, breaking away from the prudishness of the Victorian era was part of the appeal of the Harlem Renaissance.

Waller wrote several of his most renowned songs for this production, including "Black and Blue" and "Can't We All Get Together." "Ain't Misbehavin'," which became a classic, solidified Waller's reputation as a masterful composer. Most reviewers thought that the score would be an instant hit, although the *New York World* felt that too much emphasis was placed on this one song, which was repeated often in the show.

NADINE GEORGE-GRAVES

See also Armstrong, Louis; Musical Theater; Razaf, Andy; Waller, Thomas "Fats"; Wilson, Edith

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House-Rent Parties

Although house-rent parties once flourished in the black neighborhoods of Chicago, Detroit, Washington

D.C., and other cities, they have become most closely associated with Harlem. During the 1920s and 1930s (and even into the 1940s), such parties formed the backbone of Harlem nightlife and became for many working people not only an enjoyable and affordable way to dance and socialize but also an economic necessity. For the reasonable admission price of between ten cents and a dollar, plus the cost of liquor and food, guests could dance, drink, flirt, and gamble, while the hosts collected enough money to pay the landlord for another month.

The house-rent party evolved out of traditions that were several generations old by the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance. Since the late nineteenth century, African American families in the rural South had enjoyed Saturday night barbecues and fish fries, complete with music and dancing, at events called "frol-ics" or "breakdowns." By the turn of the twentieth century, African Americans in southern cities were throwing dance parties expressly to raise money. Dozens of couples would cram into tiny apartments, and the sometimes painful results of dancing in such confined spaces led to the term "shin-digs" to describe these events, although they were also referred to as "stomps," "boogies," "breakdowns," "skiffles," "scuffles," "struggles," "shake-me-downs," "chitterling rags," and "struts."

African Americans who came north during the great migration brought with them their fondness for a good shin-dig. This social custom served them well, for instead of finding plentiful and profitable work in northern cities, many migrants instead found relentless economic exploitation by employers, landlords, and merchants. Wages for black workers were disproportionately low in New York, and rents in Harlem were exorbitantly high. Limited economic options forced residents of Harlem to find creative ways to supplement their income, and so many families transformed the southern shin-dig into the modern house-rent party.

To prepare for a rent party, hosts would clear all furniture (except for the piano) from the front rooms of the apartment, take up the rugs, replace regular lightbulbs with more sensuous colored ones, and sometimes rent folding chairs from a local undertaker. Some hosts would even hire "home defense officers" (HDOs), to bounce unwelcome guests and squelch incipient brawls. The highlight of any rent party was the music, often provided by a single piano player, a series of pianists, or even a three- or four-piece musical ensemble. Well-known pianists such as "Fats" Waller, James P. Johnson, and Willie "the Lion" Smith regularly

made the rounds at rent parties, where musicians competed in “cutting contests” to determine who was the most talented. Bootleg liquor, usually homemade corn whiskey (called “King Kong”) or bathtub gin, was sold by the pint or in quarter-pint portions called “shorties.” For an additional price, guests could purchase southern-style meals that usually included some combination of hoppin’ John, fried chicken, fried fish, chitterlings, mulatto rice (rice and tomatoes), gumbo, chili, collard greens, potato salad, and sweet potato pone. The party would often last until dawn, or until someone summoned the Black Maria (the police patrol wagon) to break it up.

In order to attract a large number of paying guests, hosts advertised their parties using “rent party tickets.” Often, they enlisted the help of the “Wayside Printer,” a middle-aged white man who walked the streets of Harlem with his portable press. For a modest fee, he stamped the party information onto tickets about the size of a business card. Interestingly, these tickets always identified rent parties using such terms as “Social Party,” “Social Whist Party,” “Parlor Social,” or “Matinee Party.” Other, less elevated terms included “Too Terrible Party,” “Boogie,” and “Tea Cup Party.” Tickets often incorporated popular slang phrases, lyrics from current songs, or bits of poetry. One ticket from 1927 implored: “Save your tears for a rainy day, / We are giving a party where you can play / With red-hot mammas and too bad She-bas / Who wear their dresses above their knees / And mess around with whom they please.” Another reasoned: “You Don’t Get Nothing for Being an Angel Child, So You Might As Well Get Real Busy and Real Wild.”

Hosts would distribute these tickets to friends, neighbors, and even strangers on the street corner. Sometimes, hosts targeted a specific population, such as Pullman porters, interstate truck drivers, or black tourists. Other hosts simply tucked the tickets into elevator grilles or apartment windows. Drumming up a good crowd was important, for competition was fierce; as many as twelve parties in a single block and five in an apartment building, simultaneously, were not uncommon in Harlem during the 1920s. Although rent parties raged every night of the week, the most popular evening was Saturday, because most day laborers were paid on Saturday, and few had to work on Sunday. The next favorite party night was Thursday, when most sleep-in domestic workers were off-duty. The only population generally not invited to rent parties was white people. During Prohibition (1920–1933), any white man in Harlem could potentially be a rev-

enuer or a cop, who would certainly appreciate the opportunity to raid a rent party for violating liquor laws, or to extort money from the hosts in order to keep them out of jail. But even without that threat, black hosts seldom welcomed the presence of unfamiliar, inquisitive white people in their homes.

During the Harlem Renaissance, house-rent parties essentially amounted to a kind of grassroots social welfare. However, their general atmosphere was far more sordid than the average neighborhood block party. Frequently, back rooms were reserved for gambling or drug use, and sometimes hosts would offer the private use of the back bedrooms to couples for a price. Before long, gangsters and small-time racketeers had also entered the rent-party business, staging nightly parties that served as a front for their more illegitimate business ventures. Not surprisingly, some Harlem residents were ashamed of or appalled by rent parties, especially those who firmly believed in the immorality of jazz, liquor, and gambling. Certain black intellectuals and writers also scorned these gatherings, believing that such rowdy displays of passion and intemperance reflected poorly on the black race. No accounts of rent parties appear in the works of Jessie Redmon Fauset, Nella Larsen, or W. E. B. Du Bois, for instance, and in his sociological description of Harlem, *Black Manhattan* (1930), James Weldon Johnson simply ignores them. We do, however, get enthusiastic depictions of rent parties in the works of Langston Hughes, Wallace Thurman, and Claude McKay.

KATHLEEN DROWNE

See also Hughes, Langston; Johnson, James P.; McKay, Claude; Smith, Willie “the Lion”; Thurman, Wallace; Waller, Thomas “Fats”

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Howard University

In November 1866, representatives of the First Congregational Society of Washington, D.C., met to discuss plans for establishing a seminary for the training of black ministers. Their interest in creating "Howard Theological Seminary" stemmed from a sense of commitment and obligation to the formerly enslaved men and women of the nation. Prominent among the group of Congregationalists was General Oliver Otis Howard, a Civil War hero and commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau. In his capacity as an official of the Freedmen's Bureau, Howard had a significant interest in the welfare and education of the formerly enslaved. He became a natural leader in the group's effort, and consequently the university was named for him. As their proposal gained momentum, the school's founders soon saw fit to broaden their vision from theological seminary to Howard Normal and Theological Institute for the Education of Teachers and Preachers. Ultimately, they went a step further and obtained congressional support for the incorporation of Howard University, an institution dedicated to "the education of youth in the liberal arts and sciences." The charter of Howard University was enacted by the U.S. Congress on 2 March 1867.

Since its inception, Howard University has distinguished itself as a training ground for countless African Americans who would make significant contributions to American society. Among them are prominent civil rights lawyers, such as Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, who were trained under the tutelage of Charles Hamilton Houston, the influential dean of Howard's law school. Other distinguished graduates include Debbie Allen (actress and choreographer), Edward Brooke (former U.S. senator), Ralph Bunche

(political scientist, first African American Nobel laureate), David Dinkins (former mayor of New York City), Elaine R. Jones (first woman to head the NAACP Legal Defense Fund), Vernon Jordan (former president, National Urban League), Toni Morrison (author, recipient of Pulitzer and Nobel prizes), Jessye Norman (opera star), Phylicia Rashad (actress), L. Douglas Wilder (first African American governor of Virginia), and Andrew Young (former ambassador to the United Nations, mayor of Atlanta). Howard is also well known for its exceptional faculty. Benjamin Brawley, Sterling Brown, Ralph Bunche, Charles Drew, Rudolph Fisher, John Hope Franklin, E. Franklin Frazier, Francis Grimké, Lois Maillou Jones, Alain Locke, Rayford Logan, Kelly Miller, James Nabrit, Dorothy Porter, James Porter, Robert Terrell, Howard Thurman, Charles Wesley, and Carter G. Woodson are an abridged list of significant African American intellectual leaders who have served Howard University as pedagogues.

The Moorland-Spangarn Research Center (MSRC), a division of the university's library system, is yet another reason for Howard's prestige among American institutions of higher education. MSRC is an extensive repository of documentation and memorabilia relating to the history and culture of African Americans. Its holdings include the Alain Locke papers and the Rose McClendon Memorial Collection of photographs by Carl Van Vechten. In addition, MSRC houses manuscripts of W. E. B. Du Bois, E. Franklin Frazier, Angelina Weld Grimké, Georgia Douglas Johnson, Rayford Logan, Kelly Miller, and Carter G. Woodson, as well as correspondence by Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Charles S. Johnson, and others.

The period of the Harlem Renaissance indelibly influenced African Americans' interest in the liberal arts. By extension, the artistic movement also had an influence on African American higher education, and Howard University is no exception. The ideological thrust of the university during that period is evident in Howard's theoretical stance with respect to the lingering debate on higher education between Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois. Recognizing the severe limitations of Washington's philosophy, Howard stood squarely in Du Bois's camp. Under the influence of humanist scholars, such as Alain Locke, Mercer Cooke, Frank Snowden, Arthur P. Davis, and Sterling Brown, who helped identify the intellectual life of the university, Howard conformed to a pedagogy best defined by Du Bois: "The curriculum of Higher Education which must underlie true life is intelligence, broad sympathy, knowledge of the world that was

and is and the relation of men to it." Howard's proponents of the liberal arts engaged in an outright assault against the industrialist camp. They made clear that in advocating a liberal arts orientation, they were not seeking to create an elite which would be alienated from the larger African American community, as Washington had feared. Rather, they concurred with Du Bois's observation that "what black men need is the broader and more universal training so that they can apply the general principles of knowledge to the particular circumstances of their condition." Mordecai Wyatt Johnson, Howard's first black president, echoed Du Bois's dictum in his inaugural address of 1926:

The great danger that confronts Howard University and all Negro institutions of learning is not that we shall have too much liberal education, but that we shall have too little of it—that we shall turn out competent physicians, competent lawyers, competent teachers in their several specialties, who are at the same time incompetent, shallow sympathized men, ignorant of the fundamental human relations and not knowing how to take their part in the general development of a community. . . . It is absolutely necessary that there shall [be] studies which fit a man sympathetically to understand the kind of country that he is living in, the progress which that country has made, the direction in which it is moving, the nature of the institutions with which he has to deal, and the relations and possibilities of his own people to his government and to the progress of his country. This is what is meant by a liberal education—not the preparation of a leisured aristocracy, simply spending its time in the discussion of things of cultural interest to incompetent men, but the broadening of the sympathies, and that deepening of the understanding which make the experienced minister, the lawyer, and the teacher for the public good, together endeavoring to develop a country which shall have a deep sense of community and of brotherly cooperation.

This concept of "broad sympathy" remains at the core and is the sine qua non of Howard University's mission, which states in part: "Howard University is dedicated to attracting, sustaining, and developing a cadre of faculty who, through their teaching and research, are committed to producing distinguished and compassionate graduates who seek solutions to human and social problems in the United States and throughout the world."



Howard University, c. 1900. (Library of Congress.)

With regard to Howard University's profound legacy, and its continued humanistic vision, Zora Neale Hurston's reflections on her time as a student at Howard offer an eloquent tribute to the institution and its significance to African American life and culture. She recalled that when the students sang the alma mater, "my soul stood on tiptoe and stretched up to take in all that it meant. So I was careful to do my class work and be worthy to stand there under the shadow of the hovering spirit of Howard. I felt the ladder under my feet." Howard University had a significant impact on African American life during Reconstruction and through the Harlem Renaissance, and the tradition and influence of the institution continue today.

NATASHA COLE-LEONARD

See also Higher Education; Historically Black Colleges and Universities; *specific faculty members and alumni*

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Howells, William Dean

From his stint as the editor of *Atlantic Monthly* in the 1870s to his death in 1920, William Dean Howells was arguably the most powerful man in American publishing. Merely by mentioning a book in one of his monthly magazine columns, the "dean of American letters" could bring fame and greatly increased sales to the author. From this eminent position, he brought the works of African American writers to the attention of a white reading public. He was also the most outspoken proponent of literary realism. According to his theories of writing, a work of fiction should portray the world as it is and faithfully record the way people commonly speak and act. To achieve this, the work must accurately reflect the experience and environment of the writer. It should come as no surprise that Howells encouraged most what he imagined to be authentic expressions of the African American experience, sometimes favoring works written in dialect over those written in standard English.

Raised in the radical Republican politics of Ohio, Howells hoped for a peaceful reconciliation between the races and social equality for African Americans. He renounced any aggressive solutions to racial oppression, favoring instead gradual betterment based on increased economic power for African Americans and the exposure of the African American experience through the arts. In his "An Exemplary Citizen," Howells praised Booker T. Washington for a speech that Washington gave at the Atlanta Exposition of 1895. Howells did not see submission in Washington's speech; instead, he admired Washington's ability to maintain good-natured patience in the face of overwhelming injustice. In 1909, William Dean Howells, along with forty-two other prominent American liberals, signed a letter drafted by Oswald Garrison Villard, editor of the *New York Post*, on the hundredth anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth to protest a recent race riot in Springfield, Illinois. Howells later joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) when it began in 1910.

Howells was an early champion of African American literature, advancing the careers of Paul Laurence Dunbar and Charles Chesnutt by proclaiming the literary merits of their work to a white audience. He believed in the importance of artistic expression in the greater cause of civil rights. Achievement through the arts demonstrated the talent and genius of a people. He had faith that the sympathy generated through works of art would eventually lead to understanding between the two races and raise the status of African Americans.

Through his review of Paul Laurence Dunbar's second book of poetry, *Majors and Minors* (1896), Howells introduced Dunbar to a popular readership. Although he praised the more traditional poems written in standard English, he maintained that the verse written in dialect was more faithful to and representative of the African American experience. True to the tenets he set for realism, Howells praised Dunbar as "the first man of his color to study his race objectively, to analyze it to himself, and then to represent it in art as he felt it and found it to be." On the basis of this one review, Dunbar became a household name. Howells continued his support by contributing a laudatory introduction to Dunbar's third book, *Lyrics of Lowly Life* (1896). Dunbar appreciated the attention he received from Howells, but he felt that his ability to express himself freely was hampered by Howells's public call for dialect pieces.

Charles Chesnutt was already nationally known through his stories in *Atlantic Monthly* by the time Howells reviewed two volumes of his work, *The Conjure Woman* (1899) and *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line* (1899), in 1900, but Howells's endorsement of these books established Chesnutt as a major literary figure and a preeminent African American voice. Howells's reaction to Chesnutt's work was similar to his reception of Dunbar's—Howells applauded Chesnutt's command of his materials and the "unerring knowledge" of his subject matter. He further advised Chesnutt to write from experience as a light-skinned African American and "acquaint us with those regions where the paler shades dwell as hopelessly, with relation to ourselves, as the blackest negro." Although he praised the dramatic power of *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901) the following year, Howells could not contain his ultimate disappointment. In his review "A Psychological Counter-Current in Recent Fiction," in which he chastised literature he called "morally false and mentally despicable," Howells described the tone of Chesnutt's novel as "bitter, bitter." The anger Howells detected in Chesnutt disturbed his dream of reconciliation between the races. After this harsh criticism, the relationship



William Dean Howells, 1877. (Library of Congress.)

between Howells and Chesnutt cooled and eventually dissolved.

Howells's fascination with the condition of the "paler shades" found its way into his own work well before his exposure to the work of Chesnutt. In his novella *An Imperative Duty* (1891), a young woman discovers the secret of her parentage, that her mother had been African American, a member of a group which the young woman had always considered inferior and ugly. The doctor of nervous disorders who falls in love with her overcomes his own initial repulsion and racism to wed her and escape to Europe. Chesnutt kept a copy of this exploration into the psychological effects of racism in his personal library, where it may have provided some literary context for his own work.

Howells was greatly responsible for the popular reception of African American writers at the turn of the twentieth century. In his own way, he also tried to influence the direction of African American literature, fostering in its writers a faith in realistic portrayals of African American life and a confidence in the development of a distinctive African American voice.

Biography

William Dean Howells was born in Martinsville (later Martin's Ferry), Ohio, on 1 March 1837. He had

occasional formal schooling in Hamilton, Ohio, 1842–1847. He was a printer's apprentice for the *Ohio State Journal*, 1851–1852; a printer at the *Ashtabula Sentinel*, 1852–1856; city editor of the *Cincinnati Gazette*, 1857; city editor of the *Ohio State Journal*, 1858–1860; U.S. consul for Venice, 1861–1864; assistant editor at *Atlantic Monthly*, 1866–1870; editor at *Atlantic Monthly*, 1871–1880; editor at *Cosmopolitan*, 1891–1893; and president, American Academy of Arts and Letters, 1908–1920. His awards included the Howells Medal for Fiction, 1915. Howells died in New York City on 11 May 1920.

CHARLES D. MARTIN

See also Chesnutt, Charles Waddell; Dunbar, Paul Laurence; Villard, Oswald Garrison

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Hughes, Langston

Langston Hughes was one of the most influential, prolific, and beloved writers to emerge from the Harlem Renaissance. Over the course of a professional writing career that spanned nearly five decades, Hughes gained international attention and acclaim in nearly every genre of writing, including poetry, the short story, the essay, drama, the novel, history, autobiography, journalistic prose, children's literature, literature for adolescents, the libretto, and song lyrics. He was also a popular speaker, reading his poetry and prose to audiences of all ages around the world. Just as eclectic as his interests in numerous genres were the subjects on which Hughes chose to focus his creative talents. Keenly aware of both his own sociocultural milieu and issues affecting people worldwide, Hughes wrote as powerfully about jazz, blues, and the African American working and middle classes as he did about imperialism in Haiti or the effects of revolutionary socialism on Soviet central Asia. Whatever his subject or genre, Hughes wrote with passion, clarity, and a great deal of humanity, blending a critical awareness and condemnation of oppressive ideologies and institutions with a subtle, ironic, blues-toned sense of humor that sought the comic in the tragic and celebrated the healing power of laughter.

Hughes's artistic presence in Harlem, the burgeoning center of African American artistic and intellectual activities, actually preceded his physical arrival. In the autumn of 1920, when he was only eighteen years old, he had drawn the attention of Jessie Redmon Fauset—who was the literary editor of the youth-oriented *Brownies' Book* and of *The Crisis*, the prestigious magazine of the National Association for the

Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)—with several poems written for children that he submitted for publication. Fauset was impressed with the submissions, promised to publish one poem in a coming issue of *Brownies' Book*, and asked whether Hughes had written any children's articles or stories about Mexico (he was living with his father in Toluca at this time). Hughes responded by sending a brief piece on Mexican games, an essay about daily life in Toluca, and a third article about a Mexican volcano, all of which Fauset accepted and published, respectively, in the January, April, and December 1921 issues of *Brownies' Book*. Fauset published a fourth essay by Hughes, "The Virgin of Guadalupe," in *The Crisis* that same year.

Although these pieces gave hints of a youthful literary talent, the publication of his poem "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" in *The Crisis* in 1921 helped establish Hughes as a significant voice in African American literature. The poem's unique blend of self-revelation and historical consciousness reflected a young poet with firm control of the English language and a deep appreciation of the culture on which he would subsequently focus his creativity. The poem also introduced Hughes to important contacts in New York City. Having arrived in New York in September 1921, to enroll for classes at Columbia University, Hughes was soon invited by Fauset to visit the offices of the NAACP and to meet W. E. B. Du Bois, whose eloquent words of strength, protest, and defiance in *The Souls of Black Folk* and in editorials in *The Crisis* were among the earliest Hughes remembered from his childhood. Fauset and Du Bois would prove to be very important to Hughes at the start of his career, publishing his writings in *The Crisis* and introducing him to many dignitaries at the NAACP, especially those who were part of the literary and artistic community at the center of the Harlem Renaissance.

If "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" signified Hughes's maturing literary vision, "The Weary Blues"—published in *Opportunity* magazine in May 1925—cemented his reputation as one of the preeminent poets of the Harlem Renaissance. "The Weary Blues" blended blues lyrics that Hughes remembered from his childhood with a syncopated narrative that captured the actions and emotions of a blues musician. The poem's innovative appropriation of the blues form would serve Hughes well, earning him first prize in a literary contest sponsored by *Opportunity*. The poem also impelled Carl Van Vechten, a novelist and patron of the arts, to approach Hughes and ask to see other examples of his

work. Van Vechten was impressed by what he read and urged his own publisher, Alfred A. Knopf, to consider one of Hughes's manuscripts. The result was *The Weary Blues*, published in 1926 to nearly unanimous critical acclaim. Reviewers noted the lyrical quality of Hughes's verses but focused more intently on the ways in which the young poet seemed to be doing something never before attempted in poetry—convincingly representing in print the rhythm, tone, and emotive qualities of jazz and blues. The poems in *The Weary Blues*, to many reviewers, also captured the sheer excitement and energy that characterized Harlem during the mid-1920s. Here, some readers suggested, was clearly a poet who loved African American culture and was unafraid to represent aspects of that culture in his writings.

Hughes's reputation as a poet was certainly made secure by *The Weary Blues*, but during the Harlem Renaissance he also established himself as a talented writer in other genres. Most notably, the publication of "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1926) in *The Nation* signaled Hughes's transformation from a promising writer of nonfiction to one of America's most engaging essayists. At stake in the essay was no less than the very existence of a distinct African American aesthetic, an art originating in the confluence of African folk culture and the black experience of the "middle passage," slavery, Reconstruction, and the long era of segregation. Hughes had touched on this subject implicitly in "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," but it would take a controversial essay by another African American writing for *The Nation*, George S. Schuyler, to provoke a more explicit articulation of a distinct black art. Schuyler's "The Negro-Art Hokum" (1926) challenged the premise that art produced in the United States was in any way influenced by race. In the midst of the intense excitement surrounding the publication of Alain Locke's anthology *The New Negro* (1925), which heralded an awakening in African American visual arts, literature, music, and scholarship, Schuyler registered strong and bitingly sarcastic doubt that the movement known as the Harlem Renaissance was anything more than racial propaganda and self-promotion by a small elite. Central to Schuyler's argument is the idea that "race" is a cultural construct, a product of social class, caste, and physical environment rather than a biological determinant. Schuyler pointed out that, historically, the concept of fundamental differences among the races had been used in the United States to develop a white supremacist ideology in which African Americans were

cast as inherently inferior to white Americans. Schuyler insisted that celebrations of a distinct African American art—which might be translated by whites as a "peculiar art"—could only legitimize such an ideology.

Hughes understood the merits of Schuyler's argument concerning "fundamental differences" among races, but he was incensed by Schuyler's suggestion that African Americans were merely "lampblacked" Anglo-Saxons. In a letter to the editor of *The Nation* that appeared shortly after Schuyler's essay was published, Hughes made his own position clear:

For Mr. Schuyler to say that "the Negro masses . . . are no different from the white masses" in America seems to me obviously absurd. Fundamentally, perhaps, all peoples are the same. But as long as the Negro remains a segregated group in this country he must reflect certain racial and environmental differences which are his own.

Hughes had enumerated these differences two months before this letter, in "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," his finest essay and a virtual declaration of independence for the younger artists and writers of the Harlem Renaissance. Troubled by what he perceived to be a reliance on dominant white standards of art and culture among the African American middle class and intelligentsia, Hughes challenged black artists and writers to embrace a racial aesthetic and a source of creativity generated from within black communities in the United States rather than from without. In creating a truly racial art, the black artist could not be swayed by critiques of his or her subject matter or techniques, nor could fears of revealing aspects of black life that the standard-bearers of propriety frowned on stand in the way of artistic inspiration. "An artist must be free to choose what he does," Hughes insisted in the essay, "but he must also never be afraid to do what he might choose." In this respect, Hughes believed that there was a vast storehouse of largely untapped artistic material in the culture of the African American working masses. Jazz, spirituals, and blues offered the artist a wealth of resources for the creation of a distinct black aesthetic, and the often conflicted relations between black and white people in the United States furnished an "inexhaustible supply of themes" for the writer and dramatist. In utilizing these resources, the black artist could—indeed, must—begin to challenge and overturn dominant white standards of beauty that limited the representation of blackness to stereotypes associated with minstrelsy. Hughes

dismissed Schuyler's argument that environment and economics had transformed African Americans into darker Anglo-Saxons, and he issued in its place a code of responsibility to the artists of his generation: "It is the duty of the younger Negro artist, if he accepts any duties at all from outsiders, to change through the force of his art that old whispering 'I want to be white,' hidden in the aspirations of his people, to 'Why should I want to be white? I am a Negro—and beautiful!'"

"The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" anticipated themes Hughes would pursue in his writings for the next decade, particularly in its strong critique of white racial prejudice but also in its condemnation of the black bourgeoisie's complicity in perpetuating racist attitudes. Uncompromising in his belief that the younger generation of African American artists and writers were being held back by timeworn attitudes, Hughes chastised "the best Negroes" in another powerful essay, "These Bad New Negroes: A Critique on Critics" (1927), for rejecting the work of writers such as Jean Toomer and Rudolph Fisher because these writers had described conflict and violence within African American communities. In this essay, he also took a controversial stance on Carl Van Vechten's sensationalistic novel *Nigger Heaven* (1926), which had caused a firestorm among the black literati and intelligentsia for its grossly stereotypical depictions of Harlem society and nightlife. A combination of his friendship with Van Vechten, a desire to shock the black bourgeoisie, and perhaps a sincere conviction that he was correct compelled Hughes to pronounce the novel "true to the life it pictures." In the essay, Hughes also addressed charges by critics that his own second book of poems, *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927), was mired in the lives of the lowest classes of African America. "Is life among the better classes," Hughes asked, "any cleaner or any more worthy of a poet's consideration?"

As the nation headed toward economic collapse, Hughes's response to this question was a resounding "no." The Great Depression brought to an abrupt halt the sense of joy and hope with which he had proclaimed, in "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," a new and shining moment in African American art. The gaiety of the Harlem Renaissance had given way to the stark reality of economic crisis, and Hughes responded by focusing his work on the broader racist and classist attitudes that he perceived to be increasing in the United States. The Scottsboro trials of 1931 especially reinforced in Hughes's mind the connections between race and class, further convincing the

young writer that conservative thinking among blacks and whites alike was leading the nation, and particularly its millions of black citizens, toward disaster. The Scottsboro case involved nine African American youths—called the "Scottsboro boys" in the media—who had been arrested in Alabama and charged with the rape of two young white women on an open railroad freight car. Eight of the youths were quickly convicted by all-white juries and sentenced to death; the ninth was sentenced to life imprisonment. As Hughes journeyed through the South on a reading tour in the winter of 1931, the nine youths imprisoned at Kilby State Penitentiary in Montgomery, Alabama, were frequently on his mind. Concerned that the Scottsboro boys would perish by actual or legal lynchings, Hughes published a poem, "Scottsboro" (1931), and two powerful essays—"Southern Gentlemen, White Prostitutes, Mill-Owners, and Negroes" (1931) and "Brown America in Jail: Kilby" (1932)—which dramatized the vagaries of a racist southern justice system and implicitly criticized black leaders who remained silent about the trials.

This critique was implicit in poems such as "To Certain Negro Leaders," which Hughes published in the radical *New Masses* in 1931, and was extended in "Cowards From the Colleges" (1934), a scathing essay that took black college administrators to task for bowing down to the demands of white philanthropists. Hughes's personal experiences with white patronage during the 1920s certainly contributed to the honest conviction with which he criticized such philanthropy in the 1930s. He had been supported by a wealthy white woman, Charlotte Mason, while writing his first novel, *Not Without Laughter* (1930), and had thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to focus on his art without having to worry about where his next paycheck would come from. As soon as Hughes's work took on a radical edge of social critique, however, Mason withdrew her patronage. This kind of hypocrisy, which seemed to fester behind philanthropic fronts, troubled Hughes long after the end of the Harlem Renaissance and the largesse of wealthy patrons who supported it. Addressing in absentia the first American Writers' Congress (1935), which was organized by politically committed writers on the left and out of which grew the radical League of American Writers, Hughes called on African American writers to reveal through their art

the lovely grinning face of philanthropy—which gives a million dollars to a Jim Crow school, but not

one job to a graduate of that school; which builds a Negro hospital with second-rate equipment, then commands black patients and student-doctors to go there whether they will or no; or which, out of the kindness of its heart, erects yet another separate, segregated, shut-off, Jim Crow Y.M.C.A.

In this radical statement, which was published in essay form under the title "To Negro Writers," Hughes championed the transformative powers of the written word and urged writers to use their art to effect social change. Black writers must use their talents, Hughes argued, to overturn minstrel stereotypes and establish racial unity "on the *solid* ground of the daily working-class struggle to wipe out . . . all the old inequalities of the past." They must reveal, he continued, "the sick-sweet smile of organized religion" and the false leaders within black communities who fear to speak out against injustice.

Concerned as he was with issues affecting black communities in the United States, Hughes was no provincial; his increasing engagement with the political left in the late 1920s and 1930s was motivated as much by an active awareness of global class and racial oppression as it was by his commitment to representing the voices of the African American working masses. A trip to Haiti in 1931, for example, confirmed for Hughes the extent to which U.S. imperialism had cast an ugly net of racism and economic exploitation over a once proud people. When Hughes arrived in Haiti, signs of the American occupation were to be found everywhere. The U.S. military intervention, purportedly undertaken for humanitarian reasons after a coup d'état in 1915 had resulted in the overthrow and death of the Haitian president and the execution of political prisoners, had stripped the Haitian government of all vestiges of independence; the Haitian military, finances, and legislative powers were firmly under the control of the United States. Hughes's love of foreign travel was fed in part by a desire to temporarily escape racial prejudice and discrimination at home. The discovery that soldiers of the American occupation enforced Jim Crow in Haiti was thus a painful blow to him, as was the color line drawn between mulattoes and blacks and the fact that the Haitian ruling class segregated itself from the workers. Moving further away from the themes that characterized his writings of the 1920s, Hughes documented these sad realities in essays such as "People Without Shoes" (1931) and "White Shadows in a Black Land" (1932).



Langston Hughes, 1931. (Library of Congress.)

A trip to the Soviet Union in 1932 gave Hughes a sense of renewed optimism about the possibility of an egalitarian society. The contrast between the Soviet Union and the American South, where Hughes had spent more than four months on his speaking tour, could not have been more pronounced. Hughes was warmly greeted by white Muscovites gathered at the train station to meet him and was then whisked across Red Square in a luxurious sedan to the Grand Hotel, where he found courteous attendants and a clean, comfortable room. "Everything that a hotel for white folks at home would have," Hughes remarked in "Moscow and Me" (1933), "except that, quite truthfully, there was no toilet paper. And no Jim Crow." In essays and poems written during this trip, Hughes embraced revolutionary socialism as a viable alternative to the class and race antagonism that characterized life in the United States. "Put one more s in the U.S.A.," Hughes boldly proclaimed in a poem of 1934, "To make it Soviet." Such sentiments were characteristic of Hughes's writings of the 1930s. Discontented with the policies and practices of his own nation,

Hughes turned to others to seek the ideals of democracy that had been so badly compromised in the United States. Thus, while he was hailed as the “poet laureate of Harlem,” Hughes was, by the close of the Harlem Renaissance, truly an international man of letters and a spokesperson for oppressed peoples worldwide.

Biography

James Mercer Langston Hughes was born on 1 February 1902, in Joplin, Missouri. He studied at public schools in Topeka, Kansas; Lincoln, Illinois; and Cleveland, Ohio. He then attended Columbia University (1921–1922) and Lincoln University, Pennsylvania (B.A., 1929). He worked as a crew member aboard a freighter headed for Africa (1923); worked in a Parisian nightclub (1924); collaborated with Zora Neale Hurston on *Mule Bone*, a play (1930); traveled through the South on a reading tour with support from the Rosenwald Foundation (1931); traveled to the Soviet Union to make *Black and White*, a motion picture about race relations in the United States (1932); wrote a series of articles for *Izvestia*, a Russian newspaper (1932); was a war correspondent in Spain for the *Baltimore Afro-American* (1937); founded the Harlem Suitcase Theater (1938); wrote a Hollywood script (1939); founded the Skyloft Players in Chicago (1941); was a columnist for the *Chicago Defender* (1942–1966); taught at the University of Chicago Lab School (1949); was a columnist for the *New York Post* (1962–1967); and traveled to Europe for the U.S. State Department (1965). His awards included the *Opportunity* prize for poetry (1925), a Guggenheim Foundation fellowship (1936), a Rosenwald Fund fellowship (1941), the NAACP Spingarn Medal (1960), and induction into the National Institute of Arts and Letters (1961). Hughes died in New York City on 22 May 1967.

CHRISTOPHER C. DE SANTIS

See also *Black and White*; *Brownies' Book*; *Crisis*, The; Du Bois, W. E. B.; *Fauset*, Jessie Redmon; *Fine Clothes to the Jew*; Mason, Charlotte Osgood; *Mulatto*; *Not Without Laughter*; *Opportunity Literary Contests*; Schuyler, George S.; *Scottsboro*; *Van Vechten*, Carl; *Weary Blues*, The

Selected Works

The Weary Blues. 1926.

Fine Clothes to the Jew. 1927

Not Without Laughter. 1930.

The Negro Mother and Other Dramatic Recitations. 1931.

Dear Lovely Death. 1931.

The Dream Keeper. 1932.

Scottsboro Limited. 1932.

Popo and Fifina. 1932. (With Arna Bontemps.)

The Ways of White Folks. 1934.

Mulatto. 1935.

Little Ham. 1935.

Troubled Island. 1936.

A New Song. 1938.

The Big Sea. 1940.

Shakespeare in Harlem. 1941.

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Hunter, Alberta

The versatile blues and jazz singer Alberta Hunter was born in Memphis on 1 April 1895. In 1907 she ran away from home, accompanying her Chicago-bound music teacher (who was under the mistaken impression that Hunter had asked her mother for permission). At age fifteen she obtained her first job as a singer, in an exceedingly disreputable club called Dago Frank's, where she stayed for two years. Long-running engagements at Hugh Hoskins's and, especially, the Panama Café brought her more attention; Sophie Tucker, Eddie Cantor, and Al Jolson regularly stopped by to hear her sing. Soon Hunter was performing at Dreamland, Chicago's most prestigious club. "The South Side's sweetheart," as she was then being called, performed there with such jazz musicians as King Oliver, Sidney Bechet, and Tony Jackson. She was known for her rich contralto voice and excellent diction; her style was alternately earthy and sophisticated.

Hunter's initial recordings, for the Black Swan label in New York in 1921, featured Fletcher Henderson. She wrote and recorded "Down Hearted Blues" for Paramount in 1922 (because Hunter did not read music and therefore could not set down the score, the house pianist Lovie Austin received credit as a cowriter). A year later, Bessie Smith recorded it as her debut, with great success.

Hunter achieved fame in New York when she replaced Smith as a featured singer in the stage show

How Come? Advertised as a "girlie musical darkomedy" (Taylor 1987), *How Come?* was the most expensive black production to date. Hunter joined the cast, which also included Bechet, on 18 April 1923, and the show ran at the Apollo Theater for five weeks before going on the road (to Philadelphia, Baltimore, and the Lafayette Theater in Harlem). Meanwhile, Hunter's recording career accelerated. She was probably the first black singer to record with an all-white group (the Original Memphis Five, including Miff Mole, in 1923). In 1924 she made five records for the Gennett label with Louis Armstrong and the Red Onion Jazz Babies, including "Everybody Loves My Baby" and "Texas Moaner Blues"; because she was under contract with Paramount, Hunter used the name of her half sister, Josephine Beatty. That same year, she recorded as Alberta Prime on the Biltmore label, with Duke Ellington's band. Other notable recordings include "Chirpin' the Blues" (1923), "Your Jelly Roll Is Good" (1925), "I'm Hard to Satisfy" (1926), and three songs with Fats Waller on pipe organ for Victor ("Sugar," "Beale Street Blues," and "I'm Going to See My Ma," all 1927). Hunter also worked for Okeh, Decca, and Bluebird with musicians such as Eubie Blake, Clarence Williams, and Earl Hines. Most of her recordings during the 1930s were with orchestras, most notably Jack Johnson's society orchestra in London. She had her own radio show on NBC in 1938–1939.

In between recording dates, Hunter remained active on the circuit. Following an unsuccessful marriage in 1927 (Hunter was homosexual), she spent more and more time in Europe. Oscar Hammerstein and Jerome Kern heard her perform in 1927 at a benefit for victims of a flood in London, and they subsequently cast her as Queenie in a production of *Show Boat* with Paul Robeson at the London Palladium (1928–1929). One of the first female blues singers to tour Europe, she was especially well received in Paris, where she replaced Josephine Baker at the Casino de Paris.

During World War II, Hunter headed the first black USO show, completing twenty-five tours to various sites in Europe and the South Pacific. Soon after her mother died, Hunter retired from show business; she worked for the next twenty years as a nurse at Goldwater Memorial Hospital on Welfare Island (renamed Roosevelt Island in 1973). Renewed interest in the blues led to a successful comeback in 1977, when Hunter was eighty-two. She performed and recorded until her death in New York on 18 October 1984.

Biography

Alberta Hunter was born in Memphis, Tennessee, on 1 April 1895. In Chicago, she sang at Dago Frank's (1911–1913), Hugh Hoskins's (1913–1915), Panama Café (1915–1917), and Dreamland Ballroom (1917–1921); she also appeared in musical comedy revues in Chicago (1921–1922). Hunter made her first recording in New York City in 1921; joined the Broadway show *How Come?* in 1923; made the first of many European tours in 1927; performed in *Show Boat* at the London Palladium and in New York in 1928–1929; sang with Jack Johnson's orchestra throughout the 1930s; had her own show on NBC radio in 1938–1939; entertained troops during World War II on USO tours; joined ASCAP in 1952; and understudied three roles in the Broadway show *Mrs. Patterson* in 1954–1955. She passed the New York City elementary school equivalency examination, received a diploma (1955), attended the YMCA School for Practical Nurses (1956), and worked at Goldwater Memorial Hospital on Welfare Island (1956–1977). She returned to music in 1977. Hunter died in New York City on 18 October 1984.

GREGORY MILLER

See also Armstrong, Louis; Bechet, Sidney; Black Swan Phonograph Company; Blake, Eubie; Blues: Women Performers; Ellington, Duke; Henderson, Fletcher; Homosexuality; Oliver, Joseph "King"; Robeson, Paul; Show Boat; Singers; Smith, Bessie; Waller, Thomas "Fats"; Williams, Clarence

Selected Works

- "Down Hearted Blues." 1922.
- "Chirpin' the Blues." 1923.
- "Down South Blues." 1923.
- "You Got to Reap Just What You Sow." 1923.
- "I'm Hard to Satisfy." 1926.

Recordings on CD

Complete Recorded Works, Vols. 1–4. Document 5422–5425.
The Legendary Alberta Hunter: DRG 5195.

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Hunter, Eddie

Eddie Hunter, a fast-talking comedian, was born in 1888 on New York's East Side, to a black father and a white mother. He left school in 1903. An early exposure to Bert Williams fired him with ambition to write vaudeville and musical comedy sketches. While working as an elevator attendant, he caught the attention of a regular passenger, the great tenor Enrico Caruso, who read his material and encouraged him.

Hunter's first public productions occurred in 1905–1906, when his parents rented a hall for him to perform his comedy sketches locally. He soon graduated to the Lincoln Theater in Harlem, sandwiching comedy acts between silent movies. When the Crescent Theater was founded in 1909, the owners invited him to write for them. The Crescent was Harlem's first true theater, the Lincoln being considered a movie house. Teamed with Thomas Chappelle, Hunter contributed highly successful stock pieces for several years, drawing crowds away from the rival Lincoln.

In 1912, when the owners of the Crescent leased the newly built Lafayette Theater, Hunter worked with Lester Walton, drama editor for *New York Age*, on productions similar to those at the Crescent. In 1915, when the Lafayette switched to straight drama, becoming the

home of the Lafayette Players, Hunter returned to vaudeville. In 1920–1921, he toured as far as Salt Lake City, Utah, with his successful act—Hunter, Randall, and Senorita (his sister, Katherine), in their presentation *On the Border of Mexico*. In 1921, Hunter became the manager of the stock company of the Standard Theater in Philadelphia. He wrote and produced several shows there, which toured with his wife, Nina, in the cast.

In 1923, he produced his most famous show, *How Come?* Although its Broadway run was short and was treated harshly by the critics, it had already enjoyed long runs in Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., with a cast that included Alberta Hunter, Sidney Bechet, and, briefly, Bessie Smith. Revived in 1925, *How Come?* gained Hunter much attention, including a recording contract with Victor. This resulted in six sides during 1923–1924, including collaborations with the songwriter Alex Rogers, a veteran writer of material for Bert Williams. The association with Rogers enhanced Hunter's reputation as one of a group aspiring to inherit Williams's mantle.

Hunter collaborated with Rogers on two touring shows in 1924, *Struttin' Time* and *Steppin' Time*. Their coproduction of 1926, *My Magnolia*, starring Adelaide Hall, was a flop; but *Struttin' Hannah From Savannah* (originally 4–11–44) toured successfully. In 1928 Hunter was invited to play in the English version of Lew Leslie's *Blackbirds of 1927*, after the original star, Florence Mills, withdrew because of ill health. He rejoined Lew Leslie for *Blackbirds of 1933*, which was a flop on Broadway but had some success on tour.

Eddie Hunter continued performing into the early 1940s, when he retired and became a property manager in Harlem's Sugar Hill area. However, he occasionally made special appearances; and in 1968, he was the recipient of a presentation by the people of Harlem, honoring his contributions to the black theater movement. He died in New York in 1980.

Biography

Edward (Eddie) Hunter was born in New York, on Ninety-seventh Street between Second and Third avenues, on 4 February 1888. He finished his education in 1903. He was a production manager with the Crescent Theater (1909), Lafayette Theater (1912), and the Standard Stock Company, Philadelphia (1921). Hunter died in New York in February 1980.

See also Bechet, Sidney; Blackbirds; Crescent Theater; Hall, Adelaide; Hunter, Alberta; Lafayette Players; Lafayette Theater; Leslie, Lew; Lincoln Theater; Mills, Florence; Musical Theater; Smith, Bessie; Sugar Hill; Walton, Lester

Productions and Performances

- 1909–1912. Short sketches, Crescent Theater. (Including *Going to the Races*, *The Battle of Who Run*, *What Happens When the Husbands Leave Home*, *The Railroad Porter*, *Subway Sal*.)
1920. *On the Border of Mexico*. (Vaudeville sketch.)
1921. *The Insane Asylum*. (Philadelphia.)
1922. *Abraham the Barber*. (Philadelphia.)
1923. *How Come?*
1924. *Steppin' Time*; *Struttin' Time*.
1925. *How Come?* (Revival.)
1926. *My Magnolia*; 4–11–44.
1927. *Struttin' Hannah From Savannah*; *Darktown Scandals*.
1928. *Blackbirds of 1928*. (English provincial version.)
1933. *Blackbirds of 1933*. (Later toured as *Blackbirds of 1934*.)
1941. *Here 'Tis*.

Recordings

- Vocal Blues and Jazz*, Vol. 3, 1921–1928. (DOCD-1015; with Alex Rogers.)
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Hurst, Fannie

Today Fannie Hurst is known primarily as the writer behind such films as *Imitation of Life*, *Back Street*, and *Humoresque*. Yet during the 1920s and 1930s, she was one of America’s most popular and prolific novelists and short-story writers; she was the highest-paid writer in the nation. She also made her mark as a champion of many causes, especially workers’ rights, women’s rights, and civil rights for African Americans. Her significance to the Harlem Renaissance comes primarily from her support of Zora Neale Hurston and Dorothy West, among others; her championing of racial causes; and her work for publications such as *Opportunity*—but particularly from her friendship with Hurston.

Hurst was born in 1889 in Ohio and was raised primarily in St. Louis, Missouri, where she attended Washington University; she later did graduate work at Columbia University. Her ambition to be a writer developed early in her life, and she published numerous stories in student magazines while she was in school. In New York City, partly in order to study people for her writing, Hurst attended night court, observed people on the street, and took jobs as a waitress and a sales clerk. By 1913 her stories were appearing regularly in many popular magazines, most notably the *Saturday Evening Post*, whose editors had told her they would take anything she wrote.

Hurst married the pianist Jacques Danielson in 1915, but they kept their marriage secret for several years, living in separate houses, in part so that she could write without interruption and he could pursue his music. When news of the marriage broke on the front page of the *New York Times* in 1920, it became a cause célèbre, with both Hurst and Danielson writing defenses of their choices. In answer to one editorial in the *New York Times* that had castigated them for maintaining two separate residences during a housing shortage, Hurst asserted the right of a married woman to retain her name, life, and personal liberty. Later, though, Hurst and Danielson did share a home until his death in 1952.

Hurst’s short stories were so popular that she was called the female O. Henry, and her publishers and her public urged her to write novels as well, although most critics agree that she was better in the short form. She wrote eighteen novels, more than 300 short stories, twelve films, numerous radio scripts and articles, and pamphlets about civil rights. Her stories tended to feature immigrants, shop girls, and people living in boardinghouses. She was frequently criticized for her sentimentality and uneven writing, but she was praised for her skill at rendering the emotional lives of women. Some thirty films have been made from her writings.

Among her novels, Hurst’s own favorite was *Lummo* (1923), about a Polish immigrant domestic worker. Her greatest popular success was *Back Street* (1931). *Imitation of Life* (1933), probably her most recognizable title today, was filmed in 1934 and again in 1959. This story of a friendship between a white woman and a black woman and their two daughters, one of whom chooses to pass for white, met with great acclaim nationwide. In Harlem, it received general approval as a novel by someone who deeply deplored racial prejudice. There was, however, a notable exception: After the first wildly successful film version in 1934, starring Louise Beavers and Claudette Colbert, Sterling Brown published a review in *Opportunity* entitled “Imitation of Life: Once a Pancake.” Brown said that the film and the novel indulged in stereotypes—the contented mammy, the tragic mulatto—and perpetuated archaic ideas about the mixture of the races. Langston Hughes, however, sent a note in 1937, thanking Hurst for having helped bring to the screen “the first serious treatment of the Negro problem in America.” The next year, Hughes parodied Hurst’s novel in “Limitations of Life” for the Harlem Suitcase Theater, but the two remained warm friends.

Hurst met Zora Neale Hurston on 1 May 1925, when she presented Hurston with second prize for a short story called “Spunk” at the first *Opportunity* awards dinner; Hurst had served as one of the judges. In September, Hurst invited Hurston to tea. In November, Hurston, needing tuition for Barnard and money for living expenses, moved into Hurst’s house as her secretary. Hurston had no talent for the job. In “Zora Neale Hurston: A Personality Sketch” (1961), Hurst noted that Hurston’s “shorthand was short on legibility, her typing hit-or-miss, mostly the latter, her filing a game of find the thimble.” Hurston’s job description was changed from secretary to chauffeur and companion.

We also have Hurston’s description of her friendship with Fannie Hurst in her autobiography *Dust*

Tracks on a Road (1942). Hurston describes Hurst as “a curious mixture of little girl and very sophisticated woman.” On one of their many driving trips, Hurst used the occasion to integrate a restaurant in Vermont by having Hurston dress as an Indian princess and accompany her. In the personality sketch of Hurston, Hurst applauded her “blazing zest for life” and noted, “Regardless of race, Zora had the gift of walking into hearts.” As Wall (1995) points out, “Both accounts make much of the fact that Hurst employed Hurston as a secretary; . . . Hurston was actually in Hurst’s regular employ for less than a month. Clearly the idea of the two, both writers, with strikingly similar names, appealed to the imagination of both.” In 1934, Fannie Hurst wrote the introduction for Hurston’s first novel, *Jonah’s Gourd Vine*.

On 4 August 1946, after the Harlem Renaissance and the Harlem riots, Hurst wrote a piece for the *New York Times* Sunday magazine entitled “The Other and Unknown Harlem,” in which she reminded her readers that “the large majority of Harlem, who lead ordered, backbone-of-the-nation lives, are seldom heard of. . . . [They are] the immense section of unhonored and unsung Harlem which represents decency, family unity, and social stability.”

Hurst published throughout her life, and eventually she appeared frequently on radio and television programs. She remained involved in numerous reform movements, especially during the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt; she became a close friend of Eleanor Roosevelt, with whom she often campaigned for various issues. Hurst served as chair of the National Housing Commission in 1936–1937; chaired a national committee on workmen’s compensation; was a member of the National Committee to the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in 1940–1941; and was a delegate to the World Health Organization Assembly of 1952. She also served as a member of the board of directors of the New York Urban League. She argued for equal pay for equal work and the right of a woman to retain her name after marriage. During World War II, she worked for the relief of oppressed Jews in eastern Europe and raised funds for refugees from Nazi Germany.

Most of Hurst’s work was out of print at the time of the present writing, but Kroeger (1999) argues that she was a literary trendsetter who used her own celebrity to promote racial equality and women’s rights. Hurst left instructions for her estate and her papers to be divided between Washington and Brandeis universities, with much of the money going to endow chairs in creative writing. In addition to those collec-



Fannie Hurst, c. 1931. (Library of Congress.)

tions, the bulk of her manuscripts and correspondence is at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.

Biography

Fannie Hurst was born in Hamilton, Ohio, on 18 October 1889, to Rose Koppel Hurst and the shoe manufacturer Samuel Hurst—American Jews of Bavarian descent who had immigrated to the United States in 1860. She graduated from Washington University (B.A., 1909) and did graduate work at Columbia University. She had various part-time work in New York City, including as a waitress and in retailing. In 1915, she secretly married Jacques Danielson; he died in 1952. Her awards included an honorary degree from Washington University in 1953. Hurst died in New York City, on 23 February 1968.

KATHRYN WEST

See also Beavers, Louise; Brown, Sterling; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; Opportunity; Opportunity Awards Dinner; West, Dorothy

Selected Works

- Just Around the Corner*. 1914.
Every Soul Hath Its Song. 1916.
Gaslight Sonatas. 1918.
Humoresque: Short Stories. 1919.
Star-Dust: The Story of an American Girl. 1921.
LummoX. 1923.
Appassionata. 1926.
A President Is Born. 1928.
Back Street. 1931.
Imitation of Life. 1933.
Lonely Parade. 1942.
Hallelujah. 1944.
Man With One Head. 1954.
Anatomy of Me: A Wonderer in Search of Herself. 1958.
Family! 1959.
God Must Be Sad. 1961.

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Hurston, Zora Neale

As a folklorist, ethnographer, novelist, short-story writer, storyteller, galvanizing personality, and emblematic figure of the celebration of black culture by the Harlem Renaissance, Zora Neale Hurston not only wrote about but also lived the quest of twentieth-century blacks to pursue beauty, individuality, and

affirmation. Her writings, and her life, are characterized by a spirit of humor, contradiction, and imagination.

Hurston was born in Alabama in 1891. She grew up in Florida, and in her writings she refers repeatedly to her childhood and adolescence there: *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, for instance, is a veiled fictionalization of her parents' lives. Whereas many of the other major writers of the Harlem Renaissance focused on urban scenes and situations in Harlem, Hurston—primarily because of her parallel interest in customs and folklore—found her literary inspiration in the lives, language, and storytelling strategies of southern blacks.

In 1925, in search of the "New Negro" Renaissance, she arrived in New York and quickly distinguished herself as a storyteller and a source of entertainment at parties. But more than this, Hurston quickly translated her talent for storytelling to the written page—first by publishing "Spunk" in Alain Locke's *The New Negro* in 1925 and then by publishing "Sweat" and "Color Struck: A Play in Four Scenes" in *Fire!!* (November 1926). All three of these early works announce themes which would continue to occupy her writing for her entire career: storytelling, the relations between men and women, and the struggle for an independent sense of self. As part of a group that included Aaron Douglas, John P. Davis, Bruce Nugent, Gwendolyn Bennett, Langston Hughes, and Wallace Thurman, Hurston found herself among like-minded iconoclasts who were opposed, in various ways, to the more established figures: W. E. B. Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, and Alain Locke. Wallace Thurman, in his passages on literary salons in *The Blacker the Berry* (1929) and *Infants of the Spring* (1934), highlights the bold, outspoken, and sometimes outrageous personality of Hurston (who is called Sweetie Mae Carr). Similarly, Langston Hughes, in his autobiography *The Big Sea* (1940), devotes a great deal of space to explaining Hurston:

Of this "niggerati," Zora Neale Hurston was certainly the most amusing. Only to reach a wider audience, need she ever write books—because she is a perfect book of entertainment in herself. In her youth she was always getting scholarships and things from wealthy white people, some of whom simply paid her just to sit around and represent the Negro race for them, she did it in such racy fashion.

Such depictions of Hurston are not entirely complimentary, but they indicate the impression she made on Harlem in the 1920s.

Hurstun's talent for storytelling may have been behind her decision to study anthropology at Columbia University and Barnard College with Franz Boas, Gladys Reichard, and Ruth Benedict. Like many of the younger generation of Harlem Renaissance writers, Hurstun embraced the constructivist idea that race was a social convention rather than a biological necessity, but she also asserted her own "Negroness"—in such essays as "How It Feels to Be Colored Me" (1928)—and celebrated the distinctiveness of black culture, as in her "Characteristics of Negro Expression" (1934). Like Wallace Thurman and Rudolph Fisher, for example, Hurstun held that for African Americans race was a burden that held them back from asserting their human individuality but was also a source of unique and delightful aspects of American life. Hurstun celebrated that uniqueness in a series of sketches she published in *The Messenger* in late 1926, "The Eatonville Anthology."

Hurstun was caught up in the particularly vicious social history of the African American, and she wrote her own story within the prescribed space of the divided self: just enough space to sustain one's "Negroness," but not enough space to move beyond the limitations of racial identification into self-determination. In "How It Feels to Be Colored Me," she says:

At certain times I have no race, I am me. When I get my hat at a certain angle and saunter down Seventh Avenue, Harlem City, feeling as snooty as the lions in front of the Forty-Second Street Library, for instance. So far as my feelings are concerned, Peggy Hopkins Joyce on the Boule Mich with her gorgeous raiment, stately carriage, knees knocking together in a most aristocratic manner, has nothing on me. The cosmic Zora emerges. I belong to no race nor time. I am the eternal feminine with its string of beads.

Robert E. Hemenway, in his introduction to the second edition of Hurstun's autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road*, discusses her sense of self as belonging to two distinct categories: private and public. The former is instinctive, folklorish, and Negro-centered; the latter is learned, literary, and "at home" in the wide white world. Applying this categorization to the autobiography, one begins to read it as a dialogue—somewhat heated and personal in places—between two selves who strive for identity and personhood by different means. These two selves appear throughout Hurstun's work.

During the 1920s, however, much of that work was not under Hurstun's own control. By agreement, Hurstun ceded ownership of her writing to a wealthy patron, Charlotte Osgood Mason, who had offered the same agreement to Langston Hughes. As a result of her relationship with Mason, her research on folklore in the South (pursued in particular after she graduated from college in 1927), and the relative eccentricity of her focus on the rural South and on black female protagonists, a considerable amount of Hurstun's writing in the 1920s remained unpublished and unrecognized, despite her personal triumphs and the success of her short stories.

Hurstun came into her own as a folklorist and a novelist in the 1930s. With the publication of her books of folktales *Mules and Men* (1935) and *Tell My Horse* (1938) and the release of her novels *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934), *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), and *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (1939), she became a major figure in African American literary and cultural expression. *Mules and Men* and *Tell My Horse* had resulted from ethnographic research that Hurstun did as part of her studies with Boas and as the recipient of two Guggenheim fellowships, but *Jonah's Gourd Vine* heralded the emergence into American literature of a unique combination of narrative verve and inventiveness. In that work and her other novels of the 1930s, Hurstun combined her research on folklore with the psychological possibilities of fiction. She exposed the inner life of black characters in all their creative, erotic, and personal depth and complexity through inventive language, unusual metaphors, natural imagery, and attention to the humorous and profound realities of rural southern life. In *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (which, as noted previously, is loosely based on the lives of her mother and father), Hurstun juxtaposes the adventurous self-discovery of a philandering man against the complex self-diminishment of a long-suffering woman—chronicling what she called, in a letter to James Weldon Johnson, "the common run of us who love magnificence, beauty, poetry and color so much that there can never be too much of it."

These themes reappear in Hurstun's second novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, which is widely regarded as a very successful melding of storytelling with a focus on an independent woman's life. The opening paragraphs announce an interest in distinguishing the ways of men from those of women. As Janie Mae Crawford walks into town, her neighbors watch and comment from their porches, establishing an opposition between individual experience and social opinion.

The primacy of oral styles in this novel is indicated by its structure—it starts and ends with Janie’s recounting of her life story to her friend Phoeby as the Florida night descends—and by the extensive use of images, similes, and metaphors derived from the black storytelling tradition. Chronicling Janie’s girlhood and early womanhood in flashbacks, the novel traces her search for her own way of describing her life, for her own voice, for love, and for the world of people. Hurston’s vivid use of black dialect shows that this dialect can convey complex, realistic characters—contrary to the proclamations of several black writers. (One example is James Weldon Johnson, in the introduction to *God’s Trombones*; another is Richard Wright, in his review of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*—Johnson had decided not to use dialect, and Wright took Hurston to task for using it.) Hurston describes Janie and her world with a sympathy and an intimacy that are rare in American literature.

To her biographers, Hurston has seemed eccentric, elusive, and at times completely baffling; in her autobiography, she is doubly so. Autobiography is a genre caught in the cross fire between truth and fiction, and *Dust Tracks on a Road* is no exception. Walker (1975) concedes that Hurston “is probably more honest in her fieldwork and her fiction than she is in her autobiography, but only because she was hesitant to reveal how different she really was”; and in fact, Hurston took considerable liberties with the particulars of her life—as she admits in the text (“anybody whose mouth is cut cross-ways is given to lying”). This approach moves Hurston’s autobiography away from strictly “objective” truth, freeing it to be more accurate about the directions Hurston’s life took and about her perceptions of herself. Critics, too, have more freedom to read this autobiography as a work of the imagination in which the author’s inventiveness may actually reveal much that she failed to see. Hurston offered this observation: “People are prone to build a statue of the kind of person that it pleases them to be. And a few people want to be forced to ask themselves, ‘What if there is no me like my statue?’ The thing to do is to grab the broom of anger and drive off the beast of fear.”

Hurston’s final book published during her lifetime, *Seraph on the Suwanee* (1948), depicts the rural South (like most of her previous works) but sets the action among white characters. Some critics consider this setting a rejection of black cultural traditions; others see it as an intentional reversal meant to highlight the flaws and foibles of a society that ascribes so much to categories like race and gender. In any case, though,

during the late 1940s and the 1950s, there was clearly a growing distance between Hurston’s work and her readers. Hurston’s conservative views about race, which had always troubled her colleagues in the Harlem Renaissance, stood out more prominently toward the end of her life. In the late 1940s and the 1950s, she wrote some articles for newspapers and magazines in the South, but for the most part she lived in obscurity; she worked occasionally as a librarian, teacher, or maid, and died in poverty in 1960.

The appearance of significant critical studies—particularly those by Walker (1975) and Hemenway (1977)—renewed interest in Hurston. To the writers and critics who rediscovered her in the 1970s and 1980s, she seemed to anticipate feminism, to embody the love of a distinctively African American culture, and to present a complicated, multilayered concept of the challenges facing black writers. In particular, there was a great deal of interest in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, which has become part of the canon and a central text in American classrooms; and in *Mules and Men*, which is a classic of African American folklore. In 1991 *Mule Bone: A Comedy of Negro Life in Three Acts*, a play that Hurston cowrote with Langston Hughes and that caused a falling-out between them, was produced for the first time—nearly sixty years after its composition. Kaplan (2002) presents Hurston’s correspondence with, among others, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Fannie Hurst, Charlotte Osgood Mason, Carl Van Vechten, and Dorothy West. These letters reveal a sophisticated, complex woman who is very much aware of her considerable talents; they include her reactions to Hughes’s depiction of her in *The Big Sea* and to the antipathy of the black press and the black public during the 1950s. Along with the stories, essays, and novels, the letters fill in the picture of a protofeminist, iconoclastic, down-home, politically conservative woman who wrote some of the most alluring prose of the twentieth century.

Hurston’s complex, never fully comprehensible personality has made her infinitely attractive to critics. The contradictions and revisions in her work suggest how mobile and shifting her ideas of identity were. Hurston, rather boldly, stages herself, the South, and the situation of being a black woman in the United States for her audience. Finally, she was a master of the story. Her self-invention is inseparable from her love of storytelling and from the way she used language. Her celebration of black culture, her rebellious and independent spirit, and her determination to tell her story in her own voice (and with a sense of humor) continue to inspire writers and readers.



Zora Neale Hurston in Florida, 1935. (Library of Congress.)

Biography

Zora Neale Hurston was born in Notasulga, Alabama, on 7 January 1891 (but would later claim to have been born in 1901). She grew up in, and is particularly identified with, Eatonville, Florida. After the death of her mother in 1904, Hurston traveled with a theatrical troupe. She completed school in Baltimore, Maryland, and then enrolled at Howard University in Washington, D.C. (1923–1924). She came to New York in 1925 and began publishing that same year. She studied anthropology at Columbia University and Barnard College with Franz Boas, Gladys Reichard, and Ruth Benedict. Hurston became a major figure in African American literature in the 1930s. Her awards included two Guggenheim fellowships. In the late 1940s and the 1950s, Hurston did some writing for newspapers and magazines but lived mostly in obscurity, sometimes working as a librarian, teacher, or maid. She died in poverty in Fort Pierce, Florida, on 28 January 1960.

DANIEL M. SCOTT III

See also Bennett, Gwendolyn; Boas, Franz; Douglas, Aaron; Fire!!; Fisher, Rudolph; Hughes, Langston;

Hurst, Fannie; Johnson, James Weldon; Mason, Charlotte Osgood; Messenger, The; New Negro, The; Nugent, Richard Bruce; Their Eyes Were Watching God; Thurman, Wallace; West, Dorothy

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Infants of the Spring

Wallace Thurman's novel *Infants of the Spring* (1932) is an extraordinary work offering insights into the Harlem Renaissance from the perspective of a key figure in a younger group who called themselves or were called the niggerati (also spelled "niggeratti"). The events and discussions in *Infants of the Spring* are all set in "Niggeratti Manor," the home of the protagonist, Raymond Taylor—a meeting place of Harlem's black bohemia. Most of the characters seem to be thinly veiled real-life figures, and Taylor is evidently Thurman's persona. Similarly, the setting can be identified as Thurman's home at 267 West 136th Street, where he lived from 1926 to 1928. Except for its top floor (where an actress with two daughters, and another tenant, lived), the house was offered to young African American writers and artists by a black businesswoman, Iolanthe Sidney. In order to help talented young black people, Sidney asked for only a very low rent—or none, when (as frequently happened) her tenants were unable to pay anything at all.

The main focus of the fictional residence is Taylor's studio, where the niggerati gather for work, discussions, and parties. Two characters who live in Niggeratti Manor with Taylor are the artists Paul Arbian (modeled on Richard Bruce Nugent) and Pelham Gaylord (based on Rex Goreleigh), and the singer Eustace Savoy (based on William Service Bell). The story begins with the arrival of a white Canadian, Stephen Jorgenson (who is clearly modeled on Thurman's intimate friend Jan Harald Stefansson). Taylor and Jorgenson quickly become friends, and Jorgenson eventually moves in. Throughout the novel, the all-pervading issue of "race"

is discussed. Racial tensions soon develop, as African American women compete for Jorgenson's attention: There are episodes of jealousy and continual arguments. Although Taylor is involved in the events, he is essentially the voice of reason, whose comments and insights—often in the form of an internal monologue—give the story its structure.

A significant aspect of the plot is the development of relationships. In this regard, the focus is on Taylor. His relationship with Jorgenson is described as intimate but platonic, giving the reader the impression that Thurman has intentionally excluded sexual attraction between these two men. The interracial experiment represented by Jorgenson's living in the center of Harlem does not succeed, and he and Taylor eventually split up. Taylor's relationship with Lucille (modeled on Thurman's wife, Louise Thompson) is also important. Here, too, sex is absent, yet it remains a continual point of discussion and tension between Taylor and Lucille, whose closeness intensifies toward the end of the novel.

Art constitutes a central issue in *Infants of the Spring*. The group of young African Americans who have gathered at Niggeratti Manor are actually creative failures: the writer Taylor and the painter Arbian represent unfulfilled talent, the poet Gaylord represents mediocrity at best, and the singer Savoy suffers from problems of racial identity. This failure is meant to reflect flaws that presumably hampered the development of the actual Harlem Renaissance. The niggerati—the "infants of the spring" of the title—suffer from stunted growth, as is suggested by the epigraph of the novel, two lines from *Hamlet*: "The canker galls the infants of the spring / Too oft before their buttons be disclosed."

The characters all seem to waste their talents or misinterpret their abilities: Taylor, deeply involved in discussions about race, relationships, and art, is unable to concentrate on his writing; Arbian, although clearly talented, does not work at his art but instead opts for decadent poses (his last pose being his craftily staged suicide); the vocalist Savoy has a penchant for white music, dislikes any type of African American music, fails dramatically, and ends up in the mental ward of a hospital in New York; Gaylord writes crude love poetry dedicated to one of the daughters of the actress living on the top floor, and is jailed for alleged rape—his poems, although they are metaphorical, are used as evidence against him. The most famous passage in the novel is a scene of a literary salon at which all of the great figures of the Harlem Renaissance are gathered, including a Dr. Parkes (who represents Alain Locke), DeWitt Clinton (representing Countee Cullen), and Sweetie May Carr (representing Zora Neale Hurston). There is a heated discussion—ending in shouting matches and chaos—about race and art and the direction the movement is to take. The message seems clear: The Harlem Renaissance could not succeed, because it was too narrowly defined, was defined in terms of race, and left no space for individualism.

When *Infants of the Spring* was published in 1932, the Harlem Renaissance had long since passed its height, and the nation had entered an economic depression. Consequently, the novel never received much critical attention. Thurman had actually developed the main body of the book in 1929–1930 during a one-year absence from Manhattan, when he stayed with a friend, the theater critic Theophilus Lewis, in Jamaica, Queens, and was supported by a grant from Elisabeth Marbury, a rich American literary agent who was also a patron of the arts. The text had apparently already been accepted by a publishing company in March 1930, but the name of the publisher is not known; nor is it clear why publication was deferred. It is certain, though, that Thurman reworked the novel several times, and this may have been one reason for the delay. Another factor in the delay in publication may have been the fact that Richard Bruce Nugent, Thurman's intimate friend at the time, also wrote an account of the Harlem Renaissance period, "Gentleman Jigger." Nugent claimed that Thurman had stolen chapters from "Gentleman Jigger" and had used them in *Infants of the Spring*. This alleged plagiarism has never been proved, and it seems that if Thurman actually did copy such material, he later removed these passages.

The few contemporary critics who reviewed *Infants of the Spring* at the time of its publication almost all dismissed it as poorly written. Thurman was always highly critical of his own work and seems to have concurred with this assessment; in 1932, in a letter to Langston Hughes, he said that the novel was "lousy." For many years, *Infants of the Spring* was out of print, but in a foreword to the 1992 edition, Singh reclaims its significance and holds that its themes are relevant in modern times. Even if the novel suffers from a rather thin story line and an overemphasis on monologue and discussions, it remains a unique, insightful, and entertaining insider's perspective on the Harlem Renaissance movement.

A. B. CHRISTA SCHWARTZ

See also Cullen, Countee; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; Lewis, Theophilus; Locke, Alain; Nugent, Richard Bruce; Patterson, Louise Thompson; Thurman, Wallace

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Inter-State Tattler

Although the *Inter-State Tattler* (1925–1932) was the most-maligned and shortest-lived example of Harlem's "chocolate drop press," it was more than just a "gossipy black weekly" (Watson 1995, 136). It offered a window onto the nightlife north of 125th Street, a scene enlivened

by performers such as Bessie Smith and by clubs such as Small's Paradise, a regular advertiser. And in addition to columns called "Social Snapshots," "About People You Know," "Club Scribblings," and "Between Puffs," the *Inter-State Tattler* provided sports coverage as well as advice on finances, health, and fashion. Another column, "The World, the Flesh, and the Devil"—supposedly written by the "Three Moral Monkeys"—gave readers an opportunity to write in and redress, within limits, wrongs that anyone had done to them. Still, the playfulness of the *Tattler* led Lewis, for example, to describe it as "Afro-America's most frivolous newspaper . . . a sometimes viperous weekly hissing with gossip about 'sheiks' and 'shebas' at play in Harlem, Chicago, and on the West Coast" (1981, 126).

In focusing on the more social aspects of the New Negro, the *Tattler* was not entirely misguided. In fact, by ascribing a social element to the vibrant, yet sometimes too polished, psychology that Alain Locke and others wanted to project onto a new generation of black writers, the *Tattler* demonstrated how Harlem's "vogue and [its] literature were inextricably linked: Harlemania trained publicity's spotlight on black culture" (Watson, 106). Even Lewis concedes that the *Tattler* "excelled as a well-written gossip sheet with a racial conscience, and was even capable of serious literary commentary" (2000, 171).

The *Tattler's* star columnist was its managing editor, Geraldyn Dismond Major, who doubled as "Lady Nicotine" for the column "Between Puffs" and appeared on the cover when she won first place among society writers in the Survey of the Negro Press of 1927. She was fond of A'Leia Walker's wild parties: She said of one held in 1929 that "Bacchus himself passed out before midnight and along about two o'clock the shade of Rabelais returned to its tomb with its head hanging low in defeat." Major was also a regular at the annual Hamilton Lodge drag ball, known in the 1920s as the Faggots' Ball. In a column of February 1929, she observed that "a costume ball can be a very tame thing, but when all the exquisitely gowned women on the floor are men and a number of the smartest men are women, ah then, we have something over which to thrill and grow round-eyed."

Some of Harlem's luminaries were indeed round-eyed when they read Major's commentary. Her frank descriptions of bohemian venues such as the Hobby Horse, "which out-Villages the Village" with "exotic drawings . . . and a flock of artists," made it difficult for anyone to party anonymously. Neihart explains,

"Hell, some of the most committed faggots in Harlem were ambivalent about being seen [out], lest their names be celebrated in tomorrow's gossip columns" (2003, 8).

Coincidentally or pointedly, the *Tattler's* use of blue ink reflected the off-color quality often associated with this periodical and with some undeniable aspects of the renaissance age.

SETH CLARK SILBERMAN

See also Hobby Horse; Homosexuality; Small's Paradise; Smith, Bessie; Walker, A'Leia

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Isaacs, Edith

Edith Juliet Rich Isaacs began her career in theater in 1904 as a critic for *Ainslee's Magazine*. By 1918, she became editor of the influential magazine *Theatre Arts*. It was then that she established herself as one of the most important and influential members of the American theater community. One of Isaacs's main projects was the promotion of a national theater. She believed very strongly in the connection between theater and life; accordingly, she felt that a rich national American theater, rooted in American folk traditions, could enrich American life. She did not believe that theater in New York was fulfilling this purpose because it was too commercial, largely inartistic, and dull in general. Instead of following the uninspired paradigm of theater in New York, Isaacs urged Americans to go to "the four corners of the country and begin again, training playwrights to create in their own idiom, in their own theatres" (quoted in Martin 1996, 26). Also, Isaacs believed that in order for

there to be a national theater—a national anything, for that matter—the American Negro must have an important role. Not only must black Americans be included in a national theater, she asserted, but the folk tradition she saw as vital to the existence of a national theater was most alive in black communities. In the June 1935 issue of *Opportunity*, Isaacs said that “the American theatre and the American Negro had a world of good things to place at each other’s service if the road between them could be cleared. And . . . these things, rightly used, would enrich not only the theatre, but the whole of life” (174). With that, she set out to clear the road.

In August 1942 Isaacs devoted an entire issue of *Theatre Arts* to “The Negro in the American Theatre.” The forty-nine-page feature included Isaacs’s narrative along with copious photographs of actors (Ira Aldridge as Othello, Charles Gilpin in *The Emperor Jones*), productions (*Porgy and Bess*, *The Green Pastures*), and the like. Five years later, in 1947, Isaacs used this project as the basis for a landmark book-length study, also called *The Negro in the American Theatre*. In the introduction to this book, she stated her goal, again with an eye toward a unified national theater, and added: “The goal may not be reached until it is no longer possible to isolate the story of the Negro from the much broader panorama of the American theatre as a whole, in which the Negro plays his part as actor, dramatist, citizen. But at least the road is open now” (17). Alain Locke praised this goal, remarking: “*The Negro in the American Theatre* is all the more important because [it is] told in the overall context of the development of the drama of American life. . . . The story of the Negro’s part in all this and of his progressive integration with it profits greatly through being told as an integral part of the general story.” Locke also said that Isaacs was the most “consistent and constructive” friend of Negro drama (1948, 8–9). Isaacs was indeed a constructive friend; almost single-handedly, she opened the previously locked door of American theater to African Americans.

Biography

Edith Juliet Rich Isaacs was born on 27 March 1878, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; her parents were Adolph Rich and Rose (Sidenberg) Rich. She graduated from Downer College (later Lawrence University) in 1899 and became a reporter for the *Milwaukee Sentinel*; she became literary editor of the *Sentinel* in 1903. She

married Lewis M. Isaacs, a lawyer, in 1904 and moved to New York. She wrote for *Ladies’ Home Journal* and was a drama critic for *Ainslee’s Magazine*; she was named editor of the magazine *Theatre Arts* in 1918 and served in that capacity until 1946. She worked with Alain Locke to sponsor the Blondiau Theatre Arts Collection of Primitive African Art. She edited *Theatre: Essays on the Arts of the Theatre* (1928), *Plays of American Life and Fantasy* (1929), *The American Theatre in Social and Education Life: A Survey of Its Needs and Opportunities* (1932), and *Architecture for the New Theatre* (1935). Isaacs aided in the creation of the National Theater Conference in 1925 and the American National Theater and Academy (ANTA) in 1935; she also served as ANTA’s first vice president. In the mid-1930s, she was often consulted by Hallie Flanagan of the Federal Theater Project. Isaacs devoted the August 1942 issue of *Theatre Arts* to “The Negro in the American Theatre” and made this short narrative into a book of the same title in 1947. She relinquished the editorship of *Theatre Arts* to Rosamond Gilder in 1946. Isaacs died on 10 January 1956, at age seventy-seven.

STEPHEN CRINITI

See also Emperor Jones, The; Gilpin, Charles; Green Pastures, The; Locke, Alain

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Jackman, Harold

Harold Jackman, teacher, model, muse, and patron, is best known for being the best friend of poet Countee Cullen. Yet Jackman was himself a central figure of the Harlem Renaissance—though Arna Bontemps singled him out as one whose contributions to the renaissance had been ignored. Jackman had a collection of African American cultural artifacts; in addition, he was a witty and gossipy letter writer, and his correspondence with such figures as Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Nella Larsen, Zora Neale Hurston, Claude McKay, and Carl Van Vechten provides insight into his role in encouraging and supporting their literary efforts. Jackman was the physical model for the character Bryon Kasson in Van Vechten's novel *Nigger Heaven*, and he also appears in Wallace Thurman's novel *Infants of the Spring*.

Jackman met Countee Cullen in high school, and the two men remained close friends until Cullen's death in January 1946. They shared a love of theater, travel, and gossip. While Cullen was abroad, Jackman kept him and others informed of theatrical productions, literary news, and general goings-on in New York City. Their correspondence provides a context for and little-known details of many key events of the Harlem Renaissance. A discreet and humble man, Jackman was a member of Harlem's gay community. He frequented the famous Hamilton Lodge Balls, and his correspondence is filled with references, some coded, to other prominent gay men.

Jackman was active in the artistic and political communities in New York City. He directed Georgia

Douglas Johnson's play *Plumes* in June 1929, was an associate editor of Dorothy West's journal *New Challenge* in 1937, and participated in political and literary groups that continued after the Harlem Renaissance. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, he belonged to civic organizations including the Urban League and the American Theater Wing Stage Door Canteen. Jackman subsequently served as a contributing editor to *Phylon*, a literary journal published by Atlanta University (later Clark Atlanta University).

Jackman, a handsome man with prematurely gray hair, was a socialite in Harlem. He was a frequent escort of single women and was customarily king of the Urban League's Beaux Arts Ball. (The *New York Amsterdam News* reported his death with a headline on the front page: "Long Live the King!") He was also a model for Ophelia DeVore and Grace De Marco's legendary agency; he began modeling in the 1920s, appeared in advertisements in *Ebony* magazine through the late 1950s, and was featured in the historic special issue of the *Survey Graphic* (March 1925) in Winold Reiss's drawing *A College Lad*.

Jackman helped Carl Van Vechten obtain documents and other materials for the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection at Yale University. He also established what is now the Countee Cullen–Harold Jackman Memorial Collection at Clark Atlanta University, donating his own collection—including his correspondence with many well-known people—to Atlanta University. The collection, which also includes theater programs, drafts and manuscripts, sheet music, and audiotapes, has facilitated the study of African American culture.



Harold Jackman. (From "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro," *Survey Graphic*, Vol. 6, No. 6, March 1925, F128.9.N3 H3 1925. Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library, <http://etext.virginia.edu/harlem/>.)

Biography

Harold Jackman was born in England in 1901. He was raised in New York City and attended DeWitt Clinton High School, where he met Countee Cullen, who would become his close friend. Jackman earned a bachelor's degree from New York University and a master's degree from Columbia University. He was employed as a teacher by the New York City Public School System for his adult life. He was also active in the arts and politics; was a model; was an associate editor of *New Challenge* and a contributor to *Phylon*; and a correspondent with notable figures such as Langston Hughes, W. E. B. Du Bois, Gwendolyn Bennett, Dorothy West, Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, Richmond Barthé, Carl Van Vechten, and Owen Dodson. Jackman died in 1961.

JACQUELINE C. JONES

See also Barthé, Richmond; Bennett, Gwendolyn; Cullen, Countee; Homosexuality; Hughes, Langston;

Hurston, Zora Neale; *Infants of the Spring*; Johnson, Georgia Douglas; McKay, Claude; *New Challenge*; *Nigger Heaven*; *Survey Graphic*; Thurman, Wallace; Van Vechten, Carl; West, Dorothy

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Jackson, May Howard

May Howard Jackson was a proponent of racial representation in art, and her neoclassical portrait sculptures reflected the positive self-image of black Americans during the Harlem Renaissance. In technique, she is considered a traditionalist; and her style was not entirely indicative of the "New Negro," since she neither experimented widely nor looked to Africa for ancestral roots; however, her later works were more angular and abstract, hinting at modernism.

Jackson's realistic portrait busts of black American leaders captured their psychological character and were a significant departure from the stereotypes, caricatures, and exotic images of blacks that prevailed at the time. Her sitters included W. E. B. Du Bois, Paul Laurence

Dunbar, Reverend Francis J. Grimke, W. H. Lewis, Kelly Miller, and Jean Toomer. During the late 1920s, perhaps because of a lack of commissions, Jackson turned to the theme of mother and child, in *Head of a Negro Child* (1929), *Shell-Baby in Bronze* (1929), and *Mulatto Mother and Her Child* (1929). These works are more abstract and less neoclassical.

In 1895, Jackson was first black American woman to receive a scholarship at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, where her teachers included John Joseph Boyle, William Merritt Chase, and Charles Grafly. She moved to Washington, D.C., in 1902 when she married William T. Sherman Jackson. Between 1899 and 1931, she had a studio in Washington and exhibited both there and in New York. She also taught art to black children in Washington and lectured at Howard University; one of her students at Howard was the artist and art historian James A. Porter. Another notable student of Jackson's was her nephew Sargent Johnson, who lived with her at one time; their work was shown in some of the same exhibitions of the Harmon Foundation, a philanthropic organization that promoted the work of black American artists.

Jackson was occasionally mentioned in *Crisis*; was cited in Benjamin Brawley's *Women of Achievement* (1919); was praised in a poem by Georgia Douglas Johnson (1922); and was invited by Mary Beattie Brady, organizer of the Harmon Foundation exhibition in New York in 1927, to serve as a judge (although Jackson was delayed and had to view the works separately after selections had been made).

Because of her race, Jackson was denied membership in the Washington Society of Fine Arts and eventually received no further invitations to exhibit at the National Academy of Design (where her work had been included in group shows in 1916 and 1928); moreover, many people thought that her interest in the physiognomy of black people, combined with her neoclassical sculptural style, was outmoded. Nevertheless, in 1928 she received a bronze medal from the Harmon Foundation in recognition of her work as a whole. When Jackson died, Du Bois wrote in *Crisis* (October 1931) that her death was "a loss to art." He added that she had "met rebuffs in her attempts to study, and in her attempts at exhibition, in her chosen ideal of portraying the American mulatto type; with her own friends and people she faced continual doubt as to whether it was worthwhile" but that she had "accomplished enough to make her fame firm in our annals."

Biography

May Howard Jackson was born 12 May 1877 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She studied at public school and in J. Liberty-Tadd's Art School in Pennsylvania; and at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (A.B., 1895–1898, 1900–1902.) She married William T. Sherman Jackson, 1902; had a studio in Washington, D.C., 1902–1931; and was an instructor in the department of fine arts at Howard University, 1922–1924. Her awards included a scholarship to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, 1895–1899; and a bronze medal from the Harmon Foundation, 1928. She died in Long Beach, New York, 12 July 1931.

CLAUDIA HILL

See also Brawley, Benjamin; *Crisis*, The; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Dunbar, Paul Laurence; Harmon Foundation; Johnson, Georgia Douglas; Johnson, Sargent Claude; Miller, Kelly; Porter, James Amos; Toomer, Jean

Selected Exhibitions

- 1912: Verhoff's Galleries, Washington, D.C.
- 1913: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, New York.
- 1915: Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
- 1916: Verhoff's Galleries, Washington, D.C. (Individual.)
- 1916: National Academy of Design, New York.
- 1919: Verhoff's Galleries, Washington, D.C.
- 1919: Tanner Art Students Society, Washington, D.C.
- 1919: Dunbar High School, Washington, D.C.
- 1928: National Academy of Design, New York.
- 1929: Harmon Foundation, New York.

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Jazz

On 6 April 1917, the Original Dixieland Jass Band opened at the Paradise Room of Reisenweber's Café on Columbus Circle in New York City. Through these white imitators of New Orleans-style novelty bands, the term "jass" or, later, "jazz" and the music known as jazz came to New York. By 1918, the term had become common usage; for example, in World War I black regimental bands were called "jazz bands." Another common term was "hot" music, as opposed to "sweet" music. Sweet music was the music played for ballroom dancing downtown; hot music became associated with the music of Harlem. The movement from sweet to hot was a major transformation and was significant to the concepts of jazz that developed during the Harlem Renaissance.

Musical Life in Harlem

Benny Carter, the noted jazz arranger, player, and composer, moved to Harlem in 1923 when he was sixteen years old. As he later remembered, "There was music everywhere—from dusk to dawn. And I was privileged to be right in the midst of it. I was encouraged to sit in with people like Willie 'the Lion' Smith and Bill Basie, that was before he became 'Count.' If you could play passably well you were welcome, as long as the proprietor didn't have to pay you" (Berger 1992).

The musical life that Carter described was a result of several factors. One was the rapid migration of blacks from the South to New York. A second factor was segregation. The policies of segregation forced many blacks to live in the upper-northeastern part of Manhattan, the area called Harlem; also, many African American musicians were barred, because of their race, from entering music conservatories and classical musical organizations such as symphony, opera, and ballet orchestras. A third factor, related to the second, was the fact that musicians had to commute from their homes in Harlem to their work downtown in Broadway theaters, recording studios, ballrooms, and clubs. To accommodate them when they returned to Harlem late at night, "after-hours" clubs developed; these clubs proved to be the real conservatories for black musicians. Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn's "Take the 'A' Train"—"the quickest way to get to Harlem"—reflects this pattern of travel from downtown to uptown. Ellington (1973) recounted how, after playing a show downtown at the Kentucky Club, he and drummer Sonny Greer would play special requests for patrons and receive \$100 to \$200 in tips. Then they would go to Harlem and spend it all in the after-hours clubs.

The typical jazz musician of Harlem would be exposed to a variety of musical styles and would have to master them in order to make a living. This situation produced a very capable type of musician who could perform many genres but who had little time and few opportunities to develop as a soloist. In the words of one musician, "You did your 'woodshedding' before you came to New York if you were a solo jazz player." Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet, and Duke Ellington were all accomplished soloists before coming to New York.

Still, despite the overcrowded, segregated conditions and the competition among musicians for work, Willie "the Lion" Smith said, "I'd rather be a fly on a lamppost in Harlem than a millionaire anywhere else."

What Is This Thing Called Jazz?

At the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance, jazz was defined by performances and performers from the New Orleans tradition. Nick La Rocca, the leader of the Original Dixieland Jass Band, explained: "Jazz is the assassination of the melody and the slap of syncopation." Melodic decoration, instrumental timbral effects, and syncopation were among the characteristics of this style. In 1925, Eubie Blake—composer of *Shuffle*

Along (1921), the first all-black show in a Broadway theater—described the public taste as follows: “What the public wants today are lively, jazzy songs, not too jazzy, with love interest, but without the sickly sentimentality in vogue a generation ago.”

One characteristic distinguishing jazz from other music is that it is primarily a vocal style imitated by instruments. For instance, all the colors and nuances of the Negro voice were transferred into the plunger mutes of Bubber Miley’s trombone and Cootie Williams’s trumpet, into the slurs and growls of Johnny Dodds’s clarinet, and into the trap sound effects of drummers Sonny Greer and Chick Webb. Another unique timbral effect was achieved by James Reese Europe, who replaced the second violins, violas, and cellos in his Society Orchestra with banjos to give a strumming, murmuring sound. Also, because ballrooms in New York were so large, bands and orchestras had to add more brass instruments and saxophones, which produced a much larger, louder sound.

The jazz of this time had a strong, and significant, emphasis on individualism. It was not what you played but how you played it. Bill Evans, a jazz pianist of the 1970s, said of jazz history: “Jazz is not a ‘what’; it’s a ‘how’—and if you do things according to the ‘how’ of jazz, it’s jazz.” The jazz improviser became at the same time an interpreter and composer in relationship to the surrounding musicians and the listeners. Short preexisting forms such as blues and pop tunes from Tin Pan Alley formed the basis of the musical material from which the skilled jazz player could improvise.

The oral tradition provided the means of transmission for this music. It was the music heard in recordings, in after-hours clubs, and on the street that formed the ideas heard in jazz improvisations. Also, the “call and response” aspect of conversation, which came from the oral tradition, was adapted for jazz. The blues form consisting of statement, restatement, and result allows an instrumental response to the vocal music at the end of each couplet; this dialogue between soloist and accompaniment is based on call and response. Later, as the big bands emerged, call and response between the brass section and the saxophone section would become an important aspect of this type of jazz.

The “slaying of syncopation,” as described by Nick La Rocca, was also an essential ingredient in jazz. A basic dance movement in many west African communities is to lift the foot up off the ground and place it down gently; the upbeat of the African dancer

is reflected in the offbeat of the music. In European dances, the entire leg is used to give a stomping effect; thus the downbeat of the military march emphasizes the soldier’s footfall. In other words, the African dance will accent beats two and four of a four-beat pattern, allowing the lifting of the foot and leg, whereas a march will place the emphasis on the first and third beats of the pattern. This concept of syncopation, introduced in ragtime (“ragged time”), was developed in jazz to superimpose one beat pattern over another simultaneously. As Ellington expressed this: “It Don’t Mean a Thing If It Ain’t Got That Swing”—“Doo-wah, doo-wah, doo-wah, doo-wah, doo-wah, doo-wah, doo-wah, doo-wah, doo-wah.” Here, Ellington provides the call-and-response pattern but places the response in a pattern of nine over a pulse beat of eight. This throws the beat out of sync—syncopation. In this regard, too, the faster tempo of the new dances such as the fox trot and the Charleston (sixty and ninety beats per minute) seemed to reflect the hectic pace of the times.

William C. Handy, the composer of “Saint Louis Blues” and “Memphis Blues,” taking a more philosophical and social viewpoint, believed that ragtime, blues, jazz, and spirituals all “came from the same strain of Negro creation.” Alain Locke, a social philosopher, described jazz as “first a reaction from Puritan repressions and then an escape from the tensions and monotonies of machine-ridden, extroverted form of civilization” (1936). Locke also said: “Jazz is basically Negro, then, although fortunately, also human enough to be universal in appeal and expressiveness.”

The journalist Joel Augustus Rogers, of the *Amsterdam News*, wrote in 1925 that the racial component of jazz was “one part American and three parts American Negro, and was nobody’s child of the levee and the city slum. . . . It is really at home in its humble native soil wherever the modern unsophisticated Negro feels happy and sings and dances to his mood.”

Performers of Jazz and Their Influence

Among the early venues for jazz performers were “rent parties.” In the urban environment of Harlem, low wages and a lack of housing led to overcrowding—and to insufficient funds to pay landlords. One solution was the rent party, which often included a player of a “band in a box,” the parlor piano. Rent parties would begin on a weekend afternoon and last until the next morning. At first, the music was ragtime, waltzes, popular tunes, and dances. Later, a style known as

“Harlem stride” piano playing became popular. In stride piano, the left hand played a note in the bass register on the downbeat and then a chord in a higher octave on the offbeat; the right hand played syncopated melodic patterns. Talented players would often syncopate the left hand as follows: 1 2 | 1 2 | 1 1 | 2 1 | (with 1 as the bass note and 2 as the chord). James P. Johnson, Willie “the Lion” Smith, and Thomas “Fats” Waller were all stride pianists and were in demand for rent parties.

When piano rolls were cut of these performances—such as James P. Johnson’s “Carolina Stride”—a young player like Duke Ellington or Fletcher Henderson would learn to play the pieces by placing his fingers on the keys as they were depressed by the mechanical piano rolls. James Weldon Johnson observed in *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* that these pianists were “making ‘serious’ or ‘famous’ work in the Negro vein an aim of the professional career.”

Blues bands usually featured a small combo of trumpet, banjo or piano, and clarinet. W. C. Handy transported blues to New York, and specifically to Tin Pan Alley, to develop more of an urban feel instead of the rural tradition. In the early “race records,” these small ensembles would provide accompaniment and occasional solos.

Between 1921 and 1939, forty black musicals were presented in New York City. Beginning in 1921 with *Shuffle Along*, by Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle, the Broadway theaters provided opportunities for African American musicians. The typical theater orchestra had violins, flutes, oboes, saxophone, trumpets, piano, banjo, and drums; sometimes a tuba or bass would be added. In 2002, this long tradition was continued when *Harlem Song*, a black musical recalling the Harlem Renaissance, played at the Apollo Theater in Harlem. (In June of that year, President George W. Bush invited the producers of *Harlem Song* to give a performance at the White House in honor of Black Music Month.)

Although few recording companies were owned by blacks (Black Swan, for which Ethel Waters was a featured singer, was an exception), even white owners were quick to realize that they could find a large market by making “race records.” After a record of Mamie Smith singing “Crazy Blues” sold a million copies in less than a year, recording companies scrambled to record African American blues singers and instrumentalists. (Not until 1947 would *Variety* change the category “race music” or “Harlem Hit Parade” to “rhythm and blues.”) Duke Ellington said of this period,

when he was employed at the Kentucky Club: “We recorded once a week, sometimes three or four times a week, for almost every existing label under different names: Duke Ellington on Victor, Jungle Band on Brunswick, Washingtonians on Harmony, Whoopee Makers on Perfect and Harlem Foot Warmers on Okeh.”

Because of the technological limitations of the time, however, jazz was recorded in conditions that made a true representation of the music impossible. A record could hold only three minutes of music, which meant extended compositions and performances were severely curtailed. Certain instruments such as bass drums and string basses were omitted because of lack of space in the recording studios and because the acoustical range was limited. Also, the repertoire was restricted to what the owners thought they could sell. Therefore, Fletcher Henderson’s waltz medleys from the Roseland Ballroom were not recorded, nor was Fats Waller playing Chopin’s études. Nevertheless, jazz musicians were an important component of “race records.”

One important influence on jazz that is not well documented during this period is music from the Caribbean and South America, called “Latin music.” Roberts (1998) notes that more than half of James Reese Europe’s 180 musicians were listed in the Clef Club Booking Agency as Puerto Ricans. This was evidently because they had a higher level of musical skills such as sight reading and playing different styles. The “tango craze” was imported uptown; “tango teas”—at which people would dance to ragtime as well as tangos—were popular in Harlem. In both “Saint Louis Blues” and “Memphis Blues,” W. C. Handy included “habanera” sections reflecting a Cuban influence. In 1929 Juan Tizol, a Puerto Rican valve trombonist, joined the Ellington Band at the Cotton Club, where he wrote a famous piece of “jungle music” called “Caravan.” Classy nightspots usually had one band or orchestra for dancing, a second for the shows, and a third to play Latin music and particularly tangos. The musicians of Harlem also knew calypso. Okeh Records made recordings of calypso in the 1920s, and Sam Manning recorded “My Little West Indian Girl.”

Dance bands and show bands were probably the most influential aspect of jazz. In 1924, *Variety* listed 900 dance bands, with more than 7,200 musicians, in the United States. Paul Whiteman had sixty-eight bands and orchestras using his name, including eleven in New York City. The five- or six-piece New Orleans-style bands had to be increased to play in the larger clubs and ballrooms, which needed more

sound. Duke Ellington, for instance, had to increase the number of his musicians from the six who played at the Kentucky Club to the eleven who played at the larger Cotton Club in 1927. (Ellington was an exception to the usual practice of hiring musicians on a per-service basis. By establishing his orchestra at the Cotton Club, he was able to keep the same musicians in the band and could compose for their individual musical qualities.) Because the dance bands also had to play for shows, musicians who could sight-read and play in many styles were preferred. Few outstanding solo players emerged from the ranks of New York's dance bands.

Hot versus Sweet

Many of the early jazz groups were known as "hot": Louis Armstrong's Hot Five and Hot Seven, Fletcher Henderson's Hot Six, and the like. The term "hot" seemed to distinguish these groups from musical ensembles that called themselves orchestras and played more sophisticated "sweet" music. The contrast between hot and sweet is suggested in the lyrics to Duke Ellington's "Don't Mean a Thing": "Makes no difference if it's sweet or hot. Just keep that rhythm, give it all you've got!"

An anecdote about the famous Fletcher Henderson Orchestra, which played at the Roseland Ballroom downtown, illustrates this conflict. When Louis Armstrong joined the Henderson orchestra in 1924, he arrived in the middle of a rehearsal of waltzes and started playing along quite loudly. Henderson stopped the music and asked what the dynamic marking was; Armstrong replied that it was "pp." Henderson said that this meant *pianissimo*—that is, play softly. Armstrong answered that he thought it meant "pound plenty!" This story indicates not only the difference between styles but also Armstrong's limited ability to read music. Armstrong played in the New Orleans style, an oral tradition in which he had developed his skill as a soloist rather than skill in reading music.

When Henderson became the recording director for Black Swan Records, he accompanied Ethel Waters on a successful tour with his Black Swan Dance Masters. Waters complained that he wouldn't play the "damn-it-to-hell" bass lines (stride piano style) that she preferred. She bought him some piano rolls of James P. Johnson, and Henderson learned to play in Johnson's hot style.

A notable comment about the sweet style that was preferred in the downtown ballrooms and shows comes from Duke Ellington, describing the style of Paul Whiteman. Ellington said that Whiteman "dressed

her in woodwinds and strings and made a lady out of jazz." However, the hot bands could parody sweet orchestras. Fletcher Henderson recorded "Dicty Blues" in 1922, and Duke Ellington recorded "The Dicty Glide" in 1929 "Dicty" was a slang word in Harlem indicating snobbishness or "putting on airs."

A distinguishing feature of hot bands and orchestras was their ability to relate to the responses of the dancers. Duke Ellington describes this feature in discussing Chick Webb, who led the Savoy Ballroom Orchestra: "The reason why Chick Webb had such control, such command of his audience at the Savoy Ballroom, was because he was always in communication with the dancers and felt it the way they did." This was the era of dances such as the Charleston, black bottom, and lindy hop.

Another aspect of hot versus sweet music is suggested by the number of white musicians who came to the dance clubs and after-hours joints to learn hot music. Paul Whiteman, George Gershwin, Darius Milhaud, and others came to listen and incorporate this style into their own music. For example, in 1924, in a concert called "Experiment in Modern Music" at Aeolian Hall, the Paul Whiteman Orchestra presented both the premiere of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* and a piece that had become famous in a recording the Original Dixieland Jass Band, "Livery Stable Blues." Later, the Whiteman Orchestra added such white jazz performers as Bix Beiderbecke on trumpet, Jack Teagarden and Frank Teschmaker on trombone, and Eddie Lang on guitar. Gene Krupa learned much of his drumming style from Chick Webb; and Benny Goodman not only learned his clarinet licks in Harlem but he also was the first important white bandleader to hire black musicians.

Jazz and the Harlem Renaissance

The writers and philosophers who developed the idea of the "New Negro"—W. E. B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, James Weldon Johnson—had little regard for "entertainment" music. They appreciated the qualities of the "sorrow songs," the Negro spirituals as sung by Harry T. Burleigh and Roland Hayes, but they felt that blues, jazz, and jazz dance did nothing to uplift the Negro race. One writer, Samuel Floyd (1995), states: "Initially, entertainment music, including jazz, was ignored or dismissed by Renaissance leaders in favor of concert music; the blues and other folk forms (except for the Negro Spiritual, which was held in high esteem) were rejected as decadent and reminiscent of the 'Old Negro.'" Benny Carter writes: "Jazz was

viewed either ambivalently or with outright hostility by many of the leading figures of the movement. We in music knew there was much going on in literature, for example, but our worlds were far apart. We sensed that the Black cultural as well as moral leaders looked down on our music as undignified." An example of the ambivalence Carter mentions comes from the composer William Grant Still, who wrote the *Afro-American Symphony*: "Some forms of jazz are cheap, monotonous. No one can be blamed for scorning them. But there are also forms of jazz that are valuable additions to music; forms upon [which] great symphonies can be built."

By contrast, the younger literary talents of the Harlem Renaissance—Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Sterling Brown—embraced the new music and used it in their writings. Hughes wrote in one poem:

I'm going down to de river
And take me a rockin' chair
If the blues overcome me
I'm gonna' rock away from here.

Interestingly, in this poem Hughes uses an encapsulated version of the blues form by omitting the repetition of the first stanza. Benny Carter praises Hughes as "the poet laureate of the Renaissance and a man who had much respect for and understanding of this music"—that is, jazz. Hughes himself said, regarding the conflict over how to define the New Negro: "Let the blare of Negro jazz bands and bellowing voice of Bessie Smith singing Blues penetrate the closed ears of colored near-intellectuals until they listen and perhaps understand."

The Legacy of Jazz in the Harlem Renaissance

A significant development in jazz was the incorporation of the styles of ballroom and nightclub orchestras. Jazz, or some jazz, evolved from the New Orleans tradition of a small combo featuring solo players to big bands reading prepared arrangements and contrasting musical phrases between sections: brass, saxes, and rhythm. Harlem's musicians had to play in many ensembles and venues—tango tea dances, rent parties, Broadway theater orchestras, show clubs, military bands, "sweet" orchestras, and so on. As a result, a type of musician developed who could sight-read music and could play in many styles, but this often precluded the development of a personal soloistic style. Louis Armstrong came to New York as an established soloist, was acclaimed for his ability as an improviser, and was sought after for recordings; yet, in order to

play in Fletcher Henderson's dance orchestra, he had to improve his ability to read music.

A large number of retrospective art exhibitions, literary publications, theater reviews, and jazz performances have reflected the Harlem Renaissance. A number of jazz clubs around the world are named "Cotton Club"; bus tours of Harlem are offered every night in New York; and jazz is still recorded with homage to the Harlem traditions. Moreover, the eventual acceptance of jazz by the younger writers of the Harlem Renaissance assured it a place in the artistic and cultural legacy of the era.

JOHN K. GALM

See also Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man; Blues; Brown, Sterling; House-Rent Parties; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; Johnson, James Weldon; Locke, Alain; Music; Music: Bands and Orchestras; Rogers, Joel Augustus; Roseland Ballroom; Savoy Ballroom; Shuffle Along; Spirituals; *specific musicians*

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Jessye, Eva

Eva Jessye was playing the piano by the age of five and organizing singing groups by the age of twelve, already on her way to becoming the “dean of black female musicians,” as she would eventually be known. Jessye attended public schools in Coffeyville and Iola, Kansas, as well as in St. Louis and Seattle, living with various relatives. After graduating from Western University in Kansas in 1914, she spent three summers getting her teacher’s certificate at Langston University in Oklahoma. Her long career included teaching, journalism, composing, radio production, film acting, and, most notably, choral conducting. Eva Jessye is best known for her central role as choral director in two important operas of the 1930s: Virgil Thomson and Gertrude Stein’s *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1934), and George Gershwin and DuBose Heyward’s *Porgy and Bess* (1935). By the mid-1930s, Jessye’s choir was one of the preeminent black choral groups in the country, hailed for its eclectic repertoire and its full-throated sound.

The Eva Jessye Choir began as the Dixie Jubilee Singers, performing spirituals and popular songs. In 1926, Jessye moved to New York and formed the choir. The organization first worked singing “mood music” before movies began at the Rivoli Theater on Broadway. In 1926, the choir was hired for a radio show at the Capitol Theater. Jessye soon was asked to write her own radio shows, featuring her choir, now the Eva Jessye Choir, mostly performing spirituals that Jessye herself arranged. (The choir also performed in one of the first singing commercials on radio, for Van Heusen shirts.) In 1927 Jessye published *My Spirituals*, her arrangements interspersed with text describing the place of this music in her life. In 1929, her choir appeared in King Vidor’s *Hallelujah*, Hollywood’s first all-black talkie, for which she wrote some original music as well.

Although she championed black musical styles and forms, particularly spirituals, Jessye rebelled against the idea that she should produce only “black music.” She was a choral director at Morgan College in Baltimore, but she resigned in protest when its president, a white southerner, insisted that her singers perform only “their own music.” Her most notable

composition, *Paradise Lost and Regained* (1943), crosses racial boundaries by setting John Milton’s work to the sounds and styles of black spirituals in what she called a “folk oratorio.” Jessye’s choir participated in numerous events of the civil rights movement, most notably as the official choir of Martin Luther King’s March on Washington in 1963.

Jessye devoted the final decades of her long life to education. In 1972 she formed a new Eva Jessye Choir at the University of Michigan, where she organized a major archive on black musicians and entertainers. In 1979 she became an artist in residence at Pittsburg State University in Kansas, to which she contributed a large collection of her personal memorabilia. She received numerous honors and awards, including honorary doctorates from the University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University. Eva Jessye died in 1992.

Biography

Eva Jessye was born 20 January 1895 in Coffeyville, Kansas. She studied at Western University, Quindaro, Kansas; graduated in 1914; received a teaching certificate from Langston University in Oklahoma in 1917; taught in public schools in Taft, Haskell, and Muskogee, Oklahoma, in 1917–1920; directed the music program at Morgan State College in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1920–1925; was a reporter for the Baltimore *Afro-American* in 1925; joined the Dixie Jubilee Singers (later the Eva Jessye Choir) in 1926; and sang on radio in 1926–1929. She appeared in *Hallelujah* (MGM, 1929), Virgil Thomson and Gertrude Stein’s *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1934), George Gershwin and DuBose Heyward’s *Porgy and Bess* (1935), and numerous revivals including a tour sponsored by the U.S. State Department in 1952. She composed three oratorios: *Paradise Lost and Regained* (1934), *Chronicle of Job* (1936), and *The Story of the Black Wise Man* (1958). She was awarded honorary doctorates by the University of Michigan (1976) and Eastern Michigan University (1987). Jessye died on 21 February 1992 in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

CRISTINA L. RUOTOLO

See also *Four Saints in Three Acts*; *Hallelujah*; *Porgy and Bess*; *Spirituals*

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Jim Crow

In the late 1820s, a blackface minstrel performer named T. D. Rice introduced a new character he claimed to have patterned after an elderly slave he had observed while traveling in Kentucky. Rice, a white man, delighted audiences with the song-and-dance routine, the lyrics of which were:

Wheel about and turn about and do just so;
Ev'ry time I wheel about I jump Jim Crow.

By the 1830s, "Jim Crow" had become a popular term describing a particular African American stereotype: the slow-witted, clownish, deferential, contented slave. By the late nineteenth century, Jim Crow had become synonymous with the entire culture of formal and legal separation of the races that pervaded American society in both the South and the North.

Beginning during the waning days of Reconstruction, southern whites began to construct a system of legally sanctioned discrimination in which African Americans were generally prohibited from inhabiting the same physical spaces as whites and from interacting with whites on an equal basis. This segregation took place not merely in private establishments such as restaurants, stores, theaters, hotels, and nightclubs, but also in virtually all areas of public life—education, housing, employment, organized labor, religion, the armed forces, transportation, health care, and marriage law—as well as facilities such as swimming pools, parks, rest rooms, and drinking fountains.

The establishment of Jim Crow in the South testified to the social and political strength of white supremacy after the Civil War. Under the Reconstruction Act of 1867 and the Civil Rights Act of 1875, southern blacks

were formally given freedoms that had been only dreamed of during slavery: the right to participate in political and legal institutions as citizens; and the right to travel, dine, shop, and work alongside whites. Scholars have argued over the degree to which newly freed blacks were able to exercise these rights in the postwar years against the tide of white resentment and an entrenched code of deference. To whatever degree these rights and freedoms were exercised, they were short lived, as over the next three decades the integrationist gains of Reconstruction would be rolled back by powerful forces of white supremacy.

Scholars have also differed over whether Jim Crow laws merely reflected prejudices widely held among white southerners, or whether the laws were instrumental in nurturing a new and virulent ideology of white supremacy. Whatever the case, there can be little doubt that the architects of Jim Crow used the power of the law to affirm and naturalize the subordinate position of African Americans. Beginning in the 1870s with statutes enacted across the South against intermarriage between the races—whites had long considered such intermarriage an abomination—the prohibition on the physical union of black and white was soon expanded to an increasing number of social situations. The Civil Rights Act of 1875 was struck down by the Supreme Court in 1883, enabling a range of business establishments to discriminate on the basis of race. By the mid-1880s, segregated educational facilities had become mandatory by law in most southern states.

In conjunction with the relegation of African Americans to a separate social realm, Jim Crow also entailed the disenfranchisement of African American men (who had been given the vote in 1870) through various means, including poll taxes, literacy tests, intimidation, violence, and whites-only referenda. These techniques, however fraudulent and unconstitutional, proved highly effective: by 1900, registered black voters in the South had dwindled to 3 percent of the eligible population, making the possibility of remedies for African Americans through political representation more and more remote.

Jim Crow received its highest sanction in 1896, when the Supreme Court heard the case of a young Creole man who had been arrested for riding in a whites-only railway car in New Orleans. In this landmark case, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Court affirmed the constitutionality of racial segregation in public facilities and institutions, with the dubious proviso that the separate facilities for blacks were also "equal" to those reserved for whites. The ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* granted a powerful

and lasting legitimacy to Jim Crow and set a template for race relations until the mid-twentieth century. Perhaps the most egregious effect of *Plessy* was the system of separate and substandard (with a few exceptions) educational institutions for African American children, a handicap that perpetuated poverty among blacks as well as political and social inequalities.

The endorsement of segregation by the highest court in the land demoralized the opponents of Jim Crow and made resistance to its codes unlawful. Yet law was only one means of enforcing white supremacy under Jim Crow; the threat of extralegal racial violence was ever present. Transgressions of segregation laws and of Jim Crow etiquette by African Americans (and, in some cases, by whites), especially those codes prohibiting sexual contact between the races, were met with the most extreme punitive measures. According to recent estimates, more than 3,200 African Americans were victims of lynch mobs in the period from 1880 to 1930. Violence was used systematically to enforce obedience to Jim Crow and to remind African Americans of their status as “outsiders,” beyond the protections the law afforded white citizens.

Some scholars have argued that Jim Crow, despite placing African Americans at the margins of American society, also created spaces in which black culture flourished. Especially in the northern cities, where a somewhat milder form of Jim Crow was in force, African Americans made a virtue of their forced isolation from whites, cultivating self-sufficient and dynamic communities, educational institutions, newspapers, academic journals, political organizations, and artistic movements. New York’s Harlem was such a community, both a result of the social, political, and spatial conditions of Jim Crow and a refuge from them. Yet the refuge was not total, because Jim Crow still largely governed the interactions between the races in daily life even in the cosmopolitan urban centers; its powerful sway could be observed, for example, in the all-white clientele of nightclubs in Harlem, such as the famous Cotton Club, where the artists and employees were African American.

Jim Crow described the system under which, as W. E. B. Du Bois wrote, African Americans spent their lives behind a “veil,” a barrier that kept them from participating fully in American society, and that kept blacks and whites from recognizing each other’s humanity. That veil began to tear in the mid-twentieth century with the rise of the civil rights movement and its explicit challenges to white supremacy and to Jim Crow.

COTTEN SEILER

See also Cotton Club; Lynching; Minstrelsy; Nightclubs

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Johnson, Charles Spurgeon

Charles S. Johnson—along with W. E. B. Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, and Alain Locke—was an important black American promoter and patron of black essayists, graphic artists, fiction writers, and poets (both male and female) of the Harlem Renaissance.

Johnson was born, raised, and educated in Virginia. He had established himself as a major researcher and sociologist after his graduate studies at the University of Chicago from 1917 to 1918 (although he did not receive a doctorate from that university), before moving to Harlem in 1921. His reputation rested primarily on his immeasurably valuable contribution to a report by the Chicago Commission on Race Relations: *The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot*, published in 1922. This careful, detailed 672-page study, which was funded by the philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, described the underlying causes of the bloody and disastrous riot that had taken place in Chicago during the “red summer” of 1919—foremost among them the “great migration” and the subsequent dislocations that resulted from the influx of black

southern migrants in the North. The study also offered recommendations for a public policy that would prevent the recurrence of such rioting. Johnson had been appointed only associate executive secretary of the commission (the executive secretary was Graham Romeyn Taylor, the son of the "social gospel" prophet Graham Taylor); but Richard Robbins (1998) has concluded that Johnson wrote "at least seven" of the chapters in the study. The work, Robbins has also noted, "was a striking document for its time, whatever the criticism of its caution in coming to terms with the part played by the white power structure in sustaining discrimination."

Of more significance for the Harlem Renaissance is the fact that, while Johnson was enrolled in the graduate program in sociology at the University of Chicago, he was influenced by Robert E. Park, one of the nation's most distinguished students of sociology and the leading authority on race relations. From Park, as Wintz (1988) has noted, Johnson adopted the concept of the "marginal man," a concept first applied by Park's close friend and colleague at Chicago, William I. Thomas. To Johnson, the concept meant that African Americans were caught between their indigenous folk culture in the rural South and the urban industrial culture to which they migrated. Blacks were segregated and discriminated against in urban industrial areas; Johnson felt that it was essential to enhance their self-esteem by educating them about and preparing them to appreciate the distinctive value not only of their urban culture but also their indigenous folk culture. Furthermore, as Hutchinson has observed, Johnson thought that the press could nourish the "growth of a communal African American consciousness, which was a necessary stage in the development of an integrated America," as well as "create a national New Negro community" (1995, 179–180). In other words, through the revitalization of their folk culture, black Americans would be able to become more cohesive in the struggle for their inevitable integration into the American mainstream in the distant future.

In 1921, Johnson moved from Chicago to New York City, where he headed the research team of the National Urban League and founded and edited its monthly, *Opportunity: The Journal of Negro Life*, which he brought out during the years 1923–1928. Johnson was always committed to publishing articles containing political and socioeconomic data that he made accessible to sophisticated laypeople; he soon also turned to publishing essays, poetry, and short fiction by black writers who were then still unknown, such as

Countee Cullen, E. Franklin Frazier, Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, Nella Larsen, and Eric Walrond. Furthermore, during what Hurston called the "Negrotarian" phase of the Harlem Renaissance, Johnson developed a structure for *Opportunity's* literary awards, which were presented at banquets in 1925 and 1926.

Johnson left New York in 1926 to become head of the department of sociology at Fisk University in Nashville, and subsequently became its first black American president. He continued to be a vital presence in the "New Negro" movement, however, publishing what is now a classic work of the Harlem Renaissance, the anthology *Ebony and Topaz*. It contained semi-popular sociology by such experts on race and race relations as E. Franklin Frazier, Ellsworth Faris, Ira D. A. Reid, and Edward B. Reuter, and creative work by Arna Bontemps, Countee Cullen, Rudolph Fisher, Zora Neale Hurston, James Weldon Johnson, Claude McKay, and several others; it rivals Alain L. Locke's *The New Negro* as a major manifesto of the 1920s.

Johnson was admired by many writers and graphic artists who credited him with having ignited the Harlem Renaissance: Bontemps, Hughes, Hurston, and the painter Aaron Douglas praised him highly. Hughes's statement that Johnson "did more to encourage and develop Negro writers during the 1920s than anyone else in America" (quoted in Lewis 1981, 125) indicates the respect that Harlem's black intellectuals paid to Johnson. During the 1920s, few people dared to criticize Johnson publicly.

During the past three decades, however, historians such as David Levering Lewis, Cary Wintz, and George Hutchinson have subjected Johnson to critical scrutiny, especially regarding whether or not he was a proponent of art for art's sake and whether he was a pluralist or an integrationist. Lewis argues that Johnson promoted unknown black artists primarily because art, in contrast to skilled labor, offered a path to upward mobility and could be used as a "weapon against old racial stereotypes." According to Lewis, Johnson assumed that black artists could acquire a power equivalent to economic power and thereby "redeem through art . . . the standing of his people" (1981, 48). That is, for Johnson art was utilitarian: its function was to elevate black people to first-class citizenship so that they would eventually be integrated into American society.

Wintz, though, finds Johnson far more enigmatic. He believes that Johnson was enthusiastic about the work of young black artists primarily because of their



Charles S. Johnson, photographed by Bachrach. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

realistic appraisal of the black experience: "They were investigating through their literature the very issues that Johnson had identified as crucial to the understanding of the black experience through his studies in sociology and his work in the Urban League" (1988, 122). According to Wintz, Johnson saw the Harlem Renaissance as an avenue by which blacks could gain acceptance into the American mainstream. Yet, despite his preoccupation with the "political and social position" of blacks in American letters, Johnson (unlike W. E. B. Du Bois) did not advocate art as propaganda, and he supported the artistic freedom of blacks. In short, Johnson regarded black artistic expression as a means to achieve integrationist ends.

Hutchinson takes a position between Lewis's depiction of Johnson as a pluralist and Wintz's depiction of Johnson as an integrationist. Hutchinson argues that the development of a "New Negro aesthetic" was a vital part of Johnson's vision for achieving an "art for life" adequate to the needs of black Americans and also for achieving the "integration and spiritual invigoration of a pluralistic and truly American civilization" (1995, 59–60). Thus Hutchinson describes Johnson as

a proponent of a "pragmatist" aesthetic theory that sought to achieve pluralistic integration.

Despite the controversies surrounding Johnson's motivations and his theory of art, we do know that he saw art as a means of accomplishing a larger purpose: integration. After five years at the center of the artistic activities of the Harlem Renaissance, Johnson returned to the South in order, once again, to use social science to affect public policy in reference to blacks.

Biography

Charles Spurgeon Johnson was born 24 July 1893. He studied at Wayland Academy, Richmond, Virginia; Virginia Union in Richmond (A.B., 1916); and the University of Chicago (Ph.B., 1917). He was employed at the Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 1919–1921; and the National Urban League in New York, 1921–1928. He was the founder and editor of *Opportunity* in 1923–1928. He taught at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, 1928–1947; and was its president from 1947 to 1956. Johnson died on 27 October 1956.

VERNON J. WILLIAMS

See also Bontemps, Arna; Cullen, Countee; Douglas, Aaron; *Ebony and Topaz*; Fisher, Rudolph; Frazier, E. Franklin; *Great Migration*; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; Johnson, James Weldon; Larsen, Nella; McKay, Claude; National Urban League; *Opportunity*; *Opportunity Literary Contests*; *Riots: 2—Red Summer of 1919*; Walrond, Eric

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Johnson, Fenton

Fenton Johnson was born in 1888 in Chicago. He went through the public school system there and attended Chicago University. After teaching for one year, Johnson moved on to work as a writer, poet, reporter, editor, publisher, and activist. Although he was involved in the literary circles of Chicago, Johnson remained distanced from his African American peers, and his poetry also remained somewhat distant. Some critics would argue that Johnson's new poetic style linked him more directly with the emerging white poets of the time, such as Carl Sandburg. Because Johnson used dialect in his poetry, however, some critics align him with black poets such as Paul Laurence Dunbar and Claude McKay. Still others place Johnson at the vanguard of the Harlem Renaissance, or they even believe that he stands alone as a precursor or an adjunct.

Actually, because of his time, location, style, and subject matter, it is difficult to place Johnson in the period or in the movement. While in Chicago, he was removed from Harlem and the growing number of black artists who began to congregate there between the turn of the twentieth century and World War I. Yet it was during this time that Johnson published three volumes of poetry: *A Little Dreaming* (1913), *Visions of the Dusk* (1915), and *Songs of the Soil* (1916). He also published works in the magazines *Crisis* and *Poetry*. He started *The Favorite Choice*, which first appeared on 17 August 1918 as "the first and only weekly magazine published by and for colored people" and went under three years later. Johnson was the editor and writer for most if not all of *Favorite Choice*. In 1920, Johnson published a collection of short stories, *Tales of Darkest America*, and a collection of essays, *For the Highest Good*. By the time the Chicago renaissance developed and was in full stride, between 1935 and 1950, Johnson seems to have disappeared.

The focus of much of Johnson's work is the common man. Like Dunbar and McKay, Johnson wrote some verse in dialect, particularly in his third volume, *Songs of the Soil*. Yet within this collection and even more so

in the two earlier collections, Johnson wrote in a style akin to the emerging "new poetry" of the era; his style was new in its free form, with irregular rhythm and rhyme schemes, as well as in his use of plain speech. The result was his unique position relative to the emerging periods and movements. He portrays the real world in simple, direct language, and a sense of bitterness and disillusionment permeates his poetry—as is perhaps best revealed in "Tired." Johnson's sense of despair preceded that of the Harlem Renaissance. Another common theme is Ethiopia as a place of origin, or refuge, or both. Celebrating black culture, artists often incorporated different locations within Africa as the homeland or as an idyll. Johnson, whose racial consciousness is mixed with a radical and different poetic voice, demonstrates the struggle of the black artist in the early twentieth century.

Biography

Fenton Johnson was born in Chicago on 7 May 1888 and was educated in the public school system there, and at Chicago University. He taught for one year before becoming a writer, poet, reporter, editor, publisher, and activist in Chicago. Johnson died in 1958.

BROOKE CARLSON

See also Harlem Renaissance in the United States: 3—Chicago and the Midwest

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Johnson, Georgia Douglas

Georgia Douglas Johnson is often considered the first black female poet of the twentieth century, preceded in popularity only by the nineteenth-century poet Frances Harper. Of Johnson's four collections of poetry, three were published or received recognition during the Harlem Renaissance: *The Heart of a Woman and Other Poems* (1918), *Bronze: A Book of Verse* (1922), and *An Autumn Love Cycle* (1928). All three were published at Johnson's own expense, since she had been unable to obtain financial support or find a commercial publisher.

Johnson was born in Atlanta, Georgia; her father was George Camp and her mother (whose maiden name she later took) was Laura Douglas Camp. Johnson spent her early years in Rome, Georgia; after her parents separated, she moved to Atlanta with her mother. She studied at Atlanta University and later taught school for nearly a decade. She married attorney and politician Henry Lincoln Johnson on 28 September 1903; the Douglasses had two sons, Henry Lincoln Jr. (1906–c.1990) and Peter Douglas (1907–1957) before relocating to Washington, D.C., in 1910. During these "silent" years—despite the disapproval of her husband, who believed "a woman should take care of her home and her children

and be content with that" (Hull 1987, 159–160)—Georgia Johnson fine-tuned her craft, often drawing on her musical background; she wrote several poems that she sang for visiting friends, and she frequently published poems as well as children's stories in magazines such as *The Liberator*, *The Messenger*, *The Crisis*, and *Opportunity*. She also became very active socially and politically, occasionally speaking on topics concerning women and minorities.

The appointment of Henry Johnson Sr. to a four-year term as recorder of deeds by President William Howard Taft in 1912 had propelled the Johnsons into a black social elite. After her husband's death in 1925, Johnson remained socially prominent, opening her home at 1461 S Street in northwest Washington, D.C., to literary figures such as Gwendolyn Bennett, William Stanley Braithwaite, Countee Cullen, W. E. B. Du Bois, Jessie Fauset, Waldo Frank, Zona Gale, Angelina Weld Grimké, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, James Weldon Johnson, Vachel Lindsay, Alain Locke, Alice Dunbar Nelson, Richard Bruce Nugent, Anne Spencer, Wallace Thurman, and Jean Toomer; as well as to some social and political figures. During these Saturday soirées, her guests would share their most recent works. Johnson would later call her home "Half-Way House" because she considered herself "half-way between everybody and everything and I bring them together" (Shockley 1988, 350).

The years following her husband's death, although difficult for Johnson, had a liberating effect on her literary career. On the one hand, she had to assume the financial burden of maintaining a home and sending her two sons to college, which restricted the amount of time she could devote to writing. On the other hand, she had more creative freedom, since she no longer needed to contend with the silent disapproval of her spouse.

Johnson said that William Stanley Braithwaite had inspired her to write poetry; because she was influenced by him, critics have generally classified her raceless poetry as "genteel." In addition, Johnson's lyricism and her exploration of love and femininity have frequently led critics to compare her poetry to that of Sara Teasdale. By 1922, however, when Johnson published her second volume, *Bronze: A Book of Verse*, it became evident that she had been affected by the spirit of the Harlem Renaissance and its emphasis on racial consciousness.

As its title suggests, *Bronze* (unlike her first collection) exposed not the heart of all women but the heart of the "colored" woman. Johnson would later explain that

“some one said—she has no feeling for the race. So I wrote *Bronze*—it is entirely racial” (quoted in Hull 1987, 160). Present-day scholars and biographers have tended to consider this volume Johnson’s weakest, owing to its “obligatory” conception. However, critics of her time, such as W. E. B. Du Bois in his introduction to *Bronze*, commended Johnson for her “revelation of the soul struggle of the women of a race.” Nevertheless, in her third collection, *An Autumn Love Cycle*, which includes the frequently anthologized poem “I Want to Die While You Love Me,” Johnson reverted to the raceless themes she had explored in *The Heart of a Woman*. Some critics, such as Dover (1952), preferred a concentration on racial awareness and considered Johnson’s decision unfortunate; but others considered *An Autumn Love Cycle* Johnson’s strongest collection. Dover acknowledges that this volume expresses “the aching maturity of a sensitive woman in her forties” (1952, 634).

Johnson worked in other genres besides poetry. From 1926 to 1932 she wrote “Homely Philosophy,” a weekly newspaper column consisting of tidbits of wisdom; it was syndicated to some twenty Negro publications. She also wrote plays during this time, under the influence of Zona Gale (the writer to whom *An Autumn Love Cycle* is dedicated). Johnson is said to have written twenty-eight scripts, but most of these were destroyed by workers clearing away her home after her death in 1966. Johnson’s published dramas represent the social problems and themes with which she was concerned: lynching (*A Sunday Morning in the South*, c. 1925), miscegenation (*Blue Blood*, 1926), folk culture (*Plumes*, 1927), and history (*Frederick Douglass*, 1935; *William and Ellen Craft*, 1935). Johnson was an undoubtedly skillful dramatist. *Blue Blood* received honorable mention in *Opportunity*’s literary contest of 1926 and was performed later that year by the Krigwa Players of New York City; *Plumes*, her most famous play, received first prize the following year, firmly establishing her as a playwright.

Nevertheless, despite her other works, in 1950 Johnson would ask to be called the “mother of the Negro poets” (Tate 1997, xxxv). This seems appropriate, not only because of her willingness to provide a nurturing environment for budding writers, but also because of her own artistic talents and sensibilities.

Biography

Georgia Blanche Douglas Camp Johnson was born 10 September 1877 in Atlanta, Georgia. She studied at

public and private schools there and in Rome, Georgia; at Atlanta University’s Normal School, 1893; at Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio, 1902; and at Howard University, c. 1965. She taught and served as an assistant principal in the Atlanta school system, 1903; was a substitute teacher and librarian in the public schools in Washington, D.C., c. 1924; was a file clerk in the civil service, c. 1924; and was commissioner of Conciliation, Department of Labor, 1925–1934. She received an honorary doctorate from Atlanta University in 1965. Johnson died in Washington, D.C., 14 May 1966.

VERONICA ADAMS YON

See also Braithwaite, William Stanley; Harlem Renaissance in the United States: 9—Washington, D.C.; Krigwa Players; Opportunity Literary Contests; Salons; *specific literary figures*

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Johnson, Hall

Hall Johnson, along with Eva Jessye, was a pioneer in the organization and development of professional concert ensembles. His great mission was to perform African American spirituals properly and meaningfully, without pretension but with beauty and simplicity, preserving the integrity of this music as it had developed during the era of slavery. His passion was to acquaint the world with the true and distinctive quality of spirituals. The objective of the Hall Johnson choirs, under his leadership, was to demonstrate how spirituals should be sung. These choirs became the first African American choral groups to win national and international distinction, and they had considerable influence. Many outstanding white choral directors, including Robert Shaw, came to the Harlem Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) to watch Johnson's Hall rehearsals.

Johnson had been trained professionally as an instrumentalist and had a significant role, in 1923, in organizing the Negro String Quartet, for which he played violin and viola alternately. (The other members of this quartet were Arthur Boyd and Felix Weir, violins; and Marion Cumbo, cello.) Johnson also played in orchestras led by James Reese Europe, in the orchestras of various Broadway musicals, and in Will Marion Cook's Southern Syncopated Orchestra. In these orchestras, he met many important jazz musicians and classical musicians of the Harlem Renaissance period. In 1925, Johnson organized his preeminent choral ensemble, the Hall Johnson Choir; its major goal was to perform, legitimately, the spirituals and folk music of African Americans.

Johnson composed a number of original art songs, including *The Courtship* (1956); these works were sung by such professional artists as Marian Anderson and Roland Hayes. However, he is especially noted for his

arrangements of African American spirituals and folk songs, in which his intention was to honor the authenticity and beauty of the music in its original form and style. Johnson also composed several large works based on spirituals; one of these was his sacred cantata *Son of Man* (1946).

After Johnson moved to California in 1938, he organized the Festival Choir of Los Angeles, a group that was formed to sing in the film version of *The Green Pastures*. Johnson remained in California for a number of years, directing choruses in the films *Lost Horizon*, *Way Down South*, and *Cabin in the Sky*. He also organized the 200-voice Festival Choir of Los Angeles, among other community-based groups. In 1946, Johnson resettled in New York, where he organized the Festival Negro Chorus of New York.

In 1951, the State Department chose Johnson and the Hall Johnson Choir to represent the United States at the International Festival of Fine Arts in Berlin—probably the most prestigious honor to be bestowed on the ensemble. At this time the choir also made an extensive tour of major European cities. After returning to New York, Johnson inaugurated an annual concert series called "New Artists," featuring a number of promising young African Americans. Johnson died in 1970 after a long and productive career.

Biography

Francis Hall Johnson was born in Athens, Georgia, 12 March 1888. He received a B.A. degree from the University of Pennsylvania. Beginning in 1910, he played the violin professionally. He organized the Negro String Quartet (1923), the first Hall Johnson Choir (1925), the Festival Choir of Los Angeles (1938–1946), and the Festival Choir of New York (1946). He and his choir represented the United States at the International Festival of Fine Arts in Berlin (1951). His awards included two Holstein prizes (1925, 1927); the Harmon Award (1930); an honorary doctorate from the Philadelphia Academy of Music (1934); and the City of New York Handel Award (1970). Johnson died in New York City on 30 April 1970.

MALCOLM BREDA

See also Anderson, Marian; Cook, Will Marion; Europe, James Reese; Hayes, Roland; Jessye, Eva; Spirituals

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Johnson, Helene

At age eighteen, Helene Johnson won first prize in a short-story competition sponsored by the *Boston Chronicle*. In 1926 she came to New York to study journalism at Columbia University; when she arrived in Harlem, she was nineteen years old.

Johnson was one of a group of young women who came to Harlem in 1926 and 1927, including Mae Cowdery and Johnson's cousin Dorothy West, and she was acknowledged as an important voice among the emerging young poets. Particularly after her poem "Bottled" was published in *Vanity Fair* in May 1927, Johnson was lionized and was considered a peer of the most promising young writers, such as Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen. She made such a favorable impression on Wallace Thurman that, in his novel *Infants of the Spring* (1932), which was otherwise savagely cynical, he portrayed her as having real talent and a freshness and naïveté that the rest of the characters had lost. Johnson won several honorable mentions in *Opportunity's* literary contests of 1925 and 1926 and second prize in 1927. Her poetry was also published in *Fire!!*, a short-lived journal edited by Wallace Thurman, Hughes, and Richard Bruce Nugent; and in the *Anthology of Magazine Verse* edited by William Stanley Braithwaite in 1927.

In New York, Johnson was in constant company with her cousin Dorothy West. The two became close friends with the young literary circle of the time. West and Johnson would become particularly good friends

of Zora Neale Hurston, and even take over Hurston's apartment for a summer. After Cullen read "Bottled" to one of his audiences, Johnson sent him a packet of other work, writing, "you'll like them Countee, because one of them is a sonnet." Johnson, like Cullen, was deeply interested in Percy Bysshe Shelley and the Romantic poets; in Braithwaite's anthology, she listed Shelley, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Walt Whitman, and Carl Sandburg as her primary influences. Her poem "Fulfillment," in fact, ends with the poet swearing to "die bleeding—consummate with Life," a phrase that is reminiscent of the line "I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!" in Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind." Many of Johnson's other poems dwell on the beauty of nature and contrast it with the harsh reality of human society.

Despite an auspicious beginning, Johnson never lived up to her early promise. Exactly why is hard to say, in part because she shrouded her life in extreme privacy. Until her death in 1995—well after interest in the women poets of the Harlem Renaissance had been revived—Johnson resisted publicity. Biographical details about her are so scarce that even her married name was not published until 1970. We do know that after 1929 she moved out of Harlem and fell into obscurity. She was still writing, however, and around that time she sent some of her new work to Cullen, but nothing came of it. Her work next appeared in print in *Challenge*, a journal edited by Dorothy West (later *New Challenge*). But that contribution amounted to only a handful of poems which were criticized in some quarters as showing no significant development. After these publications, until her death, Johnson lapsed into public silence, although she continued to write. Her later poems, along with others from the 1920s that had not been published at the time, were collected in *This Waiting for Love* (Mitchell 2000) along with an extensive introduction.

Biography

Helene Johnson was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on 7 July 1907, and brought up in Boston, where she lived at 470 Brookline Avenue and attended the Boston Clerical School. She attended Columbia University in 1926–1927, studying journalism. She won honorable mentions and an award in *Opportunity's* literary contests in 1925–1927; her poetry was published in *Vanity Fair*, *Fire!!*, and William Stanley Braithwaite's anthology. After 1929, she left Harlem and fell into obscurity,

though her work appeared in *Challenge* and *New Challenge*. Johnson died in New York City on 6 July 1995.

STEVEN NARDI

See also *Challenge*; Cowdery, Mae Virginia; Cullen, Countee; *Fire!!*; Hurston, Zora Neale; *Infants of the Spring*; *New Challenge*; Opportunity Literary Contests; Thurman, Wallace; *Vanity Fair*; West, Dorothy

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Johnson, James P.

Although unheralded, even during his lifetime, outside a small group of jazz aficionados and performers, James P. Johnson was among the most important and versatile American musicians of the twentieth century. Johnson was an innovative and virtuosic performer of "stride," a style of piano playing that featured a vigorous left hand and lively melodies that was a foundation of jazz; a talented songwriter for musical theater during the 1920s and 1930s who wrote "The Charleston," the anthem of the jazz age; and a composer of classical works for piano and orchestra.

Johnson was exposed to a remarkable variety of music during his youth in New Jersey and New York.

He absorbed the music and culture of black migrants from the American southeast, featuring lively songs for folk dances. He also frequented clubs in New York where he heard great ragtime pianists. But Johnson listened to classical music as well, on recordings, in cafés, and at performances of the New York Symphony. While honing his phenomenal piano skills entertaining at clubs and parties during his teens, Johnson studied harmony and composition in the hope of someday writing "serious" music.

By the late 1910s, he was recognized as the dean of the New York stride pianists. Johnson's presence at a "rent party," a social event held to help tenants in need of rent money, guaranteed attendance among dancers and musicians alike. Through the release of several piano rolls beginning in 1917, Johnson's music began to attract wider attention, and his influence spread. "Carolina Shout" was introduced in this period and soon became the piece by which all other stride pianists were measured. Many young pianists, including Duke Ellington and Thomas "Fats" Waller, learned piano by slowing the action on player pianos that were performing Johnson's music and then fingering the automatically depressed keys. In 1921, Waller became a student and lifelong friend of Johnson's, thus guaranteeing that Johnson's innovations would spread to the numerous jazz musicians who performed with Waller.

During the 1920s and 1930s, although Johnson continued to develop and perform as a pianist, he expanded into new musical territory. Beginning with *Runnin' Wild*, which made "The Charleston" a national sensation, and then in *Keep Shufflin'*, his most important collaboration with Fats Waller, he emerged as one of the premier songwriters for black musical theater. He also began to explore compositions using classical forms. Among composers writing in popular idioms, Johnson was most committed to the ideal expressed by leaders of the Harlem Renaissance that African American music achieved its highest expression in orchestral, chamber, or traditional vocal compositions. With a performance at Carnegie Hall of his *Yamekraw: A Piano Rhapsody*—and with numerous concerts that included his orchestral works—Johnson fulfilled his lifelong ambition to write "serious" music.

Johnson always shunned the showmanship favored by many of his colleagues in jazz, and he worked increasingly in classical forms when most jazz musicians were moving toward swing bands; as a result, he virtually ensured his own obscurity. Yet his crucial jazz innovations, his versatility as a composer and

performer, and his influence on generations of pianists must give him a place among the leading American musicians of the twentieth century.

Biography

James Price Johnson was born 1 February 1894 in New Brunswick, New Jersey. He was educated in public schools in New Jersey and New York City; studied piano with his mother Josephine Johnson, Ernest Green, and Bruto Giannini; and studied composition with Jan Chiapusse at Toledo University, 1919. Pianists who influenced Johnson include Eubie Blake, Luckeyeth "Lucky" Roberts, and Richard "Abba Labba" McLean. Johnson had jobs as a dancer, vaudevillian, and nightclub performer in New York City and in Jersey City, Newark, and Atlantic City, New Jersey, 1912–1914; and he performed with James Reese Europe's Clef Club musicians, 1914–1920. Johnson's first published song was "Mamma's and Pappa's Blues," with his songwriting partner William Farrell, 1917; he cut piano rolls for Aeolian and other companies, 1916–1920; he made a tour of the east coast with *Smart Set Revue*, a black vaudeville show, 1918; he cut piano rolls for QRS Music, including "Carolina Shout," 1921; he was a mentor to Thomas "Fats" Waller, 1921; his first recorded performance, accompanying the singer Alice Leslie Carter on the Arto label, was in 1921; also in 1921, he made his first recording for Black Swan, "Harlem Strut"; he was musical director for *Plantation Days*, a touring revue in the United States and London, 1922–1923; he was an accompanist for singers including Eva Taylor, Spencer Williams, Bessie Smith, and Ethel Waters, 1920s; he performed at rent parties, nightclubs, and socials, 1920s–1940s; he contributed to black musicals, including *Runnin' Wild* (1923) and *Keep Shufflin'* (1928); his *Yamekraw: A Negro Rhapsody* (performed by Fats Waller) had its debut at Carnegie Hall in 1928; he performed in "From Spirituals to Swing" at Carnegie Hall in 1938 and 1939; the first performance of his blues opera, *The Organizer* (with libretto by Langston Hughes), was in 1940; "Jazzfest and Pop Concert Presenting James P. Johnson: Composer-Pianist" was presented at Carnegie Hall in 1945. Johnson was a member of ASCAP (1926). He died in New York City, 17 November 1955.

WILLIAM J. NANCARROW

See also Ellington, Duke; House-Rent Parties; Jazz; Musical Theater; Runnin' Wild; Waller, Thomas "Fats"

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Keep Shufflin'. 1928. (With Fats Waller, Andy Razaf, and Harry Creamer.)
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Johnson, James Weldon

To consider the career—or more properly the careers—of James Weldon Johnson is to throw a spotlight on someone who characteristically shunned the spotlight. Johnson was arguably the most versatile of all the figures associated with the Harlem Renaissance, and he blended quiet integrity, forceful ideas, and natural modesty. He crowded into sixty-seven years a series of remarkable achievements—as educator, lawyer, diplomat, poet, essayist, novelist, and songwriter—that would seem to require several lifetimes.

Johnson was born on 17 June 1871, the first son of Bahamians who had immigrated to Jacksonville, Florida. His mother, the former Helen Louise Dillet, was a schoolteacher who instilled in Johnson and his brother, John Rosamond Johnson, a love of learning, with special interests in reading, drawing, and music. His father, James Sr., held a secure position of middle-class respectability as the headwaiter at a resort hotel, the Saint James. Both parents were hard workers, and both were civic minded. The family was unusual compared with many southern African Americans; it was an educated, cultured, and financially secure household. In comparison with many of the writers and artists who led the Harlem Renaissance, Johnson could arguably be said to have come from a privileged background.

Such opportunities smoothed the way for future success, but it would be a mistake to think that Johnson had a path free of obstacles throughout his life. He had to contend with virulent racial prejudice; to his great credit, he made the project of eradicating it his life's work.

As a youth he attended the Stanton School in Jacksonville, a segregated institution where his mother taught and where he learned much under the demanding tutelage of its principal, James C. Walter. Johnson graduated from Stanton in 1887, at the age of sixteen, and left the area to attend the preparatory division of Atlanta University (later Atlanta Clark University), because the high schools in Jacksonville were closed to African Americans. Two years later, he graduated from the preparatory division and entered the freshman

class at Atlanta. He excelled in all his subjects, especially writing and speech. He began to write poems on African American themes (mostly dialect verse, which was the accepted mode for black poetry at the time), and in 1891 he won the university's prize for oratory for his address, "The Best Methods of Removing the Disabilities of Caste from the Negro."

The material in that speech was derived largely from Johnson's experiences during his summers when he taught school in rural Henry County, Georgia, and witnessed much that revealed to him the racial inequities in the United States—incidents that he later recalled in his autobiography, *Along This Way* (1933). The unspoken attitude of many whites on encountering "a strange Negro on a backcounty road" reminded him that he was "not entirely secure, not even in daylight." From that point on, he made it his life's philosophy that he "would not allow one prejudiced person or one million or one hundred million to blight my life. I will not let prejudice or any of its attendant humiliations and injustices bear me down to spiritual defeat. My inner life is mine, and I shall defend and maintain its integrity against all the powers of hell."

Johnson graduated from Atlanta University in 1893 with honors. Wanting to help improve the struggles and aspirations of African Americans, he returned to Jacksonville to teach at Stanton, where he took over as principal one year later. He expanded the curriculum to include high school classes, and at the same time undertook heavy additional responsibilities when he founded, in 1895, the *Daily American*, the first African American newspaper. As its editor, Johnson quickly acquired an image in the southeast as a spokesperson for African American advancement, although its particular brand of "radicalism," derived from the conservative views of Booker T. Washington (whom Johnson agreed with more than he agreed with the more liberal W. E. B. Du Bois), seems mild by today's standards. The *Daily American* failed after only a year; Johnson had tried to keep it afloat almost single handedly, and its failure gave him his "first taste of defeat in public life." But the newspaper did bring him to the attention of Washington, Du Bois, and others—connections which would later serve him well in his work as a political activist.

Undeterred, and spurred on by his strident ambition, Johnson started to study law with the encouragement of a local white attorney, and in 1898 he passed the bar, becoming the first African American in Florida to do so since Reconstruction. He continued to administer

the Stanton School and to write poetry while setting up a successful law practice in Jacksonville with a former classmate from Atlanta University.

Around this time, Johnson also began to try his hand at song writing. His brother, John Rosamond, had been a gifted musician from early boyhood and had gone to the New England Conservatory of Music. On graduation in 1897, Rosamond returned to Jacksonville, discovered that his brother had been writing poetry, and convinced him that the lyrics could be set to Rosamond's music. Their greatest composition was an early work that James Weldon Johnson had written for a celebration of Abraham Lincoln's birthday at Stanton School: "Lift Every Voice and Sing." The brothers published it and forgot it, but it lived on in the minds of Stanton's students, who taught it to other students throughout the South; some twenty years later, it was officially adopted by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) as the "Negro national anthem."

Their collaborative talents took the brothers out of Jacksonville and up to New York, where, at the turn of the century, they teamed with Bob Cole, a talented musician, to form a songwriting and producing trio. James Weldon worked in the background, supplying lyrics. Cole and Rosamond put together vaudeville material, which they performed onstage as "Cole and Johnson," placing them in the company of entertainers such as Will Marion Cook and Williams and Walker.

The Johnsons and Cole were enviably energetic and stunningly successful. Between 1901 and 1905, they composed some 200 songs for musical productions on Broadway and elsewhere. Their goal was to make the lyrics of Negro songs more sophisticated. The team's first collaboration was "Louisiana Lize," a love song written in a new lyrical style "which left out the watermelons, razors, and hot mamas typical of coon songs." For \$50, they sold the singing rights to a popular white entertainer, May Irwin, who was known as a performer of coon songs. Irwin used it in her next show, *The Belle of Bridgeport*. Its success encouraged the team to experiment a bit, and they developed a successful method of collaboration in which they took turns writing words, composing melodies, and critiquing works in progress.

Under an exclusive three-year contract with the Broadway producers Klaw and Erlanger, the trio turned out many such songs, including such hits as "The Congo Love Song," "I've Got Troubles of My Own," "Tell Me, Dusky Maiden," "The Old Flag Never Touched the Ground," and "Oh, Didn't He Ramble."

Probably the most famous of these tunes was "Under the Bamboo Tree," which according to Rosamond had its origins in an unusual incident. He and Cole were walking uptown after a performance one day when he began to hum the African American spiritual "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen." Hearing the song, Cole got the idea of rearranging it and working it into their act. When Rosamond objected that this was sacrilegious, Cole responded, "What kind of a musician are you anyway? Been to the Boston Conservatory and can't change a little old tune around." By the time Rosamond finally conceded, Cole had already written the words. "Under the Bamboo Tree" sold more than 400,000 copies, making it one of the biggest sellers ever. With James Weldon Johnson as their manager, the trio toured throughout the United States and also performed in Paris and London. Legend has it that "Under the Bamboo Tree" was the last thing they heard as they set sail from New York and the first thing they heard when they arrived in Paris.

Following their successful tour, Cole and Rosamond Johnson started their own theatrical company. In 1906, they produced and starred in a musical called *The Shoo-Fly Regiment*. After helping to write the songs for this show, James Weldon Johnson decided that it would be the last piece of work they would do together. Their song writing had been lucrative, netting them more than \$25,000 a year in salary and royalties, but, as Johnson later reflected, "Success is a heady beverage" and "is safe only when it comes slowly." Their prosperity had been sudden, and Johnson had begun to feel that he was forsaking his avowed life's goal of helping to advance the ambitions of the race. He also found distasteful the tradition of the coon song within which he had to work as a writer, and even the dialect poetry he had earlier begun now seemed to him an inadequate form for expressing what he felt in his heart and thought in his mind. He had recently read Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855), and he saw that his own earlier poems had relied on white stereotypes of the African American.

Johnson had accelerated his study of literature beginning in 1904, when he started to take courses in creative writing at Columbia University taught by Brander Matthews, the well-known critic and anthologist. At this time an idea for a novel began to gestate in Johnson's mind, an innovative statement on African American identity that would lay to rest much of the white-generated writing about black life of the nineteenth century. While he was working with Bob Cole and Rosamond, however, Johnson did not have the

time to devote to the book; he shelved the idea until 1906, when he left the trio to enter the diplomatic service.

For some time, Johnson had been active in New York political circles. He had become treasurer of the city's Colored Republic Club in 1904. He had also become friends with Charles W. Anderson, the most influential black Republican in the city, who was in turn a close friend of Booker T. Washington. When the black civil rights leadership split into conservative and radical factions, Johnson backed Washington, who used his connections to have the Theodore Roosevelt administration appoint Johnson as the U. S. consul in Puerto Caballo, Venezuela. Such posts had often gone to writers, and traditionally they were considered little more than sinecures that gave the writer time to reflect and work on writing.

In 1909 Johnson assumed his post in South America, where he expected to have time to work on his book; his duties turned out to be unusually demanding, however, and he could not finish the book until 1911, after a year's leave of absence. *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, published anonymously in 1912, is arguably the central text of the Harlem Renaissance and by most reckonings one of the dozen key documents that best reflect the American experience. It tells the story of a light-skinned black man who drifts rather aimlessly throughout the South, then to New York, where he becomes involved with gambling and playing ragtime piano. Eventually he is "adopted" by a wealthy white man who takes him to Europe and broadens his musical abilities. On returning to the United States, the protagonist samples the life of the black middle class in different cities on the eastern seaboard, ending up in rural Georgia; after witnessing a lynching, he decides to return to the North and pass for white. The novel is a complex psychological portrait of a weak, self-indulgent man who is alienated by both races and ultimately succumbs to and is victimized by the racist values of American society. The novel created a stir in intellectual circles in New York, but Johnson did not admit that he was its author until 1927, when it was republished. Even then, after a well-documented public career, Johnson had to deny that the novel was based on his own life, and in fact he published *Along This Way* in part to set the record straight.

On leave in 1910, Johnson married Grace Nail, the daughter of a prosperous businessman in Brooklyn. He also took up a new consular post in Nicaragua, another difficult diplomatic assignment. In 1912, after much political turmoil in Nicaragua, U. S. troops landed

at Corinto in response to an assassination and an attempted coup. When Woodrow Wilson, a Democrat, became president in 1914, Johnson resigned from the foreign service, citing race prejudice and the likelihood that party politics would bar him from securing a desirable new post.

Thus began the most famous and personally rewarding phase of Johnson's multifaceted public life: politics. He returned to New York to become an editorial writer for *New York Age*, the city's oldest and most distinguished black newspaper. Johnson's editorials were fiery and passionate, but they also reflected his basically conservative view that African Americans could improve their lot through self-education, hard work, and many of the middle-class white values that were the cultural norm.

In the summer of 1916, Joel E. Spingarn asked Johnson to attend the important Amenia Conference on racial issues, and a few months later Spingarn asked Johnson to become field secretary for NAACP, which had been organized in 1910 by blacks and whites in order to break down racial barriers. Johnson proved to be an immensely efficient administrator and an effective spokesperson for NAACP's platform. He organized local branches throughout the country and expanded the membership substantially. During his early tenure, he monitored and responded to the riots in East St. Louis, where 6,000 African Americans were driven from their homes; atrocities against black soldiers in World War I; the great Fifth Avenue March for civil rights; and the bloody race riots in Chicago and elsewhere during the "red summer" of 1919. The following year he went on an investigatory trip to Haiti and exposed the abuses of the American occupation there in a series of articles for *The Nation*.

The year 1920 also saw Johnson assume the role that destiny had seemed to carve out for him—general secretary, or chief executive, of NAACP. With typical modesty, Johnson claimed in his autobiography that he "got immense satisfaction" out of his work for NAACP, yet that understates his achievements by great lengths. In fact, it is difficult to single out for special mention one event that he orchestrated or one advance that was gained, so numerous were the organization's accomplishments during the decade when Johnson steered its course. Probably the most dramatic episode, though, was the attempt to get Congress to pass the Dyer antilynching bill in the summer of 1921, a measure behind which Johnson had placed the full force of NAACP and for which he had personally lobbied in the halls of the Capitol, literally camping out on the

benches in front of senators' offices to wait for a chance to speak in its favor. The bill was defeated, but the campaign for its passage nevertheless brought the nation's attention to the issue of race prejudice as never before.

Throughout his years of political activism, Johnson was determined not to let his creative muscles atrophy, and he produced much literary work in the 1920s. For instance, he compiled three important anthologies of African American literature: *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922), *The Book of American Negro Spirituals* (1925), and *The Second Book of American Negro Spirituals* (1926). He also brought out a series of collections of verse, culminating with *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* in 1927. The book is a paean to the soulful richness of black Christianity—ironically so, since Johnson himself professed no religious faith except an optimistic dream of man's humanity to his fellow man and an acknowledgment of an unknowable spiritual presence permeating the material world.

Fatigued by his work in the political arena, Johnson left in 1930 to accept an appointment as a professor of creative writing at Fisk University, a position that gave him time to complete two more prose works: *Black Manhattan* (1930), a copiously researched but lively and engaging history of the African American presence in New York; and his autobiography, *Along This Way* (1933), a book of which John Hope Franklin has said, "It is impossible to understand the place of African Americans in the life of this country without *Along This Way*." The following year, some of the positions Johnson presented on race and politics in the autobiography were outlined in a slim volume called *Negro Americans, What Now?* At this time, he moved back to New York to become a professor of literature at New York University, where he remained until his death in an automobile accident in Maine in June 1938.

More than 2,500 people, black and white, filled the largest church in Harlem to attend Johnson's funeral, where, for more than an hour, a succession of the brightest and most celebrated figures of the era extolled his achievements. Even these eulogies seem inadequate, for Johnson lived so full a life, touching so many other people and influencing their thoughts and actions, that it may not be possible to gauge the degree to which he guided African Americans' awareness of their identity and of their place in American society. His greatest legacy may be that he lives on, not just in the histories of the NAACP, in the biographies of its members, or in the anthologies of African American literature, but in an unusually large number of books



James Weldon Johnson, c. 1900–1920. (Library of Congress.)

for children and adolescents that tell of a life grounded in the bedrock of unwavering moral principle. In the words of another African American writer, Johnson symbolized what it meant "to be gifted, young, and black. We must begin to tell our young, there's a world waiting for you, yours is the quest that's just begun."

Biography

James Weldon Johnson was born in Jacksonville, Florida, 17 June 1871; his parents were James and Helen Louise Dillet Johnson. He studied at Stanton School; received an A.B. from Atlanta University, 1894; and did further study at Columbia University, 1903–1906. He was principal at Stanton School, 1893–1900. Johnson was founder and editor of the *Daily American*, 1895–1896. He received an honorary A.M. from Atlanta University, 1904. Johnson was U. S. consul to Venezuela, 1906–1908; and consul to Corinto, Nicaragua, 1909–1912. He married Grace Nail, 10 February 1910. He was a field secretary for the

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), 1916–1920; and its general secretary, 1920–1930. His awards included the following: Litt. D., Talladega College, 1917; Litt.D., Howard University, 1923; Spingarn Medal, 1925; Rosenwald Grant, 1929; an appointment as professor of creative writing, Fisk University, 1930; W. E. B. Du Bois Prize for Negro Literature, 1933; and Lewis Carroll Shelf Award for "Lift Every Voice and Sing," 1971. Johnson died in Wiscasset, Maine, 26 June 1938.

JAMES HUTCHISSON

See also Amenia Conference, 1916; Anderson, Charles; Antilynching Crusade; Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man; Black Manhattan; Cole, Bob; God's Trombones; Johnson, John Rosamond; New York Age; Spingarn, Joel

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Johnson, John Arthur "Jack"

Jack Johnson was the first black man to win the world heavyweight boxing championship and is considered by many boxing enthusiasts to be the greatest heavyweight boxer of all time. More than a boxing legend, he symbolized open defiance to the unjust social order evident during the first half of the twentieth century.

Johnson was born into the first generation of free blacks in the United States. His father, a former slave, provided for the family admirably despite the limited opportunities afforded in Galveston, Texas. Galveston was an economically challenged city devastated by natural disaster and living under the yoke of the Jim Crow system. Essentially raised in poverty and with little formal education, Johnson turned to fighting as a means to transcend his constricted circumstances. He began fighting in degrading battle royals, which customarily featured numerous blacks against one another in a free-for-all to entertain white spectators. Around 1897, he began fighting professionally, experienced modest success, and earned a modest living.

By 1903, Johnson had developed as a boxer, winning the Negro heavyweight title from Denver Ed Martin in Los Angeles, in a twenty-round decision. He then focused on the world heavyweight champion, James J. Jeffries; but Jeffries, a white man, adhered to the established color line in professional fighting, which discouraged whites from fighting blacks. This was an age of prevalent racism, and blacks in the boxing world—like blacks in the larger society—were perceived by whites as inferior. As a result, Johnson's attempts to win the world heavyweight championship were frustrated. Circumstances changed, however, when Jeffries retired in 1904, amid a general lack of interest in boxing; the championship subsequently passed to other white boxers, first to Marvin Hart and then to Tommy Burns.

Burns, facing the problem of a declining sport, agreed to fight Johnson in 1908. The fight, which took place in Sydney, Australia, was stopped in the fourteenth round after Johnson had thoroughly punished the outmatched Burns. The color line had been broken, and a determined black man was the world heavyweight champion. White fans and sports commentators

reacted to Johnson's victory by attempting to discount its significance, saying that boxing had deteriorated in recent years and that the best boxers were retired. But Johnson remained undaunted by the negative press, as was evident in his increasingly brazen attitude. When asked about the fight, Johnson discussed his opponent's athletic inferiority instead of offering the traditional commendation. Johnson was resolved, through his actions and his words, to defy American boxing as well as social etiquette. This was unsettling to the white community, which reacted with contempt for the new champion and demanded a match in which Johnson would be defeated and, presumably, the pseudoscientific theory of social Darwinism would be vindicated.

James J. Jeffries was called out of retirement as the "great white hope" to defeat and silence Johnson. Despite the protests of progressive reformers and the usual controversy surrounding a fight between a white and a black man, the match was held in Reno, Nevada, in 1910. Jeffries, previously undefeated, was the betting favorite; as the fight developed, however, it was apparent that he was outclassed. Moreover, Johnson demonstrated that he was more interested in humiliating Jeffries than in simply defeating him. He savored his victory as he physically punished and verbally taunted the helpless Jeffries. After Johnson had knocked Jeffries down three times in the fourteenth round (before this match, Jeffries had never been knocked down at all), the fight was stopped and Johnson retained his championship. The black community largely perceived Johnson's victory as a victory for all blacks; the white community reacted with malevolence and disdain, exasperated not only by the notion that a black man was the undisputed world champion but also by Johnson's arrogance. As a result, incidents of rioting and racial violence against blacks (including some murders) took place in many parts of the United States.

Johnson's lifestyle outside the ring further enraged whites. He was a wealthy entrepreneur who owned a prosperous nightclub, the Café de Champion in Chicago; he was also an egotist who flaunted his money, wearing flashy clothes and enjoying the high-life. The most intense controversy was centered on his public relationships with numerous white women at a time when miscegenation was considered taboo. Aside from the white girlfriends and prostitutes with whom he surrounded himself, Johnson married three white women: Etta Terry Duryea in 1911, Lucille Cameron in 1913, and Irene Marie Pineau in 1924. Even as he challenged white America, however, he

realized that he was not immune to the nation's deep-seated racism.

White America, unable to defeat Johnson in the boxing ring, sought to defeat him through the judicial system. He was charged with violating the Mann Act, an outdated and infrequently applied federal law that prohibited the transportation of women across state lines for immoral purposes. In 1913, after a trial before twelve white male jurors, Johnson was found guilty, fined, and sentenced to a prison term of a year and a day. Rather than be imprisoned, he decided to flee the United States.

In exile, Johnson traveled through Europe, where he continued to fight. However, he encountered numerous difficulties including proposals to strip him of his title, financial troubles, and racism. In 1915, he journeyed to Cuba to defend his title against a white American, Jess Willard. In a match that is still controversial, Willard knocked Johnson out in the



Jack Johnson, c. 1910. (Library of Congress.)

twenty-sixth round. Johnson, no longer the heavy-weight champion, continued boxing in Spain and then in Mexico. In 1920, he returned to the United States, where he was arrested and imprisoned for his earlier conviction.

After serving his prison term, Johnson returned to boxing, but his best years were behind him. He fought his last professional match in 1928. After that, he participated in exhibition matches and also did some acting, managing to earn a humble living. In 1946, Johnson died in a car crash near Raleigh, North Carolina.

Biography

John Arthur ("Jack") Johnson was born 31 March 1878 in Galveston, Texas. He had a limited elementary school education. He began professional boxing in 1897; won the Negro heavyweight boxing championship title from Denver Ed Martin on 3 February 1903; won the world heavyweight championship from Tommy Burns in December of 1908; defended the world heavyweight championship against James J. Jeffries on 4 July 1910; and lost the world heavyweight championship to Jess Willard on 5 April 1915. Johnson died near Raleigh, North Carolina, on 10 June 1946. He was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1954 and into the World Boxing Hall of Fame in 1980.

JOHN MARINO

See also Professional Sports and Black Athletes

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Johnson, John Rosamond

John Rosamond Johnson was one of the most prolific composers and musicians of the early twentieth century and the Harlem Renaissance. He composed "Lift Every Voice and Sing" (the "Negro national anthem," 1900) and was also a successful arranger and vaudevillian. Rosamond changed the face of early black theater and was not only the first black composer to be signed by a white music company on Broadway (Joseph W. Stern, 1901) but also the first to compose music for white Broadway shows and conduct an all-white orchestra. He was among those who awakened interest in spirituals; he made arrangements of spirituals and published two volumes of these songs. Johnson studied for six years at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston and was influenced by the nationalist composer Antonín Dvořák, who was then dean of the conservatory; Dvořák inspired Johnson's interest in black folk and popular traditions. As one of the few conservatory-trained musicians of the Harlem Renaissance, Johnson brought substance, style, and uniqueness to its music.

Johnson was introduced to musical theater in 1896, when he toured with John Isham's *Oriental America*; Isham had specifically recruited him because of his classical training and his familiarity with black popular rhythms. In 1897, Jackson returned to his hometown, Jacksonville, Florida, and began to give private piano lessons; he was also appointed music supervisor for the Jacksonville public schools. During that period Johnson (as composer) and his brother, James Weldon Johnson (as lyricist), wrote their first opera, *Toloso*. This was the beginning of a collaboration that would have a strong influence on musical theater. During the summer of 1899, the Johnson brothers traveled to New York and met some members of the black elite there: Harry Burleigh, Will Marion Cook, Paul Laurence Dunbar, George Walker, and Bert Williams—as well as Bob Cole, with whom they soon formed an alliance. On their return to Jacksonville, the brothers wrote "Lift Every Voice and Sing" to be sung by schoolchildren for a celebration of Abraham Lincoln's birthday in February 1900. The song became popular in schools throughout Jacksonville; was distributed as handwritten copies; was sung in black churches and schools, at graduation ceremonies, and at meetings of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) across the nation. By the 1920s it was being recognized as the "Negro national anthem." It was finally published by the Edward B. Marks Company in 1921.

In 1900 the Johnson brothers returned to New York, where they worked with Bob Cole. With John Rosamond Johnson as composer, James Weldon Johnson as lyricist, and Cole as arranger, they wrote four songs for the show *Belle of Bridgeport* and one for the show *Rogers Brothers in Central Park*. These songs began to earn them a reputation. In 1901—because of this initial success and also because a fire had devastated the Stanton School, where they had worked in Jacksonville—the Johnsons decided to move to Harlem. Rosamond and Bob Cole completed the musical *Cannibal King*, with a libretto by Paul Laurence Dunbar, and they continued to gain popularity in the theatrical community. Their musical style, with its syncopation, its sophistication, and its varied use of dialect, became so popular that they took a collection of songs to the publisher Joseph Stern, who signed a three-year contract with them. This arrangement, the first for any black composers, established their professional career. The two Johnsons and Cole began contributing songs to Broadway musicals such as *Sleeping Beauty and the Beast*; and in 1902 Rosamond composed one of their biggest hits, “Under the Bamboo Tree,” for the musical *Sally in Our Alley*. Its funny, catchy style and lyrics initiated a new type of popular music.

Also in 1902, John Rosamond Johnson and Bob Cole formed a vaudeville duo that soon became renowned as a “class act” because of their sophisticated charm and their avoidance of buffoonery. Johnson would often interject classical themes and art songs into their syncopated dance tunes, and he and Cole gradually overcame the image of the black minstrel entertainer and created a new image for future black performers. By 1903 they had become the hottest duo on Broadway. They enhanced their reputation with songs for the popular Broadway musicals *Mother Goose* and *Humpty Dumpty*.

In 1906 Johnson and Cole composed and performed their own first show, *The Shoo-Fly Regiment*, which included one of Johnson’s best songs, “L’il Gal,” based on a poem by Dunbar. After touring in the west and midwest with modest success, the show opened on Broadway on 3 June 1907, but it was unsuccessful there, evidently because Johnson and Cole were out of their usual element and because their show, unlike their songs, lacked the financial support and advertising that their publishers usually provided.

In their next show, *Red Moon*, based on an Indian theme, Johnson had his first stage role as a comedic actor. The show began in Delaware in 1908 and traveled throughout the northeast and midwest before

coming to the Majestic Theater in New York in 1909. As a result of the financial hardships, the strenuous schedule, and the numerous setbacks of the touring season, Cole suffered a mental and physical breakdown; he died on 2 August 1911 in a boardinghouse in the Catskills, New York.

Johnson formed another vaudeville act, with Dan Avery and Charles Hart, and this trio became part of a revue in London in 1912. Oscar Hammerstein appointed Johnson as musical director of the London Grand Opera House; Johnson remained in England for two years. When he returned to New York in 1914, Johnson became the founder and music director of the Harlem Music School Settlement for Colored People. During World War I, he served as a second lieutenant with the National Guard’s Fifteenth Infantry. He returned to his musical and theatrical career in the 1920s, focusing more on black themes. His most notable contribution was *The Book of American Spirituals* in 1925, followed by *The Second Book of American Spirituals* in 1926. He had composed the arrangements, and James Weldon Johnson had provided the historical and musicological background, as well as an introductory preface.

Johnson turned to film in 1929, as conductor of a forty-voice choir for *Saint Louis Blues*, starring Bessie Smith. In 1933 he wrote the score for the film version of *The Emperor Jones*, starring Paul Robeson; this film was the first with a score by a black composer. Johnson continued to write songs for Broadway shows in the 1930s but primarily concentrated on collecting and arranging spirituals. In 1928 he appeared in a revue, *American*, which ran briefly; and in 1935 he acted in



Left to right: Bob Cole, James Weldon Johnson, and J. Rosamond Johnson, 1900s. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

the original production of *Porgy and Bess*, as “Lawyer Frazier.” His last role as an actor was in 1940, in the film *Cabin in the Sky*, starring Ethel Waters.

Biography

John Rosamond Johnson was born 11 August 1873 in Jacksonville, Florida. His parents were well educated and encouraged him and his brother, James Weldon Johnson, to read and study music. His father was a headwaiter at the Saint James hotel in Jacksonville and later became pastor of the Ebenezer Methodist Church; his mother was the first black woman to teach in a public school in Florida and was his first piano teacher. Johnson studied at the Stanton School in Florida and the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, 1890–1896. He was music supervisor of the Jacksonville public schools, 1897–1901; musical director of London’s Grand Opera House, 1912 (he married his childhood sweetheart, Nora Floyd, during his stay in London); musical director of the Harlem Music School Settlement for Colored People, 1914; and a second lieutenant in the National Guard’s Fifteenth Infantry in World War I. After the war he returned to his musical career, focusing on spirituals and eventually working in films. Johnson died in Harlem, 11 November 1954.

BRENDA ELLIS

See also Cole, Bob; Dunbar, Paul Laurence; Emperor Jones, The; Fifteenth Infantry; Johnson, James Weldon; Musical Theater; *Porgy and Bess*; Saint Louis Blues; Spirituals

Selected Works

Toloso. 1898.

“Louisiana Lize.” 1899.

“Lift Every Voice and Sing.” 1900.

“Under the Bamboo Tree.” 1901.

The Shoo-Fly Regiment. 1906.

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Johnson, Malvin Gray

In his short life, Malvin Gray Johnson, usually called Gray, became one of several artists whose work reflects the complexities of the Harlem Renaissance at its pinnacle. Johnson’s range of subjects was wide and included portraits and figures, Harlem street life, African American folklore, and Negro spirituals. His modernist-inspired style was characterized by vigorous brushwork, intense areas of color, flattened and angular forms, and a lack of painterly finish. His work has the subtlety, charm, and sensitivity of his African American contemporaries in the early years of the Harlem Renaissance. Along with Aaron Douglas, William H. Johnson, and Hale Woodruff, Johnson was among the numerous painters and sculptors of the early 1930s who created a truly African American art by combining the basics of early modern styles with distinctly African American subjects, themes, and concerns.

Johnson was born in 1896 in Greensboro, North Carolina. He moved to New York City as a young man and studied at the National Academy of Design with Francis Coates Jones in the 1920s. In order to survive financially, he worked as a commercial artist and did various menial chores. He first gained widespread recognition when, in 1929, he received the Otto H. Kahn Prize from the Harmon Foundation for his painting *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*, which was reproduced on the cover of *Crisis* in February 1929.

In the next five years, Johnson built his reputation with many paintings of his typical themes. In 1933 he painted murals for the Public Works of Art Projects

(PWAP). Critics responded to his works in various ways. While some admired the authenticity and sincerity with which he explored African American subjects, others disliked his quick, loose handling of paint and his modernist sensibility.

Johnson's finest portraits include his late *Self-Portrait, Postman*, and *Negro Soldier*, all from 1934. In the *Self-Portrait*, two African masks are seen behind the painter; they reflect his own countenance and allude to his African heritage at a time when this rediscovery was a broad concern of African American artists in the wake of the New Negro movement. In contrast, *Postman* is much less expressively curvilinear and more cubist in the description of forms. *The Old Mill* of 1934 is a vigorously painted cubist scene of rural industry. His *Negro Masks* is a sharply angular, dark-toned cubist still life of African tribal masks, a theme that African American artists of the era sometimes explored. Johnson's most compelling scenes of African American history and folklore include *Roll Jordan, Roll* (1930).

Johnson died suddenly at the age of thirty-eight, at the height of his career.

Biography

Malvin Gray Johnson was born 28 January 1896, in Greensboro, North Carolina. He studied at the National Academy of Design, New York City. He was awarded the Otto H. Kahn Prize, Harmon Foundation, New York, 1929, and was a member of the Society of Independent Artists. Johnson died 4 October 1934.

HERBERT R. HARTEL JR.

See also Crisis, The; Douglas, Aaron; Harmon Foundation; Johnson, William H.; Woodruff, Hale

Exhibitions

- 1928–1933, 1935: Harmon Foundation, New York City.
- 1934: Nicholas Roerich Museum, New York City.
- 1934: Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
- 1935: New Jersey State Museum, Trenton.
- 1936: Texas Centennial Exhibition, Museum of Fine Arts, Dallas.
- 1939: Baltimore Museum of Art.
- 1940: American Negro Exposition, Chicago.
- 1940: Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
- 1943: Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston.

1971: Newark Museum, Newark, N.J.

1976: Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

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Johnson, Noble

Noble Johnson was one of the most successful black supporting actors in Hollywood during the silent-film era and remained an important figure in film throughout his career. His career extended from 1914, when he filled in for an injured actor in a film produced by the Lubin Company, to 1950, when he appeared in *North of the Great Divide* as a Native American chief. During the 1920s—the period of the Harlem Renaissance—Johnson appeared in at least forty-five films. He officially retired in 1950, though he appeared again in an unmemorable black-and-white television movie, *Lost Island of Kioga*, in 1966. Johnson—who was 6 feet 2 inches tall, weighed more than 200 pounds, and was light skinned—is best known for playing formidable nonwhite characters, including Native Americans, Egyptians, Mexicans, and generic “exotics” (such as the chief on Skull Island in *King Kong* in 1933). Rarely did he have a role as an African American.

Johnson was raised on his father's ranch in Colorado Springs, where he trained race horses. He left in 1896 and traveled extensively in the American west, working as a cook and a cowboy, before involving himself with motion pictures with the Lubin Company on his return to Colorado Springs. During the next ten years,

Johnson established himself as a bit actor with Universal Studios. In 1916, Johnson joined with his brother, George P. Johnson, and the actor Clarence Brooks to form the Lincoln Motion Picture Company (incorporated 1917), the first black-financed film company dedicated to producing all-black films. Noble Johnson was its (unsalaried) president and ran the studio in Los Angeles; George Johnson controlled marketing and distribution in Omaha, where he held a full-time job with the post office. The Lincoln Motion Picture Company produced three films—*The Realization of a Negro's Ambition* (1916), *A Trooper of Troop K* (1917), and *The Law of Nature* (1918)—all starring Noble Johnson, before Universal demanded that Noble Johnson discontinue his association with Lincoln to avoid a conflict of interest. Primarily, Universal feared Johnson's successes in acting with Lincoln and wanted him to discontinue race films. Rather than lose his secure career at Universal for the instability of a fledgling company, Johnson resigned from Lincoln in September 1918. Clarence Brooks succeeded him as Lincoln's president; in 1923, after only seven films, the company folded because of financial difficulties.

Johnson, sometimes billed in the black press as "the race's daredevil movie star," was consistently given roles commensurate with his stature. He remained apart from the demeaning stereotyped roles to which black actors were usually relegated; rather, he presented to African American moviegoers an image of power and professional success. The *Chicago Whip* declared in 1919, "Johnson is a fair actor . . . and we trust he some day will be allowed to play a stellar role" (Bowser and Spence 2000, 235). As it happened, Johnson's only leading roles were in his own pictures with Lincoln. Although he appeared in numerous films and played some significant characters, such as Uncle Tom in *Topsy and Eva* (1927) and Queequeg in *Moby Dick* (1930), his career at Universal never included any major roles. His success lay more in the sheer volume of his films.

Biography

Noble Johnson was born 18 April 1881 and was raised on his father's ranch in Colorado Springs. He left Colorado Springs in 1896, traveled in the West, and then returned to Colorado Springs and joined the Lubin Company. He became a bit actor with Universal Studios, formed the Lincoln Motion Picture Company with his brother George P. Johnson and Clarence

Brooks in 1916, and (under pressure from Universal) resigned from Lincoln in 1918. During the 1920s and later he appeared in many films. The date of Johnson's death is unknown.

DAN MOOS

See also Brooks, Clarence; Film; Film: Actors; Film: Black Filmmakers; Lincoln Motion Picture Company; Race Films

Selected Filmography

- The Eagle's Nest*. 1915. (As a stagecoach driver and an Indian.)
The Realization of a Negro's Ambition. 1916.
Intolerance. 1916. (As a chariot driver.)
A Trooper of Troop K. 1917.
The Law of Nature. 1918.
The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. 1921. (As Conquest, uncredited.)
Tracks. 1922. (As Leon Serrano and also wrote the scenario.)
The Loaded Door. 1922. (As Blackie Lopez.)
The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe. 1922. (As Friday.)
The Ten Commandments. 1923. (As the Bronze Man in prologue.)
The King of Kings. 1927. (As a chariot driver.)
Vanity. 1927. (As a ship's cook.)
Topsy and Eva. 1927. (As Uncle Tom.)
The Mysterious Dr. Fu Manchu. 1929. (As Li Po.)
Moby Dick. 1930. (As Queequeg.)
Murders in the Rue Morgue. 1932. (As Janos.)
The Mummy. 1932. (As the Nubian.)
King Kong. 1933. (As a native chief.)
The Son of Kong. 1933. (As a native chief, uncredited.)
Dante's Inferno. 1935. (As Devil, uncredited.)
The Plainsman. 1936. (As Indian, uncredited.)
Drums Along the Mohawk. 1939. (As Indian, uncredited.)
The Ghost Breakers. 1940. (As the zombie.)
Jungle Book. 1942. (As a Sikh.)
She Wore a Yellow Ribbon. 1949. (As Red Shirt.)

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Johnson, Sargent Claude

Sargent Claude Johnson was a visual artist who worked with great success in a range of media, producing lithographs, etchings, chalk drawings, large-scale murals, enamel metalwork, mosaic, and ceramics. Johnson made his artistic home in the Bay Area of California, rather than among the African American artists of the Harlem Renaissance. Nevertheless, he was a much-admired figure in the larger African American art world and won a number of awards in the influential shows sponsored by the Harmon Foundation. In 1935, the Harmon Foundation featured his work as part of a three-man exhibition at the Delphic Studios in New York City with the painter Malvin Gray Johnson and the sculptor Richmond Barthé, and he received an award for the wood polychrome *Forever Free*, now his most acclaimed work. This is a redwood sculpture covered with several coats of gesso and fine linen, sanded between layers. The piece is highly polished, with the flesh areas colored copper brown and the clothed portions painted black and white. The female figure looks obliquely upward, embodying strength and self-possession; at her feet she embraces and protects her young children.

Forever Free demonstrates an abiding preoccupation in Johnson's work: the relationship of the modern African American artist to his folk and African roots. The sculpture finds technical and stylistic inspiration in ancient Egypt, but Johnson is also inspired by ancient Asian, Mexican, and Native American plastic art. One can see in his work a relationship to west African tribal art, as well as to art deco, cubism, and the Mexican muralist tradition. His personal quest was to develop what he called, in 1935, a strictly Negro art; in common with other artists of the 1920s and 1930s, he took ideas



Mask of a Girl, 1926, by Sargent Claude Johnson (1888–1967); copper repoussé, 9 by 6 by 2½ inches. (© The Newark Museum/Art Resource, N.Y. Collection of the Newark Museum, Newark, New Jersey, 92.108.)

from so-called primitive art. This engagement with nonwestern art led Johnson to spend time in Mexico, and through the 1940s he produced a number of pieces using the black clay of Oaxaca. One can also see the influence of a radically pared-down African style in the lithographs he produced in the late 1930s, which were inspired by his love of African American music. *Lenox Avenue* (1938) in particular evokes Harlem's most famous thoroughfare, through references to its musical and artistic output expressed as a clearly Africanist racial physiognomy.

Johnson continued to experiment with form and medium throughout his career. When the Works Progress Administration art project began in California in 1936, Johnson was hired, and the well-equipped studios gave him an opportunity to produce much larger works. Over the next few years he produced large-scale public projects. Later in the 1940s he worked with the Paine-Mahoney Company, producing massive porcelain enamel-on-steel murals and relief sculptures. In the 1950s he made a long visit to Japan. He continued to live in the Bay Area until his death in 1971. He stands as one of the most versatile artists to have come out of the Harlem Renaissance period.

Biography

Sargent Claude Johnson was born 7 October 1887 in Boston, Massachusetts. He attended public school in Worcester, Massachusetts, and the A. W. Best School of Art and California School of Fine Arts in 1915. He worked as a fitter for Schlussers and Brothers, 1917; and as a framer for Valdespino Framers, 1921. He was hired by the Works Progress Administration in 1936; he worked as a commissioned artist for the rest of his life. His awards included the following: Harmon Foundation; Otto H. Kahn Prize for *Sammy*, \$250, 1927; Bronze Award, \$100, 1929; Robert C. Ogden Prize, 1933; and San Francisco Art Association medals in 1925, 1931, 1935, 1938. Johnson died in San Francisco, 10 October 1967.

MARIA BALSHAW

See also Barthé, Richmond; Federal Programs; Harmon Foundation; Harmon Traveling Exhibition; Johnson, Malvin Gray; Works Progress Administration

Selected Exhibitions: Individual

- 1967: "Photos and Works by Sargent Johnson." San Francisco Negro Historical Society.
 1971: "Sargent Johnson—Retrospective." Oakland Gallery, California.

Selected Exhibitions: Group

- 1925–1931, 1933, 1935, 1937: Harmon Foundation Exhibitions of Negro Art.
 1935: Three-artist exhibition, Harmon Foundation, Delphic Studios, New York.
 1945: "The Negro Artist Comes of Age." Albany (New York) Institute of History and Art.
 1966: "The Negro in American Art." UCLA Fine Arts Gallery, Los Angeles.
 1970: "Dimensions of Black." La Jolla (California) Museum of Art.
 1997: "Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance." Hayward Gallery, London, and tour.

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Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance. London: Hayward Gallery; and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Sargent Johnson: Retrospective. Oakland, Calif.: Oakland Museum, 1971.

Johnson, William H.

William Henry Johnson (1901–1970) was a major American artist of the twentieth century but has tended to be neglected. He was born in Florence, South Carolina. In 1918 he moved with his uncle to New York, where he underwent a rigorous training in art at the School of the National Academy of Design; he also studied at the Cape Cod School of Art, before relocating to Paris in 1926. In Europe, Johnson developed a turbulent style based on the paintings of Chaim Soutine, Edvard Munch, and Vincent Van Gogh, expressing his emotional reactions in exaggerated distortions and squeezing colors from the tube directly onto the canvas. After winning the Harmon Foundation Gold Medal in 1930, Johnson married Holcha Krake, a Danish tapestry weaver and ceramicist, and settled in Scandinavia for the next eight years.

In 1938, Johnson returned to Harlem and began to modify his expressionist style to depict scenes celebrating the black experience. Inspired by the work of Horace Pippin and Jacob Lawrence, Johnson simplified his painting, emphasizing flatness, heavy outlines, and jarring color contrasts in a style that has often been described as primitive, naïve, or folk oriented. Johnson painted a variety of subjects, from urban scenes of cafés and Harlem's nightlife, street musicians, and jitterbugs to rural scenes of farm life, chain gangs, churchgoers, and baptisms to biblical scenes and portraits. In the 1940s, Johnson's work became overtly religious and political, especially in his historical series *Fighters for Freedom*. Johnson was determined "to give, in simple and stark form, the story of the Negro as he has existed" (Powell 1991).

Johnson exhibited in several major shows and won accolades from both black and white critics, but his life then turned tragic: his wife died of cancer, and he himself began suffering the effects of a debilitating mental deterioration that eventually left him unable to



William H. Johnson (1901–1970), *Art Class*, c. 1939–1940; oil on plywood. (© Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C./Art Resource, N.Y.)

work, confined to Central Islip State Hospital in New York for the remainder of his life. He had initially been considered one of the up-and-coming painters of the Harlem Renaissance; the strange circumstances of his illness, however, combined with a lack of gallery support, his expatriate status, and what many critics considered his stylistic fickleness, contributed to a widespread neglect of his art. This situation has been redressed only relatively recently, as several posthumous exhibitions returned Johnson to his status as a major black modernist.

Taylor (1971) notes that Johnson's primitivism, eclecticism, and spirituality made him a "forceful and original" painter; Driskell (1987) has argued that, by integrating religious and social messages, Johnson "changed the course of artistic interpretations of Black American themes in Christianity" and "enlightened the Black community about their own history and heritage." Powell (1991) has attempted to redefine Johnson as a "world-class citizen" rather than as an isolated and tragic figure; according to Powell, Johnson's lifelong search for "home" imbued his work with a powerful empathy for "the folk life and the cultural expressions of marginalized peoples."

Johnson was a professed "primitive," and his work corresponds to similar attempts by artists of the

Harlem Renaissance to capture the innate power and spirituality of the folk heritage of common people. With his brilliant sense of design, coupled with a strong sensibility for rhythmic color and form, Johnson was able to create powerful visual narratives of African American life that celebrated the New Negro's deep reservoir of spirituality and humanity.

Biography

William H. Johnson was born 18 March 1901 in Florence, South Carolina. He studied at the Wilson School for Negroes in Florence, 1907–1917; at the School of the National Academy of Design, New York, 1921–1923; at the Cape Cod School of Art in Provincetown, Massachusetts, under Charles Webster Hawthorne, 1924–1926; and at the studio of George B. Luks in New York City, 1926. Johnson taught at WPA/FDA, Harlem Community Arts Center, in 1939–1942. His awards included the Cannon Prize for Painting, School of the National Academy of Design, 1924 and 1926; the Hallgarten Prize for Painting, Cape Cod School of Art, 1925; a Harmon Foundation Gold Medal, 1930; and a Certificate of Honor, National Negro Achievement Day, 1942. Johnson was confined to Central Islip State Hospital in 1948–1970. He died 13 April 1970 of acute pancreatitis.

RANDALL SHAWN WILHELM

See also Artists; Lawrence, Jacob

Selected Exhibitions: Individual

- 1927: "William H. Johnson: Paintings." Students and Artists Club, Paris, France.
- 1928: "William H. Johnson." Galerie Alban, Nice, France.
- 1929: "Exhibition of Paintings by William H. Johnson." Peter White Public Library, Marquette, Michigan.
- 1930: "William H. Johnson." Trondheim (Norway) Art Society.
- 1931: "Paintings: William H. Johnson." Alma Reed Galleries, New York.
- 1932: "Tempera Paintings by William H. Johnson." Wakefield Gallery, New York.
- 1946: "William H. Johnson." 135th Street Branch, New York Public Library.
- 1957–1961: "William H. Johnson: An Artist of the Work Scene." (Traveled nationally.)

1971–1973. “William H. Johnson, 1901–1970.” National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (Posthumous; traveled to Africa and Europe.)

1982: “William H. Johnson: The Scandinavian Years.” National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (Posthumous.)

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Jones, Eugene Kinckle

Eugene Kinckle Jones was born in Richmond, Virginia, in 1885, during the post-Reconstruction era; his parents were Joseph Endom and Rosa Kinckle Jones. He earned a bachelor’s degree from Virginia Union College in 1905 and that autumn enrolled in the master’s program at Cornell University in mathematics and engineering. He refocused his studies on economics and sociology, in order to have more impact on African Americans, and received a master’s degree in those two areas in 1908. At Cornell, he was a founding member of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, the first inter-collegiate Greek-letter fraternity for African Americans. Jones was denied the opportunity to pursue a career in social work; he then worked as a teacher in Louisville,

Kentucky. He married Blanche Ruby Watson on 11 March 1909; they would have two children.

In 1911, Jones met the noted black sociologist George Edmund Haynes, who during that year brought him to New York City to work as a field secretary at the League of Urban Conditions among Negroes, which later became the National Urban League (NUL). In this position Jones helped to address the role of black migrants as well as the professional development of black social workers. In 1917, he became the first executive secretary of NUL; he served in this post until 1941, the longest tenure of any leader in the organization.

Jones wrote articles in *Opportunity*, the magazine of NUL, about the education of African American social workers; he also helped implement NUL’s social work fellowship program to enable young black students to pursue graduate studies at various participating universities. According to Armfield (1999), this was part of Jones’s initiative to improve the professional status of black social workers, whose services were needed in black communities in both the North and the South. Jones is credited with developing the first successful approach to professional training for black social workers; he helped to train a number of individuals with regard to health care, housing, industry, and fieldwork.

During the period of the Harlem Renaissance—the 1920s—Jones became the first African American elected to the executive committee of the National Conference of Social Work (he was elected treasurer in 1925). Additionally, he became vice president and chairman of the Harlem Adult Education Committee, chairman of Associates in Negro Folk Education, and a trustee of Virginia Union University and president of its alumni association. During the Great Depression he became a member of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s unofficial “black cabinet”—a group of leading African Americans who gave the president input on the New Deal programs intended to improve employment opportunities for African Americans.

Jones’s leadership was in the tradition of “race men” who were committed to using their education and position to advance the cause of the African American masses.

Biography

Eugene Kinckle Jones was born in Richmond, Virginia, 30 July 1885. He studied at Wayland Academy; Virginia Union College (A.B., 1905); and Cornell University

(M.A., 1908). He was a founding member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity; an adviser to Mayor James J. Walker of New York City; treasurer of the executive committee, National Conference of Social Work; American delegate at the International Conference of Social Work in Paris; a participant in the International Conference of Human Relations in Cambridge, England; a member of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "black cabinet"; a member of the executive board of the National Conference of Social Workers; vice president and chairman of the Harlem Adult Education Committee; chairman of Associates in Negro Folk Education; a trustee of Virginia Union University; and president of the Virginia Union alumni association. Jones was employed as a teacher in the public school system of Louisville, Kentucky (1909–1911); he was a field secretary of the National Urban League in New York City (1911–1917) and an executive secretary in New York City (1917–1941). He died in Flushing, New York, 11 January 1954.

ANDREW P. SMALLWOOD

See also Haynes, George Edmund; National Urban League; Opportunity; Race Men

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Jones, Lois Mailou

The story of Lois Mailou Jones (1905–1998) as an artist and teacher is perhaps told best through her own recollections and those of her students, in particular

Benjamin (1994, 1995) and Driskell (1998). Her life spanned most of the twentieth century, and her work encompassed many stylistic changes.

Jones was born and educated in Boston, which was a center for the visual arts; it was the first American city to embrace impressionism, then considered a radical movement. At her family's summer home in Martha's Vineyard, she met the sculptor Meta Warrick Fuller and the musician and composer Harry T. Burleigh, both of whom had lived and worked in Paris and encouraged Jones to go there; she was also inspired by Fuller's stories about working with the sculptor Auguste Rodin. Jones obtained teaching positions at the Palmer Memorial Institute in Sedalia, North Carolina, in 1928; and at Howard University in Washington, D.C., in 1930. In 1937, when she had her first sabbatical leave, she received a General Education Board fellowship and left the United States to study at the Académie Julian in Paris. In the United States, Jones had endured her share of discrimination: for example, she was turned down for an assistantship at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, even though she was one of its brightest graduates. The climate in America was such that Jones asked her friend Céline Tabary, whom she met at the Académie Julian, to deliver a number of her works to museums and galleries for her; she assumed that if she delivered them herself, they would probably be rejected because of her race.

Jones, Tabary, and Lillian Evanti—an opera singer who was introduced to Jones by Burleigh—were very close, calling themselves the "three blind mice." In 1953, Jones and the Haitian artist and graphic designer Louis Vergniaud Pierre-Noël were married at Tabary's summer home in Cabris, France. (Jones and her future husband had met at Columbia University in 1934.) Another of Jones's friends, the historian and philosopher Alain Locke, had a definite influence on the direction Jones took in her art. During a summer session at Columbia University in 1934, Jones had studied its ethnographic collection of masks from nonwestern cultures; while she was in France, she explored African themes in her own work (*Les Fétiches*, 1938), having seen original art—considered artifacts at the time—in museums and galleries and then having seen these images as reworked by Pablo Picasso and other avant-garde artists. When Locke became acquainted with Jones, he suggested that she explore these themes further, telling her that she had more right to Africa than, say, Picasso did.

Jones had a long-standing interest in design, emanating from her early education at the High School of Practical Arts (HSPA) in Boston; through her apprenticeship to Grace Ripley (Ripley Studios), she designed theater costumes and masks. However, she made a conscious decision to separate herself from design so that she could be regarded as a serious artist. At the time, “design” was associated with crafts, and those executing “patterns” were primarily women who remained anonymous—whereas Jones was explicit about wanting to be an artist and be known. She did, however, return to design later in life, exploring the theme of the mask and taking inspiration from her experiences in Haiti and Africa. In the 1970s and 1980s, she experimented with transforming this traditional three-dimensional medium onto a two-dimensional surface. Examples of her work during this period are *Moon Masque* (1971), *Sudanesia* (1970), *Ubi Girl from Tai Region* (1972), *Damballah* (1980), *Symbols d’Afrique I* (1980), *Petite Ballerina* (1982), and *Initiation, Liberia* (1983). Jones once recalled, “Very early I was introduced to Africa through creating the masks with the Ripley studios.”

From time to time, Jones explored political themes in her work. *Meditation (Mob Victim)* (1944) is an empathic treatment of a single black man, representing the thousands of black men who had been lynched in the American South. Jones was not acquainted with the model for this work and had chosen him more or less by chance; it turned out, however, that his brother had been lynched in his presence. During the turbulent 1960s, Jones turned to images that included such notable figures as Martin Luther King Jr., John Kennedy, and Lyndon Johnson.

Although Jones spent her adult life mainly in Washington, D.C. (where she taught at Howard University) and in Paris (where she maintained a studio), her hometown, Boston, never forgot her. Jones’s first individual show was held at the Robert Vose Galleries in Boston in 1939. At the time of this exhibition, the *Christian Science Monitor* described her as the “leading Negro artist.” In 1973 the Boston Museum of Fine Arts organized “Reflective Moments,” Jones’s first major solo retrospective. Other important exhibitions were held in Washington. In 1972 Howard University honored Jones with a retrospective show, “Forty Years of Painting, 1932–1972.” Another solo exhibition was held at the Phillips Collection in Washington in 1979.

During the last two decades of her life, Jones received many awards, and her works were exhibited

throughout the world. She was extremely proud of her African American heritage, although she said that wanted to be remembered simply as an American artist. She also took pride in having taught for forty-seven years at Howard University, where she said she had “guided and taught many of today’s major black artists.” She summed up her career as having been “long and rich”; she noted that her style and subject matter showed “the unmistakable influence of the countries and cultures in which she has traveled and lived: France, Haiti, Africa, America.”

Biography

Lois Mailou Jones was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on 4 November 1905; her parents, Thomas Vreeland Jones and Carolyn Dorinda Adams, had moved from Paterson, New Jersey, to Cambridge shortly after their marriage, and then to Boston. She was educated in Boston, studying at the High School of Practical Arts there, and was an apprentice of Grace Ripley (Ripley Studios). Jones taught at Palmer Memorial Institute in Sedalia, North Carolina (beginning in 1928), and—for forty-seven years—at Howard University in Washington, D.C. (beginning in 1930). In 1937 she went to Paris on a sabbatical to study at the Académie Julian. She married the Haitian artist and graphic designer Louis Vergniaud Pierre-Noël in 1953. Jones spent most of her adult life in Washington, D.C., and Paris. After a long career, she died in Washington, D.C., in 1998.

MARIANNE WOODS

See also Artists; Burleigh, Harry Thacker; Fuller, Meta Warrick; Locke, Alain

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Joplin, Scott

Scott Joplin, the child of a former slave and a freeborn black woman, grew up in the town of Texarkana on the Texas-Arkansas border. His often-cited birth date, 24 November 1868, is incorrect. He had no formal education as a youth, although the members of his family were very musical and played several instruments. A German immigrant musician (perhaps Julius Weiss) seems to have played a significant role in Joplin's musical and artistic development.

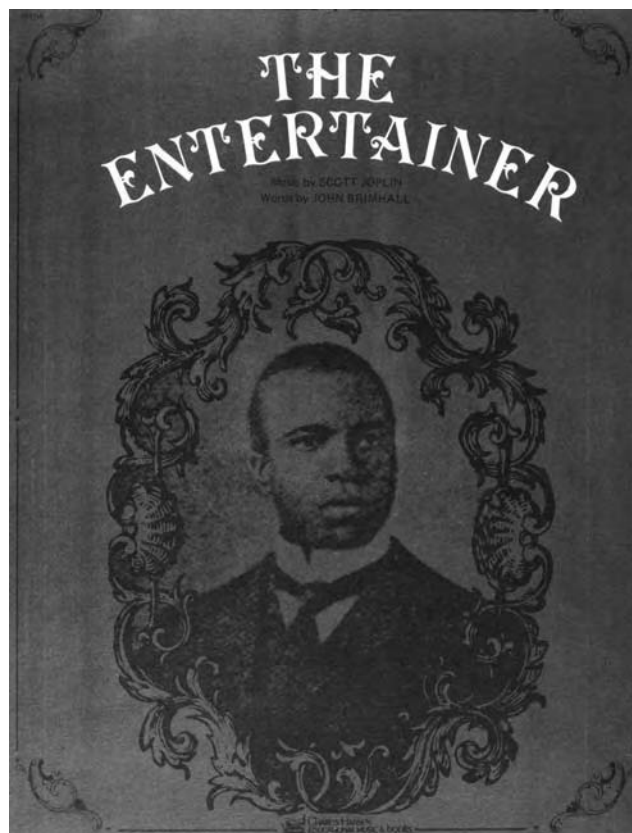
During the 1880s, Joplin probably moved to and lived in Sedalia, Missouri, where he worked as a traveling musician and became a close friend and associate of Tom Turpin of St. Louis, a pioneer in the early development of ragtime. In 1893, Joplin probably played in a band at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, where the explosion of interest in ragtime began. Returning to Sedalia in 1894, he joined the Queen City Cornet Band and led his own dance band. He also traveled with a vocal group called the Texas Medley Quartette. During this period, he attended music classes at George R. Smith College in Sedalia, at the same time teaching piano and composition to several younger ragtime composers, including Scott Hayden and Arthur Marshall. From 1898 to 1899 Joplin performed as a pianist at the Maple Leaf Club; he issued his first piano rag, "Original Rags," in 1899. His next publication, "Maple Leaf Rag," sold more than half a million copies by 1909 and provided Joplin with a small but steady income for the remainder of his life. "Maple Leaf Rag" is probably the most famous of all piano rags; it formed the basis for Joplin's success in ragtime and for his title "king of ragtime."

In 1901 Joplin and his first wife, Belle, moved to St. Louis, where he spent more time composing and teaching than performing. Rags published during this time period were "The Easy Winners" (1901), "Sunflower Slow Drag" (1901), "The Entertainer" (1902), and "The Strenuous Life" (1902), a tribute to President Theodore Roosevelt.

Joplin's interests went beyond ragtime to serious music for lyric theater and classical European art

forms. He composed a ballet called *The Ragtime Dance*, depicting a black American ball and incorporating a singer-narrator, which was first performed on 24 November 1899 in Sedalia and was published in 1902. *A Guest of Honor* was an opera depicting the black leader Booker T. Washington's dinner at the White House with President Theodore Roosevelt in 1902; this opera went on tour in 1903. Joplin's life work, however, was the composition of his opera *Treemonisha* (1911), and his subsequent efforts to publish and produce it. He moved to New York in 1907 to further his efforts to find a reputable publisher. Joplin claimed that Irving Berlin had access to the score of *Treemonisha* at this time and had stolen one of Joplin's themes for use in Berlin's hit song "Alexander's Ragtime Band." During his first year in New York, Joplin befriended and encouraged Joseph F. Lamb, a young white man who eventually became one of the foremost composers of ragtime, and one of the most successful.

Although *Treemonisha* received several favorable reviews from critics after Joplin published the score himself, he was never able to stage the work successfully



Scott Joplin as shown on the sheet music of "The Entertainer."
(© Bettmann/Corbis.)

in its entirety. Joplin published his last work, "Magnetic Rag," in 1914, through his own publishing company. After his death, it was apparent that he had been a prolific composer; he left behind numerous unpublished manuscripts and compositions of stage works and orchestral music, most of which appear to have been destroyed or lost in legal proceedings in 1961.

Joplin was the preeminent composer of piano ragtime, and he strove to be recognized as a composer of artistic merit above and beyond his popular acclaim. He called his piano rags "classic rags," meaning that they were comparable to European artistic music. The care that he took to create and subsequently publish and have performed accurate representations and renderings of his scores justifies his position.

Joplin's influence on the Harlem Renaissance movement specifically stems from his time in New York from 1907 to 1917. Ragtime as an American art form and a popular idiom flourished from about 1896 to 1918, and it has widely been identified as a precursor of jazz—that musical art form which is uniquely American in both its development and its subsequent influence and success throughout the twentieth century.

Biography

Scott Joplin was born between July 1867 and mid-January 1868 in northeastern Texas. He had few early educational opportunities, but most members of his family played musical instruments. Evidently, he moved to Sedalia, Missouri, in the 1880s, and he attended music classes at George R. Smith College in Sedalia in the 1890s. He worked as a traveling musician, and he may have played in a band in Chicago in 1893 for the World's Columbian Exposition. He issued his first piano rag, "Original Rags," in 1899; this was followed by the immensely popular "Maple Leaf Rag." Joplin moved to St. Louis, Missouri, in 1901. He devoted his time to teaching and composition and continued to publish piano rags. He had an ambition to write for lyric theater, and he wrote a number of ballets and short operas, most of which have not survived. He moved to New York City in 1907 and tried to publish and produce his opera *Treemonisha*. He completed *Treemonisha* in 1910 and published the score himself in 1911; thereafter, a few stagings and performances were done, none of any substance. Joplin continued to compose until his death in New York City on 1 April 1917. Most of his unpublished

manuscripts and scores were apparently lost or destroyed in 1961.

BRAD EDEN

See also Jazz

Selected Works

- "Maple Leaf Rag." 1899.
- "The Entertainer." 1902.
- The Ragtime Dance*. 1902. (Ballet.)
- A Guest of Honor*. 1903. (Opera, lost.)
- "Rose Leaf Rag." 1907.
- "Wall Street Rag." 1909.
- Treemonisha*. 1911. (Opera.)
- "Magnetic Rag." 1917.

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Jordan, Joe

Joe Jordan, a noted ragtime pianist, arranger, composer, and musical director, became renowned through his tenure at Robert T. Mott's Pekin Theater (formerly Pekin Music Hall) in Chicago in 1906–1909 and

1911–1913. When he was hired as musical director in 1906, Jordan immediately began supplying the new all-black stock company with his own works (*The Man from 'Bam*, 1906; *Mayor of Dixie*, 1906). As the first theater in the nation owned and operated by blacks, the Pekin quickly became a major center for black entertainment during the 1910s and 1920s.

In May 1905, the first “syncopated music” concert performed by the Memphis Students featured Jordan’s work and the talents of Ernest Hogan, James Reese Europe, and Will Dixon (the group later featured Will Marion Cook).

During the 1920s and 1930s, Jordan was a much sought-after director and conductor of musical revues. *Strut Miss Lizzie* (1922), advertised as “Glorying the Negro Beauty,” portrayed racial pride through a series of songs (mainly composed by Jordan), dances, and comedy scenes. *Rarin’ to Go* (1925–1926), a touring musical revue, had a score by Jordan and an integrated cast who performed separately; it received little attention. *Deep Harlem* (1928–1929), another musical revue with a score by Jordan, chronicled the progress of the Negro from Ethiopian royalty to Harlem’s cabarets in song, dance, and comedy. Jordan also composed most of the score for the musical comedy *Brown Buddies* (1930), which starred Bill “Bojangles” Robinson and ran for 111 performances at the Liberty Theater in Harlem. This acclaimed show, full of riveting dance sequences, looked at black soldiers in France during World War I. *Fast and Furious* (1931), which lasted for only seven performances at the New Yorker Theater, had music composed by Jordan and J. Rosamond Johnson as a team; it also included a rare appearance by Zora Neale Hurston, who acted in a few skits and sang. During the 1930s Jordan conducted the Negro Unit of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Federal Theater Project, a project intended to help employ artists during the Great Depression.

A proponent of self-empowerment and self-help, Jordan was also a sought-after businessman. Early in 1917, he brought legal action against the Original Dixieland Jazz Band for copyright infringement: the band had used his tune “That Teasin’ Rag” in its “Original Dixieland One-Step.” The band’s records were quickly recalled and redistributed as “Introducing ‘That Teasin’ Rag’ by Joe Jordan.” In 1920 and 1923, as the vice president and manager of the Chicago Production Company, Jordan produced revisions of *The Man from 'Bam*. Jordan was also a financial manager for Will Marion Cook’s New York Symphony Orchestra in 1918 and a staff arranger for the Clarence Williams

Publishing Company during the 1920s. Meanwhile, Jordan toured the United States and Europe with his group, the Ten Sharps and Flats.

Jordan retired from music in 1944 after serving as director for the Army Specialist Corp’s black orchestra, with the rank of captain. He relocated to Tacoma, Washington, and continued his real estate enterprises.

Biography

Joseph Zachariah Taylor Jordan was born 11 February 1882 in Cincinnati, Ohio. He learned violin, piano, and drums primarily by ear and briefly studied music at Lincoln Institute (later Lincoln University), Jefferson, Missouri, around 1899–1900. He taught private students in his studio in Tacoma, Washington, 1944–1971; and was on the faculty of the Modern Institute of Music in Tacoma, 1949. Jordan played violin, double bass, and drums in the band Georgia-Up-to-Date (St. Louis, Missouri), 1899; played violin and drums in the Taborin Band (St. Louis), 1900; was music and stage director of the vaudeville show *Dandy Coon* (Chicago), 1903; performed ragtime piano at Tom Turpin’s Rosebud Café (St. Louis), 1904; was conductor and director of the Pekin Music Hall (Chicago), 1904; organized and wrote music for the Memphis Students (New York City), 1905; was musical director of the Pekin Theater (Chicago), 1906–1909; organized and produced the new Memphis Students, 1908; returned to the Pekin Theater as musical director, 1911–1913; directed an orchestra for the new States Theater (Chicago), 1913; organized the YMCA symphonic orchestra (Chicago), 1913; was musical director for the prizefighter Jack Johnson’s European tour, 1915; was financial manager and assistant director of Will Marion Cook’s New York Syncopated Orchestra, 1918; was vice president and manager of Chicago Production Company, 1920 on; was staff arranger for Clarence Williams Publishing Company, 1920s; was musical director and conductor for *Keep Shufflin’*, 1928; conducted the Negro Unit Orchestra of the WPA Federal Theater Project, 1930s; conducted a seventy-five-member symphony orchestra to accompany a choir of 350 for the ASCAP Silver Jubilee Festival (Carnegie Hall), 1939; directed an orchestra of black musicians in the Army Specialist Corps (ASC) at Huachuca, Arizona, as a captain, 1943–1944; and retired from active performance to continue his career in real estate, 1944. Jordan was the first African American elected to the board of directors of American Federation

of Musicians (AFM) Local 208 of Chicago 1932; he joined ASCAP in 1939. He died in Tacoma, Washington, 11 September 1971.

EMMETT G. PRICE III

See also Cook, Will Marion; Europe, James Reese; Federal Programs; Hurston, Zora Neale; Johnson, John Rosamond; Musical Theater; Robinson, Bill "Bojangles"; Works Progress Administration

Selected Works

"Morocco Blues." 1926. (Piano; recorded, Arpeggio ARP 1205.)

"Hop Off." 1927. (Dance orchestra; recorded, Classics 580; Riverside SDP-11.)

"Betty Lou." New York: Harms, 1930.

"Don't Leave Your Little Blackbird Blue." New York: Harris, c. 1930. (Cocomposers, Porter Grainger and Shelton Brooks.)

Musical Theater

The Man from 'Bam. 1920, 1923. (Original, 1906–1907.)

Strut Miss Lizzie. 1922.

Rarin' to Go. 1925–1926.

Deep Harlem. 1928–1929.

Brown Buddies. 1930.

Fast and Furious. 1931.

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Journalists

Whether as newspaper and magazine publishers, editors, reporters, columnists, or critics, black journalists made vital contributions to African American politics and culture during the Harlem Renaissance. Black newspapers and magazines provided the institutional base for black journalists as well as publicizing and providing outlets for black essayists, poets, playwrights, and novelists. Without black journalists and the newspapers and magazines that supported them, the Harlem Renaissance would have had little impact.

By the 1920s, black newspapers had been in existence for more than one hundred years. From the establishment of the first black newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, by John Russwurm in 1827 to the 1920s, black newspapers gathered and delivered news and opinion to black communities throughout the United States. During this time, because of the limited, if not biased, coverage in the general press, blacks found their newspapers the only source of news and opinion about their activities and concerns. The black press was one of the few segments of the American news media that actively campaigned for black equality in the United States. In that sense, the black press, along with civil rights organizations and black community groups, was an agent of protest. In some communities the black press, as the only medium of black protest, helped to create and influence other agents of change.

The black press not only expressed dissatisfaction with American racism but also helped create, maintain, and mold the black communities it served. In doing so, through its coverage of black organizations, social functions, personalities, issues, events, and achievements, it helped define the black community. According to Gunnar Myrdal in *An American Dilemma*:

The press defines the Negro group to the Negroes themselves. The individual Negro is invited to share in the sufferings, grievances, and pretensions of the millions of Negroes outside the narrow local community. This creates a feeling of strength and solidarity. . . . The [black] press is also the chief agency of group control. It tells the individual how he should think and feel as an American Negro and creates a tremendous power of suggestion by implying that all other Negroes think and feel in this manner. (171)

Although other black institutions, such as churches, were also significant agencies for group control, Myrdal correctly assessed the role of the black press. To a far greater extent than the white press during the Harlem Renaissance era, the black press showed the world to the black community, showed that community to itself, and showed the black community to the world.

Black newspapers and magazines were open to all within the black community who had something to say. Aspiring black journalists were barred from most if not all journalism schools in the 1920s, so black newspapers could not tap that source. They had to train their own reporters, columnists, and critics and in so doing tapped the rich source of black literary talent that surfaced during the Harlem Renaissance. Black publishers, for the most part, were highly literate and educated people who wanted to introduce to the world the black writers of the Harlem Renaissance. Quite a few saw the 1920s as a time of radical social change, so they gave a voice on their editorial pages to black radicals of the era. Many black newspapers had feature sections in which writers and journalists of the Harlem Renaissance published their works. In that sense, black newspapers served as literary magazines as well as purveyors of news and opinion. Such a role was necessary, because few if any black literary journals survived for very long, and only a few white journals published black writers.

Here, we examine the leading black journalists of the Harlem Renaissance. These include Carl Murphy of the Baltimore *Afro-American*, Robert S. Abbott of the Chicago *Defender*, Robert L. Vann of the Pittsburgh *Courier*, P. B. Young of the Norfolk *Journal and Guide*, John Mitchell of the Richmond *Planet*, and C. A. Franklin of the Kansas City *Call*. Among the most important editors of the period were T. Thomas Fortune, the “dean” of black journalists, who in the 1920s edited Marcus Garvey’s newspaper *The Negro World*; W. E. B. Du Bois, who edited *The Crisis*, the house

organ of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, editors of *The Messenger*; and Charles S. Johnson, editor of *Opportunity*, the magazine of the Urban League.

Robert S. Abbott (1868–1940)

The black press flourished during the 1920s: more than 500 black newspapers had a total circulation of more than 1.5 million. Of all these newspapers, none prospered more than the Chicago *Defender*. Its publisher and editor was Robert Sengstacke Abbott. Abbott was born in 1868 on Saint Simons Island, Georgia, to a butler and a hairdresser; he grew up in Savannah, Georgia, and was raised by his mother and his stepfather, John Sengstacke. Sengstacke was a newspaperman himself, and this encouraged his stepson to enter the newspaper business. Abbott attended Hampton Institute, where he was trained as a printer. Printing jobs were hard to find, however, so he studied law. Despite completing a law course, Abbott was not admitted to the Georgia bar, so he returned to journalism.

In 1905, Abbott decided to start his own newspaper and chose Chicago as the place to start it. That year, Chicago’s black population was 40,000 and growing. Three newspapers were already serving the black community in Chicago, but that did not stop Abbott, who called his newspaper the *Defender*. From an initial press run of 300 copies in 1905, the *Defender* grew to a circulation of more than 200,000 during World War I. The newspaper was distributed throughout the Midwest and the middle and deep South. Its popularity came from its constant publicizing of and crusading against local and national racial oppression, especially in the South. Along that line, it constantly encouraged its southern readers to migrate North, preferably to Chicago. In no small part because of the *Defender*’s encouragement, Chicago became a magnet for black migration from the South; its black population increased 144 percent to 110,000 by 1920. Many of these newcomers became readers of the *Defender*, thereby increasing the newspaper’s circulation, wealth, and influence.

During the Harlem Renaissance, Abbott’s Chicago *Defender* was the most widely read black newspaper, with a circulation approaching 250,000. Abbott put out a lively, sensationalist newspaper that appealed to all segments of the black community. Like its contemporaries in the white press of the “roaring twenties,” the *Defender* featured lurid headlines and stories

focusing on crime and sex. This appealed to the newspaper's numerous working-class readers. Still, the *Defender* gave comprehensive coverage to the day-to-day life of Chicago's black community and crusaded against local and national racism. The *Defender* was divided into twelve sections, including local, national, and international news; sports; entertainment; society; editorials and opinion; and a features section that spotlighted black writers and artists, especially those of the Harlem Renaissance. The features section offered poetry, short stories, and serialized novels. The *Defender's* layout was imitated throughout the rest of the black press, and by the late 1920s most black newspapers had adopted its sensationalistic, comprehensive format. For good reason, the *Defender* called itself the "world's greatest weekly."

Politically, the *Defender* differed little from its contemporaries in the black press in that it generally supported the Republican Party locally and nationally. Abbott, as befitted his status as a successful entrepreneur, was moderate to conservative on most issues besides race. However, in 1928, annoyed by the Republican Party's neglect of issues concerning black people, Abbott and the *Defender* endorsed the presidential candidate of the Democratic Party, Alfred E. Smith.

Abbott and the *Defender* fell on hard times during the Great Depression. The newspaper's circulation decreased by 75 percent, and Abbott was forced to dip into his personal assets to keep the paper afloat. Then his health began to fail in the late 1930s. In 1939 he turned over control of the *Defender* to his nephew John Sengstacke. Shortly thereafter, in February 1940, Robert S. Abbott died.

Under Sengstacke's leadership, the *Defender* revived itself during World War II, reaching new heights in circulation and influence because of its extensive coverage of and advocacy for equitable participation by blacks in the war. Although the *Defender* continued to be a powerful voice of the black community during the civil rights era and beyond, it fell on hard times again during the 1990s and passed out of the control of Abbott's descendants. The *Defender* is still being published today, however, and is highly likely to continue to be as influential in the twenty-first century as it was during the twentieth.

Robert L. Vann (1879–1940)

Robert L. Vann—like his contemporary and rival Robert S. Abbott—was a lawyer who was interested in journalism. He is forever linked to the Pittsburgh

Courier, which he ran from 1910 until his death in 1940. Vann, one of the few black attorneys in Pittsburgh, was asked by the founders of the *Courier* to organize their legal affairs. When they were unable to keep the newspaper going, Vann took it over and in ten years built it to equal the *Defender* in circulation and influence. The *Courier's* layout followed that of the *Defender* but was less sensational. Also, the *Courier's* columnists and writers tended to be of higher quality than those of the *Defender*. Prominent among Vann's writers was George Schuyler, who wrote most of the *Courier's* editorials and a widely renowned column, "Views and Reviews." There was also J. A. Rogers, who contributed numerous articles and columns on ancient and contemporary Africa. Walter White, head of the NAACP, had his novel *The Fire in the Flint* serialized in the *Courier* and then became a book reviewer for the newspaper, reviewing the works of such writers of the Harlem Renaissance as Countee Cullen, Alain Locke, and Langston Hughes. Later, the *Courier* employed the distinguished black journalists P. L. Prattis and Wendell Smith. In the 1940s, Smith was instrumental in the effort to integrate major league baseball.

Unlike Abbott, Vann was very active in local and national politics. He was a "kingmaker" in Pittsburgh, controlling the black vote in the 1920s for the Republican Party. As such he was very influential in the Republican Party in Pennsylvania, and in the national party, during the 1920s. As time went by, however, Vann became disenchanted with the Republicans' lack of interest in black people's concerns; in the 1930s he switched to the Democratic Party, taking thousands of black votes with him. For this he was rewarded with an appointment as a special assistant to the attorney general in Washington, D.C.—a job with little power.

Because it had a politically active publisher, the *Courier* was an activist newspaper. It crusaded for racial equality in Pittsburgh, in Pennsylvania, and nationwide. It was one of the few black newspapers that supported the labor movement by giving news coverage and editorial support to A. Philip Randolph when he was organizing the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. During the 1920s, the *Courier*, while not the most widely read black newspaper (the *Defender* had a higher circulation), was perhaps the most influential, owing to its high-quality leadership and staff.

The Great Depression damaged the *Courier*, as it did other black newspapers. Vann found himself spending as much time back in Pittsburgh trying to keep the paper afloat as he spent in Washington. In the

late 1930s, however, the newspaper's health improved. The *Courier's* coverage of the impending world war, and its tireless advocacy of full participation by blacks in the war effort, restored it to national prominence. It led the black community's "double V" campaign for victory over racism at home and victory over fascism abroad. Vann himself, though, did not live long enough to see this revival; he died of cancer in 1940.

In the postwar years, the *Courier* continued to prosper, as its coverage and advocacy of the civil rights and "black power" movements helped it retain its readership. The Sengstacke family (the owners of the *Chicago Defender*) acquired it in 1965. Although, like black newspapers in general, it experienced hard times in the 1980s and 1990s, the *Courier* still publishes today as the *New Pittsburgh Courier* and is still a tireless advocate for racial justice.

Carl Murphy (1889–1967)

Carl Murphy was the gifted and charismatic publisher-editor of the Baltimore *Afro-American* from 1922 to 1967. One of the nine children of the *Afro-American's* owner John H. Murphy, Carl Murphy joined the newspaper in 1918 and was picked by his family to take it over in 1922 after his father's death. He had been educated at Howard University, had received a graduate degree in German from Harvard University, and was a professor of German at Howard University when he joined the *Afro-American*. His academic and scholarly background manifested itself in the extremely high quality of the editorials—most written by him—carried in the newspaper. In general, the Baltimore *Afro-American* was very highly regarded, and it dominated the black media markets along the eastern seaboard.

Throughout the 1920s, Carl Murphy had his *Afro-American* crusade continuously for racial justice and advancement in Baltimore, in Maryland, and elsewhere. Among the issues were equalization of teachers' salaries in Baltimore, efforts to maintain and increase black membership in the Baltimore city council, the struggles for representation of blacks on the local school board and in the police department, and anti-lynching crusades. Nationwide, the *Afro-American* supported anti-lynching legislation, and it called for increased federal patronage for black Republicans. The newspaper tended to be a maverick concerning national politics, however. Carl Murphy was very progressive for his time and was attracted to leftist

views and politicians. Unlike his peers in the black press, Murphy was not afraid to go out on a limb politically. For example, in 1924 he endorsed the third-party candidate, Robert La Follette, for the presidency. In 1928 he had the *Afro-American* support the Democratic Party candidate, Alfred E. Smith, instead of the Republican, Herbert Hoover. In the 1930s the newspaper gave covert endorsements to Communist Party and Socialist Party candidates for local, state, and national offices. During that time, Murphy described himself as a "red."

Carl Murphy's literate background was reflected in the high quality and wide range of columnists and feature writers who appeared in the *Afro-American*. Among others, Walter White of the NAACP; Kelly Miller, dean of Howard University; and James Weldon Johnson all had columns in the newspaper. The *Afro-American* also had homegrown columnists such as William N. Jones and Ralph Matthews. Jones wrote a column, "Day-by-Day," that was a fixture of the *Afro-American* from 1922 until his death in 1940. In this column, which was almost an editorial page in itself, he commented on local and national issues. Jones had joined the *Afro-American* in 1921, after a stint as a social worker and field investigator for the Urban League; he became the city editor and then the managing editor. As a man of the left, he was subjected to red-baiting during the 1930s. His ideology was congruent with Carl Murphy's, however, so he never lost influence within the *Afro-American*. Ralph Matthews, a witty and acerbic writer, was the *Afro-American's* answer to H. L. Mencken. Matthews had one or two columns in each issue of the *Afro-American* from the 1920s on. In these columns he lampooned various sacred cows in the black community, such as the black church and its ministers, black politicians, black "society," and the institutions of marriage and family. Matthews also wrote short stories and plays, and he contributed many of these pieces, usually expressing his worm's-eye view of male-female relationships, to the *Afro-American's* feature pages. One interesting aspect of the *Afro-American* was that, while its editorial columns, written mostly by Carl Murphy, upheld the church, society, and the family, Matthews's columns satirized these institutions. It is to Carl Murphy's credit that, despite his forceful opinions, he tolerated and even encouraged those who disagreed with him. This tolerance of diversity was one of Murphy's greatest strengths and in turn strengthened the *Afro-American*.

More so than most of his peers, Carl Murphy appreciated the Harlem Renaissance and encouraged

it by serializing the works of local and nationally known black novelists, publishing the poems and essays of Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, and Claude McKay. The newspaper encouraged young black writers by publishing serials and short stories in its magazine section. Eventually these stories were published in an anthology edited by Nick Aaron Ford: *Best Short Stories by Afro-American Writers*.

Unlike its competitors the *Defender* and the *Courier*, the *Afro-American* expanded and prospered during the Great Depression. It established branch offices and editions in Washington, Philadelphia, Richmond, and Newark. By 1940 Carl Murphy presided over a newspaper chain that blanketed the East Coast. The *Afro-American* reached unprecedented highs in circulation, income, and influence during World War II, becoming a million-dollar company in 1945. It remained at that level for many years afterwards.

Carl Murphy died in 1967, full of years and success. He left a prosperous and powerful media voice, as well as descendants who have kept the newspaper alive and well during the hard times that have befallen the black press. Today the *Afro-American*, in continuous operation since 1892, is still a powerful voice for African Americans in Baltimore, Washington, and elsewhere on the east coast.

Charles S. Johnson (1893–1956)

A renowned sociologist, Charles S. Johnson was also a major player in the Harlem Renaissance due to editorship of *Opportunity*, published by the National Urban League. Johnson was the director of research for the Urban League and at their request founded *Opportunity* in 1923. From 1923 to 1927, when Johnson left the magazine to head Fisk University's Sociology Department, *Opportunity* not only published news of the Urban League but it also published most of the poets and essayists of the Harlem Renaissance. Johnson strongly believed that African Americans could achieve racial equality through literary and artistic accomplishments. Consequently he encouraged and mentored nearly every prominent literary figure of the Harlem Renaissance. Among Johnson's protégés were Arna Bontemps, Countee Cullen, Aaron Douglas, Jessie Fauset, and Langston Hughes. In 1925 Johnson's *Opportunity* began awarding literary prizes. That year Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston were the first recipients. *Opportunity* prizes gave needed recognition to Harlem Renaissance

artists and helped jump-start the movement. The NAACP's *Crisis* followed with awards of its own. In 1926 Countee Cullen joined *Opportunity* as the assistant editor. In that capacity he wrote a column "The Dark Tower."

After joining Fisk in 1927, Charles S. Johnson established the Race Relations Institute in 1944. In 1947 he became Fisk University's first black president. Under his stewardship Fisk prospered, increasing its enrollment and endowment. Johnson died in 1956. As for *Opportunity*, it still publishes today as the Urban League's house organ.

W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963)

A true man for all seasons W. E. B. Du Bois spent some of his most productive years as a journalist. In 1909 he left his faculty position at Atlanta University, where he established their Sociology Department, to join the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) as their director of research and publications. In that capacity, Du Bois founded and edited *Crisis*, the NAACP's magazine. During the 1920s the *Crisis* provided an outlet for Du Bois' developing Pan-Africanist and Socialist ideologies, as well as a platform from which he could denounce Marcus Garvey, with whom he feuded. Besides Du Boisian ideology and NAACP news, *Crisis* kept abreast of the artistic accomplishments of the Harlem Renaissance by publishing many black poets and essayists. The noted black writer Jessie Fauset was the *Crisis*'s literary editor. She made sure *Crisis* promoted and published Harlem Renaissance writers. Among those whose works appeared in the *Crisis* were Sterling Brown, Langston Hughes, and Claude McKay. In 1924, Du Bois had *Crisis* offer prizes for artistic excellence. In the late 1920s, Du Bois became disenchanted with the Harlem Renaissance, especially its growing emphasis on ghetto realism, so *Crisis* suspended its awards competitions.

Du Bois ran the *Crisis* as his own fiefdom and frequently clashed with the NAACP's leadership, who did not often appreciate Du Bois' criticism of the organization and his ideological meandering. In 1934, Du Bois published articles in the *Crisis* calling for blacks to build self-sufficient communities separated from whites. This was too much for Walter White and the NAACP board, who fervently believed in a racially integrated society. They dismissed Du Bois, who then rejoined the faculty of Atlanta University. There he established the sociological

journal *Phylon*. As time went by, he became more and more active in leftist politics and organizations, believing that socialism offered the surest path for black advancement. For that stand, he was Red-baited during the 1950s. In 1959, Du Bois, disgusted with the slow pace of racial and social reform and his own persecution, joined the Communist party USA, then migrated to Ghana. There he began work on the *Encyclopedia Africana*, a task that occupied him until his death at 95 in 1963. As for the *Crisis*, the NAACP publishes it today as the organization's house organ.

P. B. Young (1884–1962)

Plummer Bernard Young, was born in North Carolina, migrated to Norfolk, Virginia, and in 1907 joined the staff of the Norfolk *Journal and Guide*. The *Journal and Guide* had been established in 1901 as a church journal. In 1910 Young bought out the owners, and along with his family, ran the paper until his death in 1962. Young and his *Journal and Guide* were second only to Carl Murphy and the *Afro-American* in readership and influence on the eastern seaboard. The *Journal and Guide* was especially influential in Norfolk and Virginia politics. Young was somewhat more conservative than his peers in the black press, preferring a conciliatory approach toward racial problems. Still, when black interests were threatened locally or nationally, Young's voice of protest could be heard loud and clear. In the 1920s, the newspaper campaigned against lynching and called for better schools, improved housing, and jobs for its readers. It also took a strong stand on crime reduction within the black community

The *Journal and Guide's* format was not sensational, as were its contemporaries. This tended to limit its circulation though not necessarily its influence. In fact, its nonsensational format caused it to be taken more seriously than its competitors. Like other black newspapers, the *Journal and Guide* published Harlem Renaissance black poets, novelists and essayists. It also carried columns written by such black journalists as T. Thomas Fortune.

P. B. Young died in 1962, and his son Thomas W. Young succeeded him at the helm, only to die five years later. The *Journal and Guide* passed out of the control of the Young family in the 1970s and is now owned and operated by Brenda Andrews. Today the Norfolk *Journal and Guide* carries on in the tradition set by P. B. Young.

John Mitchell (1863–1929)

P. B. Young's main rival for journalistic dominance in Virginia was John Mitchell and the Richmond *Planet*. Mitchell took over the *Planet* in 1884 and ran it until his death in 1929. Mitchell was more militant in racial matters than P. B. Young, and the two were frequently at odds during the 1920s. Mitchell from the beginning crusaded against the disenfranchisement of black voters in the South and led boycotts of streetcar companies that segregated black riders. He was far more active in politics than Young, serving in the Richmond City Council in the 1890s, as a delegate to Republican National Conventions, and running for governor of Virginia in 1921. Mitchell in his editorial policies represented the more militant "New Negro" of the 1920s than P. B. Young, who harked back to the more accommodationist ways of Booker T. Washington.

John Mitchell died in 1929. The Richmond *Planet* declined under his successors and was taken over Carl Murphy in 1938. The newspaper became the Richmond *Afro-American and Planet*. It followed the parent Baltimore *Afro-American* in layout, but its news coverage and editorials were localized to Richmond. The Richmond *Afro-American* lasted until 1996.

C. A. Franklin (1880–1955)

Chester A. Franklin was one of the most important publishers in the midwest. He started the Kansas City *Call* in 1919 and in a few short years built it into one of the more important black newspapers of the era. Franklin had run newspapers in Omaha and Denver before he moved to Kansas City during World War I. After a rocky early start, Franklin by the mid-1920s had the *Call* on a firm financial and journalistic footing. Like other black newspapers of the time, it campaigned for racial equality locally and nationwide. It led crusades against lynching, the Ku Klux Klan, and police brutality. It also campaigned for desegregated education and housing and increased job opportunities for blacks.

The *Call* rejected sensationalism as a means to sell newspapers. In that, it followed the example of the Norfolk *Journal and Guide*. It constantly presented the local and national black community in the most positive light, emphasizing news about black religious, social, and cultural activity. Along those lines, it provided an outlet for local and national black poets, novelists, and essayists. The *Call* also employed a distinguished roster

of reporters and columnists. The most important of these was Roy Wilkins, later the head of the NAACP, who started his career as a reporter columnist for the *Call* in the late 1920s.

C. A. Franklin died in 1955; his wife, Ada Crogman Franklin, succeeded him as the owner and publisher of the *Call*. The *Kansas City Call* publishes today and is still the primary media voice for Kansas City's African Americans.

Marcus Garvey (1887–1940)

Marcus Garvey is not often remembered today as a newspaper publisher. However, he did establish a newspaper, the *Negro World*, to publicize the activities of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). During the early 1920s, the UNIA was the most powerful black organization in the United States. Its membership numbered in the millions, and it established numerous subsidiaries, which included a church (African Orthodox Church) the Black Cross Nurses, the Black Star Line, an auditorium, and a laundry. Garvey preached a black nationalism built around a powerful Africa free of white colonial domination. This message resonated with black working-class folk in Harlem and elsewhere in the North, who attended UNIA meetings, patronized UNIA enterprises, bought stock in UNIA businesses, and read the *Negro World*.

For a time, the *Negro World* was the most important black newspaper in Harlem. At its peak it had a circulation approaching 200,000. An aged T. Thomas Fortune, who had published the *New York Age* and who was considered to be the most important black journalist at the turn of the century, edited it. Along with hard news, the *Negro World* promoted Garveyite Black Nationalism in its editorials and features, serializing fictional stories of Africans overthrowing white colonialists. The *Negro World* along with other black newspapers of the era published poems, essays, and short stories by Alain Locke, Claude McKay, and Zora Neale Hurston. In fact, it was the first newspaper to publish her poems, doing so in 1922. After a while Garvey lost interest in promoting the Harlem Renaissance, believing that black artistic activity should be subordinate to Black Nationalist protest politics. Therefore, the *Negro World* became solely a propaganda organ for the UNIA.

The *Negro World* flourished as long as Marcus Garvey did. When Garvey was imprisoned for mail fraud in 1925 and deported to Jamaica in 1927,

the UNIA faded away. So did the *Negro World*. Still, during its heyday it was the strongest voice for Black Nationalism during this era.

A. Phillip Randolph (1889–1979)

Primarily known as a great labor leader due to his organizing black Pullman porters into the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Workers, Randolph also was a noted journalist during the Harlem Renaissance. He cofounded with Chandler Owen (1889–1967) and edited the *Messenger*, which existed from 1917 to 1928. This magazine became the leading black radical publication of the era. The *Messenger* promoted socialism as the road to black freedom and called for solidarity between black and white workers. It also harshly criticized Marcus Garvey and the UNIA.

The *Messenger*, like *Crisis* and *Opportunity*, promoted the Harlem Renaissance, though not to the extent of the latter two. The Renaissance was incidental to its mission of promoting black socialism. It did publish Arna Bontemps, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, and Claude McKay. and The *Messenger's* drama critic was Theophilus Lewis, who wrote for the magazine from 1923 to 1927. Lewis's reviews of black plays and other fiction were the *Messenger's* main contribution to the Harlem Renaissance.

Plagued by consistently low circulation, the *Messenger* folded in 1928. Randolph later became one of the most powerful labor and civil rights leaders of the twentieth century, founding the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Workers and organizing the 1941 and 1963 Marches on Washington.

Conclusion

Black journalists and the newspapers and magazines they published and edited provided one of the main outlets for the artists of the Harlem Renaissance. At the same time, they were themselves part of the explosion of black creativity that characterized that era. The 1920s were a golden age for black journalism, as circulation, advertising, and income reached new heights. This firm financial foundation enabled them to publish and publicize Harlem Renaissance artists. By supporting local black artists of the era, black newspapers ensured that the Harlem Renaissance would be a national phenomenon, not one limited to just New York City.

The Harlem Renaissance witnessed an outpouring of black literary and political magazines, which had

not been seen before and has not been seen since. The most important of these—*The Crisis*, *Opportunity*, and the *Messenger*—were among the main publishers, critics, and employers of such Harlem Renaissance figures as Jessie Fauset, Zora Neale Hurston, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, and others. While white patronage and outlets were important to the success of the Harlem Renaissance, without black journalists the Harlem Renaissance would have had little impact.

HAYWARD "WOODY" FARRAR

See also Abbott, Robert Sengstracke; Baltimore Afro-American; Black Press; Chicago Defender; Crisis, The; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Fortune, Timothy Thomas; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Johnson, James Weldon; Messenger, The; Miller, Kelly; Murphy, Carl J.; Negro World; Opportunity; Owen, Chandler; Pittsburgh Courier; Randolph, A. Philip; Rogers, Joel Augustus; Schuyler, George S.; Vann, Robert L.; White, Walter

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Jungle Alley

Jungle Alley, also known as The Street, Paradise Valley, Beale Street, and The Stroll, was the part of 133th Street between Lenox and Seventh avenues. It was the locale for many expensive, white-owned, segregated nightclubs and cabarets such as the Cotton Club, Connie's Inn, and Small's Paradise, and for extravagant rent parties and speakeasies. As a center of Harlem's social scene, Jungle Alley functioned as a setting where upper-class white Americans who wanted to transcend the rigid rules of the color line could visit Harlem and gaze on the African American culture and people "without actually descending into it" (Watson 1995). In many ways, the economic, social, and artistic activities associated with the residents and businesses of Jungle Alley made it a microcosm of the cultural vibrancy that characterized the Harlem Renaissance.

The vogue of Harlem contributed to the popularity of the pricey nightclubs and cabarets in Jungle Alley. In addition to the Cotton Club, Connie's, and Small's, its popular nightspots and jazz clubs included the Apartment, Minton's Playhouse, Crawford's, and the Beehive. African American performers such as Duke Ellington, Ethel Waters, Cab Calloway, and Bessie

Smith appeared frequently in these establishments. Wealthy white Americans who were intrigued by the image of the African American as a primitive exotic unabashedly journeyed to Jungle Alley to see shows featuring scantily clad performers while being served by dancing waiters. To become acquainted with Harlem's nightlife and the world of the presumed primitive exotics, a visit to Jungle Alley was an essential part of a nighttime foray into Harlem, "race capital of the world."

Despite the allure and excitement of Jungle Alley, and despite the fact that this specific area of Harlem was a place where the races could congregate and socialize, the realities of racism and segregation prevented it from functioning in a genuinely color-blind way. For example, the Cotton Club—the largest and most popular nightspot in Jungle Alley—aimed its advertising at a predominantly if not wholly white clientele. The owners of clubs, who were often affiliated with the mob, strictly enforced the rules of segregation; they also carefully selected and hired young, light-skinned women whose physical appearance would be nonthreatening to a white audience. Moreover, there was seldom any social interaction between audiences and performers. Thus, although the establishments in Jungle Alley provided an income and commercial recognition for many African American performers, the exclusionary and racist practices of club owners were a reminder that white Americans had "infiltrated" Harlem and would maintain the status quo.

It should be noted, however, that the status quo varied within Jungle Alley, in terms of the clientele and reputation of the businesses there. Some establishments, such as the Sugar Cane on 135 Street at Fifth Avenue, attracted a more racially diverse crowd and provided a setting for the sale and distribution of cocaine, marijuana, and bootleg liquor. At such nightspots, sultry torch singers would perform while the customers reveled and danced into the early morning hours. Although businesses like the Sugar Cane were less elegant than the Cotton Club, they represented an adventurous fringe of Jungle Alley and appealed to the black working class.

Similarly, speakeasies, also known as "lap joints," and rent parties were a common aspect of life in Jungle Alley. The rent party, originally designed to raise money to forestall a tenant's impending eviction, became a common social gathering and communal event for working-class African Americans. Speakeasies and black-owned nightclubs provided a

venue for social interaction between blacks on the one hand and white curiosity seekers (particularly tourists) and white patrons of black artists on the other. Some establishments of this kind were used for more private events. The Bamboo Inn, for instance, was often used for young women's coming-out parties and for society matrons' luncheons; parties that began in someone's home would often conclude in a cabaret in Jungle Alley.

To some degree, the atmosphere of the speakeasies and rent parties allowed Harlemites to transcend barriers of race and class. As Wintz (1988) writes, "There all of Harlem converged: the prostitute, the washwoman, the petty gangster, the poet, and the intellectual shared the blues and swayed to the beat of the jazz musicians." Jungle Alley also appealed to gay and lesbian Harlemites. The Harlem Renaissance, in general, was a time of sexual as well as artistic freedom and exploration; moreover, the idea that African Americans were primitive exotics led, predictably, to a view of blacks as sexually uninhibited. Gay, lesbian, and bisexual Harlemites such as the novelist Wallace Thurman and the white patron Carl Van Vechten found Jungle Alley a zone of safety where they could express their sexuality. Gay establishments such as the Clam House, described as "a popular house for revelers but not for the innocent young" (Watson 1995), featured performers like Gladys Bentley and Bessie Smith, whose songs had double-entendre lyrics about same-sex love. Drag and costume balls, vividly depicted in Langston Hughes's autobiography *The Big Sea* (1940), were held at places such as the Rockland Palace and the Garden of Joy Club. Gays, lesbians, and bisexuals of all races also expressed their sexuality in private homes, apartments, and "buffet flats" such as Hazel Valentine's Daisy Chain. Jungle Alley, then, was a magnet for the sexually uninhibited.

Jungle Alley's commercial and social enterprises played a significant role in the development of the thriving Harlem community. Intellectuals, black artists and their patrons, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, working-class African Americans, and upper-class whites all converged on Jungle Alley in pursuit of good times, stimulating conversation, and hours of partying and drinking to the accompaniment of jazzy or soulful music. Despite the constraints of a racially divided society in the 1920s, the atmosphere of Jungle Alley enhanced the appeal of Harlem to a larger—and even a global—community.

LARNELL DUNKLEY JR.

Jungle Alley

See also Black Bohemia; Cotton Club; Harlem: 5—Neighborhoods; Homosexuality; House-Rent Parties; Nightclubs; Nightlife; Small's Paradise; *specific performers*

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Karamu House

Karamu House—a settlement house, neighborhood center, and complex for the fine arts and performing arts in Cleveland, Ohio—has served the city and helped launch the careers of numerous African American artists since the era of World War I. It was organized as the Playhouse Settlement in 1915 and later renamed Karamu, Swahili for “place of joyful gathering.” The center was an outgrowth of committee work done in 1914 by members of the Men’s Club of the Second Presbyterian Church, who had sensed that the cultural and social needs of the neighborhood—the Central Avenue District, at that time a community of “Jewish, Colored, and Italian peoples”—were being neglected. The committee discovered that “the better class of colored people” there were also interested in establishing a racially integrated social settlement. Early supporters of the idea included the African American author Charles Waddell Chesnutt and the Cleveland Association of Colored Men.

There was almost unanimous concern among local leaders about problems facing and related to the growing population of poor African American migrants from the South. After completing its own preliminary investigation, the committee hired a white couple, Russell and Rowena Jelliffe, who were graduates of Oberlin College and the Chicago School of Civics, to conduct a more extensive survey of the Central Avenue District. The Jelliffes found that the residents “were being denied any hope of or exposure to decent schooling, housing, jobs, recreational facilities and cultural advantages.” In 1915, at the request of the Men’s Club, the Jelliffes moved to

Cleveland to head the Playhouse Settlement and to develop programs that would address some of the needs identified in their study. Having worked at Chicago’s Hull House Settlement, they came with some practical experience in social work, but they often described their early activities in Cleveland as “learn as you go.” In a small frame house that was both their own home and the settlement center, game rooms, reading rooms, and classes in sewing, cooking, and crafts “were offered and eagerly received.” The Cleveland Board of Education also made space and equipment available in the Longwood School, including the gymnasium, printing presses, domestic science rooms, and paid teachers “to conduct classes and clubs there.” In 1919, the settlement agency was formally incorporated as the Neighborhood Association. The Karamu Theater was founded in 1927, in a building adjacent to the original complex. With encouragement from the celebrated African American actor Charles Gilpin, a resident troupe called the Gilpin Players raised funds to furnish their performance space, support other settlement activities, and endow scholarships for promising students in the performing and visual arts.

During and after the Great Depression, the Jelliffes, Chesnutt (who was now a member of the settlement’s board), and others worked with the schools and other agencies to foster creativity and interracial cooperation in social settings. These Clevelanders were pioneers in what became part of a national movement. By bringing new works to the stage and casting actors of all nationalities and racial backgrounds, the Jelliffes provided an alternative to the stereotypical plots and roles popular in mainstream American theater.

Langston Hughes was an alumnus of Karamu House. As a student at Cleveland Central High, he had been more interested in the graphic arts than in literature and had taught art to some of the younger students; he later taught graphics at the settlement. The Karamu Theater also produced six of Hughes's plays, which helped to establish it as a "focal point for both Negro and white dramatists writing for the Negro theater." When the Jelliffes retired from Karamu, Hughes expressed his gratitude in the poem "For Russell and Rowena Jelliffe."

REGENNIA N. WILLIAMS

See also Chesnutt, Charles Waddell; Gilpin, Charles; Harlem Renaissance in the United States: 4—Cleveland; Hughes, Langston

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Kellogg, Paul U.

Paul U. Kellogg attended the Civic Club Dinner of 21 March 1924—an event that was held in honor of Jessie Redmon Fauset's first novel and that James Weldon Johnson used to announce the emerging Harlem Renaissance to the white literary establishment. Kellogg was so impressed that he devoted the March 1925 issue of *Survey Graphic*, the social work magazine he edited, to black literature and art. For the six previous years, *Survey Graphic* had featured nationalist

cultural movements such as the "new Ireland" and the "new Russia" and had drawn attention to the emerging cultural pluralism in the United States. For Kellogg, the issue on black art would be an extension of this larger project.

Kellogg wanted to promote acceptance of African Americans and was looking for an approach that would be a departure from both the economic-educational method of Hampton and Tuskegee institutes and the political ideology of those fighting for legal rights in the face of discrimination and lynchings. Accordingly, he turned to the affirmation that could be found in works of art. Kellogg was predisposed toward the views of James Weldon Johnson and Alain Locke rather than those of Fauset, *The Crisis*, and particularly W. E. B. Du Bois, with whom he had had a falling-out a decade earlier.

Kellogg called on Locke to be a guest editor of the "Harlem issue," which featured the work of James Weldon Johnson, Charles S. Johnson, Rudolph Fisher, Du Bois, Countee Cullen, Anne Spencer, Angelina Grimké, Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, Langston Hughes, W. A. Domingo, Arthur Schomberg, and Walter White, among others. Importantly, Locke later expanded his work on this issue into an anthology, *The New Negro* (1925).

The March 1925 issue of *Survey Graphic* was reviewed favorably by H. L. Mencken, Waldo Frank, and Marcus Garvey, among others, and sold extremely well: 42,000 copies. In fact, this was the best-selling issue of *Survey Graphic* before World War II. However, some writers of the Harlem Renaissance criticized the issue. One point of contention was that Winold Reiss, who had illustrated other issues of the magazine, also worked on the "Harlem issue"; Fauset complained about the artwork because it was not what she considered appropriately "representative." Others said that there were limits to Kellogg's acceptance of African Americans. Kellogg was deeply involved in and committed to the support of black art and the Harlem Renaissance; however, as Hutchinson notes, his viewpoint still seemed to keep African American art in a subordinate position (1995 429). Kellogg's essay "The Negro Pioneers," for example, argued that African Americans were becoming Americanized by entering into the experiences of immigration and pioneering. He was countered on this point by others, among them Du Bois, who argued that the African American experience carried a cultural authority all its own. These debates raised by the "Harlem issue" of Kellogg's magazine were continued with the publication of Locke's book.

Kellogg made a vital contribution to the Harlem Renaissance through the "Harlem issue" of *Survey Graphic*, but the nature of that contribution also highlighted some of the ideological fissures in the movement, that would later divide it.

Biography

Paul Underwood Kellogg was born 20 September 1879, in Kalamazoo, Michigan. His parents were Frank Israel Kellogg, a businessman; and Mary Foster Underwood. He entered Columbia University in 1901. Kellogg wrote for the Kalamazoo *Daily Telegraph* after high school; joined *Charities Magazine* with his brother Arthur in 1902, and through his work there completed a study of life in Pittsburgh that would be published as the *Pittsburgh Survey* (1910–1914) and would serve as a model of research methods used for social reform; became editor of *Charities Magazine* (retitled *Survey Magazine* and later *Survey Graphic*) in 1912 and promoted it as a social work journal; served as editor of *Survey Graphic* until the magazine folded in 1952; and crusaded for social reform throughout his life. Kellogg died in 1958.

AMANDA M. LAWRENCE

See also Civic Club Dinner, 1924; Frank, Waldo; Locke, Alain; Mencken, H. L.; New Negro, The; Reiss, Winold; Survey Graphic; *specific writers*

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Kerlin, Robert

Robert Kerlin, a white socialist academic who taught at colleges throughout the American South during a long career, edited three collections of work by black

writers. In response to a wave of race riots that occurred in several northern cities just after World War I, the black press presented a variety of news articles and opinion columns. Kerlin gathered material from leading African American newspapers and published a well-regarded anthology, *The Voice of the Negro* (1919). In his introduction, Kerlin described the extent and influence of these newspapers and urged that whites who wished to understand African Americans should read the black press. In 1921, *The Nation* published a letter Kerlin had written protesting the treatment of blacks in Arkansas; Kerlin was immediately fired from his teaching post at the Virginia Military Institute, where he had served for more than a decade.

Kerlin also edited two early anthologies of African American poetry: *Contemporary Poetry of the Negro* (1921) and *Negro Poets and Their Poems* (1923). *Negro Poets and Their Poems*, the more widely read of the two, includes selections from and commentary about more than sixty poets including Phillis Wheatley, Angelina Weld Grimké, Georgia Johnson, Anne Spencer, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Walter Everette Hawkins, and Joseph S. Cotter Jr. Kerlin explained that, in selecting poems for his anthology, he looked primarily for "passion." His biographical notes and critical commentary are effusive, and thirty-six of his profiles contain photographs or portrait sketches. Chapter 1 of *Negro Poets and Their Poems* is a historical overview of folk song and pre-twentieth-century poets. Later chapters treat contemporary poets in groups, labeled "The Present Renaissance of the Negro," "The Heart of Negro Womanhood," "Dialect Verse," "The Poetry of Protest," and so on. Kerlin acknowledged earlier work by James Weldon Johnson and Arthur Schomberg as his guide in selecting poets for inclusion. *Negro Poets and Their Poems* received little serious critical attention, but it was reviewed briefly in some of the major magazines of the day.

In 1924, Kerlin wrote the lyrics for Samuel Barber's score "My Fairyland." By the 1930s, his political attention had shifted to the labor movement.

Biography

Robert Kerlin was born in Newcastle, Missouri, on 22 March 1866. He studied at Central College in Fayette, Missouri (A.M., 1890); at Johns Hopkins University, the University of Chicago, and Harvard (without completing a degree); and at Yale (Ph.D., 1906). He worked as a professor of English, Missouri Valley College,

Kerlin, Robert

1890–1894, 1901–1902; Southwestern University, 1902–1903; State Normal College, Warrensburg, Missouri, 1903–1906; Yale, 1906–1907; State Normal School, Farmville, Virginia, 1908–1910; Virginia Military Institute, 1910–1921; State Normal School, West Chester, Pennsylvania, 1922–1927; Potomac State College, Keyser, West Virginia, 1927–1933; and Western Maryland College, 1933–1940. He was active in the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1895–1898; and was chaplain for the Third Missouri Volunteers during the Spanish-American War, 1898. Kerlin died in Cumberland, Maryland, on 21 February 1950.

CYNTHIA BILLY

See also Cotter, Joseph Seamon; Grimké, Angelina Weld; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, Georgia Douglas; Johnson, James Weldon; McKay, Claude; Nation, The; Schomburg, Arthur A.; Spencer, Anne

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King, Billy

William (Billy) King, born in Whistler, Alabama, in 1875, was a living link between the Harlem Renaissance and nineteenth-century black minstrelsy. He left home at an early age and found a niche in black minstrel shows as part of the famous Georgia Minstrels in the late 1890s.

In 1898 he teamed with Clarence Bush to form King and Bush Wide Mouth Minstrels. They toured successfully until 1902, when the troupe became stranded in Texas. King rejoined the Georgia Minstrels, in which

the great Billy Kersands was the main attraction, and established himself along with Kersands as one of the four leading comedians of the troupe; he was noted for his stylish dressing.

In 1911 King went into vaudeville. He formed his own stock company in 1912, the same year he married Hattie McIntosh, widow of a famous minstrel. He wrote prolifically for shows performed at the various theaters where his company was based, including the Central in Atlanta (1912), the Lyric in Kansas City (1913), and the Star in Savannah (1914).

In 1915, he established a permanent base for his company at the white-owned Grand Theater in Chicago. From 1916 until 1923, he wrote, staged, and performed in a remarkable series of musical comedies and sketches, often changing shows every week. At least forty-four shows can be identified, mostly complete presentations although some were supporting sketches for white vaudeville. Many of them toured the black vaudeville circuits for which King was a booking agent, including Harlem's Lafayette Theater. He was also involved in operating theaters in Louisville, Chattanooga, Atlanta, Savannah, Birmingham, Jacksonville, Mobile, and elsewhere.

King's stock company employed a large roster of performers, many of whom went on to greater things. An early protégée was Gertrude Saunders, later famous in *Shuffle Along*. Other notable names included the comedian Billy Higgins, the female impersonator Andrew Tribble, the dancer Ida Forsythe, Lottie Gee (also of *Shuffle Along*), and Maude Russell. King also claimed to have helped promote the early career of Florence Mills.

His innovations included the clowning and chorus girl routine that later made Josephine Baker famous. He did not balk at including social and political satire on the race question, causing Lester Walton to describe one show as being like a protest meeting held under the auspices of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). When King's long run at the Grand Theater finally ended, he went back to vaudeville, taking the Billy King Road Show on tour from 1923 until it disbanded in Oklahoma City in 1925. The band stayed together as Walter Page's Blue Devils, the original nucleus of the Count Basie Orchestra.

King continued in show business, but after 1925 his career is obscure. He played in Earl Dancer and Ethel Waters' show *Vanities* in 1926 but later sought an injunction to prevent them from using his material. In 1937 he was elected president of the Colored Actors'



Billy King, c. 1907. (Library of Congress.)

Protective Society, which was based in New York. In 1967 Langston Hughes and Milton Melzer listed him in their “golden dozen” of all-time best black comedians. The date of King’s death is unrecorded.

Biography

William (Billy) King was born in Whistler, Alabama, in 1875. He was a cofounder of King and Bush Wide Mouth (later Colored) Minstrels, 1898–1902; a member of the Georgia Minstrels, 1902–1911; and founder and owner of the Billy King Stock Company, 1912–1923. He was elected president of the Colored Actors’ Protective Society, New York, 1937. The date of King’s death is unknown but was probably sometime in the 1960s.

BILL EGAN

See also Baker, Josephine; Blackface Performance; Forsyne, Ida; Lafayette Theater; Mills, Florence; Minstrelsy; Muse, Clarence; Musical Theater; Shuffle Along; Theater Owners’ Booking Association; Vaudeville; Waters, Ethel

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- 1912: *Two Bills from Alaska*.
- 1914: *Two Bills from Alaska* (second edition).
- 1914: *Carnation*.
- 1914: *Out in the Street*.
- 1914: *The Runaway’s Return*.
- 1916: *The Rivals*.
- 1916: *The Undertaker’s Daughter*.
- 1916: *Preparedness*.
- 1916: *The Other Fellow*.
- 1917: *Exploits in Africa*.
- 1917: *The Face at the Window*.
- 1917: *The Final Rehearsal*.
- 1917: *Hotel Nobody*.
- 1917: *The Kidnapper*.
- 1917: *Lady for a Day*.
- 1917: *The Lonesome Mile*.
- 1917: *A Mother-in-law’s Disposition*.
- 1917: *Neighbours*.
- 1917: *Raiding a Cabaret*.
- 1917: *The Senator*.
- 1918: *The Board of Education*.
- 1918: *Catching the Burglar*.
- 1918: *Chief Outlanchette*.
- 1918: *The Con Man*.
- 1918: *The Heart Breakers*.
- 1918: *My Rich Uncle*.
- 1918: *At The Beach*.
- 1918: *Goodby Everybody*.
- 1918: *In the Draft*.
- 1918: *Mr Jazz from Dixie*.
- 1918: *The Night Raid*.
- 1918: *Now I’m a Mason*.
- 1918: *The Rich Uncle*.
- 1919: *Exploits in Africa*.
- 1919: *Over the Top*.
- 1919: *They’re Off*.
- 1920: *China Town*.
- 1920: *Hello Dixieland*.
- 1920: *The New Americans*.
- 1920: *Lime Kiln Club*.
- 1921: *Trip Around the World*.
- 1922: *Moonshine*.
- 1922: *Darktown Jubilee*.
- 1922: *Hello Sue*.
- 1922: *Hits and Bits*.
- 1922: *Moonshine*.
- 1922: *Whirl of Joy*.
- 1923: *Burgleton Green versus Spark Plug*.
- 1923: *Whirl of Pleasure*.

King, Billy

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Kirkpatrick, Sidney

The baritone Sidney Kirkpatrick acted and entertained in minstrel shows, vaudeville, musicals, and dramas during the period of the Harlem Renaissance. His first professional engagement was with Billy Kersands’s Minstrels in 1902–1903. He was hired as a singer with Richards and Pringle’s Minstrels in 1909. Later, he went into vaudeville with his wife, Laura Bowman; they toured the United States and Europe together for nearly ten years with the Dark Town Entertainers, a group Kirkpatrick had founded. The repertoire of this group was unique in theatrical

circles. The members sang and danced, with Bowman, the highlight of the evening, performing varied characterizations in costume. One of her favorites was “Salome,” from the opera of that name.

In 1914, Kirkpatrick played the title role in *Captain Rufus*, a military comedy that had first been produced by the Pekin Theater in Chicago in 1907. In 1917, he appeared in the second production of the Frederick Douglass Film Company, *The Scapegoat*, which had its premiere on 15 May, at the Simplex Theater in New York City. The impressive cast also included Abbie Mitchell, Walker Thompson, Maude Jones, and Leon Williams. This film—an adaptation of a story by Paul Laurence Dunbar—was widely reviewed by critics of the time and was so successful that it was booked by white as well as black motion picture houses.

Bowman and Kirkpatrick separated in 1918, but they continued to perform together with the legendary Lafayette Players in Harlem in such shows as *His Honor, the Mayor* (1918); *Shades of Hades* (1922), in which Kirkpatrick played Satan; and *That Gets It* (1928). They also performed together in 1923 in the landmark productions of the Ethiopian Art Players, a group formed by Raymond O’Neil and the wife of Sherwood Anderson. These presentations included *Salome*, in which Kirkpatrick was praised for his portrayal of King Herod; *The Chip Woman’s Fortune*, in which he played the role of Silas Green; and *A Comedy of Errors*, in which he played the merchant Aegeon. Kirkpatrick made his final appearance on Broadway in 1928, as Enos Green in *Meek Mose*, written by Frank Wilson and produced by Lester Walton. He died two years later.

As his career developed during first two decades of the twentieth century, Kirkpatrick had come to be one of the favorites among many talented performers in Harlem. In addition, his professional affiliations with major production groups and other influential artists of this era contributed to his own success in the performing arts as well as the continuing development of other black Americans in this field.

Biography

The date of Sidney Kirkpatrick’s birth is uncertain. Kirkpatrick performed with Billy Kersands’s Minstrels, 1909; and played the title role in *Captain Rufus*, 1914. He also performed in *The Scapegoat*, 1917; *His Honor, the Mayor*, 1918; *Shades of Hades*, 1922; *Salome*, 1923; *The Chip Woman’s Fortune*, 1923; *A Comedy of Errors*, 1923;

That Gets It, 1928; and *Meek Mose*, 1928. He founded the Dark Town Entertainers. Kirkpatrick died in New York City in 1930.

CARMEN PHELPS

See also Ethiopian Art Players; Lafayette Players; Minstrelsy; Mitchell, Abbie; Walton, Lester; Wilson, Frank

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Knopf, Alfred A.

Alfred A. Knopf founded the publishing house Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., in New York in 1915 and then served as chairman of this highly respected firm until 1972. Knopf was interested in poetry, European literature in translation, and literature that touched on issues of the day; and he shepherded the house through a tremendously productive period in the 1920s. During this time, the firm emerged as both the leading venue for writers of the Harlem Renaissance—publishing works by Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson, Nella Larsen, Carl Van Vechten, and Walter White, among others—and a dominant force in the American literary marketplace at large. The Knopf imprint (which later became a subsidiary of Random House) is still recognized through its “Borzoï” icon, an image of a Russian hound.

Alfred Knopf was born in New York City, the son of Samuel Knopf and Ida Japhe Knopf, Jewish immigrants from Europe. Alfred’s mother died when he was four

years old. Samuel Knopf became successful in advertising, and in 1906 the family moved from Manhattan to Long Island. Knopf was educated first at public schools, then at the MacKenzie School in Westchester, New York, before receiving a bachelor of arts degree from Columbia University in 1912. At Columbia, he studied literature with Brander Matthews; Bernard Boyeson, who was an early American advocate of Russian writers; and Joel Spingarn, who would later become a prominent publisher and an activist with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Knopf also wrote for, and became advertising manager of, the *Columbia Monthly*. After graduation, Knopf traveled in Europe and Britain, where he met and stayed with the writer John Galsworthy. On returning to the United States, Knopf cast aside his plans to attend Harvard Law School and, with some difficulty and using his father’s connections, found a position in the accounting department of the publishing firm Doubleday, Page, and Company. During the period around 1915, the publishing industry was not generally open to Jews; and it was still in the process of becoming an industry located almost exclusively in New York. The opening up of the publishing business, along with its newly centralized location in New York, helped fuel those aspects of the Harlem Renaissance that relied on receptive mainstream white publishers and a consolidation of cultural outlets in New York.

In 1915, after a brief stint with the firm of Mitchell Kennerley, Knopf launched his own business with the financial assistance of his father and the enthusiastic editorial assistance of the woman he would marry in 1916, Blanche Wolf. In 1916, Knopf’s new house published a number of Russian, German, and French works in translation and a book of music criticism by Carl Van Vechten, *Music and Bad Manners* (1916). Van Vechten, a white critic and man about town, would come to play a significant role in the Knopfs’ support of African American writers and subjects. Van Vechten’s first novel, *Peter Whiffle* (1922), was a best-seller for the company and on that basis Van Vechten was able to build his influence. Knopf demonstrated his interest in the burgeoning genre of African American literature by publishing Walter White’s controversial novel about the riots in Atlanta, *The Fire in the Flint*, in 1924. The following year, after meeting White through Alfred Knopf’s introduction, Van Vechten began to exert his influence in support of Langston Hughes and then other African American writers.

Knopf, Alfred A.

When Van Vechten and Hughes first became friends, in 1925, Hughes had just won a prize for his poem “The Weary Blues.” Van Vechten insisted on reading a collection of Hughes’s poems, made suggestions, and—most important—brought the poems to Knopf for consideration. Hughes’s first book, *The Weary Blues* (1926), began what would become a long and complex relationship among Hughes, Van Vechten, Alfred Knopf, and Blanche Knopf. Emily Bernard’s collection of letters between Van Vechten and Hughes (2001) suggests both the helpful and the manipulative aspects of the relationship between the older established white writer and the younger, unknown, but promising African American. Ultimately, Bernard finds much of value in the assistance Van Vechten gave to Hughes, indicated perhaps best by the longevity of their friendship but also by the efficacy of that first gesture: “Van Vechten’s one lunch date with Alfred Knopf meant that Hughes could quit his tedious day job doing research” (Bernard 2001, p. xxi).

Van Vechten soon became the most notable—and in some quarters the most notorious—white popularizer of the Harlem Renaissance, with the publication by Knopf of his best-selling novel *Nigger Heaven* (1926). The novel was condemned by many critics even as it opened market-driven publishing opportunities for ever more African American writers. The Knopf publishing house went on to bring out such landmarks as James Weldon Johnson’s *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, which it reissued in 1927 to great acclaim—and to a much wider audience than Johnson had achieved when the work was originally issued by a lesser-known publisher in 1912. Knopf also published Nella Larsen’s pair of novels, *Quicksand* (1928) and *Passing* (1929).

Alfred Knopf’s personal style, at least by his own account, seems to have played a role in the success and high reputation of his firm. In his unpublished memoirs, probably written in the 1960s, Knopf remembers the early days of the firm fondly: “1920 completed our first five years and we marked this anniversary with the publication of *The Borzoi*, 1920, a small volume which I think is unique in publishing. It shows our authors to have been a happy family in the early days, for many of them wrote pieces for it, about other authors on the list” (Moore and Lewis 1992). The sense of a “family” was underscored by the social relations that developed between the Knopfs and their authors. Knopf writes warmly of the period from 1924 to 1928, when the couple lived at 1148 Fifth Avenue and entertained guests such as George Gershwin, who played the piano; Paul Robeson, who sang; and James



Alfred A. Knopf, photographed by Carl Van Vechten, 1935.

(Library of Congress.)

Weldon Johnson, who recited his poems. At the same time, however, Knopf was not a gentleman publisher; he was running a business and he needed to make money. According to the critic Clifton Fadiman, in his introduction to another promotional retrospective collection put out by the Knopf publishing house in 1965 to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary, the company “was started not as a playboy’s exercise but as a business. It has remained one, with attention methodically paid to the superior attractions of black ink over red” (1965, ix).

In addition to its role in the Harlem Renaissance, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., emerged as a major publisher of nationally and internationally renowned authors. During the period of the Harlem Renaissance, Knopf’s list included Wallace Stevens, Ezra Pound, Willa Cather, T. S. Eliot, Edmund Wilson, H. L. Mencken, Dashiell Hammett, E. M. Forster, and Thomas Mann.

Biography

Alfred Abraham Knopf was born 12 September 1892 in New York City. He studied at public schools in New

York; MacKenzie School, Westchester, New York; and Columbia University (A.B., 1912). He worked in the accounting department of Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1912–1914; founded the publishing house Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1915; and became chairman emeritus in 1972. He was publisher of *American Mercury*, 1924–1934. Knopf was chairman of the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments of the National Park Service; a member of the American Historical Association and the New York State Historical Society; a trustee of the American Scenic Historic Preservation Society; and a member of the Overseers' Visiting Committee of the English Department of Harvard University. He died in Purchase, New York, 11 August 1984.

JOSHUA BOAZ KOTZIN

See also American Mercury; Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man; Fire in the Flint, The; Gershwin, George; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, James Weldon; Knopf, Alfred A., Inc.; Knopf, Blanche; Larsen, Nella; Mencken, H. L.; Nigger Heaven; Passing: Novel; Publishers and Publishing Houses; Quicksand; Robeson, Paul; Spingarn, Joel; Van Vechten, Carl; White, Walter

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Knopf, Alfred A., Inc.

The publishing house Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., was founded by Alfred Knopf in New York in 1915. With the financial assistance of his father, Samuel Knopf,

and the editorial guidance of his wife, Blanche Wolfe Knopf, Alfred guided the house through a tremendously productive period in the 1920s as it emerged as both the leading venue for writers of the Harlem Renaissance—publishing works by Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson, Nella Larsen, Carl Van Vechten, and Walter White, among others—and as a dominant force in the American literary marketplace at large. The Knopf imprint (which became a subsidiary of Random House) still uses its logo of a borzoi, a Russian hound.

The advent of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., was an important development in the Harlem Renaissance both because of the particular works it published and because of the larger trends of which it was an exemplary part. During the period around 1915, the publishing industry was still an elite Anglo-American business, and it was still in the process of becoming an industry located mostly in New York. Opening up the publishing business to Jews such as the Knopfs, along with the industry's newly centralized location in New York, helped fuel those aspects of the Harlem Renaissance that relied on receptive mainstream publishers and a consolidation of cultural outlets in New York. Alfred Knopf's interest in European literature—described by Randolph Lewis as "a wider definition of what was publishable"—was combined with Blanche Knopf's "fluency in French and fondness for French culture," which "made her a perfect envoy to Parisian literary circles." Lewis adds: "This multicultural attitude made the house of Knopf atypical among the literary publishers of New York, ideal for alternative American voices from outside the literary establishment—such as those of African American writers" (1992, 53).

In 1916, the new house published a number of Russian, German, and French works in translation and a book of music criticism by Carl Van Vechten, *Music and Bad Manners* (1916). Van Vechten, a white critic and man about town, would play an important part in the Knopfs' support of African American writers and subjects. Van Vechten's first novel, *Peter Whiffle* (1922), was a best-seller for the company, and on that basis Van Vechten was able to build his influence. Knopf demonstrated his own interest in the burgeoning genre of African American literature by publishing Walter White's controversial novel about riots in Atlanta, *The Fire in the Flint*, in 1924; the following year, after meeting Walter White through Alfred Knopf's introduction, Van Vechten began to exert his influence in support of, first, Langston Hughes and then other African American writers.

When Van Vechten and Hughes first became friends in 1925, Hughes had just won a prize for his poem "The Weary Blues." Van Vechten insisted on reading a collection of Hughes's poems, made suggestions, and—most important—brought the poems to Knopf for consideration. Hughes's first book, *The Weary Blues* (1926), began what would become a long and complex relationship among Hughes, Van Vechten, Alfred Knopf, and Blanche Knopf. Emily Bernard's collection of letters between Van Vechten and Hughes (2001) suggests both the helpful and the manipulative aspects of their relationship. Ultimately, Bernard seems to find much of value in the assistance Van Vechten gave Hughes, which was perhaps indicated best by the longevity of their friendship.

Van Vechten had considerable muscle to flex at Knopf when he decided to help Hughes. Hughes had impressed the black literati with his early poems, but none of his mentors in Harlem had the power to get his work published. "Van Vechten's one lunch date with Alfred Knopf meant that Hughes could quit his tedious day job doing research" (Bernard, xxi).

Van Vechten soon became the most noted—and was considered by some the most notorious—white popularizer of the Harlem Renaissance, with the publication by Knopf of his best-selling novel *Nigger Heaven* (1926). The novel was condemned by many critics even as it opened up a market, and thus publishing opportunities, for increasingly more African American writers. The Knopf publishing house, partially through Van Vechten's influence, went on to bring out such landmarks as its reissue in 1927 of James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*; this had first been published in 1912, when it had only a small press run, but now it found a much wider audience. Knopf also published Nella Larsen's novels *Quicksand* (1928) and *Passing* (1929).

The relationship between the Knopfs and Langston Hughes illustrates how financial considerations, always a source of concern, could produce tension over questions of creative and political autonomy. When money became more of an issue, the Knopfs put more pressure on Hughes to produce marketable work: "The financial pressures of the early 1930s forced the shortcomings of the Knopfs' treatment of Hughes to the surface; with fewer people buying books, the Knopfs became less tolerant publishers" (Lewis 1992, 56). Also, as Hughes, in the early 1930s, became more politically engaged with causes that were not exclusively African American, economic and ideological fissures began to appear: "The Knopfs,

with Van Vechten's support, as many letters indicate, implicitly and explicitly urged Hughes to focus his writing on racial subjects. Political themes were only acceptable if they stuck to primarily racial issues" (Lewis 1992, 57). Despite these problems, Hughes seems to have appreciated his long-standing relationship with the Knopfs. He wrote to them in 1941: "Dear Alfred and Blanche, This June marks for me twenty years of publication—largely thanks to you as my publishers. With my continued gratitude and affection . . . Langston Hughes" (Lewis 1992, 62).

Lewis concludes:

Financial pressures in the early years of the Depression took a toll on the Knopf-Harlem relationship, as did age. The Knopfs were no longer the "new breed" of publisher; younger, more daring publishers assumed this role. With the Knopfs reaching middle age and their firm growing in reputation, they gradually entered into the fold of the publishing establishment, letting someone else save the world from commercial publishing of the narrow-minded variety. (63)

At the same time as it was participating in the triumphs and conflicts of the Harlem Renaissance, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., emerged as a major publisher of nationally and internationally regarded authors. During the period of the Harlem Renaissance, Knopf's list included Wallace Stevens, Ezra Pound, Willa Cather, T. S. Eliot, Edmund Wilson, H. L. Mencken, Dashiell Hammett, E. M. Forster, and Thomas Mann—the "publishing establishment" indeed.

JOSHUA BOAZ KOTZIN

See also *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*; *Fire in the Flint*, The; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, James Weldon; Knopf, Alfred A.; Knopf, Blanche; Larsen, Nella; Mencken, H. L.; *Nigger Heaven*; *Passing*; *Novel*; *Publishers and Publishing Houses*; *Quicksand*; Van Vechten, Carl; White, Walter

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Knopf, Blanche

As a director of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., Publishers, from its founding in 1915 until her death in 1966, Blanche Knopf helped many authors of the Harlem Renaissance gain a wider audience by the seemingly simple means of recognizing their talent and accepting and publishing their work. Under her guidance, the new firm quickly developed a reputation as a publisher of high-quality literary books. While Blanche Knopf is best known as the publisher who introduced English translations of important European writers, including Sigmund Freud, Albert Camus, and Thomas Mann, to the United States, she was also responsible for the fact that Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., became one of the most significant publishers of the writers of the Harlem Renaissance.

When Blanche Wolf and her future husband, Alfred (they married in 1916), established the publishing firm of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., in 1915, there were no models for a woman who wished to do serious work as a book editor and publisher. In this period there was no question that the firm would bear Alfred's name alone, or that his title would be (and would remain) a bit more impressive than Blanche's, although the two were equal in their responsibilities, their talent, and their accomplishments. As the firm grew, Alfred made full use of the contacts he made through male-only organizations such as the Publishers' Lunch Club, while Blanche became adept at using her social connections to cultivate writers. Her work with writers was personal and individual; writers with whom she worked received invitations to lunch and personal letters from her regularly.

For the first several years of her work with the firm, the multilingual Knopf focused on learning about the technical aspects of book publishing and on acquiring the works of French writers. But the firm also took on an angry novel about riots in Atlanta,

Walter White's *The Fire in the Flint* (1924). Like most of the company's books, *The Fire in the Flint* sold respectably, but it was by no means a best-seller. Two years later, the company published White's second novel, *Flight* (1926), about Atlanta's black middle class and African Americans who "passed" in the North. As a black writer whose work was being issued by a major publisher of the 1920s, White was in small group. Most black writers at the time published and sold their own work, or they found their work accepted by a very few small presses in New York that turned out good books but could not reach a national audience. With Knopf, White found himself in a community of recognized writers with a supportive editor. A letter that White wrote to Knopf in 1928, as he was working on *Rope and Faggot* (1929)—a book about lynching in the United States, which Knopf published—includes greetings to Carl Van Vechten and to other writers of the Harlem Renaissance who were also published by Knopf.

It was through her friendship with Carl Van Vechten, the controversial white author of the novel *Nigger Heaven* (1926), that Knopf was encouraged to take on the works of more black American writers. Van Vechten was fascinated by the culture of Harlem, and he had asked the Knopfs for an introduction to Walter White. With White as his guide, he became acquainted with many of the important writers and musicians of Harlem in the 1920s, and he wrote reviews and criticism of their work. He suggested to Blanche that Knopf, Inc., turn its attention to "the Negro question," and she agreed to consider manuscripts Van Vechten sent her way.

In 1925, Van Vechten brought Blanche a manuscript of a collection by an unknown poet, Langston Hughes. At Van Vechten's urging, Blanche agreed to publish *The Weary Blues* (1926), making Hughes the first African American poet to be published by a major firm in the United States. Knopf took Hughes under her wing, guiding his manuscript through the production and marketing process, and also helping him with personal and professional advice and encouragement. Knopf acted in some ways as Hughes's agent, negotiating royalties and speaker's fees that he was too timid to ask for himself. Hughes's second collection of poetry, *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927), was, in Knopf's view, too political and not as marketable as his first book. Although Knopf and Hughes disagreed about the direction of his work, and their professional relationship grew strained as Hughes's work became more political and less profitable, Knopf, Inc., continued to publish Hughes's work, including the novel *Not without Laughter* (1930).

Knopf took on the work of several other writers of the Harlem Renaissance, in many cases acting on Van Vechten's advice. Important Knopf publications include James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1927) and *Black Manhattan* (1930); Nella Larsen's two novels, *Quicksand* (1928) and *Passing* (1929); and Rudolph Fisher's *Walls of Jericho* (1930). A pattern emerged with these books: Van Vechten identified the work; Knopf edited and published it; and, frequently, Van Vechten wrote the introduction. Knopf also published the work of Van Vechten, including the sensational *Nigger Heaven*. The title of that novel was intended to be offensive and eye-catching, and it was both. The book was intended as a sympathetic portrayal of urban African American life, but many readers found it condescending.

Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., was a business, and Blanche Knopf accepted manuscripts that she expected would turn a profit for the company. But she considered manuscripts that most publishing houses at the time would not consider, she nurtured new talents, and she made it possible—and profitable—for African American writers of the 1920s to reach a national audience.



Blanche Knopf. (Library of Congress.)

Biography

Blanche Wolf Knopf was born 30 July 1894 in New York City. She was educated by private governesses and at the Gardner School. With Alfred A. Knopf, her future husband, she founded the publishing company Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., in New York City (1915), and the Borzoi colophon and imprint (1916). She was the firm's office manager, 1916–1921; its director and vice president, 1921–1957; and its director and president, 1957–1966. Her awards included the following: French Legion of Honor, Chevalier (1949) and Officer (1960); Brazilian Order of the Southern Cross, Cavaliero (1952) and Oficial (1964); honorary degrees from Franklin and Marshall College (1962), Western College for Women (1966), and Adelphi University (1966); and the Women's National Book Association Skinner Award (1966). She died 4 June 1966 in New York City.

CYNTHIA BILY

See also *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*; *Black Manhattan*; *Fine Clothes to the Jew*; *Fire in the Flint, The*; Fisher, Rudolph; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, James Weldon; Knopf, Alfred A.; Knopf, Alfred A., Inc.; Larsen, Nella; *Nigger Heaven*; *Not without Laughter*; *Passing: Novel*; *Quicksand*; Van Vechten, Carl; *Walls of Jericho, The*; *Weary Blues, The*; *White, Walter*

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Krigwa Players

The Krigwa Players Little Theater Group was founded in 1925 by *Crisis* magazine at the urging of W. E. B. Du Bois. By all accounts, the Krigwa Players were dedicated to the production of theater by, for, about, and near black Americans, with a special emphasis on the

production of plays with a racially conscious message. The name Krigwa (originally Crigwa) is an acronym representing the initial sounds and letters of the legendary Crisis Guild of Writers and Artists. Famous members of the Krigwa Players included the artist Aaron Douglas (who painted the scenery for the group) and the playwrights Mary T. Burrill (who wrote *Aftermath* and *They That Sit in Darkness*), Willis Richardson (who wrote *The Chip Woman's Fortune* and *Boothblack Lover*), May Miller (who wrote *Riding the Goat* and *Harriet Tubman*), and Georgia Douglas Johnson (who wrote *Blue Blood* and *Sunday Morning in the South*). The contributions of Krigwa to the development of black theater are vast: the group awarded prizes to encourage blacks to write drama, used *Crisis* as an outlet for establishing guidelines for budding dramatists, provided space for the workshopping of dramas in progress, and served as a training ground for black actors and actresses.

Success stories attributable to Krigwa are abundant. For example, when the administration of Howard University refused to grant the Howard Players permission to perform some of Willis Richardson's works (because the administrators considered them propaganda), Richardson was encouraged by Du Bois to submit his plays to black theater houses and to *Crisis*. Richardson's first-place award in the first annual Krigwa drama contest helped bring national attention to his work. Another example of Krigwa's successful promotion of black theater practitioners is May Miller, whose plays had previously been staged primarily in educational environments with little financial support for her work. Miller was able to advance her theater career by winning prizes in Krigwa's playwriting contests and by joining the Baltimore Krigwa group as director, performer, and actor. Additionally, two of Krigwa's performers—Richard Hughly and Doralyn Spence—joined professional casts in downtown theaters after the successes of the Krigwa group in the Belasco tournament.

Theophilus Lewis, the black drama critic for the *Messenger*, praised Krigwa and other "little theater" groups operating in black communities for staging serious and potentially educational plays by blacks. Du Bois described the Krigwa Players as a group dedicated to presenting black community theater, with special attention to noncommercial theater with a political message: even more specifically, they supported developing propaganda plays that could be used to politically uplift and to educate African Americans. Occasionally, the Krigwa Players would include interpretive dancing on their programs, but Krigwa's promotion of political

theater was especially important because, without the help of a communal group, this type of theater was not likely to gain an audience. It rarely appealed to wealthy theatergoers, theater owners, or any other group without a strong allegiance to the black community.

The Krigwa "little theater" movement quickly found support not only in New York but also in other areas of the country. The original Krigwa Players operated under the direction of Charles Burroughs and met in the basement of the New York Public Library on 135th Street—a space offered by the librarian, Earnestine Rose. Material support for the group came from a variety of sources. Amy Spingarn provided the money for the prizes that the group awarded. The New York Public Library provided stage space, dressing rooms, and lighting equipment. The players wrote their own plays, acted the parts, furnished audiences, and attended to any other necessary aspects of production. The Krigwa Players soon had extensions in Cleveland, Ohio; New Haven, Connecticut; Baltimore, Maryland; Washington, D.C.; and Denver, Colorado.

The Krigwa Players' first major production took place on 25 October 1926, as they enlivened the *Crisis* awards dinner with performances of Willis Richardson's *Compromise* and Eulalie Spence's *Fool's Errand*. In addition, they regularly offered local weekend performances and participated in small competitions for one-act plays. In May 1927, the New York group entered a national "little theater" tournament and again presented *Fool's Errand*, in a performance that was praised in the *New York Times* as a close second to the top performance of the tournament. In June 1927, Spence's *The Hunch* was performed by the Krigwa Players of Washington, D.C. In 1928, *The Crisis* reported that the group was not meeting as regularly as before but that it had performed Mary Burrill's *Aftermath* in the Belasco tournament, with the encouragement of the tournament's promoters.

By 1930, there is no record of the group's activities, and their practice and performance space was given to the Harlem Experimental Theater. Various explanations for the demise of Krigwa have been offered. Du Bois said that after the group won the national "little theater" contest, its activities slowed because its best members were lured away by downtown theaters, which could give performers more money and greater exposure; however, the fatal blow, according to Du Bois, was the onset of the Depression. This second reason seems somewhat unlikely, though, since other black acting troupes, such as the Harlem Experimental Theater, survived.

Another explanation was given by some group members, who said they left because of Du Bois's increasingly heavy-handed promotion of the propaganda play, without respect for their individual artistic concerns: while they understood the need for political theater, they did not want to limit their art to political themes. For instance, Eulalie Spence—one of the first writers to have her work produced by Krigwa—grew increasingly frustrated because Du Bois was insisting that she write about issues which were not engaging for her. Still another explanation had to do with money: the New York group was said to have dissolved over a disagreement about the money that had been won in the tournament of 1927; when Du Bois claimed the total amount for expenses, without sharing any of the prize with the group members, some of them became embittered and left the troupe. In any case, after the group in New York broke up, Krigwa groups across the country soon did the same.

Though the life of Krigwa was short and its concerns were often controversial, it had a significant role in the developments of black theater at the time and significant effects on the black theater that followed.

ETHEL A. YOUNG-MINOR

See also Community Theater; Crisis, The; Douglas, Aaron; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Fool's Errand; Johnson, Georgia Douglas; Lewis, Theophilus; Little Theater Tournament; Messenger, The; 135th Street Library; Richardson, Willis

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Labor

The Harlem Renaissance has sometimes been interpreted largely in terms of race. Analyses, however, are incomplete without an understanding of the important fact that the vast majority of black Americans, including Harlemites, were working people. Indeed, the lives of working black Americans provided much of the subject matter for the authors, poets, painters, and photographers of the Harlem Renaissance. It was this focus as much as anything that distinguished early authors of the renaissance, such as Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, and Jean Toomer, from their black predecessors. Particularly significant for their art was the great movement of blacks from the South to the North that was happening during the time of the Harlem Renaissance. Much of what the authors observed and wrote about concerned the difficult transition of rural agricultural folk into an urban working class.

In the early twentieth century, black Americans were so constrained by systematic racial oppression and discrimination that the structure of black America was radically different from that of white America. In Harlem during the 1920s, 90 percent of black Americans were blue-collar workers. Not only were black Americans excluded from skilled, supervisory, and managerial positions (except in black businesses); they were also excluded from entire industries, segregated into positions requiring strength and endurance, and often given the dirtiest and most dangerous tasks. In 1930, for example, the following occupations in America were most heavily occupied by blacks: laborers in fertilizer factories (84.1 percent), laborers in turpentine

farms and distilleries (82 percent), launderers and laundresses not in a laundry (75.1 percent), porters other than those in stores (73.5 percent), cooks other than those in hotels and boardinghouses (68.5 percent), operatives in fertilizer factories (67.6 percent), laborers in cigar and tobacco factories (59.5 percent), operatives in turpentine farms and distilleries (53.1 percent), bootblacks (50.6 percent), and midwives (50.1 percent; "The Negro in Industry" 1936, 976).

Because opportunities for work for black men were infrequent, and because black men's work was insecure, the proportion of black women in the paid labor force was greater than that of women in almost any other group—although opportunities were even more restricted for black women than for black men. In 1934, for instance, about 25 percent of all women over the age of fifteen were in the paid workforce, but the figure for black women was about 50 percent. In 1925, 45 percent of married black women worked, whereas the rate for all married women was about 15 percent. Of all child workers, 36 percent were black. Six times more black girls under age sixteen worked than white girls. Four times more black women over age sixty-five worked than white women.

Not only were employers reluctant to hire black men; labor unions and white workers were generally also hostile. Studies of New York City by George S. Schuyler, published in 1927, revealed that no blacks worked as salesclerks in major department stores. Macy's hired blacks as elevator operators, cafeteria workers, and escalator men; but Gimbel's refused all black labor, claiming that white workers and shoppers would object. Of the large employers in New York, not one hired blacks as semiskilled or skilled

workers. In the transit systems, no drivers were black; the systems that did hire blacks used them as porters or messengers.

World War I was a watershed for African Americans. It marked the first time that black Americans in large numbers were able to break the "agricultural ceiling." Half a million blacks left the South for northern and western cities between 1916 and 1920. While the war lasted, despite residential segregation and differential wage rates, black workers had opportunities in mass-production industries at much better rates of pay than they were used to. Following peace and the economic collapse of 1921–1922, there was a recovery; during the rest of the 1920s 800,000 more blacks left the South. The proportion of all blacks living in cities rose from 27 percent in 1916 to about 35 percent in 1920, then to 43 percent in the late 1920s, and then to nearly 50 percent by 1940. In Harlem, the number of blacks rose from 73,000 in 1920 to 164,000 in 1930 (25 percent were foreign born).

However, pervasive racism and other factors contributed to low occupational levels among black migrants. In New York City, the economy revolved around skilled and white-collar jobs and small manufacturing firms. Few opportunities existed for unskilled and unschooled labor such as those offered elsewhere. A majority of the migrants from the South had not completed grade school, and few had any vocational training. Opportunities for adult education in Harlem were minimal. During the 1920s, blacks made little headway in improving their occupational opportunities.

Harlem was, if nothing else, poor. The poorest 50 percent of blacks in New York City lived on the equivalent of 46 percent of the income of the poorest 50 percent of whites. In addition to low wages and frequent periods of unemployment, black Harlemites paid more in rent (up to 40 percent of their income) to live in more crowded conditions than existed anywhere else in the nation, and they were in worse health.

The relationship between black Americans and the organized labor movement was troubled, to say the least. In 1890, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) had banned the color bar and refused to grant a charter of affiliation to the National Association of Machinists, which maintained such a bar; in 1891 the AFL had hired George L. Norton to organize black workers. By the end of the decade, however, the AFL had changed: it accepted the autonomy of member unions, and the nation witnessed an aggressive exclusion of skilled black workers from their trades. In 1900,

the AFL convention gave official sanction to Jim Crow in organizing. By 1910, twelve union affiliates in good standing had constitutional or ritual bans on black members, and a range of less formal exclusionary mechanisms were in place. High initiation fees, tacit agreements, discriminatory technical exams, special licenses, and a ban on blacks as apprentices all worked against black union membership. Even when national unions were not unsympathetic to black workers, individual locals often were. Blacks in search of work were sometimes able to find it only by replacing striking white workers. New York City's black longshoremen, for example, gained a foothold in the late 1890s when the exclusionary white union struck their employers.

The black community thus became not only suspicious of organized labor unions but in many cases hostile to them. The outstanding leader of his generation, Booker T. Washington, promoted individual self-help and opposed unions. After Washington's death in 1915, Marcus Garvey was the most influential black leader to oppose unions. As early as 1902, on the other hand, the group around W. E. B. Du Bois recommended that blacks support the labor movement even while denouncing its racist practices. By 1915, attempts to organize national, as opposed to just local, unions of black workers began to bear fruit. In that year, Robert L. Mays organized the Railwaymen's International Industrial Benevolent Association, which would peak in 1920 with 15,000 members. Rienzi B. Lemus founded the Brotherhood of Dining Car Porters in 1920. Most important, the activities of A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen in Harlem led to attempts to organize elevator operators in 1918 and shipyard workers in the National Brotherhood Workers of America the following year, and to an invitation to Randolph in 1925 to head the newly founded Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. In Harlem, the other great promoter and organizer of black labor was the socialist Frank R. Crosswaith.

As the Harlem ghetto developed, the problems of employment stirred both the Urban League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). During World War I, the New York Urban League involved itself in labor matters when it started the Committee for Improving the Industrial Conditions of Negroes and held conferences with the AFL in what turned out to be a long and fruitless effort to get the federation to stop discriminatory practices. Pressure from NAACP led, in 1918, to the establishment of the United States Division of Negro

Economics under the Department of Labor (the division was scrapped in 1921). NAACP tried again in 1924 when it proposed an Interracial Labor Commission to try to improve relations with the AFL and end discrimination. None of these efforts succeeded.

In 1925, several developments marked a turning point in black labor history. The National Urban League formed its Department of Industrial Relations to lobby and agitate continually for better opportunities for black workers. The American Communist Party established the American Negro Labor Congress. Frank Crosswaith, A. Philip Randolph, and the Urban League formed the Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers; and the Pullman porters began their long fight for recognition. Harlem was crucial in all these efforts. Even by 1928, however, only 4 percent of the members of the AFL in New York City were black—though the foundation for improvement had nevertheless been laid.

Throughout what is generally known as a prosperous decade, black workers experienced little affluence. Declines occurred in industries where they were most heavily concentrated—agriculture, coal, lumber, iron, and steel. The construction industry was also uneven. Earlier than in many areas of the country, the economy in New York City slowed down and unemployment rose. Floyd J. Calvin reported in *Opportunity* in May 1929 (a few months before the stock market crashed in October) that over the previous year, because of an economic slowdown, blacks had been replaced by whites in such normally “black” jobs as laying pavement and collecting garbage.

Blacks were hit earliest and hardest by the Depression. The Urban League surveyed twenty-five cities in 1930 and found a decrease of 34.5 percent in the number of available jobs for blacks and an increase of 40 percent in demand. In New York City at the end of 1930, only 42.5 percent of black workers were in full-time employment, compared with 64.2 percent of native-born whites. Similarly, only 31.9 percent of black women workers were employed full time, compared with 74.7 percent of native-born white women. Blacks became unemployed sooner and stayed unemployed longer than whites.

Despite some exceptions, relief programs and their implementation almost universally discriminated against blacks, either through exclusion of job categories containing the largest numbers of blacks, such as domestic service workers and agricultural workers, or through differential payments. In Harlem by 1933, almost 50 percent of all families received unemployment

relief but only 9 percent of work relief jobs went to blacks. The whole community in Harlem took action to increase the representation of blacks in employment and to improve opportunities. In 1933, the Reverend John H. Johnson spearheaded the Citizens League for Fair Play (CLFP). Ira Kemp and Arthur Reid formed the Harlem Labor Union (HLU) to gain employment in Harlem for black workers. Sufi Abdul Hamid founded the Harlem Industrial Clerical Alliance. Crosswaith and Randolph started the Harlem Labor Council (HLC). While CLFP worked on boycotts to force companies to hire blacks—“Don’t buy where you can’t work”—Hamid’s organization was denounced as little better than racketeering, forcing firms to employ blacks by offering “protection” to those that did. HLU made an impact, but the most solid achievements came from HLC, which was involved in organizing black workers all over the city. Through the efforts of HLC, 4,000 black workers joined the Building Service Employees Union. HLC also worked with the International Ladies Garment Workers Union to organize black women. By 1938 it claimed to have organized more than 50 percent of all Harlemites in unions. The successes of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), long delayed, resulted in acceptance into the AFL in 1935 and a contract with the staunchly antiunion Pullman Company in 1937. The BSCP, together with the emerging CIO, formed the backdrop to the phenomenal increase of Harlem’s black trade unionists. In addition, the Harlem riot of 1935 revealed the powder keg created by prolonged discrimination and jolted city government and employers into opening up employment to blacks. The transformation was startling. When the Federal Writers’ Project published its *New York Panorama* in 1938, the authors could say: “Perhaps the strongest of Negro organizations in Harlem are the trade unions. . . . Since the depression and the inception of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, there is hardly a trade or profession in Harlem that is not organized.” Harlem had become the heart not only of black America but also of black labor in segregated America.

STEPHEN BURWOOD

See also Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; Communist Party; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Federal Writers’ Project; Garvey, Marcus; Great Migration; Hamid, Sufi Abdul; Harlem: 2—Economics; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; National Urban League; Owen, Chandler; Randolph, A. Philip; Riots:

4—Harlem Riot, 1935; Schuyler, George S.; Washington, Booker T.

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Lafayette Players

The Lafayette Players Stock Company, commonly known as the Lafayette Players, was New York's first African American stock company to concentrate on legitimate theater. From 1915 to 1923, the company resided at the Lafayette Theater, one of the major

playhouses in Harlem. The company presented more than 250 productions that included original works by African American playwrights as well as revivals of popular comedies and the classics. The stated goals of the Lafayette Players were to raise the standards of African American acting and dramatic productions, demonstrate that black actors could excel in dramatic roles as well as in song and dance, and provide the black community of Harlem with an alternative to vaudeville and minstrel shows, which often ridiculed African Americans. The actor Charles Gilpin, who became famous in the title role in Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* (1920), was among the founding members of the company. Other well-recognized members included Ida Anderson, Andrew Bishop, Laura Bowman, Inez Clough, Evelyn Ellis, Clarence Muse, Evelyn Preer, and Arthur "Dooley" Wilson.

The Lafayette Players were founded in 1915 by the actress and former dancer Anita Bush, as the Anita Bush Stock Company. The company made its first stage appearance at the Lincoln Theater in Harlem on 15 November 1915, with a production of Billie Burke's *The Girl at the Fort*. The players had been gathered only two weeks earlier, when Eugene Elmore, the manager of the Lincoln, had given Bush permission to perform there with a troupe of her own. Shortly after their opening at the Lincoln, the players followed Elmore to the nearby Lafayette Theater, where their first production, *Across the Footlights*, opened on 27 December 1915. In 1916, because of financial difficulties, Anita Bush sold the managing rights of her company to the comanager of the Lafayette, Lester Walton. She remained with the players until 1920, however, and it was she who chose most of their repertoire. In March 1916, the troupe was renamed the Lafayette Players Stock Company. In the same year, Walton sold the management rights of the Lafayette Players to the Elite Amusement Corporation, which hired Elmore to manage the troupe. In 1917 the Lafayette Players were taken over by the Quality Amusement Company, and in 1919 Walton was reinstalled as the company's manager.

As their productions became famous, the Lafayette Players organized road companies; in 1916–1917 two of these offspring toured on different circuits, appearing in Chicago, Philadelphia, Washington, Baltimore, Richmond, Norfolk, and other large cities on the East Coast. When the Lafayette Theater was turned into a vaudeville house in 1923, the Lafayette Players disbanded as a residential troupe and concentrated on their traveling companies. They reunited as a stock company in 1928, when Robert Levy, who now headed

the Quality Amusement Corporation, invited them to move to Los Angeles. The Lafayette Players performed at the newly built Lincoln Theater in Los Angeles, until the economic hardships of the Great Depression finally forced them to dissolve in 1932.

The Lafayette Players had an almost exclusively African American audience. They presented a repertoire that changed weekly, staging abridged versions of popular Broadway plays. Many of these plays were being performed by black actors, and for black spectators, for the first time. The players obtained stock-company rights to numerous Broadway hits, particularly comedies, melodramas, and classics; but their repertoire occasionally also included original plays, operas, and musical revues. Among the most successful productions of the Lafayette Players were the Broadway melodramas *Within the Law* (1915–1916) and *Madame X* (1916–1917); Jerome Kern's musical *Very Good Eddie* (1917–1918); and adaptations of *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1916–1917), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1916–1917), and Goethe's *Faust* (1917–1918).

In Los Angeles, the Lafayette Players performed before racially mixed audiences. This turned out to be a challenge for the company, because black and white patrons often had conflicting expectations about how African Americans should be portrayed onstage. Nevertheless, the players continued to present—successfully—their usual offering of popular works from the white stage, which now included Eugene O'Neill's *Desire under the Elms* as well as DuBose Heyward's *Porgy*.

The Lafayette Players generally received favorable reviews, which were regularly published nationwide in the black press. However, progressive theater critics and intellectuals, including Theophilus Lewis, Lester Walton, and James Weldon Johnson, attacked the company for being too “white” with regard to the scope and style of its productions. The Lafayette Players favored light-skinned actors and actresses; in fact, dark-complexioned performers such as Clarence Muse sometimes whitened their faces. Moreover, not only was the repertoire taken almost exclusively from Broadway; the performances also followed the conventions of the white stage.

Considering their need to survive financially, the Lafayette Players operated within a rather narrow framework of opportunities. Their popularity depended on the range of their repertoire, and also on their low ticket prices. Well into the 1920s, they were the least expensive legitimate theater company in New York and on the road. Furthermore, the concept

of a black legitimate theater that would present original works and develop its own dramatic conventions was only just emerging during the time when the Lafayette Players were active. Nevertheless, to meet audiences' demand for authentic portrayals of blacks onstage, and to compensate for a general lack of plays written by and for African Americans, the company did occasionally commission works from within its own ranks. Andrew Bishop's *It Happened in Harlem* (1917–1918) and *An Automobile Honeymoon* (1917–1918) are probably the best-known examples.

As the first and major African American legitimate theater company in Harlem during the Harlem Renaissance, the Lafayette Players helped pave the way for the development of modern African American theater in the United States. In taking productions from the white repertoire and having black actors present them to black audiences, the company overcame racial barriers in casting and broke away from the traditional portrayals of African Americans onstage. Perhaps the company's most significant achievement was training African American actors in a variety of dramatic roles, many of which had never before been given to black performers. The Lafayette Players not only fostered the theatrical careers of a whole generation of African American actors but also helped raise the general standards of black theatrical entertainment.

ASTRID HAAS

See also Anita Bush Theater Company; Bush, Anita; Clough, Inez; Ellis, Evelyn; Gilpin, Charles; Johnson, James Weldon; Lafayette Theater; Lewis, Theophilus; Lincoln Theater; Madame X; Muse, Clarence; Porgy; Play; Preer, Evelyn; Walton, Lester; Wilson, Arthur “Dooley”

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Lafayette Theater

The Lafayette Theater at 132nd Street and Seventh Avenue was built in 1912 by John Mulonski; during the 1910s and 1920s it became one of the most important theaters in Harlem catering to the African American community. The Lafayette, which at one time was called "House Beautiful," was the largest theater in Harlem; it was also the first major playhouse there to desegregate: as early as 1912, African American theatergoers were allowed to sit in the orchestra. From 1915 to 1923, the Lafayette was home to an important theatrical troupe, the Lafayette Players. The theater became known as a "cradle of stars" (Anderson 1982, 236); among the many prominent actors, singers, and musicians who appeared on its stage were Charles Gilpin, Duke Ellington, Fletcher Henderson, Florence Mills, Bessie Smith, Mamie Smith, Ethel Waters, and Arthur "Dooley" Wilson. Because of the variety and the high artistic standards of its productions, the Lafayette was both a popular and a critical success. Its presentations were reviewed nationwide in black newspapers, and critics acknowledged its significance in the development of African American theater and acting during the Harlem Renaissance.

Like most other theaters of the time, the Lafayette was originally owned and managed by whites. This began to change in 1914, however, when Lester Walton, a black journalist, leased the Lafayette—which had been a vaudeville and movie theater—and took over the duties of comanager. Walton broadened the Lafayette's range of productions and in 1915 persuaded Anita Bush to transfer her theatrical company to the

Lafayette from a rival theater, the Lincoln. Less than a year later, the Anita Bush Stock Company changed its name to the Lafayette Players Stock Company; the troupe soon became known simply as the Lafayette Players. Walton also pushed for a blacks-only employment policy at the Lafayette. Owing to disagreements within the management, Walton left the Lafayette Theater in 1916, but he continued to support it in his journalistic writing. Management rights of the theater and its stock company were sold to the Elite Amusement Corporation, a theatrical syndicate controlling African American playhouses; and then were sold to another syndicate, the Quality Amusement Corporation.

In 1919 the Lafayette became a completely African American enterprise, when two black Philadelphians—the bankers E. C. Brown and Andrew F. Stevens—bought controlling ownership of Quality Amusement. They also brought Lester Walton back to the management staff. Walton left the Lafayette again in 1923, when Frank Schiffman and Leo Brechler bought the theater in order to turn it into a vaudeville house.

The economic downturn of the Great Depression forced Schiffman and Brechler to close the Lafayette in 1934. During the New Deal era, however, it was revived as a legitimate theater for the Federal Theater Project (FTP) of the Works Progress Administration; from 1935 to 1939 it served as the headquarters of FTP's New York Negro Unit. During this period the Lafayette became famous as the theater where Orson Welles's production of a "voodoo" *Macbeth* (1936) was staged. This was an adaptation of Shakespeare's play set in Haiti in the 1820s and included elements of African American and Afro-Caribbean culture. In 1939 the Lafayette was turned into a movie theater; eventually, it was turned into a church. A black theater impresario, Robert Macbeth, revived the Lafayette's dramatic tradition in 1966, when he leased a wing of the building and founded the New Lafayette Theater.

The Lafayette Theater seated 2,000 patrons, and its audiences were almost exclusively African American. Productions offered there followed the typical stock repertoire schedule, with a bill that changed weekly and with daily matinee and evening performances on Monday through Saturday. On Fridays an additional midnight show lasted until four o'clock in the morning. Wallace Thurman vividly recalled the lively atmosphere of these shows, which usually attracted a noisy crowd, turning the auditorium itself into a stage.

The Lafayette offered a wide range of productions. The Lafayette Players regularly presented abridged versions of Broadway comedies and melodramas as

well as classics, such as *Within the Law* (1915–1916), *Madame X* (1916–1917), and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1916–1917). In 1916 the Lafayette Theater participated in the tercentenary celebrations of Shakespeare's death with a production of *Othello*, and in 1923 the theater was host to productions of *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Taming of the Shrew* performed by the Ethiopian Players, a company based in Chicago. The Lafayette's fame, however, rested mainly on its productions of musical revues, such as Porter Grainger and Freddie Johnson's *Aces and Queens* (1925), and *Mississippi Days* (1928), starring Bessie Smith. Many of the shows presented at the Lafayette were simply replicas of recent Broadway hits. A popular success could also inspire new versions; Lew Leslie's *Plantation Revue* (1922), for instance, was immediately modified and revived as *Club Alabam* during the same season.

Although reviews of the productions at the Lafayette were generally favorable, progressive theater critics, writers, and intellectuals, such as Theophilus Lewis, Lester Walton, Wallace Thurman, and Harold Cruse, complained that the Lafayette was too "white" in the content and style of its presentations. In those days, however, legitimate drama that dealt seriously with black life and race relations was rare. Thus, not only criticism of its policies but also time was needed before the Lafayette began to produce works by African American playwrights, such as Andrew Bishop's *It Happened in Harlem* (1918) and Frank Wilson's *Pa Williams's Gal* (1923). Critics also objected to the Lafayette's practice of casting mostly light-skinned performers who might pass for white. There were no dark-complexioned chorus girls at the Lafayette, and dark-skinned actors occasionally whitened their faces for performances.

Although the Lafayette Theater never resolved the tension between the taste of its mass audience and the aesthetic or political demands of some of its critics, it did have a prominent place in the cultural life of Harlem during the 1910s and 1920s, and it was widely acclaimed by patrons and reviewers alike. As a completely black-operated house offering employment and theatrical training to a generation of African American actors, the Lafayette came to represent a "focal point of ethnic pride" (Vorder Brugge 1987, 254) for Harlem's black community.

ASTRID HAAS

See also Anita Bush Theater Company; Bush, Anita; Ethiopian Art Players; Lafayette Players; Lewis, Theophilus; *Pa Williams's Gal*; Thurman, Wallace; Walton, Lester; *specific performers*

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Larsen, Nella

Nella Larsen, one of the most important novelists of the Harlem Renaissance, is also the most mysterious. Published biographies have been rife with error, and accurate information is difficult to come by. Larsen's original name was Nellie Walker. She was born in Chicago in 1891 to a Danish immigrant whose maiden name was Mary Hansen and a "colored" cook from the Danish West Indies (later the U. S. Virgin Islands) whose name was Peter Walker. Within a year Walker died, or perhaps abandoned the family. Mary then married a white Dane, Peter Larsen, and gave birth to a second daughter, Anna Elizabeth. Throughout Nella's childhood, her working-class family suffered from intense animosity directed toward a white woman with a "mulatto" daughter, while racial tension escalated around them in the rapidly segregating near South side of Chicago.

Sometime between 1895 and 1897, Mary Larsen took her daughters to Denmark, possibly fleeing

persecution. They returned in 1898, and the girls attended, briefly, a private school for German and Scandinavian children in the “white” neighborhood to which Peter Larsen had moved. Within months, the family moved back to a “mixed” race district, and Nella entered the public school system. She did well academically, but her neighborhood was rapidly turning into a racial battleground. In the fall of 1907, the family sent her to the normal school at Fisk University, in hopes that she could find a place in the black middle class. After her first year, however, she was told not to return. She next went to live in Denmark with relatives of her mother, but by 1912 Larsen returned to the United States and entered the Lincoln Hospital and Home Training School for Nurses in the Bronx, New York.

Larsen excelled at Lincoln and was then accepted for the position of head nurse at Tuskegee Institute’s hospital in Alabama. She was quickly disillusioned, working fourteen hours a day under insulting conditions, and finding the philosophy of the school as well as its treatment of pupil nurses insupportable. At the end of a year, she resigned and returned to Lincoln Hospital. Then, in 1918, she took a position with the Bureau of Preventable Diseases in the Bronx, a group that was on the cutting edge of the new field of public health.

Soon Larsen met and married Dr. Elmer S. Imes, a graduate of Fisk University who had recently received a Ph.D. in physics from the University of Michigan and who shared Larsen’s love of books and was well connected to the African American elite. Nella Larsen Imes, as she now signed her name, had finally achieved a foothold in the higher echelons of black society. In 1919 she published two articles on Danish children’s games, riddles, and rhymes for *The Brownies’ Book*, the first African American children’s magazine. Larsen’s love of reading and her new connections in black Harlem led her to take an interest in library work. In the fall of 1922, having resigned from her nursing position and having worked for several months in the library, she entered the library school of the New York Public Library, the first black woman to be admitted for formal training in the profession. After graduation, she worked for a year in the Children’s Room of the Seward Park Library and then took over the children’s division at the 135th Street branch library, the nerve center of the Harlem Renaissance.

As interest in African American subjects and writers grew, Larsen began writing fiction. In 1926 two of her stories—“Freedom,” and “The Wrong

Man”—appeared under the pen name Allen Semi in *Young’s Magazine*, a “pulp” periodical aimed at working-class readers. Resigning from the library in 1926 to concentrate on writing, Larsen entered the interracial world of high bohemian intellectuals, growing particularly close to Carl Van Vechten, author of the controversial novel *Nigger Heaven*. At Van Vechten’s urging, she submitted her first novel, *Quicksand*, to Alfred A. Knopf, who published it in 1928 under her maiden name. The next year, Larsen was awarded the Harmon Foundation’s bronze medal for literary achievement among Negroes. Soon afterward, her second novel, *Passing*, was published by Knopf with considerable fanfare.

Larsen was now considered one of the most important black novelists of the day. In the January 1930 issue of the prestigious magazine *Forum*, she published the story “Sanctuary,” about an old black woman in the American South who harbors a fugitive fleeing a white sheriff after killing the woman’s own son. The story marked a significant departure from her earlier fiction, but readers quickly noticed detailed parallels between “Sanctuary” and the story “Mrs. Adis” by the British author Sheila Kaye-Smith. Confronted with accusations of plagiarism, Larsen claimed that she had based the story on one told years earlier by a patient in the nursing home at Lincoln Hospital. The editors accepted her explanation, but among some circles in Harlem her reputation was badly damaged.

At about this time Larsen won a Guggenheim Fellowship to write a novel concerning the effect on African Americans of differences in intellectual and physical freedom between America and Europe. From September 1930 until January 1932, Larsen lived in Majorca, Paris, and Málaga, working partly on this project but mostly on another, called “Mirage,” that she described as her “white novel.” The latter was rejected by her publisher; of the former, no record remains.

Elmer Imes started work as a professor of physics at Fisk University while Larsen was abroad. He was, she knew, in love with a popular white administrator at the school. Having put off any decision about how to respond, on her return to the United States in January 1932 Larsen took an apartment in New York and postponed joining Imes in Nashville; eventually she agreed to try living on campus. She found herself in an excruciating position, and her behavior grew erratic as she hung on to force the most favorable terms for a divorce, which finally came in August 1933.



Winners of Harmon Award, at Zion Church. Left to right: Miss Harmon (daughter of the founder) congratulates the winners, Nella Larsen Imes; Channing H. Tobins; James Weldon Johnson; a proxy of Claude McKay; and Dr. George Haynes, secretary of a committee on race relations. (© Bettmann/Corbis, n.d.)

Larsen moved back to New York, took an apartment on Second Avenue near Stuyvesant Park, and maintained herself financially with her alimony, but the divorce was psychologically devastating. Other romantic disappointments ensued as she sank into alcoholism and depression. Between 1934 and 1937, still failing to place any of her fiction and fearing abandonment by friends, she gradually withdrew into herself. From 1938 to 1944, she practically disappeared, cutting off her friends, moving to a new apartment, and falling into a spiral of addiction.

Elmer Imes's death of cancer in 1941 eventually forced Larsen to earn a living. From 1944 until 1961, she worked as a staff nurse and then nurse supervisor at Gouverneur Hospital on the lower east side, and from 1961 to 1963 she worked at Metropolitan Hospital, serving east Harlem. Highly respected on the job, she quickly leapfrogged over her colleagues into higher-paid supervisory positions; but she was not entirely free of alcohol and drugs. She was forced to retire in June 1963 when the hospital realized that she had passed her seventieth birthday. (She was actually seventy-two.) She died of a heart attack in her apartment eight months later. For several days, no one missed her; finally the police answered a call from the building supervisor and found her body. The first person they contacted to claim it—probably a relative of Imes's—refused. One of Larsen's friends, the nurse Alice Carper, saw to the funeral arrangements and buried Larsen in her own family plot, with more than fifty nursing colleagues present. Larsen's sister Anna

inherited her estate, exclaiming with surprise when informed of the death, "Why, I didn't know I had a sister"—which, of course, was a lie. Larsen is buried in Cypress Hills Cemetery off the Triborough Expressway in New York, under the name Nella Imes.

Biography

Nella Larsen (née Nellie Walker) was born in Chicago on 13 April 1891. In 1892 her father, Peter Walker, died; her mother remarried a white Dane, Peter Larsen, and gave birth to Nella Larsen's half sister, Anna Elizabeth. From about 1895 to 1898 Nella Larsen lived in Denmark with her mother and half sister; from 1898 to 1907 she lived with her family on the near South side of Chicago. In 1907–1908 she studied at Fisk University's Normal School. In 1908–1909 she again lived in Denmark. In 1912–1915 she attended Lincoln Hospital and Home Training School for Nurses in the Bronx, New York. In 1915–1916 she was head nurse at the John A. Andrew Memorial Hospital, Tuskegee Institute; in 1916–1918 she was assistant superintendent of nurses and an instructor at Lincoln Hospital and Home; in 1918–1921 she was a public health nurse at the Bureau of Preventable Diseases in New York. She married Elmer S. Imes, a research physicist, on 3 May 1919. Her "Three Scandinavian Games" and "Danish Fun" were published in the *Brownies' Book* in June–July 1919. In 1922–1926 she attended the Library School of the New York Public Library and worked as a children's librarian at the Seward Park and Harlem branches. (Larsen was the first black woman to graduate from a library school.) "The Wrong Man" and "Freedom" were published in *Young's Realistic Stories Magazine* in January and April 1926, under the pen name Allen Semi. In 1928 *Quick-sand* was published. In 1929 Larsen won the Harmon Foundation Bronze medal for Literary Achievement among Negroes; also in 1929 *Passing* was published. During 1930–1932 "Sanctuary" was published in *Forum* (January 1930); Larsen was accused of plagiarism; she won a Guggenheim Fellowship; she lived in Majorca, Paris, and Málaga; and she wrote a novel called *Mirage* (unpublished). During 1932–1933 she moved to Fisk University. She divorced Elmer Imes on 30 August 1933 and returned to New York. In 1938, suffering from alcoholism, depression, and possibly drug addiction, she cut off all friendships, moved to a new apartment, and "disappeared." In 1944 she began working as a staff nurse at Gouverneur Hospital; she

was quickly promoted to supervisor of nurses for the night shift. In 1961 Gouverneur Hospital closed; Larsen transferred to Metropolitan Hospital as night supervisor in the psychiatric ward. In March of 1964 Larsen died alone in her apartment. Larson was rediscovered in the twenty-first century, and her novels were reissued.

GEORGE HUTCHINSON

See also *Brownies' Book, The*; Harmon Foundation; Knopf, Alfred A.; 135th Street Library; *Passing: Novel*; *Quicksand*; Van Vechten, Carl

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Lawrence, Jacob

Jacob Lawrence is arguably one of the most important American artists of the twentieth century. Although he was not active during the Harlem Renaissance, his work directly reflects the importance of Harlem both as a place and as an artistic community.

Lawrence was born in 1917 in Atlantic City, New Jersey, the eldest child of Jacob and Rosa Lee Lawrence. His father worked as a railroad cook but in 1919 moved the family to Easton, Pennsylvania, in order to seek work as a coal miner. Lawrence's parents separated when he was seven, and in 1924 his mother

moved the children to Philadelphia, where, because of the types of jobs she held—primarily live-in domestic work—they spent time in and out of foster homes. They moved to Harlem when Lawrence was twelve years old. In Harlem, he spent many hours listening to relatives and neighbors describe their lives in the South and their journey northward, themes that would later appear in his art.

Shortly after his arrival in Harlem—because his mother wanted to keep him out of trouble—Lawrence enrolled at the Utopia Children's Center, a settlement house that provided an after-school program in arts and crafts. The center was operated by the painter Charles Alston, who recognized Lawrence's talent and encouraged him. After graduating from grade school, Lawrence attended the High School of Commerce and continued to paint on his own. As the Great Depression deepened, his mother lost her job, the family had to go on relief, and Lawrence dropped out of high school before his junior year to help by working at odd jobs. In 1936 he joined the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and was sent to upstate New York, where he planted trees and built dams. When he returned to Harlem, he became actively involved with another New Deal program, the Harlem Community Art Center, directed by the sculptor Augusta Savage. There he began painting his earliest scenes of Harlem. As a teenager, Lawrence hung out at the Harlem branch of the YMCA, where he became friendly with "Professor" Seifert, a self-taught expert on African and African American culture. Lawrence was profoundly influenced by Seifert, who, he explained, "wanted to get black artists interested in art . . . to select as our content black history." Seifert encouraged Lawrence to visit the public library as well as local museums to learn more about the African and African American past. Seifert also gave Lawrence access to his personal collection.

As the Depression continued, hard times persisted for Lawrence and his family. Yet he maintained that, in Harlem, the Depression "was actually a wonderful period. . . . There was a real vitality in the community." In part this vitality was due to the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which established jobs for blacks in a variety of fields. Most significant for Lawrence were the WPA's art projects, in particular the Federal Arts Project (FPA). With the help of Augusta Savage, Lawrence was assigned to the FPA's easel project. The FPA paid artists, black and white, a living wage—\$23.60 a week—and, according to Lawrence, that was a lot of money at the time.

While working with the FPA, Lawrence became interested in the life of the black revolutionary Toussaint-Louverture, founder of the republic of Haiti. Lawrence felt that no single painting could capture Toussaint's numerous achievements and that he would therefore need to paint the entire story. Series of paintings would become one of Lawrence's signature traits. A year after completing the Toussaint-Louverture series, Lawrence began work on a forty-panel series depicting the life of the abolitionist Frederick Douglass; in 1939 he did a thirty-painting series, *The Life of Harriet Tubman*; and in 1940–1941 he painted the famous *Migration Series*, with a grant (his first of three) from the Rosenwald Foundation. All these series reflected his strong interest in African American history.

With regard to the *Migration Series*, Lawrence said:

By the time I was in Harlem, I decided to paint this series—I wasn't thinking of sales or of a gallery. I liked storytelling. I went to the Schomburg Library and selected events from the North and the South. I think that the series alternates from South to North. I just got into it. I didn't separate it—I wasn't looking at it from the inside out or the outside in. This was such a part of my life. . . . I was doing research at the time. I guess it was both emotional and intellectual. . . . We are absolutely a people telling stories. It seems like we were born talking and telling people about it. The series came out of that—people talking about people coming up from the South. This tradition continues. . . . Another family arrives.

When Lawrence created a series, he would work on all the panels at once, one color at a time, going from dark to light. A striking characteristic of his work is his use of bright colors, a trait that he attributed to his experience of living in Harlem:

We lived in a deep depression. Not only my mother, but the poor people in general. In order to add something to their lives, they decorated their tenements and their homes in all of these colors. I've been asked, Is anybody in my family artistically inclined? I've always felt ashamed of my response and I always said no, not realizing that my artistic sensibility came from this ambience. I did have this influence, but I didn't realize it was taking place. It's only in retrospect that I realized that I was surrounded by art. You'd walk Seventh Avenue and look in the windows and you'd see all these colors in the depth of the depression. All these colors. You'd walk though

Harlem and go to the Apollo theater, and the jokes that were being told! The pathos! People would laugh, but it was a comedy on a very profound, deep, philosophical level. But you can only see this, you can only realize this., in retrospect.

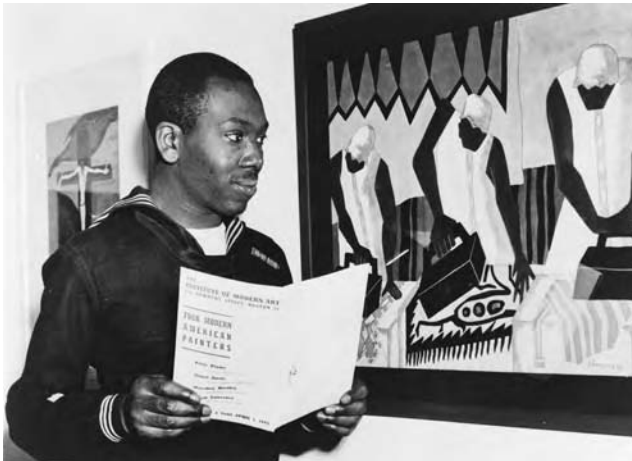
Essentially, then, Lawrence's sense of color was communal, coming directly from the streets of Harlem.

In general, Lawrence's pictures tell a story not only visually but also verbally. The *Migration Series*, for instance, has a caption for each image, such as the following text for the sixth panel: "The trains were packed continually with migrants." In this regard, it is worth noting that for Lawrence the railroad was an important symbol of the great migration:

I didn't realize that there were so many symbols of railroad stations, bus stations, people travelling! But that's what migration is. You think in terms of people on the move, people moving from one situation to another. Crossroads, bus stations, and train stations—moments of transition—it certainly was a moment of transition in the history of America and for the race. It's one of the big movements in our country. And I want to say this, too: I don't think the blacks in making a movement just contributed to their own development. It contributed to American development. Look at your structure of the cities—the passion, the energy, the vitality. Not always positive—some of it quite negative—but it's there and I think we have added to, and not taken from, our growth. When I say our, I'm using that in a larger context. And I think that we have made a contribution in making this move. Many people tried to keep us out. You had your riots. But we made a tremendous contribution to the American growth, to the American development of America.

The *Migration Series* met with immediate acclaim and with praise from critics, and it secured Lawrence's reputation. Shortly after it was completed, Alain Locke brought Lawrence to the attention of Edith Halbert, the head of the respected Downtown Gallery. She in turn exhibited the entire series and arranged for *Fortune* magazine to run a story on Lawrence and to reproduce twenty-six of the paintings. Half of the sixty panels in the series were sold to the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the other half to the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C.

Lawrence followed the *Migration Series* with *The Life of John Brown* (twenty-two panels), *Harlem* (thirty-two



Jacob Lawrence. (Library of Congress.)

panels), *War* (fourteen panels), *The South* (ten panels), *Hospital* (eleven panels), and *History of the American People* (thirty panels). *Hospital* was painted during and after his own nine-month stay at Hillside Psychiatric Hospital, where he had gone voluntarily for treatment, citing the stresses of fame. Lawrence also completed a number of individual paintings and drawings inspired by African American history and by his own life experiences.

As his fame grew, Lawrence was in demand as a teacher. He taught at the Black Mountain School in North Carolina; the Pratt Institute and the New School for Social Research in New York; the Five Towns Music and Art Foundation in Cedarhurst, Long Island; and elsewhere. In 1970, he became a full professor at the University of Washington in Seattle, where he lived until his death in 2000.

Lawrence's work has been represented in numerous individual and group shows, and he received many awards, commendations, and honorary doctorates. His lifework may perhaps be summed up in his own assertion that "the Negro experience is the American experience."

Biography

Jacob Armstead Lawrence was born in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on 7 September 1917 and moved at the age of twelve to Harlem, where he attended public schools. He won a scholarship to the American Artists School (organized by the John Reed Club, a communist group) at 131 West Fourteenth Street in 1937. He worked for six months in the Civilian Conservation

Corps (CCC) near Middletown, New York, in 1936 and made drawings of life in the CCC. He married Gwendolyn Knight in 1941. Also in 1941, *Fortune* published a color portfolio of twenty-six panels of his series *The Migration of the Negro*, with text; and the Downtown Gallery showed the series in its main gallery. Lawrence served in the armed forces during World War II, at one point on the USS *Sea Cloud*, a weather patrol boat that was the navy's first racially integrated ship. In 1949 he voluntarily entered Hillside Hospital in Queens, New York, for treatment of depression; the *New York Times Magazine* had an article on this episode: "An Artist Reports on the Troubled Mind," and an exhibition of his hospital paintings opened at the Downtown Gallery in October 1950. In 1951 he received an award from the Committee for the Negro in the Arts. Lawrence taught at Black Mountain College in Asheville, North Carolina (summer session, 1946); at Five Towns Music and Art Foundation in Cedarhurst, Long Island (1955–1962, 1966–1968); at the Pratt Institute in New York (1958–1970); at the New School for Social Research in New York (1966–1969); at the Art Students League in New York (1967–1969); at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine (summer 1968); and at the University of Washington, as a full professor (beginning in 1970). He served as president of the New York chapter of the National Institute of Arts and Letters (1957); as president of the artists' committee of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC, 1963); as a member of the advisory board for the founding of the Museum of African Art in Washington, D.C.; as a member of the coordinating committee for an exhibition of contemporary African art sponsored by the American Society of African Culture (AMSAC); and as a member of the National Screening Committee for the Fulbright-Hays scholarship program (1965–1967). Lawrence exhibited in Nigeria in 1964. He was an artist in residence at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts, in February–May 1965; a visiting artist at California State College in Hayward (September 1969–March 1970); and a visiting artist at the University of Washington in Seattle (March–June 1970). Lawrence was appointed commissioner of the National Council of Arts by President Jimmy Carter in 1979; was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1983; and was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1995. He received the Artist Award from the College Art Association, the NAACP Third Annual Great Black Artists Award, and the Images Award for Outstanding Achievement in Art from the

University of Pittsburgh (1988); the National Medal of Arts from President George H. W. Bush (1990); the Medal of Honor from the National Arts Club, New York (1993); the Charles White Lifetime Achievement Award in Los Angeles and the Edwin T. Pratt Award from the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle (1994); an award from the American Civil Liberties Union and the Washington State Medal of Merit (1998); a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Americans for the Arts and Seattle's Golden Umbrella Award and Mayor's Master Artist Award (1999); and numerous honorary doctorates. He established the Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence Foundation to promote the creation, exhibition, and study of American art (1999). Lawrence died in Seattle on 9 June 2000, at age eighty-two.

JOAN SAAB

See also Alston, Charles; Artists; Federal Programs; Great Migration; Locke, Alain; Savage, Augusta; Second Harlem Renaissance; Works Progress Administration

Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 1936: In studio of Addison Bates, a cabinetmaker.
- 1938: Harlem YMCA, exhibition sponsored by James Weldon Johnson Literary Guild.
- 1942: "The Migration of the Negro." Museum of Modern Art, New York (even-numbered panels); Phillips Memorial Gallery; Washington, D.C. (odd-numbered panels).
- 1943: Harlem paintings. Downtown Gallery; New York.
- 1944: "Paintings by Jacob Lawrence: Migration of the Negro and Works Made in U.S. Coast Guard." Museum of Modern Art, New York.
- 1953: "Performance: A Series of New Paintings in Tempera by Jacob Lawrence." Downtown Gallery, New York.
- 1960: Retrospective. Brooklyn Museum, New York. (National tour.)
- 1962: Exhibition in Lagos and Ibadan, Nigeria. Organized by AMSAC and the Mbari Artists' and Writers' Club Cultural Center.
- 1963: Paintings pertaining to the civil rights movement. Terry Dintenfass, New York.
- 1964: Brandeis University. (Traveled to Morgan State College.)
- 1968: "The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture." (Fisk University.)
- 1976: "Graphics by Jacob Lawrence." Francine Seders Gallery, Seattle.
- 1977: "The Life of John Brown." Detroit Institute of Arts.
- 1977: "Jacob Lawrence: Paintings and Graphics from 1936 to 1978." Chrysler Museum of Art; Norfolk, Virginia.
- 1982: "Jacob Lawrence: The Builder." Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson.
- 1984: "Jacob Lawrence: Fifty Years of His Work." Jamaica Arts Center; New York.
- 1985: Colored-pencil drawings. Francine Seders Gallery, Seattle.
- 1989: "Jacob Lawrence: Paintings and Drawings"; "Jacob Lawrence: Drawings and Prints." (Tour, Caribbean and Africa, sponsored by United States Information Agency.)
- 1989: "Jacob Lawrence: The Washington Years." Tacoma (Washington) Art Museum.
- 1989: "Jacob Lawrence: A Continuing Presence." Syracuse (New York) University.
- 1992: Whatcom Museum of History and Art, Bellingham, Washington.
- 1992: "Jacob Lawrence: An American Master." East Carolina University, Greenville.
- 1992: "Jacob Lawrence: The Early Decades, 1935–1950." Katonah (New York) Museum of Art.
- 1993: "Jacob Lawrence: An Exhibition Presented by the Black Alumni of Pratt Institute." Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York.
- 1993: "Jacob Lawrence: Paintings, Drawings, and Prints." Midtown Payson Galleries, New York.
- 1994: "Jacob Lawrence: Works on Paper." University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
- 1994: "Jacob Lawrence: Prints and Drawings." Shasta College, Redding, California.
- 1997: "Jacob Lawrence: An American Vision—Paintings and Prints 1942–1996." Museum of Northwest Art, La Conner, Washington.
- 1998: Savannah (Georgia) College of Art and Design.
- 1998: "Jacob Lawrence as Muralist." Francine Seders Gallery, Seattle, Washington.
- 2000: "Games." Francine Seders Gallery, Seattle, Washington.

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Lee, Canada

Canada Lee (Leonard Lionel Cornelius Canegate) was an actor on Broadway and in films who played classical roles and, as his career continued, roles that portrayed blacks in a less stereotypical way than was usual in the 1920s and 1930s. He was a violinist and a jockey during his youth; he changed his name to Canada Lee when he became a prizefighter as a young man. After World War II, black characters in films and onstage became more multidimensional, and Lee took advantage of the opportunity to perform in a variety of roles.

Lee's role as Bigger Thomas in the stage version of Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940 and 1941) is memorable. His portrayal of Joe in Alfred Hitchcock's movie *Lifeboat* (1944) is one of his best performances. Also noteworthy is his performance as Stephen Kumalo in the movie version of Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1952). Sidney Poitier costarred in that movie, his first.

In the early 1930s, Canada Lee acted onstage in Orson Welles's *Voodoo Macbeth* (1936), and in many productions of the Works Projects Administration's Federal Theater Project, which helped black actors hone their skills as they worked with talented directors and attended workshops. Lee also appeared in *The Tempest* (1945), and he put on whiteface makeup as a character in *The Duchess of Malfi* (1946).

In the 1940s, Lee's connections with progressive causes, including his efforts to change racial images onstage and in films, became a liability. He participated in rallies, took petitions to Congress, was seen with controversial people, and allied himself with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Walter White. During these years he also decided to become a producer in order to avoid menial roles. *On Whitman Avenue* (1946), a work he produced with Mark Marvin, attracted the attention of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in 1947 because of its portrayal of liberal groups. Because Lee would not appear before HUAC, his name was never officially cleared, despite his

public statements denying that he had communist affiliations. He was harassed by HUAC and the Federal Bureau of Investigation; was blacklisted from films, radio, and television; and became destitute. *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1952) was his last film.

Lee is seldom mentioned today, partly because he was a casualty of the communist scare; however, his pioneering work as a classical actor, his portrayal of nonstereotypical blacks onscreen, and his credits as a director helped to broaden job opportunities for blacks in Hollywood. He opened doors of opportunity for blacks to perform in a wider range of dramatic roles. For example, his son, Carl Lee, also became an actor and performed in *The Connection* (1962), *Super Fly* (1972), and *Gordon's War* (1973). The younger Lee also cowrote *The Cool World* (1964) with Shirley Clarke.

Biography

Canada Lee (Leonard Lionel Cornelius Canegate) was born 3 March 1907 in New York City. He had public schooling in Harlem and was a violinist and a jockey as a young adult. He changed his name to Canada Lee when he became a boxer; an eye injury ended his boxing career in 1933. His stage credits include *Voodoo Macbeth* (1936), *Native Son* (1940 and 1941), and *The Tempest* (1945). His movies include *Lifeboat* (1944), *Body and Soul* (1947), and *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1952). Lee was falsely labeled a communist in the 1940s and was blacklisted from films, radio, and television. He died 10 May 1952.

LOU-ANN CROUTHER

See also Federal Programs; Second Harlem Renaissance; White, Walter; Works Progress Administration; Wright, Richard

Selected Work: Stage

Voodoo Macbeth. 1936.

One-Act Plays of the Sea. 1937.

Haiti. 1938.

Mamba's Daughters. 1939.

Big White Fog. 1940.

Native Son. 1940, 1941.

The Tempest. 1945.

The Duchess of Malfi. 1946.

On Whitman Avenue. 1946.

Set My People Free. 1948.

Selected Work: Films

Keep Punching. 1939.

Farmer Henry Browne. 1942.

Lifeboat. 1944.

Body and Soul. 1947.

Lost Boundaries. 1949.

Cry, the Beloved Country. 1952.

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Lee, George

George W. Lee's literary work serves as a southern "countervoice" to the Harlem Renaissance. Lee is best-known for his hagiography of Beale Street in Memphis, Tennessee; he also is credited as the author of a realistic anti-sharecropping novel that offered rural black southerners a voice. His work has a strongly pro-business bent that constitutes a critique but also an extension of the artistic and philosophical concerns of the Harlem Renaissance.

Lee was born in Mississippi in 1894 and spent several years of his childhood as a sharecropper. He

attended high school and college at Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College, graduating in 1917. He enlisted in the U.S. Army and fought in World War I as a second lieutenant. In Memphis, he had a productive career in insurance, eventually serving as vice president for two of the nation's most successful black-owned insurance companies. Lee became an important force in state and national Republican politics, placing African Americans in political and municipal positions, corresponding with three presidents, and serving as a delegate to several national conventions. In the early 1960s the party's white members unseated Lee and other African Americans from positions of leadership. However, he continued to be politically active, speaking nationwide on issues of education and desegregation through the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World. Lee died in an automobile accident in Memphis in 1976.

James Weldon Johnson encouraged Lee to finish his first work, *Beale Street: Where the Blues Began* (1934), an account of the colorful figures in a legendary area in Memphis. It became a commercial and critical success and was a selection of the Book of the Month Club. By choosing Beale Street as his subject, Lee established Memphis and the South as a setting for African American contributions to artistic and economic enterprises. His catalog of Beale Street's businessmen and companies emphasizes his belief in the centrality of economics to racial uplift.

Lee's *River George* (1937) traces the downfall of Aaron George, the son of a sharecropper who hoped that his college education could help him free his race from economic and social bondage. According to Lee, he wrote this book to prove himself to the literati of the Harlem Renaissance, who had attributed the success of his first work simply to its subject, not to the talents of its author. *River George* follows George (a character from *Beale Street: Where the Blues Began*) from the Mississippi delta to Memphis and New York City—a gesture toward the "great migration" of African Americans from the farm to the city and from the South to the North. Lee questions the usefulness and productivity of the Harlem Renaissance, favoring instead talented African Americans across the nation, coupled (troublingly) with white paternalism. The novel searches for effective ways to protest against white racist society but admits defeat, symbolized by the lynching that ends it. The reaction of the critics of the day to *River George* was disappointing.

Lee's last work, *Beale Street Sundown* (1942), is a collection of short stories, some of which had

Lee, George

originally appeared in *Negro Digest*, *World's Digest*, and *Southern Literary Messenger*. Like *Beale Street: Where the Blues Began*, it focuses on the people of Beale Street.

Biography

George Lee was born 4 January 1894 near Indianola, Mississippi. He attended public school in Indianola and completed high school and college coursework at Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College, Lorman, Mississippi (1917). He worked as a bellhop during summers at Gayoso Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee (1910–1917). He was a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army, Ninety-Second Division, 268th Regiment, Company C (1917–1919). He was an insurance salesman at Mississippi Life in Memphis (1919), then a manager, then a vice president (1920–1924); later he was a manager (1924–1939) and a vice president (1939–1976) at Atlanta Life in Memphis. Lee was a member of the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World (1926–1976) and was Elks' Best Orator (1926). He was national director, Veterans for Hoover (1928); was on the Tennessee Republican Executive Committee (1942–1962); and was grand commissioner of education in the Elks (1951–1976). Lee was named one of ten "Most Useful Men" by the *Chicago Defender* in 1951, for his voter registration efforts in Memphis. He was the first African American for whom a post office was named (in Memphis, 1956). He received a Certificate of Honor from the Lincoln League of Memphis in 1962. He was appointed colonel aide-de-camp, Gov. Buford Ellington (1967) and Gov. Winfield Dunn (1973); and he was honorary sergeant-at-arms, Tennessee House of Representatives (1973). His portrait was hung in the Tennessee state capitol in 1973. Also in 1973, he received the American Legion Post 27 R.Q. Venson Appreciation Award. Lee died in Memphis on 1 August 1976.

SCOTT HICKS

See also Johnson, James Weldon

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River George. 1937, 1975.
Beale Street: Sundown. 1942.

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Leslie, Lew

Lew Leslie was white, a fact many people have been surprised to discover, so closely was he associated with black entertainment during the Harlem Renaissance era. After an undistinguished early career in vaudeville Leslie gravitated to promotion, organizing revues for Broadway. An early protégée of his was the vaudeville star Belle Baker. He coached and partnered her, then married her in 1909. Though they were divorced by 1919, they remained close friends ever afterward.

The first sign of Leslie's interest in black entertainment came in 1921, when he presented the white actress Tess Gardella in blackface as Aunt Jemima in George White's *Scandals*. However, the definitive moment of his life came when he saw Florence Mills in *Shuffle Along*; from then on, Leslie was driven by a consuming vision—to glorify the black American showgirl as Ziegfeld had glorified white showgirls. From 1922 to 1927, Leslie starred Florence Mills in a succession of elaborate, fast-paced revues (*Plantation Revue*, *Dover Street to Dixie*, *Dixie to Broadway*) that

made her the toast of Broadway and ultimately a superstar in London and Paris. Later versions of his revues were called the *Blackbirds* series, after her theme song, "I'm a Little Blackbird Looking for a Bluebird."

When Mills died tragically in 1927, Leslie continued his *Blackbirds* series. *Blackbirds of 1928* was the most successful, bringing international fame to the dancer Bill "Bojangles" Robinson and the singer Adelaide Hall. During the Great Depression—which also undermined the Harlem Renaissance—later versions of *Blackbirds* (1930–1936) had only mixed success at home and overseas. However, these shows helped the careers of many black performers such as the Nicholas Brothers, Eubie Blake, and Valaida Snow and gave them international exposure; the shows also included notable hit songs such as Blake's "Memories of You." The last of the series, *Blackbirds of 1939*, was a flop but gave valuable exposure to a young Lena Horne.

Whitebirds (1927), as its name implies, had a white cast; it was an attempt to cash in on the success of *Blackbirds* in London, but it was a financial disaster. Apart from the *Blackbirds* shows, Leslie mounted two notable productions during the 1930s: the ambitious all-white *International Revue* (1930), which was panned as a pretentious attempt to use an ill-assorted set of international stars; and *Rhapsody in Black* (1931), starring Ethel Waters and Valaida Snow, which was praised for abandoning stereotypes of blacks.

Leslie was a paradoxical figure. He created huge employment opportunities for black performers, but leaders of the Harlem Renaissance such as Theophilus Lewis and W. E. B. Du Bois objected to his use of stereotyped material. Despite his faith in black performers, he entrusted most of the music and writing to whites. An amiable, generous man in private, he was ruthless in business, saving money by playing stars off against each other. Though he was solicitous for the welfare of his performers, he was a perfectionist who drove them relentlessly in rehearsal.

After 1939 Leslie's career as a producer languished, and he worked as a talent scout for a theatrical agency. When he died in 1963, many of the black stars he had worked with attended his funeral to express their respect and affection. Despite the justified accusations of stereotyping, he influenced the style of black shows for a generation, abandoning the libretto-based approach for a modernized, fast presentation that allowed the performers to strut their stuff. By featuring a female superstar, Florence Mills, he also broke with

the convention that black shows were usually built around two male comedians.

Biography

Lew Leslie (Lev Lessinsky) was born 15 January 1890 in New York City. His theatrical productions included *Plantation Revue* (Plantation Club, New York, 1922–1924, various editions); *Dover Street to Dixie* (Pavilion Theater, London, 1923); *Dixie to Broadway* (Broadhurst Theater, New York, 1924); *Blackbirds of 1926* and *Blackbirds of 1927* (Pavilion Theater, London); *Whitebirds* (Majestic Theater, London, 1927); *Blackbirds of 1928* (Liberty Theater, New York); *Lew Leslie's Blackbirds* (Royale Theater, New York, 1930); *International Revue* (Majestic Theater, New York, 1930); *Rhapsody in Black* (Sam H. Harris Theater, New York, 1931); *Blackbirds of 1933* (Apollo Theater, New York); *Blackbirds of 1934* (Coliseum Theater, London); *Blackbirds of 1936* (Gaiety Theater, London); *Lew Leslie's Blackbirds of 1939* (Hudson Theater, New York). There were also some *Blackbirds* shows in Europe, mainly in Paris. Leslie was the inaugural producer of the floor show at the Cotton Club in Harlem (1923). He died in Orangeburg, New York, 10 March 1963.

BILL EGAN

See also *Blackbirds*; Blake, Eubie; Cotton Club; Hall, Adelaide; Lewis, Theophilus; Mills, Florence; Musical Theater; Robinson, Bill "Bojangles"; Shuffle Along; Ward, Aida; Waters, Ethel

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Lewis, Sinclair

During the 1920s no American writer was more successful than Sinclair Lewis, and in 1930 he became the first American to receive the Nobel Prize for literature. His prestige and his frequent residence in New York City would qualify him as being of some note in a study of the Harlem Renaissance. Lewis also had some direct connection with the renaissance, primarily through his friendship with Walter White. However, it is appropriate to point out that his biographer Mark Schorer (1961) does not mention any connection with the Harlem Renaissance whatsoever but merely has an index entry, “Negroes, HSL’s [Lewis’s] interest in”—seemingly, this interest was first awakened in 1940 with his initial research for his novel *Kingsblood Royal* (1947).

During the Harlem Renaissance, Lewis was widely considered the foremost critic of American hypocrisy, yet his renowned novels of the decade largely ignore racial issues. Regarding Lewis’s first seven books, Charles Cooney (1975) observes that “the few Negro characters who meander through Lewis’s novels range from innocuous to mildly derogatory.” Yet Lewis’s satirical style and overt social concerns did have an impact on many writers of the Harlem Renaissance.

Lewis left his childhood home in Minnesota to attend Yale University and after graduation embarked on a career as a writer. He traveled and managed to support himself as a journalist and a writer of short stories and novels until 1920, when his book *Main Street* made him one of the most recognized literary figures in America. *Main Street* is about the romantic Carole Kennicott and her discovery of the petty, mean-spirited attitudes beneath the veneer of small-town American life. Lewis followed *Main Street* with *Babbitt*, for which he invented the city of Zenith—the setting for several of his future novels as well. George F. Babbitt, like Carole Kennicott, seeks to escape his successful but ultimately stultifying life: in his case, selling real estate. The book’s power lies in the contrast between Babbitt’s conformist behavior and his rebellious thoughts. He takes advantage of everyone he encounters, yet never fully recognizes that he is morally compromised. The book struck such a chord

that the word “Babbittry,” to describe a sort of unthinking commercialism, entered the language. In the 1920s, Lewis also published his three other most renowned novels: *Arrowsmith*, *Elmer Gantry*, and *Dodsworth*. In each, Lewis examines how success in America can become a perpetual round of self-congratulatory activities, which eventually threaten any true social improvement.

Lewis won the Pulitzer Prize in 1925 for *Arrowsmith* but declined the award. Many commentators have assumed he refused the prize largely because he was bitter about not receiving it for *Main Street* (despite the committee’s original vote for that work) or for *Babbitt*. In his strongly worded refusal, he implored other writers not to accept such awards, because acceptance leads to admitting the authority of awarding institutions, and he asked rhetorically “whether any prize is worth that subservience” (Schorer). Ironically, though, when in 1930 he became the first American to be awarded the Nobel Prize for literature he accepted that award almost without reservation. These awards and Lewis’s response to them did much to make him a public figure. He pointedly criticized the literary establishment, and his attacks—like the characterizations in his novels—were so cruel that they alienated many other writers. For this reason, and because there was a general dismissal of his particular brand of “social realism,” Lewis has disappeared from most of the major anthologies of American literature.

Interestingly, Lewis’s struggle to have his naturalism accepted as great literature parallels the struggles of many writers of the Harlem Renaissance, who often found their own artistic vision being denounced and demeaned as “primitivist.” Stylistic and thematic debts to Sinclair Lewis can be seen in such varied writers as Wallace Thurman, whose novel *The Blacker the Berry* has a narrative tone reminiscent of Lewis’s best works; and Jessie Fauset, whose repeated criticism of the hypocrisy of the middle class echoes some of Lewis’s observations. Also, later realist writers such as Richard Wright were able to find a more receptive public in part because Lewis’s best-sellers had altered the literary marketplace.

Lewis did, moreover, offer direct encouragement to some writers of the Harlem Renaissance, most notably Walter White and Claude McKay. Lewis supplied a very favorable quotation for the dust jacket of White’s first novel (ranking it with *A Passage to India* as one of the two most important novels of the year). This led to a decades-long friendship between the two men; and Lewis not only gave White a thorough



Sinclair Lewis, c. 1900–1940. (Library of Congress.)

analysis of *The Fire in the Flint* but also helped him with his second novel, *Flight*. In addition, Lewis wrote a very strong recommendation that helped White secure a Guggenheim fellowship. On White's suggestion, Lewis visited Claude McKay in Paris; and McKay later said, "Lewis gave me a few cardinal and practical points about the writing of a book or novel" (Cooney). Lewis further demonstrated that he no longer condemned all literary prizes when, in 1935, he agreed to serve on the Spingarn Medal Committee of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In his first year on the committee, Lewis recommended that McKay be given the award, and in his second year he voted for A. Philip Randolph; he resigned from the committee before completing his three-year term, however.

Toward the end of his career, Lewis published *Kingsblood Royal* (1947), a novel in which the protagonist, Neil Kingsblood, discovers that he has black ancestry and thus by state law is black. This book was rather poorly received. It was given a citation by

Ebony magazine for promoting interracial understanding, but most of the reviewers found it an "oversimplified 'sociological tract' and a total failure as a work of art" (Schorer).

Schorer concludes that Lewis "is one of the worst writers in modern American literature, but without his writing one cannot imagine modern American literature." Similarly, one could assert that Lewis was a figure very tangential to the Harlem Renaissance, but that without his writing and influence the fiction of the Harlem Renaissance would undoubtedly have looked much different.

Biography

Sinclair Lewis was born 7 February 1885 in Sauk Center, Minnesota. He studied at Yale University (A.B., 1908). His awards included a Pulitzer Prize for *Arrowsmith* in 1925 (refused); the Nobel Prize for literature (1930); election to the National Institute of Arts and Letters (1935); and election to the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1938). Lewis died in Rome, Italy, 10 January 1951.

NEIL BROOKS

See also Fauset, Jessie Redmon; *Fire in the Flint*, The; McKay, Claude; Randolph, A. Philip; Thurman, Wallace; White, Walter; Wright, Richard

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Main Street. 1920.
Babbitt. 1922.
Arrowsmith. 1925.
Mantrap. 1926.
Elmer Gantry. 1927.
The Man Who Knew Coolidge. 1928.
Dodsworth. 1929.
Ann Vickers. 1933.
It Can't Happen Here. 1935.
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Lewis, Theophilus

Theophilus Lewis was the leading theater critic during the Harlem Renaissance. From 1923 to 1927 he wrote primarily for A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owens's magazine *The Messenger*, where he was also the coauthor of a column, "Shafts and Darts: A Page of Calumny and Satire," with the *Messenger's* editor George S. Schuyler. Lewis was an iconoclastic and sharply biting writer who repeatedly called for significant improvements in the composition and direction of African American theater, particularly dramatic productions. He proposed the establishment of a national African American theater that would eschew stereotypes and "colorism" in favor of realistic roles and casting without regard to skin color.

Lewis was born in Baltimore in 1891. Although he had very little formal education, he was a devotee of the theater from his teens onward. Not long before World War I began, Lewis traveled to New York City and made the acquaintance of Randolph and Owen. After serving in the army during the war, Lewis moved to Detroit for three years and then, in 1922, obtained employment as a postal clerk in New York.

After showing a theater review to Randolph, Lewis was commissioned to write regular reviews for the *Messenger*, albeit with no remuneration except the price of his tickets. According to Kornweibel (1972), Lewis's columns were the only ones from Harlem that offered a discriminating perspective on theater. Lewis was fairly consistent throughout his career in urging African Americans to create a theatrical tradition distinct from that of white Americans, and especially from any vestiges of the minstrel tradition. Lewis had a low opinion of African American comedies and musical revues, primarily because they abounded with racial stereotypes. Most African American musicals, Lewis wrote, were "compounded of sheer imbecility sugar-coated with music and dancing" and, because they so often relied on low humor and nudity, degraded such fine actors and singers as Charles Gilpin

and Florence Mills. In addition, Lewis decried the overwhelming tendency for directors to cast only light-skinned African Americans in their productions. His opposition stemmed from a black cultural nationalism that was at odds with the ideas of many of the *Messenger's* other columnists, who frequently condemned separate cultural institutions and argued against cultural differences.

Nonetheless, Lewis was apparently the first black theater critic to address the dearth of aesthetically, morally, or culturally sound plays and roles for African Americans. Lewis argued that theater productions which appealed to the intelligence of African American audiences would help foster the careers of black playwrights. Actually, there were very few African American playwrights in the 1920s, and far fewer who had access to Broadway or even to off-Broadway—and those who did catered to the lowest common denominator among their black audiences, making development of high-quality theater highly improbable. Lewis believed that black theater should be based on serious study of African American folk experiences, rather than on the aspirations of the black bourgeoisie. Accordingly, he encouraged young playwrights such as Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle, and his friends Wallace Thurman and William Jourdan Rapp; he also encouraged emerging "little theater" groups such as the Aldridge Players, the Krigwa Players, the National Ethiopian Art Theater, and the Tri-Arts Club. Lewis hoped that these groups would form the foundation of a national black theater.

In addition, Lewis's satirical "Shafts and Darts" columns, which he wrote with Schuyler from April 1924 through August 1925, allowed him to discuss a number of cultural and political issues, including the rise and fall of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), African American literature, and, again, the lack of high-quality dramatic productions. Lewis also reviewed new books for the *Messenger*; he was among the first to react positively to Langston Hughes's *Weary Blues* and the controversial *Fine Clothes to the Jew*.

After the Harlem Renaissance began to decline, Lewis seldom wrote for African American publications. He converted to Catholicism in the 1930s and then wrote primarily for Catholic magazines and journals until the early 1970s; however, in most of his columns he still continued his campaign for high-quality African American drama. Today he is one of

the lesser-known African American dramatic critics, but unquestionably one of the most important.

Biography

Theophilus Lewis was born 4 March 1891 in Baltimore, Maryland, and studied at public schools there. He served in the U.S. Army in 1917–1918 and was a clerk in the U.S. Post Office in 1922–c. 1955. He was a member of the Commission on Human Rights, New York City (1950s); the Epworth League, Salem Missionary Church, New York City (beginning in 1911); Friends of Negro Freedom (1920–c. 1928); and the Independent Political Council, New York City (1913). Lewis wrote for *America*, *Catholic World*, *Commonweal*, *Harlem*, *Interracial Review*, *Messenger*, *Opportunity*, and the *Pittsburgh Courier*. He died in 1974.

DARRYL DICKSON-CARR

See also Blake, Eubie; Krigwa Players; Messenger, The; National Ethiopian Art Theater; Schuyler, George S.; Sissle; Noble; Theater; Thurman, Wallace; Tri-Arts Club

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Liberator

The *Liberator* was an avant-garde publication founded, owned, and edited in its first years by the socialist writer Max Eastman. It covered economic and political news and views, as well as art, poetry, fiction, and criticism. Eastman began the magazine in 1918 as a successor to *The Masses*, a radical periodical he had edited from 1913 to 1917, which had been banned by the government. Eastman was intolerant of "dogma and rigidity of mind," and in the *Liberator* he welcomed a wide range of leftist views and took a stand against censorship. In 1921, he asked the poet Claude McKay to become an associate editor of the *Liberator*; shortly thereafter he handed the reins to McKay and the writer Michael Gold as coeditors.

Under the direction of McKay and Gold, the circulation of the *Liberator* rose from 50,000 to 60,000; its format became more elegant; and illustrations by socially minded artists like William Gropper and Stuart Davis made a sharp impact. Contributors included talented people such as Art Young, Boardman Robinson, Robert Minor, Maurice Becker, Helen Keller, and Cornelia Barns; McKay also published several poems by e.e. cummings. Initially, McKay decided not to publish a short story submitted by Jean Toomer; later, when he noticed that Toomer's work was appearing

elsewhere, however, the *Liberator* did publish one of Toomer's poems in 1922.

Seven of McKay's own poems—overtly political works about lynchings of African Americans—were published in the *Liberator* in 1919. His sonnet "If We Must Die," which expressed militant politics within a traditional poetic form, was unprecedented; in fact, one publisher later it considered too incendiary to be included in a collection of McKay's poetry, and Alain Locke considered it too radical to be included in *The New Negro*. Langston Hughes, who subscribed to the *Liberator*, got his first taste of African American revolutionary concepts from McKay's militant poems.

Gold and other left-wing associates eventually took the magazine in a clearly Marxist direction; although McKay tried to reserve a certain amount of space in each issue for racial topics, he lost the battle. Eastman warned McKay that if they "published too much material about the Negroes, our white readers would dismiss the magazine, not the material. They would stop buying and reading it." Disappointed over the magazine's policies and wanting to see the Bolshevik Revolution up close, McKay left for Russia in late 1922.

After McKay returned from abroad, having immersed himself in the ideas of Marx and Lenin, he invited various socialists, Marxists, and black nationalists to strategy sessions at the *Liberator*. This caused Eastman to worry about surveillance by the Justice Department; McKay, for his part, used one of his last articles in the *Liberator* to criticize Eastman.

Undercapitalization, a weak distribution network, and a lack of broad appeal shortened the life of many magazines like the *Liberator*. The *Liberator* continued to veer toward the communist line; eventually it merged with some other communist periodicals, and in 1924 it became the *Workers' Monthly*, a journal of Marxist thought owned by the Communist Party.

KATHLEEN COLLINS

See also Communist Party; Eastman, Max; McKay, Claude

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Lincoln Motion Picture Company

The Lincoln Motion Picture Company was founded in Los Angeles in 1916 by the actor Noble M. Johnson, who had already achieved considerable recognition and now starred in the new company's productions. In 1918 Noble Johnson brought in his brother George P. Johnson, who established an impressive distribution network that drew on the patronage of the black middle class in major cities, including Chicago, New York, Pittsburgh, and Los Angeles. George Johnson also devised a method of distribution to small-town establishments that could not afford to rent prints, and he advertised the company's films in newspapers such as the *Chicago Defender* and the *Amsterdam News*.

Lincoln's films were intended to present images of black people as normal human beings with talent and intelligence, and to avoid the negative stereotyping that was prevalent during this period: its productions offered the first blacks in film who did not conform to the usual roles of mammies, spear-wielding natives, or slapstick and burlesque comedians. In keeping with the ideology of uplift generally espoused by black leaders, these films emphasized decidedly middle-class values and achievements. Moreover, except for the cameraman Harry Grant, who was also a stockholder, the production company itself was all black.

Lincoln produced five narrative films—*Realization of a Negro's Ambition* (1916), *Trooper of Company K* (1916), *Law of Nature* (1917), *Man's Duty* (1919), and *By Right of Birth* (1921)—and two newsreels: *Lincoln Pictorial* (1918) and *A Day with the Tenth Cavalry at Fort Huachuca* (1922). In addition to Noble Johnson, its regular actors included Clarence Brooks, Beulah Hall, and A. Collins.

Lincoln's first "photoplay" (the term used for film productions), *Realization of a Negro's Ambition*, was a testament to the virtues of hard work and earnestness. The hero, a graduate of the Tuskegee Institute, leaves home to seek his fortune in the oil fields of California; rescues the daughter of the owner of an oil company; and returns home, where he finds oil on the family farm. The film opened in white-owned theaters catering to blacks, as well as in public-gathering places such as churches and schools; it was also shown at the Tuskegee Institute. Two of the four prints that were made were copyrighted

by white-owned film companies: Carver Film and Supply and Queen Feature Service.

The next film, *Trooper of Company K*, was about the “Carrizal incident,” an episode during the Mexican War in which all-black troops were virtually wiped out. It too starred Noble Johnson and Beulah Hall. *Trooper of Company K* played to both black and white audiences; it was shown in two white theaters in New Orleans and drew large crowds throughout the Midwest and the South.

Law of Nature, released in 1917, was the last movie in which Noble Johnson starred; he resigned from Lincoln soon afterward, possibly at the insistence of Universal, a studio with which he was also under contract. (Johnson was such a strong attraction that Lincoln’s films were evidently drawing moviegoers away from Universal’s.) Ultimately, Lincoln could not survive the loss of its star.

A Man’s Duty and *By Right of Birth* were Lincoln’s final films. *A Man’s Duty*, with its traveling road show of actors and dancers, was shown in all of the then forty-eight states of the nation. *Heart of a Negro* was announced as the next release, but it was never produced. The Lincoln Motion Picture Company ceased operations in 1923.

AUDREY THOMAS MCCCLUSKEY

See also Brooks, Clarence; Film; Film: Black Filmmakers; Johnson, Noble

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Lincoln Theater

The Lincoln Theater opened in 1909 at 56–58 West 135th Street, between Fifth and Lenox avenues, to

serve Harlem’s burgeoning African American population. The new owner, Maria C. Downs, converted what had been a nickelodeon into a 300-seat theater, and its success allowed her to build a new 850-seat theater on the same site in 1915. Along with the Lafayette Theater (which desegregated in 1914), the Lincoln was Harlem’s most important venue for bringing entertainment to black audiences during the 1910s and 1920s.

The defection to the white *Ziegfeld Follies* of the great black comedian Bert Williams in 1910 signaled the end of black Broadway’s first great age, one that would not be revived until the phenomenal success of *Shuffle Along* in 1921. The virtual banishment of African Americans from downtown stages, however, encouraged the development of a vital theater within Harlem itself, financed, performed, and attended by members of the community. In 1914, the actress and dancer Anita Bush, who had been born in Brooklyn and who had performed with Williams in around 1904, organized a Colored Dramatic Stock Company at the Lincoln in order to offer black audiences serious drama—that is, to break away from the all-singing, all-dancing format which usually constrained black performers. By 1915, the organization was called the Anita Bush Stock Company, and by 1916 it had moved to the Lafayette. Samuel Hay (1994, 173–174) suggests this move might better be described as a “hostile takeover” on the part of Maria Downs and the Lafayette Players.

The Lincoln continued to present drama, but by the 1920s it was better known as a raucous movie and vaudeville house popular with recent migrants from the South: “the kind of people,” the *Messenger’s* drama critic Theophilus Lewis wrote with bourgeois dismay



Lincoln Theater, c. 1915. (Brown Brothers.)

and fascinated pride, “who kick the varnish off the furniture, plaster chewing gum on the seats and throw peanut shells in the aisles” (quoted in Fraden 1994, 73). In *The Big Sea* (1940), Langston Hughes fondly recalled one summer night in 1927 when Jules Bledsoe stopped a performance of Eugene O’Neill’s *The Emperor Jones* to deliver a lecture on theater manners to an audience that had “howled with laughter” at the spectacle of Bledsoe running naked through a stage forest pursued by his fears. Hughes added that “their manners had been all right at all the other shows at the Lincoln, where they took part in the performance at will” (1940, 258–259).

As a stop on the Theater Owners’ Booking Association circuit, the Lincoln was the New York showcase for national black jazz and vaudeville acts like Williams, Butterbeans and Susie, Ethel Waters, and the blues singers Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, Mamie Smith, and Alberta Hunter. In 1919, the Lincoln hired the young Fats Waller at \$23 a week to play its new \$10,000 Wurlitzer organ for silent films and vaudeville acts.

In 1929, the Lincoln was sold to Frank Schiffman and Leo Brecher, businessmen who were busy consolidating Harlem’s entertainment industry. The Lincoln was designated to show movies while live entertainment (including Waller) was moved to the Lafayette.

RYAN JERVING

See also Anita Bush Stock Company; Bledsoe, Jules; Bush, Anita; Community Theater; Emperor Jones, The; Hughes, Langston; Hunter, Alberta; Lafayette Players; Lafayette Theater; Lewis, Theophilus; Messenger, The; O’Neill, Eugene; Rainey, Gertrude “Ma”; Shuffle Along; Smith, Bessie; Smith, Mamie; Theater Owners’ Booking Association; Waller, Thomas “Fats”; Waters, Ethel; Williams, Egbert Austin “Bert”

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Lindsay, Vachel

Of his birthplace—Springfield, Illinois—Vachel Lindsay wrote, “Everything begins and ends there for me.” In a profound way this is true of his life. Lindsay drew on the people and landscape of Illinois as the material for his art and also as the yardstick for judging that art. For Lindsay, poetry was necessarily popular and democratic. He strove to create art that would appeal to the common people, in Springfield and beyond.

Lindsay’s first book was a prose memoir recalling his journeys across America as a tramp, exchanging his goodwill and poetic recitations for money and lodging. From this start, Lindsay rose quickly to become a central figure in the popularization of free verse in America. His poem “William Booth Enters Heaven” (1914) brought him wide acclaim and took him to the top of the American avant-garde. In 1914 the Irish poet William Butler Yeats, visiting America, said that Lindsay’s poetry had a “strange beauty,” legitimizing the new avant-garde in the eyes of the conservative press. By the end of that year, with the publication of Lindsay’s poem “The Congo” in the magazine *Poetry* and his volume *The Congo* shortly thereafter, Lindsay’s dramatic reading style and his verse—which was influenced by vaudeville—became wildly popular, and he embarked on a rigorous schedule of readings and lectures nationwide which he would keep up for years.

Lindsay, along with Carl Sandburg and Edgar Lee Masters, defined modernism for the Harlem Renaissance. His chanted verse and dramatic cadences anticipated the use of jazz and ragtime in poetry, but it was Lindsay’s populism that made him so influential a figure in the renaissance. Lindsay was first and foremost concerned about how to create poetry that would sing to the masses. Famously, he claimed to have discovered Langston Hughes while appearing at a hotel where Hughes was working as a busboy. Hughes dropped a packet of poems on Lindsay’s table; Lindsay read them that night, and then he surprised his audience by announcing that he had

discovered a black poet working right there in the hotel. However, Lindsay did not realize that Hughes had already been discovered: Alfred Knopf had a contract to publish Hughes's *Weary Blues*.

Lindsay's most famous poem, "The Congo," is subtitled "A Study of the Negro Race." The poem draws on the concept of African Americans as barely concealed primitives and portrays black people's coming into civilization as a source of a vital new poetry. Although "The Congo" now reads as stereotyped, condescending, and even offensive, Lindsay claimed that it had been inspired when he discussed the plight of the Negro with a black lawyer in Springfield, Charles Gibson.

Lindsay's interest in helping black America was sincere, if sometimes misguided. In 1926 he was a judge for *Opportunity's* annual literary contest; that same year he was also one of the respondents in a symposium in *The Crisis*: "The Negro in Art—How Shall He Be Portrayed?" Lindsay was also involved in civil rights causes; for example, he wrote letters of protest to newspapers after two black men were lynched in Springfield in 1908, and he made a point of including black colleges on his reading tours.

By the 1920s, Lindsay's career was in decline. He himself came to hate reading "The Congo," although his audiences kept on demanding to hear it. In 1931, faced with the critical failure of his later work, and battling exhaustion and illness, Lindsay committed suicide (by drinking Lysol) in the home in Springfield where he had been born.

Biography

Nicholas Vachel Lindsay was born in Springfield, Illinois, 10 November 1879. He attended Hiram College in Ohio (1897–1900); the Chicago Art Institute and the New York School of Art (1900–1905). He was a pen-and-ink designer (1900–1910) and a lecturer on art history (1905–1910). His honors included Phi Beta Kappa (Harvard, 1922); a Litt.D. from Baylor University, and a Litt.D. from Hiram College (1930). Lindsay died in Springfield 5 December 1931.

STEVEN NARDI

See also *Crisis, The: The Negro in Art—How Shall He Be Portrayed? A Symposium*; Hughes, Langston; Knopf, Alfred A.; *Opportunity Literary Contests*; *Weary Blues, The*

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Lippincott, J. B., Publisher

J. B. Lippincott, one of America's oldest publishing houses, was started by Joseph Ballinger Lippincott in 1836. He established his own firm by buying the business of a bookseller in Philadelphia named Clarke and later acquiring Jacob Johnson and Company, a publisher—also in Philadelphia—that had been in existence since 1792. In its early years, Lippincott was known for publishing bibles, prayer books, and literature. The company's list diversified through the 1850s, and Lippincott became the largest publishing, distributing, and manufacturing office in the world, establishing its reputation as a seller of medical books, religious books, and textbooks.

Lippincott's Magazine was launched in 1868 to boost the firm's literary publishing list. It became an important venue for Rudyard Kipling, Oscar Wilde, Jack London, and Arthur Conan Doyle, all of whom published complete novels or novelettes in the magazine; it was one of the leading magazines of its type until it merged with *Scribner's* in 1916.

Although a poem by Alice Dunbar Nelson appeared in *Lippincott's Magazine* in 1902 and William Stanley Braithwaite's *A Tale of a Walled Town and Other Verses* was published by the firm in 1921, Lippincott's list during the heyday of the Harlem Renaissance

showed no significant investment in works by black writers. Rather, Lippincott's principal contribution to the Harlem Renaissance was its publication of Zora Neale Hurston's major works in the 1930s and 1940s.

Bertram Lippincott took over as editor during this time and brought a new perspective to the conservative firm. Lippincott discovered Hurston's work when he read "The Gilded Six-Bits" in *Story Magazine* in 1933, and he wrote to her asking if she had a novel. Although she had not yet begun writing the text that would become her first novel, *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, Hurston convinced Lippincott that she was already working on it, and he offered her an advance. Lippincott was interested in Hurston's blending of fiction and folklore, and published *Jonah's Gourd Vine* in 1934. He eagerly published Hurston's next four books—*Mules and Men* (1935), *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), *Tell My Horse* (1938) and *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (1939)—although the last two did not sell well.

When Lippincott urged Hurston to write an autobiography as her next project, she initially disagreed; he prevailed, however, and *Dust Tracks on a Road* was published in 1942. This book is marked by inconsistencies that are very likely a result of Hurston's and Lippincott's contrary expectations for its content. When, in 1945, Lippincott rejected Hurston's proposal for a novel about the upper strata of African American life, she called him a "timid soul" and stated that he thought America was not yet ready for this kind of text. Her later essay "What White Publishers Won't Print" may have been related to Lippincott's rejection of her idea.

Aside from its promotion of Zora Neale Hurston's works, J. B. Lippincott contributed little to the Harlem Renaissance. Still, the role this publishing house played in establishing Hurston as a major figure of the 1930s is notable indeed.

AMANDA M. LAWRENCE

See also Hurston, Zora Neale; Publishers and Publishing Houses; *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

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Literary and Artistic Prizes

During the Harlem Renaissance, several sponsors had contests for outstanding literary, artistic, and scientific achievement. These sponsors included The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), through its magazine *The Crisis*; the National Urban League, through its magazine *Opportunity*; private foundations; and individual patrons whose purpose was to encourage young writers and artists and to have the best of their work published. Such contests went on throughout the 1920s and early 1930s. Most were eventually discontinued for various reasons—financial constraints, a lack of worthy entries, and a desire to forgo white patronage—but they left an important legacy. Among the eminent literary figures who achieved recognition, and whose work was promoted, through these contests were Arna Bontemps, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Nella Larsen.

As early as 1922, the blues singer Trixie Smith won the first concert competition of the 369th Infantry Regimental Band, sponsored by Black Swan Records. But the literary and artistic prizes of the Harlem Renaissance officially got under way in the summer of 1924, when W. E. B. Du Bois, the editor of *The Crisis*, received \$300 to sponsor an annual literary competition. The donors were Amy E. Spingarn, daughter of a wealthy mill owner in New Jersey; and her husband, Joel Spingarn, who was a literary editor at the publishing firm Harcourt Brace and a member of the board of NAACP. In September 1924, Charles S. Johnson, the editor of *Opportunity*, announced a creative writing contest of his own, both to encourage literary achievement and to promote African American social and political causes.

From their inception, the contests raised concerns having to do with the content, goals, and patronage of the sponsoring magazines. Regarding content and goals, in early 1926 the poet Claude McKay responded to the proliferation of awards with an essay (unpublished) called "Negro Life and Negro Art," in which he

argued that the contests were, ill-advisedly, channeling artistic expression toward racial propaganda. With regard to patronage, although the Urban League and the NAACP supported the arts during the 1920s, this situation began to change as the decade wore on: increasing numbers of prizes and fellowships were sponsored by white businesses, foundations, and entrepreneurs. White patronage was at first considered an encouraging development in interracial relations, but eventually it came to be seen as inimical to African American uplift—and, as noted earlier, this was one reason why the magazines finally ended the awards. Du Bois, for one, had misgivings about certain white publishers that he believed were perpetuating sensationalist images of Harlem and African Americans. Nevertheless, for quite a few years the contests and award ceremonies provided a prominent venue in which emerging writers and artists could meet each other and publicize their work.

The Crisis

The Crisis, which had been founded by Du Bois in 1910, was a high-quality journal that urged the eradication of racism in America and emphasized African American sources of the nation's cultural landscape. Before undertaking its literary contests, it had published work by little-known poets and writers such as Georgia Johnson, Mary Effie Lee, and Lucian Watkins; had offered the Spingarn medal for African American achievement in several categories; and, in December 1922, had run a short-story competition. *The Crisis* formally announced its first literary contest in October 1924. The rules were few, calling for plays, poems, fiction, and essays dealing with some aspect of Negro life; the categories also included illustration and song. The first awards dinner was held in November 1925 at the Renaissance Casino in Harlem. The prestigious panel of judges, selected by Du Bois and Jessie Fauset (the literary editor of *The Crisis*), included Sinclair Lewis, Charles Chestnutt, Eugene O'Neill, H. G. Wells, and the African American anthologist and literary critic William Stanley Braithwaite.

The following year, the award money was increased. Langston Hughes won a prize in the contest of 1926; and Du Bois announced the Krigwa prizes (originally Crigwa, an acronym standing for Crisis Guild of Writers and Artists), sponsored by white and black patrons. Du Bois, who was a firm believer in the power of art to promote racial uplift, established the Krigwa workshop to encourage young playwrights,

writers, and artists. In 1927 he formed the Krigwa Academy, comprising everyone who had received two prizes (first or second) in the contests run by *The Crisis*. Du Bois also believed firmly that African American life should be presented in positive terms; nevertheless the Krigwa competition invited submissions on all facets of black life.

Du Bois's ambivalence about the goals set by *The Crisis* became manifest in the announcement of the prizes for 1927. Substantial prize money came from African American businesses and the Empire State Federation of Women's Clubs rather than from whites. Prizes were to be awarded not only for artistic achievements but also for achievements in African American economic activities. *The Crisis* continued to acknowledge creative works with the Amy Spingarn awards and with a cash award from Charles Chestnutt, but the rules for the contest became more restrictive, urging submissions that promoted black business and social causes over those of an artistic nature. Although Mae Virginia Cowdery of Philadelphia won first prize for poetry, the general feeling at *The Crisis* was that the quality of the entries and the stature of the judges had declined. Du Bois decided to eliminate the annual prizes and banquets in favor of modest monthly Spingarn awards for poetry and fiction. Toward the end of 1928, *The Crisis* had abandoned its arts and literature categories altogether, maintaining only the Charles Chestnutt honoraria and the economic prizes, with its own editors acting as judges.

The Crisis revived its contests in 1931 with a Du Bois Literary Prize of \$1,000, established by Mrs. E. R. Mathews. First prize went to James Weldon Johnson for *Black Manhattan*. There was no winner in 1932, and enthusiasm for the contests continued to fade: prizes were postponed, submissions decreased, and there was a lack of qualified judges. Interest in *The Crisis* itself also declined as Du Bois struggled with the direction the magazine should take and dampened the enthusiasm of artists with his exacting demands and restrictions.

Opportunity

Founded in 1923, *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* was committed to promoting talented African American artists, writers, and poets whose work was often neglected by other periodicals. Its editor, Charles S. Johnson, furthered this goal by inaugurating *Opportunity's* literary contest in September 1924; entries depicting varied aspects of African American life were requested.

Johnson had raised awareness of black literature earlier that year as the host of a party at the Civic Club on 21 March 1924; the guests had included many literary luminaries, such as Alain Locke, who served as master of ceremonies. The ensuing enthusiasm for African American writing led to a gift of \$500 from Mrs. Henry G. Leach to sponsor a creative-writing contest run by *Opportunity*.

To Johnson's delight, *Opportunity* received numerous submissions in fiction, poetry, and drama, and the winners were announced at a banquet in New York City on 1 May 1925. An integrated panel of twenty-four judges included Robert C. Benchley of *Life* magazine, Alexander Woollcott of the *New York Sun*, Henry G. Leach of *Forum*, and James Weldon Johnson. First prize for fiction went to John Matheus for "Fog"; second prize to Zora Neale Hurston for "Spunk" and Dorothy West (then age nineteen) for "The Typewriter"; and third prize to Eric Walrond for "The Voodoo's Revenge." Langston Hughes won first prize for poetry for "Weary Blues"; Hurston's play *Color Struck* shared second prize for drama with Warren A. MacDonald's *Humble Instrument*; and E. Franklin Frazier, Sterling Brown, and Laura D. Wheatley won prizes for essays.

The first *Opportunity* awards also established important relationships in New York's literary milieu. Among the guests at the banquet were the publisher Alfred Knopf, the essayist and novelist Fannie Hurst, and several members of the Van Doren family. It was at this banquet that Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston met for the first time, and Hurston first became acquainted with Fannie Hurst, who soon thereafter hired Hurston as her companion and personal secretary. Distinguished magazines such as the *Nation*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Harper's* solicited further work from several prizewinners, including Countee Cullen; the black West Indian merchant Caspar Holstein gave Johnson the funds to sponsor a second contest.

The following year, *Opportunity* received 1,276 entries for its contest, which had been extended to include journalism, musical composition, and the Alexander Pushkin Poetry Prize. The second awards ceremony was held in April 1926; the judges this time included Robert Frost, Vachel Lindsay, Jean Toomer, James Weldon Johnson, Alain Locke, Carl Van Doren, and William Stanley Braithwaite. Zora Neale Hurston received second prize for her short story "Muttsy," and Arna Bontemps received the Pushkin prize for "Golgotha Is a Mountain." Arthur Fauset (Jessie Fauset's half brother), Joseph Cotter Seamon, Dorothy

West, and John Matheus also won prizes. Many award-winning works appeared in the June issue—the "Contest Number"—of *Opportunity*.

The *Opportunity* awards of 1927 were successful but also controversial. Winners included Sterling Brown (who was awarded the first prize in poetry for "When De Saints Go Ma'ching Home"), Helene Johnson (who won second prize in poetry for "Summer Matures"), and Nellie R. Bright (who won third prize for poetry). Arna Bontemps won his second Pushkin prize for "The Return," and Georgia Douglas Johnson won first prize for her play *Plumes*. Nevertheless, four months later the Urban League suspended the contests. One judge resigned from the panel; Charles Johnson and others deplored the inferior critical standards applied to many submissions; and the writer Wallace Thurman lamented that the prizes seemed to be based on racial rather than literary merit. Financial troubles set in as well, when a five-year grant from the Carnegie Corporation ended in 1927 and *Opportunity* sold just 11,000 copies a month during 1928; also, Johnson left *Opportunity* in 1928 for a professorship in sociology at Fisk University.

Like *The Crisis*, *Opportunity* later resumed its contests. It held a banquet on 5 May 1933 honoring Arna Bontemps with first prize for "A Summer Tragedy" and Marieta Bonner and Henry B. Jones with honorable mentions. Pearl S. Buck was the guest of honor, and the judges included Sterling Brown, Fannie Hurst, and John Day (the president of John Day Publishing Company). By the following year, however, the contests were permanently discontinued.

Other Prizes

Additional prizes included the NAACP's Spingarn Medal for exemplary work by an African American, awarded to William Stanley Braithwaite in 1918; and various Amy Spingarn awards. In 1925, Rudolph Fisher won a first prize for a story in the Spingarn contest in literature and art; Willis Richardson won the Amy Spingarn prize for his play *The Broken Banjo*. Funding for prizes in 1926 included the Boni and Liveright prize of \$1,000 for an outstanding novel by an African American writer (although this was never awarded, for lack of a worthy recipient); \$600 from Amy Spingarn for the forthcoming *Crisis* contest; \$1,000 from Casper Holstein; and a cash award from Carl Van Vechten for *Opportunity*.

In 1921, Marcus Garvey's weekly newspaper, *Negro World*, ran a Christmas literary competition with dozens

of cash prizes for essays, poems, and short stories combining creative talent with race-consciousness. One notable entrant was Eric Walrond, who won first prize in the category “Africa Redeemed” for his short story “A Senator’s Memoirs.”

The William E. Harmon Foundation sponsored annual prizes in science, education, literature, music, fine arts, industry, and race relations. Seven prizes were designated for African American contestants, and an eighth for an eligible contestant of any ethnicity. At the Harmon Foundation’s awards ceremony on 12 February 1928, James Weldon Johnson accepted the gold medal and \$400 for Claude McKay, and Nella Larsen received the bronze medal and \$100 for her novel *Quicksand*.

Other prizes included those of the Garland Fund, and the Louis Rodman Wanamaker awards for musical composition.

Conclusion

The literary and artistic contests of the Harlem Renaissance were invaluable in promoting and publishing the work of talented black Americans. Yet the momentum of these contests slowed for several reasons. First, editors at both *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* believed that the submissions during the late 1920s lacked the vibrancy and spontaneity of earlier entries. Second, noting decreasing circulation at both magazines, many sponsors sensed a waning public enthusiasm for the arts and diverted their funds elsewhere, despite major publications of black prose and poetry at the time, including Alain Locke’s *The New Negro*. *The Crisis*, for its part, seemed to have lost much of its aplomb, publishing literature haphazardly and engendering controversy over poorly run contests in 1928 and 1929. Third, there were varying and increasingly complex opinions as to the means of racial uplift. Whereas the announcements of the early contests had encouraged diverse literary representations of black life, Du Bois, for one, later believed in only one acceptable portrayal of the African American experience. Fourth, Du Bois’s exertion of rigid control over the contests run by *The Crisis* alienated a new generation of artists and writers. Fifth, Charles Johnson at *Opportunity* faced financial difficulties and the question of whether the magazine and its literature were still effective vehicles for the Urban League.

As a result of all these factors, the prizes of the Harlem Renaissance—although they connoted dazzling literary success—ultimately succumbed to

financial distress, artistic disputes, and ongoing racial tension.

KRISTIN E. CZARNECKI

See also Black Manhattan; Boni and Liveright Prize; Bontemps, Arna; Braithwaite, William Stanley; Brown, Sterling; Chesnutt, Charles Waddell; Civic Club Dinner, 1924; Cowdery, Mae Virginia; Crisis, The: Literary Prizes; Cullen, Countee; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Frazier, E. Franklin; Garland Fund; Harmon Foundation; Holstein, Casper; Hughes, Langston; Hurst, Fannie; Hurston, Zora Neale; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Johnson, Georgia Douglas; Johnson, James Weldon; Larsen, Nella; Locke, Alain; Matheus, John Frederick; Negro World; Opportunity Literary Contests; Smith, Trixie; Spingarn, Joel; Walrond, Eric; Wanamaker Award; West, Dorothy; *other specific writers and artists*

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Literary Criticism and the Harlem Renaissance

Much literary criticism was written during the Harlem Renaissance, although it took slightly different forms

from the literary criticism written today. Analyses and interpretations of fiction, poetry, and drama in the 1920s appeared as review essays, rather than the extended academic essays that we currently associate with literary criticism. During the Harlem Renaissance, some literary criticism appeared in books and anthologies, but its more common venues were the popular magazines of the time: *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* in particular, but also *The Messenger* and some white journals like *Vanity Fair*.

Some white writers, such as Carl Van Doren and H. L. Mencken, reviewed literature by African Americans, but work by and about African Americans received its most frequent and extensive attention from other African Americans. The writers of reviews and essays included many of the most prominent African American participants in the Harlem Renaissance: W. E. B. Du Bois and Jessie Fauset, whose essays appeared mostly in *The Crisis*; Alain Locke and James Weldon Johnson, who contributed reviews to *The Crisis*, *Opportunity*, and other magazines; and Charles S. Johnson, who wrote about literature primarily for *Opportunity*. Literary critics for the *Messenger* included George Schuyler, whose reviews also were published in other publications; Theophilus Lewis, who wrote about drama; and Wallace Thurman, whose barbed critiques also appeared in white magazines and in *Fire!!* A number of anthologies published during the 1920s also included important critical essays: Among these are James Weldon Johnson's *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922; revised 1931); Alain Locke's *The New Negro* (1925); Countee Cullen's *Caroling Dusk* (1927), and Charles Johnson's *Ebony and Topaz* (1927). Benjamin Brawley, William S. Braithwaite, and Sterling Brown also deserve note as literary critics: All three published books and essays about African American literature, although much of Brown's work appeared in the years after the Harlem Renaissance.

These critics used a range of criteria to assess literature. Some of the critical essays of the time merely debated those criteria, without reference to specific texts. But most essays analyzed an individual book or play and described its strengths and weaknesses. In the early years of the renaissance, many of the writers of literary criticism measured texts by the degree to which they offered portrayals of African Americans that challenged racist stereotypes and assumptions. This criterion was applied most often to works of fiction or drama. For example, in 1923 Montgomery Gregory argued that the realistic portraits of African Americans in Jean Toomer's *Cane* were important

complements to the caricatures so often present in literature by white writers. Similarly, Gregory heralded Fauset's *There Is Confusion* in 1924, asserting that it presented "the better elements of our life to those who know us only as domestic servants, 'uncles,' or criminals" (181). Such arguments were common in the literary criticism of the Harlem Renaissance; the reviewers' belief in the importance of new images of African Americans is clear in the laudatory reviews of work like Fauset's that presented well-educated, property-holding, "respectable" African American characters.

This hope that literature might help undermine racism also led to condemnations of books that were seen as presenting "negative" images of African Americans. These included blatantly racist novels by white southern writers such as Thomas Dixon, whose novel *The Clansman* (1905) was the basis for the movie *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). Writers in the major African American magazines warned their readers about these depictions, as well as those in more subtly demeaning texts that seemed perhaps more well-intentioned but still advanced racist stereotypes. Also viciously denounced were texts by African Americans that, in reviewers' minds, were counterproductive to the goal of presenting positive images of African Americans. For example, Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem* (1928) received outraged criticism from Du Bois, who declared that he felt like taking a bath after he read it. Perhaps the one book that was most criticized along these lines was Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* (1926). Again, Du Bois led the charge, writing that the book was "a blow to the face" and "an affront to the hospitality of black folk" (81), particularly because it was written by a white writer who had been assumed to be a "friend" of African Americans. Du Bois found the title misleading and objectionable, but he also was offended by what he saw as the book's focus on cabaret scenes, its reveling in the details of a "wildly, barbaric drunken orgy" (81), and its caricatures of African Americans. Other reviewers, however, were much more positive about the novel, and their responses to it hint at a shift away from the expectation that literature should work as propaganda.

One place where the various positions in this debate were articulated was "The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed?," a symposium launched in *The Crisis* in early 1926. Implying that too much literature presented African Americans "at their worst," the opening questionnaire asked whether writers had a duty to present more positive images of African Americans. Du Bois

made clear his own answer to this question in “Criteria of Negro Art,” which he included in the October 1926 issue of *Crisis*. In this essay, a transcription of a speech he had delivered to a meeting of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Du Bois issued his famous proclamation that he did not “care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda”; he also insisted that black writers had a “bounden duty” to focus on beauty, truth, and goodness (296). Ironically, Du Bois had declared in an editorial, “Negro Art,” in 1921 that expecting art to work as propaganda was wrong and would be harmful. Many of the other contributors to the symposium of 1926 agreed with his earlier argument. Langston Hughes, for example, insisted, as he would insist in his famous essay “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” that artists needed to be free to create work according to their own experiences and desires. Others agreed with Hughes, and many declared themselves to be more concerned with the demands of art than the need for propaganda.

The critique of the idea that literature should present positive images of African Americans became more pronounced in the mid- to late 1920s. Wallace Thurman was one of the most vocal writers to articulate this opposition; in fact, he pointedly attacked the expectation that literature and the arts should work as propaganda. For example, in an essay in *Fire!!* he wrote that racist readers probably wouldn’t believe that characters like Fauset’s were realistic; if they assumed that the less-respectable characters in a book like *Nigger Heaven* were typical African Americans, they probably already believed “such poppy-cock, . . . without any additional aid from Mr. Van Vechten” (1926, 47). In other words, Thurman challenged the validity of the hope that literature could serve the social purpose of undermining racism. Furthermore, here and elsewhere, he insisted that expecting literature to work as propaganda was counterproductive, that it limited what writers thought they could create and, by oppressing their creative tendencies, weakened the artistic merit of the work produced. He insisted that the criterion by which literature should be measured was quality, not content. This position—art for art’s sake—was articulated, for example, in the opening statement of *Fire!!*, which defined the magazine as “interested only in the arts” (2). Thurman’s essays and reviews were perhaps among the most sharply worded of the arguments along these lines, but many other literary critics of the Harlem Renaissance agreed with Thurman on these points.

Still another set of reviewers focused on the importance of the quality rather than the content of literature by African Americans because they believed that the work’s quality could serve as an argument against racism. This criterion was applied to literature in all genres. In his preface to the first edition of *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, for example, James Weldon Johnson asserted that “the amount and standard of literature and art” produced by a group of people was critical to judgments about that group (1922, 9). This assumption underlay many of the reviews of texts by African American writers. Significantly, many reviews were published with photographs of the authors; these made visible the race of their creators, as if to ensure that their work “counted” as a credit to the race. This idea that well-written literature was an important demonstration of the skills of African Americans also seems to have fit into the sense of purpose for the literary contests run by *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* from 1925 to 1927, the Civic Club dinner held by Charles Johnson in 1924, and other events designed to draw reviewers’ attention to high-quality work by African American writers.

The question of what made a text notable for its quality was, of course, also subject to debate. Critical discussions ensued about what formal aspects made a text worthy of note. One of the most debated issues was the question of language—in particular, whether writers should use dialect in their work. Poetry was most often the focus of this debate. James Weldon Johnson, for example, argued in the preface to the first edition of *The Book of American Negro Poetry* that the use of traditional dialect was outdated and problematic; he declared that there was a need for black writers to use the vernacular in new and innovative ways, but he also argued that traditional dialect had too many demeaning connotations to be useful to poets in the Harlem Renaissance. Young poets like Hughes and Sterling Brown did use the speech of “ordinary” black people in their poetry, however, and their innovative use of language was heralded by literary critics—including Johnson in his preface to the second edition of his book—who saw their work as marked by important literary innovations.

Another set of critics debated ideas about culture that had implications for literary criticism. Participants in the Harlem Renaissance voiced a range of opinions about whether African American writers should reflect distinctive elements of African American culture in their work—and even whether distinctive elements of African American culture existed. George

Schuyler's essay "Negro Art Hokum," published in *The Nation* in June 1926, was a particularly strong piece on this topic. Arguing that black and white people in America were subject to the same cultural and social forces, Schuyler insisted that black culture did not exist as a separate, distinct entity; that nationality rather than race had the most significant impact on creative work. By extension, Schuyler asserted, African American writers and artists should not be expected to create work that differed significantly from work created by white American writers and artists. Langston Hughes's response, published a week later in the same magazine, was "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain." Opening with a critique of poets who wanted their work to be judged without regard to their race, Hughes attacked what he called an "urge within the race toward whiteness," a desire to be "as little Negro and as much American as possible" (1926, 91). In contrast to Schuyler, Hughes called for the black artist to maintain "his racial individuality" and to create "a racial art" (93). Hughes offered folk music and jazz as examples of specifically racial art forms, and he mentioned his own poetry, particularly his "jazz poems," as demonstrating the possibility of literature that was formally linked to black culture. Diametrically opposed to Hughes's poetry, in terms of their formal elements, were McKay's Elizabethan sonnets. To critics who believed that black culture was distinct from white culture, literature like McKay's poems was seen as missing the opportunity to add something unique to American literature.

A related issue that was debated in the literary criticism of the Harlem Renaissance was whether African American writers should focus on the African American folk, rather than the elite. Poets like Hughes and Brown often portrayed the "low-down folks, the so-called common element," as Hughes referred to them in "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (92). Zora Neale Hurston's plays and fiction also were full of such characters, as were stories written by Wallace Thurman and others. Such work did not fit the demands of reviewers who believed that it was depictions of the talented tenth—or at least of middle-class African Americans—that would do the most to improve perceptions of African Americans. But texts that focused on the black folk also had many supporters. Charles Johnson, for example, repeatedly called for fiction that focused on the "lower classes," as did white writers like Carl Van Vechten, who encouraged African American writers to mine the black folk for fresh, innovative material. They and others either saw

such work as complementing propaganda literature by ensuring that the folk as well as the elite were depicted, or they saw it as complementing literature by white Americans in adding realistic and sympathetic depictions of the black folk to the national literary tradition.

Whatever their own positions in these arguments about literary criteria, many reviewers also recognized the influence of audiences' demands on writers' work. In some cases, critics pointed to African Americans' expectations as part of the problem. For example, Theophilus Lewis, in his reviews in the *Messenger* of plays by and about African Americans, often called for more "serious" black drama but bemoaned the lack of support from black audiences for such work. Too many African Americans, he argued, were too fond of dancing and comedies to sufficiently support the development of theater in a way that would nurture an understanding and appreciation for black culture. More often, though, the demands of white audiences were the focus of discussion. One of the assumptions behind the symposium in *The Crisis* on "Negro in Art," for example, was that white publishers were interested only in literature that conformed to certain stereotypes of African Americans—an assumption with which many of the respondents to the survey disagreed. If it were true, though, the demands of those publishers might persuade writers to create work that fit those expectations. On the other hand, the idea that literature should serve as propaganda also primarily assumed that white readers were the intended audience, and it potentially pushed writers to produce more propaganda literature. In fact, as the Harlem Renaissance wound down, literary critics often used this concern over the effect of literature on white readers to attack the movement. Richard Wright, for example, in his devastating critique of the literature of the Harlem Renaissance, argued that the movement's participants had been too focused on white readers; in his essay "Blueprint for Negro Writing" (1937), he characterized the writers of the Harlem Renaissance as "prim and decorous ambassadors who went a-begging to white America" (194). Ironically, then, as a new generation of literary critics rose to prominence in aftermath of the Harlem Renaissance, the literature of the movement was dismissed on the basis of the very criteria for which it had been praised two decades earlier.

The fact that so much of the literary criticism published during the Harlem Renaissance appeared in periodicals has made its study time consuming and challenging, for it requires archival research on

magazines like *The Crisis*, *Opportunity*, and the *Messenger*. However, relatively recent critical work on the literary criticism of the movement demonstrates the insights to be gained from such study. For example, George Hutchinson (1995) offers an overview of the main concerns of literary critics who wrote for *The Crisis*, *Opportunity*, and the *Messenger*, focusing particularly on the work of their drama critics. Furthermore, a number of collections of primary materials from the movement have been published since the 1990s, including Sondra Kathryn Wilson's three readers (1999a; 1999b; 2000) and the first two volumes of Cary Wintz's six-volume series on the Harlem Renaissance. These make at least some of the movement's literary criticism more easily accessible, thus opening the door for continued analysis of this important body of work.

ANNE CARROLL

See also Cane; Crisis, The; Crisis, The: The Negro in Art—How Shall He Be Portrayed? A Symposium; Ebony and Topaz; Fire!!; Home to Harlem; Messenger, The; New Negro, The; Nigger Heaven; Opportunity; There Is Confusion; Vanity Fair; *specific individuals*

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Literature: 1—Overview

The literature of the Harlem Renaissance, or the New Negro movement, not only was an affirmation of the artistic sensibility and the intellectual potential of the African Americans gathered in Harlem in the years 1910–1930, but it also connected black culture to the avant-garde aesthetics being developed on both sides of the Atlantic. The literary Harlem Renaissance can be seen as beginning with the opening of the musical *Shuffle Along* in 1921 and with the publication of Claude McKay's *Harlem Shadows* (1922), Jean Toomer's *Cane* (1923), and Jessie Redmon Fauset's *There Is Confusion* (1924). *Cane* in particular—a sophisticated collage of modernism and folk materials, poetry and prose, advanced urban milieus and mythic rural Georgia—reflected characteristic themes concerning unresolved conflicts between the psychological and the political, the personal and the social, the North and the South, and white modernist formalized elitism and black social advancement.

The renaissance of African American literature was influenced by the "great migration" of the early twentieth century, in which African Americans moved from the rural South to major cities in the North. The resulting concentration of creative artists in

urban settings—poets, dramatists, essayists, fiction writers, dancers, painters, singers, and musicians—encouraged interchange and productivity. Often, these artists had a common goal: to develop new forms of artistic expression for the African American experience. Over the span of a few decades, Harlem became the black capital of the world; it was seen as a new mecca where the “niggerati” (as they called themselves, ironically) could undertake a formal exploration of popular culture—leading to new kinds of poetry and music and attracting unprecedented national and international attention. Although earlier writers such as Paul Laurence Dunbar and Charles W. Chesnutt had received national recognition, it was during the Harlem Renaissance that far more mainstream publishers and critics came to take African American literature seriously.

The riots that erupted during the “red summer” of 1919, whatever their ill effects, were also a source of energy for intellectuals and artists. In July 1919, Claude McKay’s “If We Must Die” appeared in the *Liberator*, a white left-leaning publication; this poem, which contained an impassioned protest against racial violence, became an anthem for the whole movement. W. E. B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, James Weldon Johnson, and Jessie Fauset, who were among the foremost instigators and oracles of the Harlem Renaissance, argued that the inferior status of African Americans could be countered by affirming their intellectual quality, and equality, through art and literature. James Weldon Johnson wrote, in his preface to *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, “The world does not know that a people is great until the people produces great literature and art.”

Du Bois, in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), had anticipated the new sensibility that would be celebrated during the Harlem Renaissance: he affirmed the dignity and cultural potential of African Americans and indicted the history of prejudice, on the part of white America, that had imposed a “double-consciousness” on blacks, obliging them to measure themselves “by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.” Du Bois’s argument was significant for literature, implying the existence of a new psychic territory, a connection between knowledge and power, and an interdependence between power and the awareness of one’s own talent. Moreover, his theory of the “talented tenth” suggested that the achievements of black intellectuals would be a beacon for the black multitudes. Du Bois influenced the concept of the New Negro that Locke defined in 1925 in a special

issue of *Survey Graphic* illustrated by Winold Reiss. The New Negro was a revolutionary affirmation of black self-reliance, which at the time overlapped with the notion of modernism. It is worth noting that the special issue of *Survey Graphic* in which this idea was propounded had resulted from a grand dinner given by Charles S. Johnson, the editor of *Opportunity*, in order to introduce young African American writers to the white literary establishment of New York.

Du Bois was also the founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), an organization that had a role in the birth of the New Negro movement and lent its support to literary production. In November 1910, the NAACP founded its official magazine, *The Crisis*, edited by Du Bois, which became a literary and artistic outlet for many black intellectuals and helped to undermine stereotypes of blacks in literature and art. Jessie Fauset was its literary editor from 1919 to 1926, and in that capacity was the first to publish the most distinguished African American poets. Moreover, William S. Braithwaite commented appreciatively on the writers Georgia Douglas Johnson, James Weldon Johnson, and Claude McKay in *The Crisis* as early as the issue of April 1918.

Other periodicals—such as *Opportunity*, edited by Charles S. Johnson—gave writers many occasions for publication. *Harlem* (1928) and the short-lived *Fire!!* (1926), both edited by Wallace Thurman, were highly influential, as was *Negro World*; the latter was a periodical of the extravagant Jamaican nationalist Marcus Garvey, through which he expanded the reach of his Universal Negro Improvement Association and publicized his “back to Africa” ideology.

The Harlem Renaissance was part of an international artistic climate of formal experimentation. On the other side of the Atlantic, some artistic trends focused on the beauty and sophistication of African art and showed a new interest in and a new emphasis of the black body. Similar trends occurred in literature: for example, the most influential poem of the 1920s, T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922), borrowed its syncopations, which expressed the pace of modern life, from jazz rhythms. It is true that some people would come to regard this “exoticism” as only another form of exploitation by whites; nevertheless, the new interest in Africa and African America did make black culture an acknowledged source of artistic inspiration. Many white creative artists of the 1920s, including writers such as Sherwood Anderson, Fannie Hurst, Eugene O’Neill, Waldo Frank, and DuBose Heyward, incorporated black characters and idioms into their works.

“Primitivism”—which is sometimes dismissed as a morbid bent toward the workings of the supposedly “savage” mind—was also a tremendously progressive force. Claude McKay maintained that Negro primitivism should be considered a revolutionary future rather than a past to escape from; and Locke insisted that the modernist treatment of African art might help African Americans to perceive their spiritual heritage in ways that would enable them to understand and to shape their own distinctive experiences in the new world. The poet Countee Cullen, for one, used African and European images to explore his African roots. Furthermore, the African presence in European art encouraged other black writers in the United States to reevaluate their African heritage and to include it in their literary works. Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larsen, Claude McKay, Richard Bruce Nugent, Jean Toomer, and Wallace Thurman all pondered how their heritage could be considered an inspiration rather than a hindrance. Mixing folk tradition, highly refined modernist techniques, free verse in the style of Walt Whitman, and syncopated prose, they overturned all the conventions about African American writing. Among the poets, Hughes fervently affirmed the elements that were common to black life, whether rural or urban; he wanted to avoid the modernists’ cryptic, elitist tone and adopt a voice that would be both personal and communal. He was acclaimed for *The Weary Blues* (1926); in *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927) he explored the terse, double-edged language of blues and the new linguistic possibilities of dense jazz rhythms, providing an alternative to dialect poetry and (as the white critic Howard Mumford Jones said) “a really new verse form to the English language.” In fiction, Zora Neale Hurston provided a connection to the black folk heritage that Locke, her mentor, considered the essence of “New Negro” literature. In drama, playwrights such as Georgia Douglas Johnson drew from a black folk reservoir. The first drama by an African American—Willis Richardson’s *The Chip Woman’s Fortune*—was staged in 1923.

White creative artists as well as African Americans represented black life; financial support from white patrons—the “salon Negrotarians” such as Charlotte Mason, Waldo Frank, Carl Van Vechten, and Nancy Cunard—also proved significant, albeit controversial, for the growth of the movement. Van Vechten’s best-seller *Nigger Heaven* (1926) was a depiction of nightlife in Harlem, conveying seediness through glittering prose. It had a mixed reception: most

African Americans dismissed Van Vechten an exploiter of fashionable black themes, but some, like Claude McKay, Wallace Thurman, Nella Larsen, and Charles S. Johnson, supported the book. Langston Hughes, in his autobiography, *The Big Sea*, praised Van Vechten, noting that Van Vechten’s generous promotion of black culture had been instrumental in establishing connections between African American writers like Hughes himself, Nella Larsen, and Rudolph Fisher and the publisher Alfred Knopf. (In 1927 Knopf would also reissue James Weldon Johnson’s novel of 1912, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*.)

The New Negro movement was not monolithic but was characterized by internal differences and tension. The publication of Claude McKay’s *Home to Harlem* (1928) and Wallace Thurman’s *Infants of the Spring* (1932) caused considerable controversy. Thurman, especially, was a leader of the new literary bohemians, but both novels offered a firsthand, vibrant account of Harlem’s street life, with its pimps and prostitutes, derelicts, loan sharks, racketeers, and hustlers—an atmosphere that had little to do with the “theology” of the talented tenth. Thurman’s first novel, *The Blacker the Berry* (1929), and Nella Larsen’s *Passing* (1929) examined the complexities of skin color as a central theme in black life and concluded that, despite the optimism of the New Negroes, a color hierarchy—related to a class hierarchy—still existed within the black community. (Du Bois, for example, scorned the uneducated Marcus Garvey; and Richard Bruce Nugent revealed a certain “color chauvinism” when he met the dark-skinned Thurman—confirming the persistence of these thorny intraracial issues.)

Perhaps predictably, the movement did not transcend discrimination against women. Women writers attested to the persistence of sexist attitudes among the New Negroes. Jessie Fauset and Marieta Bonner, for instance, had to find covert forms of artistic expression so as not to openly defy the roles or the literary conventions imposed on women. Zora Neale Hurston did have the temerity to confront the narrow-mindedness of blacks and whites; in her essays and novels, she challenged the sexism and class snobbery of the Harlem Renaissance. She received some criticism for supposedly pandering to white readers, but her innovative aesthetics combined a mastery of folk materials with advanced writing techniques (such as a mixture of direct and indirect narration); her work, together with Jean Toomer’s, stands out as perhaps the highest literary achievement of the renaissance.

The thematic concerns of the renaissance writers, like their experiments with literary form, were promising and far-reaching. These writers dealt innovatively with vital issues such as identity, interracial and intraracial prejudice, gender roles, sexual exploitation, passing, and black artistic independence and white patronage—exposing the realities and ironies of black life.

After 1929, however, the glamour of the Harlem Renaissance, “not so gay and sparkling beneath the surface as it looked,” faded. Literary figures such as McKay and Hurston, as well as many others, left Harlem and in some cases disappeared into obscurity. Still, the movement would have an impact on American arts and letters for decades to come.

PAOLA BOI

See also Braithwaite, William Stanley; Crisis, The; Cunard, Nancy; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Fire!!; Frank, Waldo; Great Migration; Harlem: A Forum of Negro Life; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Liberator; Mason, Charlotte Osgood; Negro World; New Negro; Opportunity; Primitivism; Riots: 2—Red Summer of 1919; Shuffle Along; Survey Graphic; Talented Tenth; Van Vechten, Carl; White Patronage; specific writers; specific works

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Literature: 2—Children's

Children's literature flourished during the Harlem Renaissance. In plays and pageants, in the children's magazine *The Brownies' Book*, and in texts by major authors like Langston Hughes, Arna Bontemps, and Countee Cullen, writers discussed and debated black childhood, the future of black children, and the potential for art to change black communities. Importantly, for children's writers of the Harlem Renaissance, the "New Negro" would arise from the young Negro. By cultivating the racial self-image and political awareness of young black readers, writers attempted to transform race relations in America. As an aspect of emerging cultural nationalism, children's literature directed attention to the black child as an icon of progress and revolutionary possibilities. This turn toward children's literature as a means of nation building was not limited to Harlem or to the 1920s. In other urban centers of the North and Midwest and in rural communities in the South throughout the 1920s, 1930s,

and 1940s, writers advanced progressive images of black childhood. Additionally, books for black children during the renaissance inaugurated a tradition of African American children's literature emphasizing black history and heroism.

Periodicals

As editor of *The Crisis*, W. E. B. Du Bois issued a "Children's Number" in October of nearly every year from 1912 to 1934. These issues included children's poetry, short stories, and nonfiction narratives; discussions of parenting and education; photographs of "perfect babies"; and coverage of baby beauty contests held by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

The popularity of the "Children's Numbers" inspired Du Bois to found one of the earliest literary magazines for black children, *The Brownies' Book* (1920–1921). Under the expert eye of Jessie Redmon Fauset, the magazine issued Langston Hughes's first published poems and short stories, as well as works by Nella Larsen, Willis Richardson, James Weldon Johnson, and others. Although its subscriptions numbered only 4,000, *The Brownies' Book* reached children nationwide. It included various genres and viewpoints—such as pan-Africanism, black fairy tales; dialect stories of the South, descriptions of black industrialists—but the writers had in common the goal of preparing young people to contend with racism and oppression.

When *The Brownies' Book* ceased publication in 1921, *Crisis* continued its commitment to black children's literature, albeit on a smaller scale. It published the poet Effie Lee Newsome's "Little Page" nearly every month from March 1925 to November 1930. Offering "Things That Children Will Love and Learn" (January 1926), Newsome cultivated children's positive self-image by comparing their blackness to beautiful features of the natural world; she also offered descriptions of her own childhood and her experiences in the South and in Ohio.

Other periodicals included Carter G. Woodson's *Negro History Bulletin*, founded in 1937, which offered biographies and historical narratives for school-age children.

Drama

Staged in schools, community centers, and churches nationwide, dramas for children allowed communities

to address local concerns as well as the larger topics of black nationhood and cultural identity. Many of the plays were not published, however, and exist only in archives and private collections.

Much of children's drama of the renaissance adhered to Du Bois's proclamation in "Criteria of Negro Art" (1926), "I do not care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda." For example, Mary Church Terrell's "Historical Pageant-Play Based on the Life of Phyllis Wheatley" (1932) aimed to increase children's self-respect through reflection on the accomplishments of African ancestors. Washington, D.C., where Terrell's pageant was staged, was an important site for the development of children's drama, since playwrights drew on Howard University's theater program and Carter G. Woodson's Association for the Study of Negro Life and History.

Black history was central to much children's drama. Playwrights like May Miller, Willis Richardson, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, and Louise Lovett depicted historical figures so as to shape contemporary black identity; as actors and audience members, children were able to walk in the shoes of Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, and others. Some playwrights, though, like Langston Hughes in "The Gold Piece" (*Brownies' Book*, 1921), were more concerned with the domestic sphere and its influence on black children's ethics. And Willis Richardson—who published a body of children's plays and was an editor of *Plays and Pageants from the Life of the Negro* (1930) and *The King's Dilemma and Other Plays for Children* (1956), a collection of his early dramas—used fantasy to explore the ability of the imagination to transform black children's social conditions.

Black Presses

Perhaps the most important black press for children's literature was Carter G. Woodson's Associated Publishers, which issued more than a dozen picture books, poetry collections, and histories aimed at children. These texts were often written by female schoolteachers and became an important means of revitalizing black education. Black teachers throughout the nation sent Woodson lesson plans, manuscripts, and poems on black history, many of which he published in the *Negro History Bulletin* and as individual volumes through Associated Publishers. Effie Lee Newsome issued her book of poetry, *Gladiola Garden* (1940), through Woodson's house, which also published many lesser-known writers, like Gertrude

Parthenia McBrown, Jane Dabney Shackelford, and Helen Adele Whiting. The painter Lois Mailou Jones (who also did illustrations for *Negro History Bulletin*) illustrated nine of Associated Publishers' books during the 1930s and 1940s. Black representatives sold Woodson's children's texts successfully throughout the South and Midwest, even during the Great Depression. Today, these texts might seem conservative and conciliatory, but in the context of Jim Crow their approach can be understood as strategic rather than defeatist.

Major Figures

Major writers who turned to children's literature toward the end of the 1920s did so for economic as well as ideological reasons. Langston Hughes, who had published in *The Brownies' Book* at age nineteen, collaborated with the novelist and poet Arna Bontemps on *Popo and Fifina: Children of Haiti* (1932), *The Pasteboard Bandit* (written in 1935, published in 1997), "Bon-Bon Buddy" (unpublished, 1935), and "The Boy of the Border" (unpublished, 1939). Both Hughes and Bontemps found themselves increasingly interested in children as a means to reach a mass audience. Bontemps himself published a dozen children's books from 1932 to 1955, including historical narratives like *Chariot in the Sky* (1951), illustrated folktales like *The Fast Sooner Hound* (with Jack Conroy, 1942), and nonfiction like the acclaimed *Story of the Negro* (1948). Bontemps's *Lonesome Boy* (1955) is generally considered the capstone of early black children's literature. Hughes published a book of poetry, *The Dream Keeper* (1932); many texts in the Watts "First Book" series, including *First Book of Negroes* (1952) and *First Book of Jazz* (1955); and *Famous Negro Athletes* (1954) and *Famous Negro Music Makers* (1955) in Dodd, Mead's "Famous American" series.

Countee Cullen wrote almost exclusively for children after 1930. In *The Lost Zoo* (1940) and *My Lives and How I Lost Them* (1942), envisioning an urbane child reader, he manipulated and parodied adult literary conventions such as footnotes, prologues, and epilogues. Ellen Tarry—who is best known for her account of the renaissance in *The Third Door: Autobiography of an American Negro Woman* (1955)—was perhaps the earliest writer of picture books for black children. Her *Janie Belle* (1940), *Hezekiah Horton* (1942), *My Dog Rinty* (1946), and *The Runaway Elephant* (1950) set the stage for later writers' interest in interracial dynamics and the urban experience.

Unlike other “New Negro” children’s writers of the period, Bontemps, Hughes, Cullen, and Tarry were published by mainstream houses, and they reached a more integrated audience. Their association with mainstream publishers entailed some compromises (as Hughes and Bontemps report in their extensive correspondence), but all four writers were gratified to see black children’s books take their place in the national literary world.

KATHARINE CAPSHAW SMITH

See also Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and *Journal of Negro History*; Bontemps, Arna; *Brownies Book*; *Crisis*, The; Cullen, Countee; Howard University; Hughes, Langston; Jones, Lois Mailou; Richardson, Willis; Woodson, Carter G.; *other specific writers and editors*

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Literature: 3—Drama

The evolution of black drama in America was quite slow. In fact, compared with other literary genres, drama could be regarded as a new field for African American writers; the Harlem Renaissance, so rich in poetry and fiction, was relatively poor in drama. Historically, slavery and its aftermath, as well as prejudice, are obvious explanations; however, the comparative

lack of black dramatists—in contrast to black poets and novelists—in the first half of the twentieth century can also be explained by the fact that drama is a totally public genre. A play needs to be staged; staging costs money; investors are therefore needed; and investors expect to make a profit. At the time of the Harlem Renaissance, professional theaters, which were owned and run mostly by whites, were reluctant to produce black drama because there was no guarantee of a satisfactory box office. On the other hand, black playwrights were active in amateur theaters, and many black playwrights, men and women, were seriously involved in establishing genuine black drama.

White Playwrights and Black Drama

One factor motivating black dramatists, even if they were effectively excluded from commercial American theater, was the way blacks were being portrayed onstage. Some theatrical roles did exist for black performers, especially in musicals, but these roles were almost invariably stereotyped. In the early 1820s, white entertainers had begun to imitate African American songs, dances, dialects, and manners; minstrel shows developed in the 1840s. Minstrelsy became extremely popular, and its sentimental, melodramatic, and mocking images dominated the American stage until the 1920s. Consequently, black characters—as presented to white theater audiences by white playwrights—were fixed types such as the buffoon, the tragic mulatto, the primitive, the Christian slave, and the black beast. At around the end of World War I, a few white playwrights set out to create a more realistic picture of blacks and black life and to give black characters more verisimilitude. They were seeking new materials for drama; the folk tradition, which was to be a hallmark of black drama during the Harlem Renaissance and later, appealed to them. Eugene O’Neill, Paul Green, Marc Connelly, Dorothy and DuBose Heyward, and Ridgely Torrence did initiate a new folk drama; but despite their seriousness and their integrity, and although many blacks were in sympathy with their efforts, these white dramatists could not have firsthand knowledge of the black experience. Arguably, then, black dramatists were needed to find genuine material for drama and to mold it truthfully.

O’Neill’s plays about African Americans, most notably *The Emperor Jones* (1920) and *All God’s Chillun Got Wings* (1924), are a case in point. The black characters are presented as emancipated but at the same time as “chained” because they are, in one way or another,

psychologically subjugated: they exist in a state of fear and resentment. Thus these characters, who seem fated to fail in the white world, confirm white people's stereotypes of blacks. O'Neill's depiction of blacks has been problematic for black critics, who feel that, whatever he intended, he did little to improve the image of African Americans onstage.

A second example is Paul Green, who was the most prolific white dramatist to write about black people and their issues but who seems to have envisaged failure as their ultimate fate. His play *In Abraham's Bosom: The Tragedy of a Southern Negro* (1926)—which attracted a great deal of attention on Broadway and won a Pulitzer prize—focuses on Abraham McCranie, a black man who dreams of leading his people out of the bondage of poverty and ignorance through education. *In Abraham's Bosom* powerfully illustrates the workings of racism in the minds of blacks as well as whites, and it is a moving drama; in the end, though, the protagonist cannot realize his dream.

A third example is Marc Connelly's *Green Pastures* (1930), his only play about blacks and his only play on a religious subject; it too won a Pulitzer prize. This biblical drama, presented in southern American Negro dialect, had an all-Negro cast that included a Negro actor playing the role of God; it was extremely popular and tremendously successful on Broadway—but it too seems to end in failure, as human sympathy is extended to a suffering God.

DuBose Heyward's novella *Porgy* (1925), set in a Negro quarter in Charleston, South Carolina, at the turn of the twentieth century, is a fourth example. It was widely considered one of the two most successful fictional works of the Harlem Renaissance (the other being Jean Toomer's *Cane*); Dorothy and DuBose Heyward turned it into a play (1927), also called *Porgy*, on which the libretto of George Gershwin's opera *Porgy and Bess* was based. The protagonist, Porgy, is a crippled street vendor who falls in love with Bess, the mistress of a black "bad man," and is eventually defeated. The play proceeds from life, love, and hope toward murder, resignation, and loneliness.

By contrast, Ridgely Torrence's earlier *Three Plays for a Negro Theatre*, staged between 1914 and 1917, marked a turning point in black drama because they broke away from stereotypes of black characters, presenting Negroes as human beings with dignity and the potential for tragedy. *Granny Maumee* (1914), hailed as a serious and truthful play about Negroes from the Negro point of view, is the story of a proud, vengeful black matriarch whose sense of her duty as a

Christian eventually prevails as she confronts her son's white murderer, who happens also to be the rapist of her daughter and the father of her grandson. The other two of the *Three Plays* were *The Rider of Dreams* (1917) and *Simon the Cyrenian* (1917).

Black Theories and Black Theater

All these white dramatists, then, served as a motivation for black dramatists and thus heralded a new dawn for black drama. In addition, two figures who worked diligently for the development of African American drama were W. E. B. Du Bois and Alain Locke. Although Du Bois and Locke disagreed about several aspects of black drama, they agreed that it needed to be promoted, and they both emphasized the importance of black culture as its proper source.

African American drama by African Americans emerged in Harlem and elsewhere during the early 1920s and was accepted as giving a more authentic view of blacks than works by white playwrights could offer. This black drama could be divided into two distinct categories: race plays and folk plays. Race plays dealt with pertinent racial issues such as prejudice, oppression, and miscegenation and often constituted propaganda directed toward social change. Folk plays were intended mainly to educate and entertain without offending the audience. The basic differences between race and folk drama regarding purpose and subject matter reflected Du Bois and Locke's opposite attitudes.

Du Bois believed strongly that African American drama had to serve a purpose, which was clearly propagandistic. He advanced this theory in *The Crisis*, the magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), of which he was the editor; and he applied it in his own pageant *The Star of Ethiopia* (1915). At this time NAACP organized a drama committee to encourage black playwrights to address the black experience; later, in 1925, Du Bois and Charles S. Johnson, the editor of the National Urban League's magazine *Opportunity*, launched contests for the best one-act plays of the year, which they would publish in *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* respectively, thus providing exposure for new playwrights. In 1926, to contribute further to the development of black drama, Du Bois organized the Crigwa Players (an acronym for Crisis Guild of Writers and Artists; the name was later changed to Krigwa). In his article "Krigwa Players Little Negro Theatre: The Story of a Little Theatre Movement," which was published in *The Crisis*, Du Bois laid down four fundamental principles for the new drama: "the

plays of a real Negro theatre must be about us . . . by us . . . for us . . . and near us." These criteria imply race drama.

Du Bois's conviction that black drama should be propaganda for the race clashed with Alain Locke's concept of black drama as an art, not a vehicle for messages. Locke's alternative to race drama was folk drama or art drama. Locke and Montgomery T. Gregory promoted folk plays at Howard University, where Gregory organized the department of dramatic arts as a step toward a national Negro theater. This was the first institution to provide professional training in theater for aspiring black playwrights and performers. The Howard dramatic arts department had an advisory board consisting mostly of successful white theater practitioners and academics; it included Ridgely Torrence and Eugene O'Neill, the drama critic Robert Benchley, Professor George Baker of the renowned "Harvard 47" workshop, and the presidents of Harvard University and Smith College. Gregory believed that to survive and be accepted in the United States, black drama would have to reach not only blacks but all of American society—and that this could best be done by art plays rather than race plays. He and Locke both considered the stage to be a means of entertaining an audience and of preserving African American folk culture. In "Steps toward the Negro Theatre," published in *The Crisis* in 1922, Locke heralded the concept of Negro theater as distinct from race drama.

In a sense, the Harlem Renaissance was a battleground for Du Bois's and Locke's conflicting visions of theater; much of the literature produced by black literati—poets, essayists, and novelists as well as dramatists—reflected this crucial conflict. Eventually, though, the principles of Gregory, Locke, and Howard University's dramatic arts department seemed to win out: African American drama found its voice in the folk tradition; the folk element became a defining feature of most drama, professional and amateur, of the Harlem Renaissance.

This folk element was derived from slavery, the rural culture of the South, and the migration to the industrial North—and from racial oppression and prejudice as crucial factors (if not the most crucial factor) in black history. It should be noted, however, that folk drama did not take the form of "problem plays"; unlike race drama, it did not deal with issues like miscegenation, lynching, and passing. Instead, it dealt with issues such as poverty and with black history, and it explored the lives of black people. Borrowing almost nothing from white culture, folk drama initiated a new black

aesthetics, as well as a form of black nationalism. These plays were unlike most of the plays about black life written by white dramatists; the black stereotypes popular with white producers and their white audiences were replaced with more genuine portrayals. As was mentioned earlier, this kind of drama tended to cut off black playwrights from professional theaters, but many of their works were performed in small community theaters, churches, and college auditoriums.

Black Drama on Broadway

The first black hit on Broadway was actually a sensational musical comedy, *Shuffle Along* (1921), written by four black artists: Flournoy Miller, Aubrey Lyles, Noble Sissle, and Eubie Blake. *Shuffle Along* differed from earlier revues in its tightly structured plot and how it blended the story with the music in an organic whole.

Willis Richardson was the first black playwright to have a serious drama produced on Broadway. This was *The Chip Woman's Fortune* (1923), a one-act folk drama that had been prepared for Broadway under the patronage of Eugene O'Neill and was a great success. Richardson, a prolific dramatist, differed from most of his contemporaries in that he avoided themes having to do with tension between blacks and whites, focusing instead on the ordinary problems faced by ordinary black people. He wrote about poverty, gossip, jealousy, extravagance, greed, and family problems. Richardson's main influence on the Harlem Renaissance was this shift away from the usual emphasis on racial strife, along with the absence of white characters in his plays. He avoided depictions of blacks as victimized by whites, and his stage was not dominated by white culture. Richardson was a pioneer in dramatizing black Americans and their lives and in attempting to correct distorted stereotypes of blacks.

Garland Anderson's *Appearances* (1925) was the second black play and the first full-length black play to reach Broadway. It espoused a philosophy of self-sufficiency traceable to Booker T. Washington, emphasizing the work ethic and individual initiative as the path to success in capitalist America. Frank Wilson's *Meek Mose* was the next black play on Broadway, in 1928.

The poet, novelist, and editor Wallace Thurman collaborated with William Rapp on a play, *Harlem*, that was staged on Broadway in 1929 and was one of the first black plays to become a box-office success there. *Harlem* was a controversial play; it received quite negative reviews from black critics, who objected to its picture of Harlem as a wild, exotic playground, a

corrupt place where gambling, prostitution, sexual promiscuity, and murder were everyday experiences. In underlining the primitive and sensational elements in black life, Thurman seemed to be appealing to white tastes and perpetuating stereotypes; his intention, though, was to give a genuine portrait of urban blacks, in particular by using vernacular and idiomatic expressions—which he explained in a glossary that accompanied the playbill.

Of the plays by African American dramatists, Langston Hughes's *Mulatto* (1935) had the longest run on Broadway. Hughes was seriously interested in black drama but believed that, although an honest American Negro literature had been achieved, Negro theater still remained to be developed. For his own dramatic works, he took various themes from his poetry: the legacy of slavery, the African heritage, black rural and urban folk culture, and racial oppression. Hughes created both race plays and folk plays.

Mulatto is in the tragic mode of black folk drama. Here Hughes changes the familiar stereotype of the tragic mulatto, making this figure militant rather than meek and gentle. The mulatto character, who desires above all else to be recognized as his white father's son, ultimately kills first his father and then himself. Hughes saw tragedy as intertwined with historical, social, and political injustice, and his tragic figures in *Mulatto*, *Emperor of Haiti* (1934), and *Front Porch* (1938) are all involved in broad social issues and conflicts.

Mule Bone, which Hughes wrote with Zora Neale Hurston (in the 1930s, although it was not staged until 1991 because of a disagreement between them), is in the comic folk mode. *Little Ham* (1936), *When the Jack Hollers* (1936), and *Joy to My Soul* (1936) are also in the comic folk mode. *Little Ham*, a comedy of urban life that blends satire with social issues, is a romantic play with a large cast of more than forty characters; it is about the black world of Harlem and is written for that world alone—Hughes uses a vernacular that few whites would know.

Hughes also tried his hand at poetic drama in the experimental play *Don't You Want to Be Free* (1939), which chronicled the experience of slavery through music and dance.

In the 1930s, Hughes's ideology shifted to the left; in plays like *Blood on the Fields* (1934), *Angelo Herndon Jones* (1936), and *The Organizer* (1938) he used leftist ideology to interpret social injustice. These were his problem plays, or race plays.

Taken as a whole, Hughes's drama of the 1930s grew out of the black drama of the previous decade, was in

various dramatic modes, and offered a panoramic view of black life. It is extremely inclusive: it embraces a keen race-consciousness, racial tension, comic and tragic folk elements, rural and urban motifs, poverty, the experience of slavery, family conflicts, and social and economic inequities. Underlying his tragic and comic folk drama and his race drama is a constant emphasis on social rectification.

Race Drama

Willis Richardson, Garland Anderson, Frank Wilson, Wallace Thurman, and Langston Hughes were prominent black dramatists whose work was staged on Broadway during the Harlem Renaissance. Anderson, Wilson, and Thurman had plays on Broadway before the stock market crash in 1929. After the crash, it became nearly impossible for a black dramatist to find a commercial producer; however, as noted previously, works by black playwrights were produced in churches, lodges, and community halls; were published in periodicals such as *The Crisis*, *Opportunity*, *Carolina*, and *Birth Control Review*; and were entered in contests sponsored by *The Crisis* and *Opportunity*. In addition, some black theater groups, such as the Harlem Suitcase Theater, Negro People's Theater, and Rose McClendon Players, were formed during the Harlem Renaissance. The Federal Theater Project, particularly the Negro Unit at the Lafayette Theater in Harlem, also provided opportunities for black actors and dramatists. It is true that many black dramatists, by staying within the black community, did not achieve the popularity they might have had on Broadway. However, the few black plays that were produced on Broadway at the time were neither race plays that might challenge a white audience nor folk plays that might present the black heritage to whites; the considerable black theater that took place in communities, even if it did not reach a large public at the time, did contribute to the development of African American drama.

A notable early example of black race drama was Angelina Weld Grimké's *Rachel* (1916), commissioned by NAACP to counter D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915). *Rachel* was presented by the drama committee of the District of Columbia branch of the NAACP at the Myrtilla Miner Normal School, and the playbill stated that it was "the first attempt to use the stage for race propaganda in order to enlighten the American people relative to the lamentable condition of ten million of colored citizens in this free Republic." *Rachel* addresses the psychological impact of racism on black women;

the protagonist is so deeply affected by racism that she decides never to marry and never to have a child. The play became controversial and aroused considerable unease in the black community—particularly among members of the NAACP, its sponsor—because of its overtly political, propagandistic nature. For example, Gregory and Locke (who espoused folk or art drama rather than race drama) dissented from the ideological platform of the NAACP's drama committee.

Still, *Rachel* was an influential play, one of the first of a succession of serious protest and propaganda dramas, many of which were written by women. Dominant themes in these plays were lynching, poverty, miscegenation, and passing; like *Rachel*, the plays tended to be grim, ending with the death of the main character or with his or her complete disillusionment. Alice Dunbar Nelson's *Mine Eyes Have Seen* (1918) considers the question of a black man's loyalty during wartime to a country that has offered him only prejudice and oppression. In Mary Burrill's *Aftermath* (1919), a young black hero returns from the war to find that his father has been lynched and decides to take the law into his own hands. Another play by Burrill, *They That Sit in Darkness* (1919), is a tract for birth control: It is about an impoverished woman who dies after bearing too many children. Ottie Graham's *Holiday* (1923) exemplifies the theme of the tragic mulatto. In this play, a mulatto mother leaves her brown-skinned daughter to be raised by friends and then, years later, precipitates a tragedy when she decides to reveal her identity to the daughter. The daughter, unable to accept the truth, commits suicide; and the mother, unable to live with her guilt, does the same. In Myrtle Livingston Smith's *For Unborn Children* (1926), a mulatto man—not wanting to have children who would undergo what he has experienced—leaves his white fiancée and finally offers himself to a lynch mob. In Georgia Johnson's *A Sunday Morning in the South* (1925), an innocent young black man, suspected of flirting with a white woman, is taken from his family on a Sunday morning and hanged. Marieta Bonner, in *The Purple Flower* (1928), a surrealist play, condemns “white devils.” In May Miller's *Stragglers in the Dust* (1930), a black charwoman is convinced that the body in the tomb of the unknown soldier in Washington, D.C., is that of her son, who was killed in action during World War I.

Folk plays, which were written by men and women, often focused on the lighter side of the black experience. Religion, class-consciousness, morality, and love were favorite themes of folk drama. The folk dramatist Eulalie Spence, for instance, intentionally avoided

racial themes in favor of universal themes. In her article “A Criticism of the Negro Drama” (published in *Opportunity* in 1928), she stressed entertainment as the most important element of drama, arguing that black people go to the theater to laugh, not to “have old fires and hates rekindled”; she herself was basically a writer of comedies—such as *The Hunch* (1927), which centers on a love triangle in Harlem. However, Spence's play *Her* (1927) is a mystery that juxtaposes religion and superstition, and her *Undertow* (1929)—about a woman who returns from the South after many years to take back the man she loves from his wife—is more of a melodrama.

Many folk plays were set in the South, and these tended to be less lighthearted than other folk drama: they often portray whites as antagonists and end with death. In G. D. Lipscomb's *Frances* (1925), a young black woman's father forces her into a sexual liaison with a white foreman. In Randolph Edmonds's *Breeders* (1930), a young black woman's white master tries to force her into a sexual relationship with a black man in order to bear strong slave children, but she commits suicide. In John Mathews's *Ti Yette* (1930), a black man murders his sister rather than let her marry her white lover. Such folk drama often presented whites as cruel and cunning, who lured and cheated innocent, unsuspecting blacks. In Joseph Mitchell's *Help Wanted* (1929), a black couple move to Chicago in hope of a better life, only to be cheated out of receiving credit for their money-saving invention. And even folk plays set in the North frequently presented the African American as being like a caged bird: emancipation, in such plays, has led to a new form of slavery—black people are enslaved not only by the oppressiveness and prejudice of white society but also by their own lack of education, lack of confidence, lack of experience, and lack of the material resources needed for survival in a free land.

To address this new, post-Emancipation slavery, some dramatists set out to educate black people. Willis Richardson and May Miller, for instance, compiled an anthology of dramas of the 1920s and early 1930s, *Negro History in Thirteen Plays* (1935), that was intended for black schools. Carter G. Woodson, who wrote the preface, said that this anthology was a “step of the Negro toward the emancipation of his mind from the slavery of the inferiority complex.” The plays chosen by Richardson and Miller interpreted history through myth, legend, and fiction and offered impressive alternatives to the stereotypes of blacks that were usual in American theater. Helen Webb Harris's *Genifrede* (1922) and Frederick Douglass (1923), Willis Richardson's *Flight of the Natives* (1927), and May Miller's *Graven Images*

(1929) were all plays that tried to liberate the black audience from its past in slavery and reconstruct a history that would convey hope, pride, and glory.

Although Zora Neale Hurston is known mainly as a novelist (*Their Eyes Were Watching God*, 1937) and an anthropologist (*Mules and Men*, 1935), she also wrote plays such as *Color Struck* (1925), *The First One* (1927), and (with Langston Hughes, as mentioned earlier) *Mule Bone* (1931). In *Color Struck*, a black girl is damaged by illogical standards of beauty. *The First One* is a history play that reinterprets the relationship between the biblical Noah and his darker son, Ham; it parodies a version of the biblical story which was circulated during the antebellum period to convince blacks that slavery was part of God's design. Hurston, in her typical playful style, presents a whole family of Hams—artists who do not believe that being black is a curse, whatever Noah might have intended. *Mule Bone: A Comedy of Negro Life* combines amusing anecdotes from Hurston's folklore collection *Mules and Men* with Langston Hughes' bluesy humor.

The Legacy of Black Drama

Black drama written during the Harlem Renaissance encompassed a great variety of themes, styles, and approaches. What has survived from that era, however, is quite a small body of works. A few black playwrights—perhaps five—had their work performed on Broadway; some playwrights received productions from amateur groups in schools, lodges, churches, and so on, reaching a limited audience; and plays that won the drama contests sponsored by *Opportunity* and *The Crisis* were published, as were plays by the important figures of the renaissance, such as Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston. The rest of the dramatists and their works were, for a long time, doomed to obscurity. Not until the 1990s were many of these plays brought to light in anthologies and collections. The “lost plays” of the Harlem Renaissance that have been found relatively recently testify to the extensive dramatic activity of the renaissance period, despite the adverse circumstances facing black dramatists. Freeing themselves from the influence of stereotypes and turning to a black audiences, however small that audience may have been, these playwrights strove to develop a true African American drama.

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See also Authors: 4—Playwrights; Blacks in Theater; Carolina Magazine; Community Theater; Crisis, The; Literary Prizes; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Federal Programs;

Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Krigwa Players; Locke, Alain; Opportunity Literary Contests; Theater; Woodson, Carter G.; *specific playwrights and works*

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Literature: 4—Fiction

Fiction produced during the Harlem Renaissance reflects the social, historic, and political influences present in the immediate aftermath of World War I. Participation by blacks in the war that was to make the

world safe for democracy, along with their keen awareness of continued racial oppression in postwar America, resulted in awakened pride, race-consciousness, militancy, and assertiveness—traits that were evident among writers of fiction and in their works. This boldness manifested itself in a rejection of stifling western literary aesthetics and a search for original narrative forms and techniques. By no means is the fiction monolithic, however. Rather, there are diverse political concerns, strategies, and subjects. For instance, writing reflecting the “talented tenth”—such as the works of Jessie Redmon Fauset and Nella Larsen—is vastly different from the bohemian emphasis of the Jamaican-born Claude McKay. George Schuyler’s satiric works, or those of Rudolph Fisher, contrast sharply with the impressionism of Jean Toomer’s masterpiece *Cane*. Among all writers of fiction, though, there is a narrative concern with the attempt of blacks to explore the complex bicultural self. This discussion will focus on just a few representative novels.

The Color Line

A number of novelists turned their attention to the talented tenth, the elite segment of the race that was to offer leadership to the masses (Du Bois, 1903). Foremost among the issues confronting this group was color. Because quite a few of the talented tenth were light enough to pass for white and thus cross the color line, questions regarding the nature, scope, and consequences of passing assumed paramount importance. Nella Larsen’s *Quicksand* (1928) is a compelling rendering of a young woman’s efforts to find a place within a society polarized along lines of race, gender, and class. The heroine, twenty-three-year-old Helga Crane, is the daughter of a West Indian father and a Danish mother. Refined, well educated, and strikingly beautiful, Helga exemplifies the ideals of the talented tenth. But she is unable to find genuine satisfaction in either bourgeois white society or the black world. The narrative unfolds against a backdrop involving Helga’s search for herself—one that takes her from the rural South, where at the opening she is a schoolteacher, to Chicago, New York, Denmark, back to New York, and finally to a small town in Alabama. When she returns to the South she becomes the wife of a dull, overbearing country preacher. Helga abandons her aspirations for the finer things in life: exquisite clothes, fine food, and elaborate furnishings. Instead, she is mired in domesticity, subject to her husband’s authoritarian rule. As the novel closes, Helga, worn

down by a life of endless childbearing, is pregnant with her fifth child.

Much of the significance of *Quicksand* has to do with Larsen’s rather sympathetic portrayal of a heroine facing a crisis. Helga is not simply a stereotypical tragic mulatto poised between the black and white worlds and unable to find genuine acceptance in either society; she is a psychologically complex woman. Larsen is careful to offer a representation of Helga’s inner life. The young woman is far too refined for the small-town southern community where she teaches, and she is clearly out of place among the people who are disdainful of her because of her manner, bearing, and taste. A painful rejection by her white uncle in Chicago prompts her meeting with Mrs. Hayes-Rore, an independently wealthy widow who rescues the destitute Helga, takes her to New York, and finds her a place to stay and a job. But Hayes-Rore’s pompous manner and pretentious speeches about race are unappealing to Helga. Anne Grey, a socialite widow in Harlem, is well connected but overly consumed by the issue of race. She too befriends Helga, who, however, is either unable or unwilling to establish a lasting bond with Grey.

Helga’s crisis is not only a matter of race; she also struggles with her nascent sexuality, which she both revels in and denies. The confusion surrounding her sexuality prompts her to end her engagement to James Vayle, a well-connected teacher. She also refuses a proposal from Axel Olsen, a Swedish painter who, like the other Europeans, sees Helga not as an individual but as something exotic. The character who has by far the strongest impact on Helga’s sexual self is James Anderson, principal of the school where she teaches. In New York, Anderson kisses Helga passionately, and she believes that he loves her. When she learns of his engagement to Anne Grey, Helga is devastated. In a rush of emotions, Helga finds herself in a storefront church in Harlem, where she surrenders to God and to the minister’s seductive powers.

Larsen uses quicksand skillfully as a metaphor, interweaving this motif throughout the narrative. The image suggests the various influences—both internal and external—conspiring to bring about the heroine’s tragic fall. The harder Helga tries to extricate herself from the quagmire of race, class, and gender, the more those forces entrap her. Perhaps this is Larsen’s own pronouncement on the limited options of a mixed-race woman. Even so, one cannot ignore the role that Helga’s poor judgment plays in determining her fate: her painful dilemma is intensified by what she herself does or refuses to do. In any case, the novel is

a forceful treatment of passing and its consequences; and although the portrait of Harlem is superficial, Larsen presents a memorable account of the challenges often faced by the black middle class.

Jessie Fauset's *Plum Bun* (1929) is perhaps less convincing than *Quicksand* but is still compelling in its treatment of the bourgeoisie. *Plum Bun* deals with passing largely through the experiences of Angela Murray, an attractive, ambitious art student; and her younger sister Virginia, a music teacher. Angela, like her mother, is fair skinned and can pass for white; but Virginia is dark skinned like her father. The sisters have been reared in an all-black working-class neighborhood in Philadelphia; they are left alone after both parents die within a relatively short time. Angela then studies art in New York and is established in Greenwich Village; there, as in Philadelphia, she decides that refraining from announcing her race will allow her freedom and mobility. She is attracted to a rich young white man, Roger Fielding, who is interested only in seducing her. When Virginia arrives, Angela is torn between her desire to pass in the white world and her sisterly bond. Rather than risk exposure, Angela chooses to estrange herself from Virginia.

Although Fauset appears to avoid dealing directly with racial issues in her treatment of the black middle class, the resolution of the novel emphasizes the importance of race. What sets the stage for this affirmation is the relationship between Angela and Rachel Powell, a young black woman pursuing a career in art. The climax of the novel occurs when Rachel is denied passage to Europe on an art scholarship because she is black. Angela is outraged and realizes that her own scholarship was a matter of color, not talent or merit. But it is mainly Virginia's example that makes Angela realize she is mistaken in denying her racial identity. Virginia enters the world of black artists and intellectuals in Harlem and is comfortable. Through her sister's example, then, Angela comes to see how superficial her own life has been.

Angela's conflict with Virginia symbolizes a war between the black and the white self; *Plum Bun*, like other novels of the Harlem Renaissance, touches not only on the racial prejudice of white America but also on "colorism" among blacks, an attitude that leads some of them to deny their cultural heritage. In exploring this theme, Fauset includes a number of highly improbable situations. That the two sisters should become romantically involved with the same man, who also passes for white, is unlikely. Anthony, who thinks Angela is white, is unaware of her relationship to

Virginia. Once Angela announces her heritage publicly, she and Anthony are reunited. Virginia then returns to her first love, Martin, and to Philadelphia. In the end, individual characters learn that happiness cannot be achieved through a rejection of one's true identity.

Wallace Thurman's *The Blacker the Berry: A Novel of Negro Life* (1929) focuses on Emma Lou Morgan's struggle to be accepted by light-skinned blacks. Because she is dark, Emma Lou is mistreated by her fair-skinned family. Emma Lou's mother was light-skinned and expected her daughter to be even lighter. The mother's most serious flaw is her belief that "white is right," an ideal which she upholds at every turn; she makes her daughter's life miserable by repeatedly and unfavorably comparing Emma Lou's color with that of others. Unfortunately, Emma Lou comes to accept her mother's pronouncements, internalizing western standards of beauty.

In an effort to escape the rejection she experiences at home, Emma Lou goes to a university in California. There, through a series of humiliating experiences, she learns that her fair-skinned classmates ostracize her as readily as her family does. She uses various skin whiteners and bleaching creams, but to no avail; in fact, some of these products accentuate her blackness. To make matters worse, she prefers light-skinned boyfriends who take advantage of her emotionally and sexually. But finally, as a result of a painful encounter with one of her lovers, she comes to accept herself as she is.

Thurman deals head-on with the color-consciousness that was prevalent during the Harlem Renaissance. Emma Lou represents the black Americans who failed to embrace Marcus Garvey's slogan "Black is beautiful." *The Blacker the Berry* lacks subtlety in its portrayal of Emma Lou and her pervasive self-hatred, however, and the issue of color prejudice is much more complex than Thurman indicates. Because he fails to address the intricacies of intraracial prejudice, he oversimplifies a very complicated psychosocial issue. Nevertheless, in her divided allegiance and her preoccupation with white standards and ideals, Emma Lou personifies the "double consciousness" that W. E. B. Du Bois considered central to black life in a nation polarized by race.

Literary Primitivism

Whereas some novelists chose to depict the tragedies and triumphs of the middle class, others, like Claude McKay, focused on the experiences of the working class. McKay's *Home to Harlem* (1928) is an exposé of the seamier side of Harlem—the jook joints, speakeasies,

and cabarets frequented by the displaced urban masses. Here, outside the social mainstream, people have a certain *joie de vivre* that is reflected in their carefree lifestyle and attitudes. Jake Brown, the protagonist, takes unofficial leave from the army during World War I after being assigned noncombatant duties in Europe. He returns to New York as a stoker and finds that Harlem is a safe haven. After an affair with a prostitute, Felice, who declines to keep his money, he continues to search for her. His search takes him through the underworld of Harlem, where he comes into contact with a wide range of characters. Congo Rose, for example, is an entertainer who takes Jake as a lover when he is broke. Agatha, an assistant in a beauty parlor, is a paragon: sincere, warm, and congenial. Zeddy Plummer is a gambler who reports Jake to the authorities as a deserter. Susy is a prostitute who supports Zeddy. Billy Biasse is Jake's friend who operates a longshoremen's gambling apartment.

McKay, unlike Larsen or Fauset, focuses on the proletariat, the working class, rather than on the talented tenth with their painfully proper ways. As a result, he was strongly criticized by Du Bois, who felt that literature should be political and should serve the purpose of racial uplift. Du Bois, along with a number of others, reasoned that when blacks write about themselves they should put their best foot forward, and that McKay had therefore let down the race. However, McKay does introduce a character, Jake's comrade Ray, who is bookish and serves as a foil to Jake. Through Ray, McKay establishes tension between the intellectual and the primitive. Ray is a Haitian who has attended Howard University, and he no doubt represents McKay, a Jamaican who had studied at Tuskegee Institute. Ray is a voice for McKay's social and philosophical views, believing that blacks should regain their self-confidence by understanding the past glories of black civilization. But Ray is also pessimistic, decrying his education at Howard, unable to accept marriage to Agatha, and unable to accept the challenges of life in Harlem; eventually he leaves America for Europe.

Jake, who lacks formal education, is McKay's ideal black American. Free from materialism, spirited, and streetwise, he is the classic picaresque hero. He represents the unlettered masses. Jake's one goal is to find Felice again so that they can enjoy life together. One of his most significant traits is resilience. He is able to endure the vicissitudes and misfortunes of life and yet remain positive. Thus the message McKay conveys is that the primitive black can cope with the uncertainties of life whereas the intellectual cannot.

Home to Harlem offers a vivid and realistic portrait of Harlem's underworld and its denizens. Scenes in nightclubs and cabarets give the reader insights into life among the struggling masses. The novel is, as well, a vehicle for McKay's political views, especially his views on class and race. He explores social issues of everyday urban life, such as overcrowding, unemployment, and discrimination.

The Satiric Novel

Through the lens of satire, novelists are able to maintain artistic distance between themselves and their sometimes very serious subject matter, holding all of society—black and white—up for scrutiny. George Schuyler's *Black No More* (1931) offers an examination of color prejudice. The novel opens when a black doctor named Crookman discovers an electric process that can make black people white. This discovery makes the doctor rich but causes an upheaval in America: black leaders lose their followers; white supremacist organizations are at a loss because race can no longer be easily discerned; alarming numbers of white women give birth to black babies. At the end of the novel, "Nordicized" blacks are found to be actually whiter than born Nordics. A black beautician then invents a skin stain to turn white skin light brown, and everyone starts trying to darken up.

Schuyler aims his attack at race leaders who exploit the color line for personal gain, and he is as unrelenting toward the talented tenth as toward the unlettered masses. In the world of *Black No More*, brown, not black, is beautiful. The novel suggests that the root of the color problem is capitalism and the free enterprise system, because those who are most vehemently opposed to Crookman's process are businessmen. Schuyler rejects both capitalism and racism and offers socialism as the solution for national ills. Yet the novel ends on an ambivalent note, suggesting uncertainty about the materialist American dream and those who pursue it.

Rudolph Fisher, in *The Walls of Jericho* (1928), satirizes the social extremes of Harlem: not only the pretensions of the "dickties"—the middle-class elite—but also the earthiness of the low-down folk. He also pokes fun at the whites who patronize haunts in Harlem. Merrit, a fair-skinned black lawyer who can pass for white, buys a home in one of the last white neighborhoods in Harlem. Shine, one of the black movers who bring in Merrit's furniture, falls in love

with Linda, Merrit's maid. Whites, presumably, set fire to Merrit's house, and the author shows how class tension between Jinx and Bubber, the other movers, and Merrit is relaxed in the face of a racial struggle. As it turns out, though, Merrit's house was burned not by whites but by one of his black enemies.

A major contribution that this novel made to the fiction of the Harlem Renaissance is its use of the vernacular, especially street talk between Jinx and Bubber. The humor of this pair of characters is expressed largely in the slang of the times. The novel abounds with signifying, playing the dozens (talking about someone's ancestors, especially the mother), and terms for describing an opponent's worthlessness. Fisher's chief purpose, however, was to examine the complexities, and particularly the foibles, of Harlemites. He attempted to debunk what he saw as myths about Harlem; at the same time as he depicted middle-class attitudes of the day, he was also able to look at all of black life objectively. By making the villain in *The Walls of Jericho* black rather than white, he suggested that the white man is not always the black man's problem.

Folklore and Fiction

During the Harlem Renaissance, a number of novelists found material in black expressive culture: symbolic acts of religion, speech, and music. A coalescence of oral and written forms resulted in texts with a rich, complex substructure harking back to the vernacular tradition. Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) follows the life of Janie Crawford as she comes of age and finds her identity both as an African American and as a woman. The action is set in rural Florida—mostly in Eatonville, Hurston's own birthplace. Janie is the product of an illicit relationship between her mother, Leafy, and a schoolteacher. After seeing sixteen-year-old Janie kissing a young man, Nanny, Janie's grandmother (a former slave), arranges a marriage to Logan Killicks, an older, propertied farmer. The marriage is unhappy; Logan intends to break Janie's spirit by making her submissive and forcing her to work alongside him in the fields. Janie leaves him in order to marry Joe Starks, a citified, smooth-talking, ambitious older man who offers her the "front porch" existence Nanny values. But Joe turns out to be no different from Logan. He wants Janie to remain subservient in a socially prescribed place and refuses to let her associate with the folk.

Joe's early death (he dies of kidney failure) allows Janie to begin the process of self-discovery. She enters a third marriage with Virgible Tea Cake Woods, an itinerant blues man and gambler who is her ideal. Although he is fourteen years her junior and unemployed, he allows her space to be herself. With Tea Cake, Janie travels to South Florida, where she works on the muck, the rich soil in which vegetables flourish. Here, among migrant workers, she steps down from the pedestal on which southern women were expected to remain and comes into her own. No longer does Janie try to live as her well-meaning grandmother would like; instead, she lives according to her own plans. Her happiness is brief, however; Tea Cake is bitten by a rabid dog during a flood, and Janie is forced to shoot him. After being acquitted of murder, she returns to Eatonville, where she tells her life story to her best friend, Phoebe.

Their Eyes Were Watching God reveals Hurston's skill not only as a writer of fiction but also as a folklorist: she captures brilliantly the customs and language of everyday people. Janie's account of her life, spoken in black dialect, is a literary device that allows the heroine to tell her own story. The text is notable for its authenticity and its fidelity to black folk speech. Some passages read much like poetry, as Hurston blurs the boundary between oral and written forms. Storytelling is an aspect of the folk tradition, allowing the transmission of values from one generation to the next; Janie's growth is suggested by her connection, or reconnection, with the vernacular tradition. With Tea Cake, particularly, Janie reaffirms the historic black past, and her voice signifies her empowerment within a white, patriarchal society.

Hurston's work is a classic within the African American novelistic tradition. Hurston tells the story of Janie in richly poetic language, and that story becomes a saga of the historic black quest for the self. Although Richard Wright (1937) criticized *Their Eyes Were Watching God* for Hurston's avoidance of overt social protest and argued that she had perpetuated racial stereotypes, more recent critics have given a more balanced assessment of its contribution to black letters. Moreover, a number of women novelists today—such as Alice Walker—consider Hurston their literary "foremother."

Langston Hughes's *Not Without Laughter* (1930)—his first novel—is about the coming of age of Sandy, a young, impressionable boy growing up in Stanton, a small midwestern town; the novel describes how Sandy must choose his path in life. His family is

presided over by Aunt Hagar, who is a former slave and a community mainstay. She and his mother, Anjee, are domestics, as are all the women in the family. His aunt Harriet, who is restless and rebellious, tires of small-town life and turns to prostitution. Jim Boy, Sandy's absent father, is an itinerant railroad worker who plays blues and is constantly at odds with the churchgoing Hagar. When Hagar dies, Sandy goes to live with his prim, proper Aunt Tempy. Tempy tries to impose her conservative lifestyle on him, but he comes to reject her way of life and eventually joins his mother and Harriet in Chicago, where he works as an elevator boy.

Not without Laughter takes up various ideologies of America in the period after World War I. Hughes creates a broad range of unique characters whose response to racial oppression typifies that of other blacks struggling to make sense of their changing world. In the tradition of Booker T. Washington, the pious Aunt Hagar is conciliatory toward southern whites, believing that accommodation is the only way to achieve racial harmony, and she wants her grandson to follow in Washington's footsteps. Tempy, an elitist who joins the Episcopal church, espouses values similar to those of W. E. B. Du Bois. Free-spirited and worldly, Harriet and Jim Boy embrace the lifestyle of the working-class poor. The reader assumes that Sandy will reject Hagar's strict religiosity, Tempy's elitism, and even the blues lifestyle of his father and aunt to chart his own course in life.

The setting of this novel—Stanton's Bottom, an all-black neighborhood where individuals are free to abandon social restraints—is far removed from urbanized Harlem. Its contribution to the fiction of the Harlem Renaissance has to do with Hughes's deft rendering of secular and sacred folk forms that have allowed blacks to endure oppression. Spirituals deriving from the church are a central part of the life he depicts, especially for older people like Aunt Hagar; and blues expresses the sorrows and successes of the younger generation. Spirituals and blues, and also the storytelling of the men at the barbershop and pool hall, indicate the ability to the folk to survive and also indicate their sensibility, "laughing to keep from crying." The novel's central message is that no matter how difficult life might be, it is not without laughter.

Jean Toomer's *Cane* (1923), frequently regarded as the greatest literary achievement of the Harlem Renaissance, is an experimental work that also relies heavily on aspects of black folklore. *Cane* defies classification: it is a rather loose combination of poetry,

prose sketches, and an unfinished drama that resulted from a visit by Toomer (who was born in the North) to Sparta, Georgia. The author tries to capture the essence of the South and its inhabitants, paying tribute to their culture and customs during a time when large numbers of African Americans were migrating to the urban North. It has a three-part structure corresponding to black people's epic search for their beginnings. Part One is set in the rural South and offers a portrait of the region and the people living there—especially the women, who remain psychologically intact despite externally imposed limitations. Part Two, focusing on the North, deals with life in a fast-paced, materialistic urban environment. Part Three returns to the South, developing the experiences of Kabnis (no doubt representing Toomer), who attempts but fails to establish meaningful cultural, social, and psychological ties with the region. Unity is achieved through recurring patterns, symbols, and images such as pine, cane, dusk, African vestiges, and ascent.

Cane is a hauntingly lyrical work of fiction but is also highly autobiographical. Its theme centers on the importance of the land in the lives of African Americans. Those who remain close to the rural past, in all its beauty and terror, remain psychologically whole; those who seek to deny or suppress the past are fragmented. Not surprisingly, then, the characters in Part Two seem superficial, lacking the depth and complexity of their southern counterparts. Thus the text is critical of the migration to the North and the subsequent pursuit of materialist values—values that are clearly at odds with the spirituality of the rural past. By moving up the socioeconomic ladder, individuals have distanced themselves geographically and psychologically from their own vibrant history.

More than any other figure, the biracial Kabnis epitomizes the racial ambivalence of blacks. Kabnis, a schoolteacher, is erudite, refined, and cultured but obviously neurotic and paranoid. He spends much of his time carousing with prostitutes and fretting over racial issues rather than pursuing his teaching career. The emphasis in Part Three is on possible responses to oppression, as well as on the religion that was vital to community life. However, Toomer focuses not so much on the physical violence that blacks often faced as on the psychological assaults to which black men such as Kabnis were subjected. In the end, Kabnis is in a cellar, symbolically outside the social mainstream, unable to take charge of his life. Although the work closes with a promise of new

beginnings, represented by a sunrise, neither Kabnis's personal problems nor the searing racial problems have been resolved.

Cane does not present a conventional world of exotics or primitives. Rather, it is a montage of seemingly disparate pieces that in fact make up a tightly structured, unified whole. In this work Toomer explores his thesis—that America has given birth to a new race, which has subsumed all the old identities—and chronicles the black experience in the early twentieth century. *Cane* signaled a new era for black artistic expression.

Conclusion

The fiction of the Harlem Renaissance, in sum, is a varied genre representing a major aspect of the movement. The many themes the authors explored reflect numerous concerns of African Americans during the renaissance period. The authors of this fiction speak in uniquely individual voices as they tell and retell the story of a journey from bondage to freedom in an American promised land; they take up key issues that later authors would also treat.

MAXINE LAVON MONTGOMERY

See also Authors: 2—Fiction; Passing; Primitivism; Talented Tenth; *specific writers and works*

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Literature: 5—Humor and Satire

Before the Harlem Renaissance, the most popular public presentations of African American humor were generally limited to depictions by whites, in such forms as Joel Chandler Harris's "Uncle Remus" stories or minstrels performing material such as Ernest Hogan's infamous song "All Coons Look Alike to Me." The comedy that emerged during and after the Harlem Renaissance reflected the diverse political, religious, and economic interests of its creators, as well as their various views of race itself. Of course, this diversity is not news to anyone who has had access to the private folklore of African Americans: in feigned reverence and mockery of their white "superiors" and other inside jokes, and in their basic everyday interactions with each other, one could easily see that there was more to African Americans than their previous representations had suggested. And because much of African Americans' previous experience had been marked by various forms of oppression, it should not be surprising that the humor and satire of the Harlem Renaissance added depth, rage, and even tragedy to the earlier formula of black buffoonery.

Works such as J. A. Rogers's *From "Superman" to Man* (1917), Walter White's *Flight* (1926), Rudolph Fisher's *Walls of Jericho* (1928), Claude McKay's *Banjo* (1929), and Countee Cullen's *One Way to Heaven* (1932) satirized white society; works such as Wallace Thurman's *The Blacker the Berry* (1929) and *Infants of the Spring* (1932, a book in which Thurman memorably used the term "niggerati") targeted blacks; and novels such as George Schuyler's *Black No More* (1931) targeted not only blacks and whites, but also race itself. Of course, with this variety of comic approaches came varying views on how race should be depicted comedically. Two examples are George S. Schuyler and Zora Neale Hurston.

Perhaps the most prominent satirist of the Harlem Renaissance was George S. Schuyler, a conservative socialist and iconoclast whose wit was directed at both blacks and whites. Writing a column for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, as well as articles for widely respected

periodicals such as the *Messenger* and *American Mercury*, Schuyler frequently satirized race as a cultural concept, considering such a concept illegitimate; this focus may account for the lack of black folk humor in his work. Encouraged by H. L. Mencken, Schuyler often mocked whites' self-deception, as well as "black art," black nationalism, and apologists for the race, in such pieces as "Our White Folks," "Blessed Are the Sons of Ham," "Our Greatest Gift to America," and "Negro Art Hokum"; this last piece was an article in which he claimed that there can be no such thing as black art because there are no cultural differences between blacks and whites. In 1931, Schuyler published two novels, *Slaves Today* and the aforementioned *Black No More*. The latter is a science fiction novel about the aftermath of blacks' crossing the color line after surgically becoming white; in it Schuyler lampoons W. E. B. Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, Walter White, Marcus Garvey, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), and the Ku Klux Klan.

In contrast to Schuyler, whose view seems to preclude folk humor, Zora Neale Hurston put black folk humor at the center of her work—much of which is set in Eatonville, Florida, the all-black town where she spent much of her youth. Some scholars are reluctant to refer to Hurston as a writer of the Harlem Renaissance, because she did not publish her first novel until 1934; however, she had published a handful of stories during the latter half of the 1920s, and these place her among an elite group of renaissance writers. Before publishing her four novels between 1934 and 1948 (the most famous of these is *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, 1937), Hurston studied anthropology with the paternalistic Franz Boas, and she later produced two studies of folk life—*Tell My Horse* (1938), a study of Haiti and Jamaica, and *Mules and Men* (1935), a study of Negro "lies" (folk humor)—in addition to a number of articles, short stories, and plays. Many of the same characters and episodes reappear in more than one of Hurston's various works, acquiring different meanings in different contexts. Hurston made a noteworthy contribution by bringing black private humor into the public domain via anthropology and literature. Some critics have found the recurrent material simplistic or uninteresting, however; and some (such as Richard Wright) saw her humor as pandering to white audiences by putting blacks on display, an argument that has been made against anthropology in general. In addition to writing novels and stories,

Hurston also aspired to fame in the performing arts, and in 1927 she collaborated with Langston Hughes on *Mule Bone*, an adaptation of her short story "The Bone of Contention" for which she was to provide the dramatic structure. A feud cut short their collaboration and their friendship, however, and the play was not performed until 1991, at Lincoln Center.

In addition to comic literature, black performance comedy of the time had tremendous and lasting mass appeal. Plays such as Flournoy Miller and Aubrey Lyles's *Shuffle Along* (1921) and *Runnin' Wild* (1923) introduced popular dances like the time steps, the buck-and-wing, the soft-shoe, rapid-fire tap dancing, and the Charleston to white audiences. Other examples of popular black comedy and musical performances include *Chocolate Dandies* (1924), which featured Josephine Baker; *Dixie to Broadway* (1924); *Africana* (1927); *Weather Clear—Track Fast* (1927); and Fats Waller's *Hot Chocolates* (1929).

Also at this time, some black performers started achieving success and popularity in the film industry, although usually in regressive roles. For example, in *Hearts in Dixie* (1929), Stepin Fetchit (Lincoln Perry) played a clownish, baffled character; he went on to appear in twenty-six films from 1929 to 1935 and created a type that would pave the way for such stars as Bill "Bojangles" Robinson. Simply dismissing such performances as stereotypes would be an oversimplification, ignoring the fact that these performers gained a degree of fame and wealth which had eluded many other African Americans, and created a new type of African American lifestyle.

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See also *American Mercury*; Boas, Franz; Cullen, Countee; Fisher, Rudolph; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; *Infants of the Spring*; McKay, Claude; Mencken, H. L.; *Messenger*, The; *Niggerati*; *Pittsburgh Courier*; Rogers, Joel Augustus; Schuyler, George S.; Thurman, Wallace; *Walls of Jericho*, The; White, Walter; *specific individuals and works in theater and film*

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Literature: 6—Nonfiction

The nonfiction of the Harlem Renaissance—essays, editorials, literary criticism, histories, and so on—performed several important tasks. First, it defined the mind-set of young black intellectuals and creative artists and differentiated them from the older, genteel African American men and women of letters. Second, it heightened black people's racial consciousness and class consciousness—frequently, in particular, seeking an identification with the working classes. Third, it sought to discover and convey what was authentic and deserving of preservation in African life and thought. Fourth, it sought to demolish stereotypes of blacks and replace them with an authentic picture of black people's strengths and weaknesses. The following discussion will briefly consider just a few of the many aspects of nonfiction.

A primary goal of African American and European-American writers—both men and women—who published nonfiction during the Harlem Renaissance was to reawaken black peoples' dormant racial consciousness and racial pride. As a consequence, they made a deliberate attempt, as Alain Locke put it, to rehabilitate "the race in world esteem."

Ironically, the quest for a strong self-image for black people had begun during what has been generally considered a period of racial accommodation, as exemplified by Booker T. Washington. Nevertheless, this period saw a proliferation of racially conscious, historical achievements in literature, by writers such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Kelly Miller, John E. Bruce, and W. H. Councill; and it also saw the emergence of institutions—founded by Arthur A. Schomburg and Carter G. Woodson—that disseminated historical writings intended to foster an enhanced racial image for African Americans. During this same period, Du Bois and later Charles S. Johnson wrote sociological treatises that examined the impact of a racist society on the lives of most African Americans. Furthermore, Locke's philosophical lectures on the nature of both interracial and intraracial relations provided an intellectual basis for the "New Negro" movement. The nonfiction literature of the time of Booker T. Washington provided historical, sociological, and philosophical foundations for the young creative artists who would attempt to re-create an essential racial culture in the 1920s and early 1930s.

Before the self-image of black people could be enhanced, the culture makers felt they needed to destroy a subservient attitude that was supposedly a salient characteristic of the older generation of "plantation Negroes." Accordingly, between 1917 and 1923, leftist, centrist, and conservative periodicals all bombarded the reading public with a new image. This concept of a "New Negro" contrasted starkly with an earlier image which had originated in antebellum abolitionist literature and that S. P. Fullin, a writer in the late 1960s, described as "Christlike."

The socialist image of this New Negro was offered by W. A. Domingo in A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owens's periodical, the *Messenger*. Domingo's New Negro met "violence with violence," resisted the exploitation of his labor, and, unlike accommodationists such as Booker T. Washington and W. H. Councill, demanded "social equality." Finally, Domingo's New Negro sought to identify his interests with those of the white working class.

W. E. B. Du Bois's position at this time was represented in the organ of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), *Crisis*. Du Bois was impressed by the Bolshevik Revolution in the emergent Soviet Union (which he visited in 1926), and he stressed the importance of the laboring classes. He concurred, then, with Domingo's assertion that the working classes were the key constituency in fostering radical political and economic change in the United States after World War I.

A position that was more conservative than either Domingo's or Du Bois's was offered in *Opportunity*, the monthly magazine of the National Urban League. Charles S. Johnson, a distinguished sociologist who had been trained at the University of Chicago and who served as a patron for young, aspiring African American graphic artists and writers of fiction and nonfiction, became the editor of *Opportunity* in 1923. The magazine's stated intention was to examine and analyze "Negro life as it is with no exaggerations." In consequence, this publication tried to appeal to the educated layperson, especially with its economic and sociological studies.

Some European Americans—perhaps especially leftists—also contributed to the image of the New Negro and the concept of a "Negro arts movement." For example, Max Eastman, owner of the magazine *Liberator*, appointed the West Indian darling of the European-American left, Claude McKay, as an associate editor and then a coeditor, in order to give better and deeper coverage of working classes' articulation of their struggle for liberation.

Much of the nonfiction that came out of Harlem and other black communities in the United States proffered a color-blind universalistic worldview and argued that the militant New Negro could play an essential role in the radical transformation of American life and society. Nevertheless, the "Negrotarians"—a term coined by the writer, folklorist, and anthropologist Zora Neal Hurston to describe the moderate and conservative elements of the civil rights establishment, which attempted to harness the content and direction of the "New Negro" movement—gained prominence between 1923 and 1927. When Locke brought out his anthology *The New Negro* in 1925, to an enthusiastic reception, the generational clash between African Americans was well under way. Young creative artists, Locke pointed out in his foreword, were revolting against a genteel tradition that focused on the victimization of African Americans. Black and white writers who believed that moral suasion was useless

preached a brand of cultural and economic nationalism which emphasized self-reliance, self-respect, and racial pride; they expected their nationalism to replace appeals to the conscience of European Americans regarding racial oppression and exploitation.

Locke's anthology included one article—"Durham: Capital of the Black Middle Class," by E. Franklin Frazier—that extolled the virtues of capitalism and thus deviated from the party line of the American leftist radicals and socialists who had emerged after World War I. Frazier stated that a strong black economic base was essential for the revitalization of African American culture. In essence, he thought that his fellow writers were overly dependent on white capitalists and therefore could not serve the cultural and nationalist functions that the literary critics and creative artists had intended. Frazier's emphasis on self-determination reflected an attempt by African Americans of the past to transform the economic as well as the social structure so as to create an order in which blacks would become socially independent.

These varying viewpoints also led to different approaches to culture. For instance, Charles S. Johnson used *Opportunity* to examine and analyze critically the cultural production of the Harlem Renaissance. He was devoted to building the self-esteem and racial pride of black migrants who were traumatized by their transitional status in both northern and southern urban-industrial areas. Johnson argued time and again in the pages of *Opportunity* that the solution to the problems causing anomie among blacks was a revitalization of the rural folk culture which had traditionally unified and sustained blacks in their quest for full integration into mainstream American society. In his nonfiction writing, Johnson argued that art was utilitarian, that it was a means toward an end—integration.

Du Bois also argued that it was a necessity for the works of African American creative artists to have a utilitarian function. Accordingly, when he reviewed Locke's anthology *The New Negro*—in a controversial article published in *Crisis* in January 1926—he was critical of Locke's philosophy of art for art's sake. Du Bois believed that such a concept of art would result in works that were dangerously introspective, formalistic, and too far removed from reality to have any "tangible" use. He therefore attempted to formulate criteria of utility that could guide the writing of the "Negro Renaissance." These criteria evidently influenced his reaction to Claude McKay's slice-of-life novel *Home to Harlem* (1928); he found it so repugnant that he commented, "After the dirtier parts of its

filth . . . I feel distinctly like taking a bath." Du Bois opened the pages of *Crisis* to social scientists who, he believed (sometimes mistakenly), could provide a significant part of his arsenal as he made his case for art as propaganda. Du Bois admired the work of Melville Herskovits, a Jewish immigrant who was Franz Boas's student and who at this juncture was emphasizing the assimilability of African Americans into the United States. (Later, Herskovits would provide empirical evidence for Du Bois's hypothesis about African retentions in the Americas.)

Langston Hughes summed up his own response and that of young writers such as Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larsen, Wallace Thurman, and Countee Cullen in an article published in 1926 in *The Nation*: "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain." This was a declaration of the young writers' independence from the staid confines of Du Boisian propaganda. Drawing on the resources of black culture—including folklore and blues—they celebrated an essential blackness that was part of their cultural identity and heritage.

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See also Authors: 3—Nonfiction; Black History and Historiography; Boas, Franz; Bruce, John Edward; *Crisis*, The; Domingo, Wilfred Adolphus; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Frazier, E. Franklin; Herskovits, Melville; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; *Literary Criticism and the Harlem Renaissance*; Locke, Alain; *Messenger*, The; Miller, Kelly; *New Negro*; *Opportunity*; Schomburg, Arthur A.; Woodson, Carter G.

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Literature: 7—Poetry

Regarding poetry, it is convenient to mark the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance with the publication of Claude McKay's forcible sonnet "If We Must Die" in 1919 and to see it as ending around 1932, a year after James Weldon Johnson issued the expanded edition of his *Book of American Negro Poetry*. During that thirteen-year span, some of the most distinguished voices in American poetry emerged, including Johnson, McKay, Angelina Weld Grimké, Anne Spencer, Jean Toomer, Langston Hughes, and Countee Cullen. They were joined by Alice Dunbar Nelson, William Stanley Braithwaite, Jessie Redmon Fauset,



Countee Cullen. (Brown Brothers.)

Georgia Douglas Johnson, Frank Horne, Sterling Brown, Gwendolyn Bennett, Arna Bontemps, Richard Bruce Nugent, Waring Cuney, Helene Johnson, and Mae Cowdery—poets whose reputation after the renaissance waned slightly, but whose contributions to the explosion of poetic art in the 1920s were nevertheless valuable and vast. Together, these writers produced a body of poetry that was unprecedented in its volume, variety, and achievement. The work of this period is notable particularly for its innovation and for expanding the repertoire of themes commonly treated in verse. The poets of the Harlem Renaissance took older, established forms, such as the sonnet, and made them new by reflecting on contemporary conditions and by addressing questions of race. They also created novel poetic forms, arranging the rhythm and structure of some of their poems after the musical models of jazz, bebop, and blues. And in representing the real lives and the real speech of black Americans of the time, the renaissance poets confirmed that everyday experience—especially everyday black experience—deserves and rewards serious poetic consideration.

Writing “Brown Poems” in the 1920s

Although Alain Locke’s *The New Negro* (1925) is routinely identified as being the first anthology to document a pioneering aesthetic among black artists, it rather belatedly recognized the achievement of a new poetry that had already been flourishing for several years. Between 1922 and 1925, three major, original anthologies of contemporary black verse were published (a fourth would appear in 1927). Also, in 1922, McKay published his *Harlem Shadows*, which confirmed the emergence of a new sensibility that would animate the work of poets associated with the Harlem Renaissance. *Harlem Shadows* was followed by several individual volumes of poetry that proved to be equally modern in their conception and formidable in their achievement, including Toomer’s *Cane* (1923); Hughes’s *The Weary Blues* (1926), *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927), and *The Dream Keeper* (1932); Cullen’s *Color* (1925), *Copper Sun* (1927), and *The Black Christ and Other Poems* (1929); and James Weldon Johnson’s *God’s Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* (1927). Dozens of books and hundreds of poems were published by these and other black poets during the 1920s. The interest and influence of white patrons helped make the publication and recognition of much of the renaissance verse possible, but even more

significant were the contributions of talented black editors, publishers, and reviewers of poetry, such as James Weldon Johnson, Braithwaite, Fauset, Locke, and Cullen. They were all poets of some stature, but, with the exception of Johnson and Cullen, were and are best known as promoters of poetry.

The poems composed by black writers around the 1920s are so varied in form, tone, style, and theme that it is difficult to generalize about them. Nevertheless, all the poets of the Harlem Renaissance struggled with the question of whether, and how, to “Write poems—/brown poems/Of dark words.” These lines, from Gwendolyn Bennett’s poem “Advice,” suggest how a poet’s artistic choices are affected when that poet is black. For all the renaissance poets, race inevitably informed the way they thought about what subjects and what language to choose.

Still, different poets dealt differently with what Langston Hughes called the “racial mountain.” For instance, though Braithwaite, Horne, Cuney, and Georgia Johnson sometimes identified black figures or themes in their poems, there is little indication that race as a sociopolitical concern is central to their artistic thinking. They usually preferred to write about abstract concepts—especially love, death, beauty, and God—though often from a very personal perspective.

Georgia Johnson, for instance, composed many capable and quite popular verses about women’s experience with love and longing. The pathos of her poetry is well represented by the last lines of “The Heart of a Woman”: “The heart of a woman falls back with the night,/And enters some alien cage in its plight,/And tries to forget it has dreamed of the stars,/While it breaks, breaks, breaks on the sheltering bars.”

Like Johnson, Horne traded in a certain sentimentality, which is especially in evidence in his series “Letters Found Near a Suicide.” Even so, there and in his best poems, Horne, again like Johnson, usually avoids the maudlin; both showed themselves attentive to the craft of writing poetry. Braithwaite, too, conscientiously composed his pieces, in which he was inclined to reflect on such topics as time and fate, beauty and joy, memory and mortality.

These were not the only poets of the Harlem Renaissance disposed to comment on abstractions and on the human condition generally. However, in the work of the majority of poets of that period, much more common situations predominate, and the subject of race is more explicitly—if variously—treated. Gwendolyn Bennett declares her affection for other

black women in “To A Dark Girl,” when she attests, “I love you for your brownness.” Similarly, Helene Johnson praises the splendor of a young black man in her “Sonnet to a Negro in Harlem”: “You are disdainful and magnificent—/. . . You are too splendid for the city street.” Mixed with Johnson’s sensual admiration for this young man is a nonsexualized racial pride that is commonly expressed in renaissance poetry. She makes no apologies for the man’s self-confidence; indeed, she suggests that not enough of his peers are following his lead.

In “The Shroud of Color,” Countee Cullen is somewhat more conflicted about the impact of race on one’s will and power, admitting, “‘Lord, being dark’ I said, ‘I cannot bear/The further touch of earth, the scented air.’” By contrast, Claude McKay is certain of his ability to live nobly and ably, and of his capacity to respond to racial injustices: “I possess the courage and the grace/To bear my anger proudly and unbent.”

Sometimes, racial themes seemed to be too ponderous to be accommodated by poetic lines, as Hughes implies in one piece: “In the Johannesburg mines/There are 240,000/Native Africans working./What kind of poem/Would you/Make out of that?/. . .” But his skepticism is enabling; the response to his question is contained in the fact of the poem itself. He suggests that no subject is too great for poetry, so long as we are willing to expand our idea of what poetry is.

For many poets of the Harlem Renaissance, the question of how best to write “brown poems,” or poems that were uniquely their own, entailed not only considering what topics to address but what type of language to use. Most preferred to compose in the vernacular, using everyday language and syntax to express their ideas, paving the way for a practice that would become almost universal in American poetry written in the second half of the twentieth century. However, Cullen, for one, usually favored a formal, literary mode and sometimes even archaic language—one of his poems is entitled “The Wind Bloweth Where It Listeth.” He disparaged the use of dialect in poetry and wishfully announced that “the day of dialect as far as Negro poets are concerned is in the decline.”

Cullen’s prediction was not borne out by the verse compositions of his day, however, as James Weldon Johnson, Sterling Brown, and Hughes, among others, became well known for their folk poems and their work written in dialect. The challenge for them was to write authentic folk poetry without relying on the kind of dialect verse that Paul Laurence Dunbar wrote. Though Dunbar was revered by most renaissance

poets, his work was seen as possessing a certain quaintness and modesty that the poets of this new age did not wish to replicate in their own work. One way to modernize dialect was to combine folk language with new musical forms, as Hughes did in “Bound No’th Blues,” which begins, “Goin’ down the road, Lawd,/Goin’ down the road./Down the road, Lawd,/Way, way down the road./Got to find somebody/To help me carry this load.” Here Hughes inserts an unexaggerated dialect into a blues pattern of stating a problem, reiterating that problem, and then projecting a solution. However, the solution, such as it is, is not discovered at the end of the poem but inheres in its process—reflecting the function of blues itself—and the poet refuses to offer the kind of moral the reader might expect from a poem by Dunbar or others like him.

Another way for renaissance poets to refresh dialect is revealed in Brown’s “Strong Men,” which blends standard language and dialect, playing one off the other in a pattern of call and response typical of some forms of jazz: “They put hammers in your hands/And said—Drive so much before sundown./*You sang:/Ain’t no hammah/In dis lan’/Strikes lak mine, bebby . . .*” Here the standard language contextualizes and leavens the nonstandard lines so that the latter do not become “humorous or pathetic,” as James Weldon Johnson warned was the fate of most dialect verse.

The “language” of jazz was in fact another method that renaissance poets used for updating dialect. Toomer’s “Portrait in Georgia,” for instance, has jazz-like syncopation: “Hair—braided chestnut,/coiled like a lyncher’s rope,/Eyes—fagots,/Lips—old scars, or the first red blisters/Breath—the last sweet scent of cane.”

The staggered rhythms and irregular tempo of jazz became hallmarks of Harlem Renaissance poetry, and they are one manifestation of some poets’ urge to devise forms appropriate to their experience. In order to create new forms, the poets had first to know old ones and understand the past; thus, to think about writing “brown poems” also meant considering one’s place as a black poet in the older tradition. Some felt a considerable—if also productive—conflict about being black and yet taking up an art form whose most famous serious practitioners have been white. Cullen’s memorable lines articulate this conflict: “Yet do I marvel at this curious thing:/To make a poet black, and bid him sing!” Many, like James Weldon Johnson, partly resolved this conflict by looking back to Dunbar and to the traditions of “Black and unknown

bards of long ago” whose “lips [were able] to touch the sacred fire” of poetic inspiration. Others, such as Langston Hughes, were convinced that they could create a new tradition which would be more authentically “American” than the predominantly white tradition which most students of poetry knew at the time. Hughes may well have been speaking of American poetry when he wrote, “O, yes, /I say it plain, /America never was America to me, /And yet I swear this oath— /America will be!”

Still, although Hughes focused on the future, several renaissance poets stayed trained on the past. Cullen addressed a lyric poem “To John Keats, Poets, at Spring Time,” and Anne Spencer also invoked the nineteenth-century poets whom she had read and studied, inserting herself as well as other black poets into the largely white tradition that preceded them. In the short poem “Dunbar,” she laments, “Ah, how poets sing and die! /Make one song and Heaven takes it; /Have one heart and Beauty breaks it; /Chatterton, Shelley, Keats, and I— /Ah, how poets sing and die!” Her grief for the passing of great poets is mitigated by her faith in the feeling that links poets across generations.

But even as Spencer identifies with these men, she acknowledges that the question of poetic traditions is even more complicated for women writers. In her poem “Letter to My Sister,” she contends that “It is dangerous for a woman to defy the gods,” referring to male figures of authority—in poetry and elsewhere—from the past as well as in the present. And if defiant acts by women were threatening, how much more so were the acts of black women, as Spencer once proclaimed: “I proudly love being a Negro woman—it’s so involved and interesting. We are the PROBLEM—the great national game of TABOO.”

While black women may have presented a “problem,” they participated significantly and influentially in the creative activity of the Harlem Renaissance—more so than in society in general. Black women published alongside men in leading journals during the 1920s, and their poems were included in contemporary anthologies. Jessie Fauset served as literary editor of *The Crisis* from 1919 to 1926, during which time she discovered the work of Langston Hughes and others. Georgia Johnson held salons at her home in Washington, D.C., which attracted male and female intellectuals and encouraged and inspired many young artists.

Yet, despite the contributions of women writers, and despite recent scholarship which has raised their status, the poets of the Harlem Renaissance whose

legacy has persisted are almost exclusively men. The reason may be that the most accomplished women poets of the period wrote comparatively few poems and had relatively short careers as poets. Hughes spoke for himself as well as for many contemporary scholars of the renaissance when he speculated that, “On Anne Spencer’s table /There lies an unsharpened pencil— /As though she has left unwritten /Many things she knows to write.” But the poems that she, Grimké, and others have left behind are worthy of study, are reasonably well-preserved, and are integral to understanding what we now recognize as the tradition of the Harlem Renaissance.

Two Landmark Anthologies: *The Book of American Negro Poetry* and *Caroling Dusk*

A fair number of the best-known poems written by the women of the Harlem Renaissance are, like those written by the men, most accessible to us today in two anthologies published in the 1920s: James Weldon Johnson’s *The Book of American Negro Poetry* and Cullen’s *Caroling Dusk: An Anthology of Verse by Negro Poets*. Both texts are remarkably valuable resources for understanding the range and accomplishments of the renaissance poets.

Johnson’s collection was first published in 1922, then published in a second, enlarged edition in 1931. It was the first book-length compilation of the work of modern black poets. Perhaps more famous now than the anthology itself is Johnson’s preface, “Essay on the Negro’s Creative Genius.” This influential and continually illuminating essay reveals Johnson’s belief—which he shared with many of the figures of the renaissance—that artistic achievement can be tied to social and political advancements:

The final measure of the greatness of all peoples is the amount and standard of the literature and art they have produced. The world does not know that a people is great until that people produces great literature and art. No people that has produced great literature and art has ever been looked upon by the world as distinctly inferior.

Published in 1927, *Caroling Dusk* contained some of the most recently produced poems of its day and, uniquely, included brief biographies that in almost every case were written by the poets themselves. In his foreword, Cullen (like Johnson) emphasizes the variety of the work by black poets: “The conservatives,

the middlers, and the arch heretics will be found among them as among the white poets.” Cullen goes on to deny that there is any organic unity among the poems written by blacks during the 1920s, and to downplay the idea that novelty is their most worthy characteristic: “to say that the pulse beat of their verse shows generally such a fever, or the symptoms of such an ague, will prove on closer examination merely the moment’s exaggeration of a physician anxious to establish a new literary ailment.” Cullen was suspicious of efforts to identify an aesthetic of the “New Negro,” fearing that such identifications would keep the work of black poets on the margins of American literature. Even more than Johnson, Cullen hoped that the renaissance poets would participate fully in a “national literature” and would be recognized simply as poets, without the qualification “Negro.”

In addition to Johnson’s and Cullen’s anthologies, two other major poetry collections and a few smaller volumes of verse appeared during the 1920s to showcase black writers. Robert Kerlin published *Negro Poets and Their Poems* in 1923 and issued a revised version in 1935. Newman White and Walter Jackson, two self-identified “southern white men,” brought out *An Anthology of Verse by American Negroes* in 1924. White (a professor at Trinity College, which would later become Duke University) and Jackson (a professor at the North Carolina College for Women, now the University of North Carolina at Greensboro) had the specific purpose of providing a text for college students. Their editorial note is rather dated, and some of their comments suggest a custodial attitude, yet their effort to incorporate the work of black poets into the college curriculum seems to have been motivated by a genuine interest in expanding the canon of American literature and not, as was the case with some other white critics and teachers, by a prurient interest in the “exoticism” of the contemporary Negro.

Whatever White’s and Jackson’s motivations were, James Weldon Johnson and Sterling Brown had a similar idea. Published in conjunction with the second edition of Johnson’s anthology was an “Outline of Study,” prepared by Brown “for the use,” according to Johnson, “of teachers and students.” Like White and Jackson’s anthology, Brown’s “Outline” and Johnson’s preface indicate their hope not only of making the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance available to appreciative readers but also of making it an object of critical appraisal and study.

The fact that four separate collections dedicated to black poetry appeared within the span of five

years attests to the importance, vitality, and continuous renewal of the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance. In addition, Alain Locke’s anthology *The New Negro* contained some poems; and pamphlets such as Kerlin’s *Contemporary Poetry of the Negro* (1921) and Locke’s *Four Negro Poets* (1927)—both put out by mainstream publishing houses—further documented the fecundity of the renaissance imagination and the willingness of publishers to make it known to readers.

Black Journals, the Little Magazines, and Modernism

The publishing of poetry during the Harlem Renaissance was perhaps most vibrant in periodicals. Almost all the major and minor poets of the renaissance first found an audience by presenting their work in journals dedicated to black life, such as *The Crisis*, the official publication of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); and *Opportunity*, published by the National Urban League. These journals sponsored literary contests, granting recognition as well as much-needed financial rewards to many fledgling poets. Yet some of the younger artists considered these magazines too conservative, and several of the principal figures of the Harlem Renaissance came together in 1926 to found *Fire!!* It was intended to be a quarterly publication that would, as Hughes explained, “burn up a lot of the old, dead conventional Negro-white ideas of the past, *épater les bourgeois* into a realization of the younger Negro writers and artists, and provide us with an outlet for publication not available in the limited pages of the small Negro magazines then existing.” Only one issue of *Fire!!* was ever published, however, and these artists had to return to other venues.

Before and especially after the demise of *Fire!!* renaissance poets published widely in the prestigious “little magazines”: *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, *Dial*, *Messenger*, *Broom*, *Others*, *Little Review*, *Liberator*, and its successor *New Masses*. These journals promoted avant-garde literature (and often left-wing politics), and appealed to a primarily white highbrow readership. It was largely through these little magazines that the Harlem Renaissance and modernism intermingled. “Modernist” is a term used to describe certain trends in art and literature during the period from about 1914 to 1945. Briefly, modernist art was experimental, and many modernists valued fragmentation over unity and implication over direct

communication or description; they aimed to reproduce the workings of the mind rather than transcribe some supposedly objective reality.

Modernists were producing strikingly original verse in the 1920s, when the Harlem Renaissance was flourishing. During that decade, white American poets (modernists and others) such as Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, H. D., Marianne Moore, John Crowe Ransom, T. S. Eliot, Edna St. Vincent Millay, e. e. cummings, Hart Crane, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren all published significant volumes of poetry. All the white modernist poets were familiar with the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance, and Pound, H. D., Crane, and Williams were personally acquainted with several renaissance figures. Jean Toomer had a close association with Hart Crane and other literary people such as Waldo Frank and Van Wyck Brooks; as a result, he occupies a unique place at the intersection of modernism and the Harlem Renaissance, and his eclectic *Cane* is considered a masterpiece of modernism. It is a pastiche of verse and prose, written in many voices, most of which are rural and southern. On the surface, the poetry does not appear difficult, yet many of Toomer's lines resist easy explication, such as the enigmatic ending of the prose poem "Harvest Song": "O my brothers, I beat my palms, still soft, against the stubble of my harvesting. (You beat your soft palms, too.) My pain is sweet. Sweeter than the oats or wheat or corn. It will not bring me knowledge of my hunger."

Like Toomer, Richard Bruce Nugent, Hughes, and other renaissance poets shared with their modernist counterparts an interest in experimenting with form, genre, and perspective. Nevertheless, while the Harlem Renaissance and modernism were not wholly independent movements, they influenced each other largely indirectly. Many poets of the Harlem Renaissance—but only a very few white poets—were committed to traditional forms, particularly the sonnet. Only a few leading white writers displayed much political consciousness, and most of them were disinclined to describe social conditions concretely. Furthermore, many modernists preserved a distinction between high and low culture, and they valued erudition and at times seemed to revel in abstruseness. By contrast, even if most of the poets of the Harlem Renaissance were middle class and educated—unlike the vast majority of black Americans of their era—they showed more interest in what Johnson called the "lower strata" of society and they almost uniformly aimed to create a poetry that was

accessible (in theory if not in practice) to most of the literate public.

Racial Identity and Poetic Identity: The Implications of Genre

To some extent, poets of the Harlem Renaissance were torn between their populist impulses and their higher literary aspirations. This was one manifestation of W. E. B. Du Bois's concept of "two-ness," a split consciousness that many black Americans felt and still feel. Cullen invokes this "two-ness" when he speaks of the "double obligation of being both Negro and American." This condition, he says, "is not so unified as we are often led to believe." For the Harlem Renaissance poets, this double obligation often presented itself when they had to choose a form in which to express their ideas. Cullen, whose prosody was conservative, advocated in his foreword to *Caroling Dusk* the power of traditional literary elements: "As heretical as it may sound, there is the probability that Negro poets, dependent as they are on the English language, may have more to gain from the rich background of English and American poetry than from any nebulous atavistic yearnings toward an African inheritance."

Claude McKay, whom few would characterize as "conservative," nevertheless embraced predominantly white English and American literary history, though only to a point, skillfully combining traditional forms and political protest in his sonnets "To the White Fiends," "Africa," "The Harlem Dancer," "America," "Enslaved," "The White House," "Outcast," and, most famously, "If We Must Die." McKay took an old and very rigid poetic genre and made it new and relevant to his own project by examining within its bounds unconventional, contemporary subjects. He is particularly affecting in his final couplets, as in "If We Must Die": "Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,/Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!" and in "The White House": "Oh, I must keep my heart inviolate/Against the potent poison of your hate."

Although he also composed Petrarchan sonnets (in which an octave is followed by a sestet), McKay preferred the Shakespearean form (which contains three quatrains and a couplet). Among his best efforts at the Shakespearean sonnet is "America," which opens: "Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,/And sinks into my throat her tiger's tooth,/Stealing my breath of life, I will confess/I love this cultured hell that tests

my youth!" As a Jamaican immigrant, McKay perhaps initially idealized the United States and its promise of success to all who exerted sufficient effort, but his enthusiasm for and belief in meritocracy was tempered by his understanding of America's entrenched racism. McKay closes another sonnet, "The Lynching," with the ominous observation, "And little lads, lynchers that were to be,/Danced round the dreadful thing in fiendish glee." Still, despite the despair in some of his poems, McKay ultimately wants to affirm that if he successfully bears the burdens of today, he will live to see the promise of the future. In "Harlem Dancer," one of his most frequently anthologized pieces, McKay might well be describing himself when he says of the title figure, "To me she seemed a proudly-swaying palm/Grown lovelier for passing through a storm."

Langston Hughes found it more difficult to articulate his vision within traditional poetic forms, as he suggests in "Aesthete in Harlem": "Strange,/That in this nigger place,/I should meet Life face to face/When for years I had been seeking/Life in places gentler speaking/Until I came to this near street/And found Life—stepping on my feet!" The rhymes suggest conventional models, but the anomalous opening line and the irregular meter throughout the poem indicate that Hughes's hand is quite free. His play is deliberate, as is indicated by the poem's last word, a pun on poetic feet. (In standard meter, syllables are grouped in particular ways to create what is called a "foot.") The "life" that he discovers in Harlem does not conform to predetermined poetic models, but this conflict is liberating and exhilarating.

Hughes's discomfort with traditional forms hardly constituted a limitation for him. He was an extremely prolific writer of poetry, prose, and drama; very early in his career he had the skill and the confidence to create a new poetry when he found old forms inadequate, while at the same time insinuating himself into the most venerable poetic traditions. In "I, Too," Hughes lays claim to the assertiveness and expansiveness of the nineteenth-century American poet Walt Whitman, who wrote: "I am large. . . . I contain multitudes." Hughes responds: "I, too, sing America," claiming his rightful place as an American citizen and an American poet.

Although Hughes invokes Whitman's audacity, his claims are understated and he hopes for ordinary achievements. For instance, Hughes envisions a day when he won't be sent "to eat in the kitchen/When company comes" and says of the guests, "They'll see

how beautiful I am/And be ashamed." This reference to his own physical beauty recalls his poem "My People": "The night is beautiful,/So the faces of my people." But in "I, Too" beauty may also indicate a quality of his poem: "they" will see the value in his poetry and be ashamed for having held a narrow concept of what constitutes good poetry. By extension, Hughes' pronouncement suggests that social justice may derive from white society's recognition of black poets' equal power to create verse. In the final line, Hughes announces, "I, too, am America." The repetition of "too" emphasizes his desire to be part of the national identity but also emphasizes the divide between black and white. Hughes's voice is legitimately American but is not raceless.

Hughes devised a great range of poetic personae: an escaped slave, a historian of American and African life, a poor single mother, a soldier, a member of the Ku Klux Klan, a new Ph.D., an American prophet, and so on. But he also enjoyed recording the "voice" of Harlem as a whole. "Air Raid Over Harlem," subtitled "Scenario for a Little Black Movie," begins with this exchange: "Who you gonna put in it?/Me./Who the hell are you?/Harlem./Alright, then."

Hughes not only put Harlem into many of his poems but, along with his fellow poets of the 1920s, put poetry into Harlem. If it was true before the Harlem Renaissance that "Harlem/Knows a song/Without a tune—/The rhythm's there:/But the melody's/Bare," as Hughes once asserted, this was not the case by the end of the renaissance. Hughes and others bestowed on Harlem the melody it needed and deserved, and in so doing helped set a new course in American literature.

The Legacy of the Harlem Renaissance

Many of the poets of the period continued to write after the end of the Harlem Renaissance, and several of them turned to fiction, drama, and criticism. Hughes wrote in other forms, but he also continued to compose poetry for decades. His verse, along with that of the other central poets of the 1920s, helped shape the work of Melvin Tolson, Robert Hayden, Margaret Walker, and Gwendolyn Brooks, all of whom began their careers as writers in the 1930s and are sometimes identified as belonging to the tail end of the renaissance.

Among the more recent poets who inherited the legacy of the Harlem Renaissance are Derek Walcott, Audre Lorde, Sonia Sanchez, Amiri Baraka, Jay

Wright, Lucille Clifton, June Jordan, Clarence Major, Michael S. Harper, Nikki Giovanni, Alice Walker, Yusef Komunyakaa, Ai, Ntozake Shange, Rita Dove, Thylas Moss, Patricia Smith, Essex Hemphill, Carl Phillips, and Elizabeth Alexander. Thanks in part to the efforts of their predecessors of the renaissance, these poets continue to find poetry pliable enough to accommodate their multiple voices and to pursue their wide-ranging visions.

JEANNINE JOHNSON

See also Authors: 5—Poets; Bennett, Gwendolyn; Bontemps, Arna; Braithwaite, William Stanley; Brooks, Gwendolyn; Brown, Sterling; Cane; Color; Cowdery, Mae Virginia; Crisis, The: Literary Prizes; Cullen, Countee; Cuney, Waring; Dunbar, Paul Laurence; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Fine Clothes to the Jew; Fire!!; God's Trombones; Grimké, Angelina Weld; Harlem Shadows; Hayden, Robert; Horne, Frank; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, Georgia Douglas; Johnson, Helene; Johnson, James Weldon; Kerlin, Robert; Literary and Artistic Prizes; Locke, Alain; McKay, Claude; Modernism; Nelson, Alice Dunbar; Nugent, Richard Bruce; Opportunity Literary Contests; Poetry: Dialect Poetry; Spencer, Anne; Tolson, Melvin; Toomer, Jean; Walker, Margaret; Weary Blues, The

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Little Theater Tournament

The National Little Theater Tournament, held in New York from 1923 to 1931, was an influential competition for amateur theater groups. The contest was an outlet of recognition and support for "little theater" organizations, providing national exposure in a Broadway setting. Several black little theater groups of the Harlem Renaissance competed in the tournament with white groups and earned prizes as well as critical praise.

The National Little Theater Tournament was the brainchild of Walter Hartwig, executive secretary of the New York Drama League, which supported little theater groups in the city. The tournament grew from an unofficial competition that Hartwig organized, in 1921, between the Nyack Club Players and the Forest Hills Garden Players, two little theater companies in the New York area. This pairing led to other informal competitions, until 1923, when Hartwig invited groups within 100 miles of New York City to participate in a formal contest.

The date of the first National Little Tournament was 7 May 1923. It featured twenty groups in a week-long competition at the Bayes Theater on Broadway. Four plays were performed from Monday through Friday, with four finalists chosen to compete for a silver trophy cup on Saturday. David Belasco, the prolific Broadway producer and director, contributed the silver trophy and his name to the prize for the winner of the finalists' competition. The tournament was therefore sometimes referred to as the Belasco Little Theater Tournament or the Belasco Cup Match. The East West Players of Manhattan won the trophy in the 1923 competition for their performance of George Calderon's *The Little Stone House*.

Belasco's sponsorship of the silver trophy cup was an attempt to appease little theater artists. He was critical of the little theater movement and its departure from the popular melodrama that was a staple of his own Broadway productions. Belasco's involvement with the tournament was minimal, however, other than his contribution of the prize and his participation in judging the finals of the competition in 1924.

Other prizes in the contest included \$200 to each of the four finalists. The drama publisher Samuel French sponsored two additional prizes of \$200 for the first- and second-best presentations of original unpublished plays from the four competition finalists. Winning the Samuel French prize meant publication of the play by French's company and rights controlled by Samuel French Publishers as the playwright's agent. Playwrights who won the Samuel French Prize received royalties from the publication of their works.

The National Little Theater Tournament reflected and enhanced the growth of amateur theater groups in the United States. The increased artistic output of the Harlem Renaissance coincided with this burgeoning little theater movement. These amateur groups were known for producing plays that strayed from the melodrama that was popular in Broadway theaters at the time. Randolph Edmonds—a dramatist, college professor, and father of black educational theater—described the little theater movement as the best chance for developing authentic black theater (1949). Blacks had control of the productions from start to finish, without pressure from white backers to perpetuate racial stereotypes or otherwise compromise the presentation of the plays.

In 1927, the Krigwa Players (originally Crigwa, an acronym for Crisis Guild of Writers and Artists), a black little theater group sponsored by W. E. B. Du Bois and *The Crisis* magazine, performed a work by

the black female playwright Eulalie Spence—*The Fool's Errand*—and won first prize in addition to a \$200 Samuel French Prize for one of the best unpublished plays. Friction developed between Du Bois and Spence when he kept the prize money to cover his expenses. The Krigwa Players also performed Mary P. Burrill's *Aftermath* during the tournament of 1928. Randolph Edmond's Morgan Players, representing the drama club at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland, performed in the National Little Theater Tournament in 1929. Although the Morgan Players did not win a prize, their performance of Paul Green's *The Man Who Died at Twelve O'Clock* was ranked fourth out of the twenty groups performing that year.

Following the inaugural National Little Theater Tournament in 1923, the competition broadened to include national and international (primarily English) amateur theater groups. Regional tournaments imitated the competition held in New York, and by 1928 fifty little theater tournaments had been held nationwide. The organizer, Walter Hartwig, financed the tournament in New York by requiring entrance fees from groups in the contest. The groups could sell tickets to their performances to recoup entrance fees and earn additional money. Many regional theater competitions copied this financing plan.

One-act plays were the standard for most of these tournaments, and the National Little Theater Tournament groups performed thirty 50-minute plays in the contest through 1930. In 1930, Hartwig expanded the competition to include original, unpublished long plays, which were performed during the week after the one-act competition. Samuel French offered a \$1,000 prize for the winner of the long-play contest, and the magazine *Theater Arts Monthly* awarded a silver cup. The Morningside Players of Columbia University won with their performance of *The New Freedom* by Marjorie Paradis.

In 1931, one-act plays were dropped from the National Little Theater Tournament, since the Depression was putting a financial strain on little theater groups. Only ten groups could afford to pay the entrance fee for the contest. The long-play competition in 1931 was the last of the National Little Theater Tournament contests. Although Hartwig announced his intention to continue the tournament, he could not find competitors, and the contest was never revived.

HEATHER MARTIN

See also Community Theater; Fool's Errand; Green, Paul; Krigwa Players

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Liveright, Horace

If any one event signaled the arrival of the Harlem Renaissance as a literary phenomenon, it would be the Civic Club dinner given by Charles S. Johnson of the National Urban League on 21 March 1924. The guests included Alain Locke, James Weldon Johnson, and W. E. B. Du Bois; supportive white writers and critics such as Eugene O'Neill, H. L. Mencken, and Carl Van Vechten; and aspiring young black authors. The purpose of the dinner (or at least its ostensible purpose) was to celebrate the publication by Boni and Liveright of Jessie Redmon Fauset's novel *There Is Confusion*. Standing to toast Fauset—and Jean Toomer, whose *Cane* had been published by Boni and Liveright the previous year—Horace Liveright noted the difficulties involved in marketing books of merit and urged the writers in his audience to present a rounded rather than sanitized view of Negro life.

Liveright's comments reveal the aesthetic judgment that enabled him, as a publisher, to connect the writers of the Harlem Renaissance to the bohemian and avant-garde left of Greenwich Village. As a major publisher of the 1920s, Liveright was important in defining and identifying modernist artists and pro-

gressive intellectuals. Throughout the 1920s, his firm would take risks and fight censorship in order to publish many of the books that came to define American modernism: Ezra Pound's *Poems 1909–1921*, T. S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*, all of Eugene O'Neill's work, Ernest Hemingway's *In Our Time*, Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, Stephen Crane's *The Bridge*, and William Faulkner's *Soldier's Pay*. In addition, Boni and Liveright published Sigmund Freud, Bertrand Russell, Havelock Ellis, Upton Sinclair, Leon Trotsky, and Jack Reed—writers who shaped progressive thought during this era. Therefore, Boni and Liveright provided an important venue for its black authors: Jean Toomer, Jessie Fauset, and Eric Walrond.

Horace Brisbin Liveright was born in 1886 and raised in Philadelphia. He had written a comic opera, worked on Wall Street, and failed at a number of marketing ventures when, in 1916, he met Albert Boni, who was a bookseller in Greenwich Village and, like Liveright, was looking for an investment partner. Boni's idea was to publish reprints of modern classics and sell them in a series of inexpensive editions. Liveright was enthusiastic, and in May 1917 the firm of Boni and Liveright opened for business at 105 West Forty-Eighth Street, offering the first twelve titles in the Modern Library series. Modern Library reissued hard-to-find and out-of-print works—attractively bound in limp leatherette and inexpensively priced at sixty cents each—by such authors as Friedrich Nietzsche, Oscar Wilde, Maxim Gorki, August Strindberg, and Fyodor Dostoyevsky. The venture was an immediate success and an important event in American publishing; it was also to prove important in shaping the literary canon. In the decades to follow, new generations of writers would find themselves published in Modern Library along with the classics of the past.

With income from Modern Library and a growing reputation for publishing contemporary literature, Liveright was able to have a rather brilliant private life. He had an image as a jazz age entrepreneur, and his lavish parties, attended by blacks and whites, never lacked for liquor or stimulating conversation. Professionally, Liveright would risk publishing innovative and radical authors when mainstream commercial publishers would not take a chance. Who, then, but Horace Liveright would give serious consideration to *Cane*, a highly experimental book dealing with racial themes and written by an unknown Negro author?

Jean Toomer first met Liveright in 1922 through Waldo Frank, an avant-garde writer in Greenwich

Village whose work Boni and Liveright published without much financial return. At that time, Frank was one of Toomer's closest friends. The two had corresponded throughout 1921–1922, critiquing each other's work and enthusiastically pursuing a new modernist aesthetic. Toomer introduced Frank to the American South and black culture during a week they spent together in Spartanburg, South Carolina; Toomer was in turn introduced by Frank to the literary scene in Greenwich Village, meeting Georgia O'Keefe, Alfred Stieglitz, and Hart Crane as well as Horace Liveright.

Liveright published Toomer's masterpiece, *Cane*, in 1923, with an introduction by Waldo Frank. Although critics, both black and white, gave the book favorable reviews, it was not a financial success, selling only 500 copies. Nevertheless, Liveright offered Toomer a contract for a second, unspecified book (which was never actually completed). By the time of the Civic Club dinner in 1924, however, Toomer had begun to distance himself from both literary production and identification as a black man. When Boni and Liveright's publicity for *Cane* emphasized that Toomer was a new, talented Negro writer, he objected to the mention of race—an attitude which Liveright found difficult to understand.

Liveright's decision to publish a second work of fiction by a black author, Jessie Fauset's *There Is Confusion*, suggests his openness to a "rounded" view of Negro life. Although his publishing career reflected his support of progressive causes and sexual freedom, *There Is Confusion* is a novel of the Negro upper class and is almost Victorian in its depiction of sexual matters. Advertisements for this book featured the gathering of the Negro elite at the Civic Club dinner and compared Fauset's treatment of the upper class to Edith Wharton's.

The West Indian short-story writer Eric Walrond was the third significant author of the Harlem Renaissance whose work was published by Boni and Liveright. Walrond was raised in Barbados and Panama, was educated in Spanish and English, studied literature at Columbia University, wrote for Marcus Garvey's *Negro World*, and was an important link between aspiring black writers and white publishers. He had been the business manager of *Opportunity* since 1925 when Liveright advanced him money for a trip to Panama. The result was the short-story collection *Tropic Death*, published by Boni and Liveright in 1926. Walrond's experimental and expressionistic prose, like Toomer's, was modernist and exotic, rich in dialect

and allegory; it was highly praised by Du Bois and others. Walrond went abroad with Guggenheim funding in 1926, again under contract to Boni and Liveright; as with Toomer, however, Liveright's investment failed to yield a second book. Walrond died in England in 1956, without publishing again.

By 1928 the heyday of Boni and Liveright was over. In 1925 Liveright sold the firm's most reliable source of profit, the Modern Library, to pay for a series of poor theatrical and stock investments. Although the firm continued to publish important books, its financial situation weakened. Liveright had invested heavily in the stock market, and he never recovered from the crash of 1929. In the early 1930s, he lost the business and moved to Hollywood to work for Paramount, where he tried, unsuccessfully, to produce Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* with the filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein of the Soviet Union. Still looking for new publishing ventures, Liveright died broke and alone in New York in 1933. Upton Sinclair gave the eulogy at his funeral.

Biography

Horace Brisbin Liveright was born 10 December 1884 in Oceola Mills, Pennsylvania. He attended public schools in Philadelphia. He was a bond salesman and an investment manager (1904–1916); a cofounder with Albert Boni of the publishing house Boni and Liveright (1917); publisher, Boni and Liveright (1917–1928); publisher, Horace Liveright (1928–1933); and an adviser at Paramount Studios (1931). Liveright died in New York on 25 September 1933.

MICHAEL ZEITLER

See also Boni and Liveright; Civic Club Dinner, 1924; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Frank, Waldo; Johnson, Charles S.; Modernism; Publishers and Publishing Houses; *There Is Confusion*; Toomer, Jean; Walrond, Eric

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Liza

Liza—a musical comedy with book by Irvin C. Miller, score (words and music) by Maceo Pinkard, and “special lyrics” by Nat Vincent—was produced by Al Davis and had its premiere on 27 November 1922 at Daly’s Sixty-Third Street Theater. Its cast included Irvin Miller, the team of R. Eddie Greenlee and Thaddeus Drayton, and Emmett (“Gang”) Anthony, comedians; Gertrude Saunders (the “falsetto comedienne”) and Margaret Simms, singers; and Maude Russell and Johnny Nitt, dancers.

Liza was originally titled *Bon Bon Buddy, Jr.*, and had a trial run at the Lafayette Theater in Harlem during August and September 1922. It was one of at least five black shows to open during that year attempting to duplicate the immense success of *Shuffle Along* (1921) and was the only one to succeed, running for more than two years in various configurations.

The story of *Liza* concerned a woman—the daughter of a small-town mayor—who has fallen in love with a schoolteacher. The young man is unjustly accused of embezzling public funds. In the end the truth comes to light, the young man is exonerated, and the happy couple are able to wed. The songs in the show included “Tag Day,” “Pleasure,” “I’m the Sheriff,” “Liza,” “Memories,” “Just a Barber Shop Chord,” “That Brown-Skin Flapper,” “On the Moonlit Swanee,” “Essence,” “Forget Your Troubles,” “My Old Man,” “Runnin’ Wild Blues,” “The Charleston Dance,” “Dandy,” “My Creole Girl,” “Planning,” “The Ghost Dance,” “Love Me,” “Jintown Speedster,” and “Don’t Be Blue,” as well as several untitled numbers.

Liza was scored for a modified theater orchestra, consisting—according to composer Darius Milhaud, who saw the show—of flute, clarinet, saxophone, two trumpets, trombone, percussion, two violins, viola, cello, and string bass. (Presumably there was also a piano.)

The show was widely reviewed in the mainstream press by major critics of the day, including Alexander Woollcott and Heywood Broun. The reviewers

particularly praised the dancing in *Liza*, as well as the general liveliness and fast pace. The loose story line and script were accounted trite and weak, although some critics found some of the comedy pleasing. The score was received favorably, but without excitement; although Pinkard wrote some immortal songs, including “Sweet Georgia Brown” and other hits, none of his best work appeared in *Liza*.

Liza is of lasting historical importance for two reasons that were not readily apparent at the time. It was a major influence on Milhaud, as a source for his famous *ballet nègre* of 1923, *La création du monde*. *Liza* also heralded a major change in American dance. It was in this show that Maude Russell (the “slim princess,” 1897–2001) and a chorus line, the Dancing Honey Girls, performed a number called “The Charleston Dance.” This was the first appearance of the Charleston on a New York stage. It would become the ubiquitous dance of the jazz age, although it did not rise to its full popularity until the mid-1920s, following its success in the show *Runnin’ Wild*.

ELLIOTT S. HURWITT

See also Lafayette Theater; Miller, Irvin; Musical Theater; Runnin’ Wild; Shuffle Along

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Locke, Alain

In the pantheon of African American intellectuals who helped to spur on the artistic, social, and political flowering of the Harlem Renaissance, few names occupy as prominent a place as that of Alain Locke. Locke was formally trained and vastly accomplished as a philosopher, but his life and work far transcend

the role traditionally ascribed to that profession. As a result of his more than forty years as a prominent member of the faculty at Howard University and his exemplary record of publication on a variety of subjects, Locke exerted a broad influence on African American arts, sociology, and education, among other areas. Locke's status as a cultural authority during the height of the Harlem Renaissance was perhaps rivaled only by that of W. E. B. Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, Charles S. Johnson, and a select group of others. Although he was not a creative artist himself, Locke's intellectual work not only shaped the Harlem Renaissance but also significantly altered the development of modern American thought in general. His status as a prominent, albeit somewhat closeted, gay figure has also been more fully acknowledged only in recent years. On the whole, Locke's life is marked throughout by a genteel brand of cerebral struggle against the numerous problems he perceived in American society.

Locke was born into a well-to-do African American family in Philadelphia in 1885 and benefited most from this privileged situation in terms of his education. After a distinguished high school career, Locke spent two years training to become a teacher in Philadelphia before matriculating at Harvard, where he earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy and graduated magna cum laude in 1907. That same year, Locke was awarded a Rhodes scholarship as a representative of his home state, Pennsylvania. When he departed for Oxford in the fall of 1907, he officially became the first African American Rhodes scholar in the history of that prestigious program. He continued his post-baccalaureate studies in philosophy for another five years, the first four of which (1907–1910) were completed at Oxford. He subsequently spent a year (1910–1911) at the University of Berlin, where Du Bois had also studied for three years in the early 1890s. Locke distinguished himself at both institutions, excelling at his scholastic work even as he bore the significant burden of being considered a pacesetter for his entire race (a task he actually welcomed, however). He wrote an article called "Oxford Contrasts" in 1909 for *The Independent*, a British periodical, on the triumphs and tribulations associated with his experience as an African American student at Oxford. This piece was reprinted in *Colored American Magazine* that same year, marking Locke's first written contribution to the project of racial uplift associated with the so-called talented tenth. Du Bois had coined this phrase in an essay of 1903 to denote the black intellectual elite

that he believed would lead the entire race to a better position in American society. This group was composed mostly of educated, prosperous, urban African American men from the spheres of business, education, art, medicine, religion, and law. In Du Bois's conception, they were morally obliged to elevate the status of their comparatively powerless lower-class brethren. Locke's later articulation of the characteristics of the "New Negro" borrowed heavily from Du Bois's writings on the talented tenth.

After he returned to the United States, Locke embarked on a six-month tour of the American South. During this tour, the prejudice and intolerance he himself witnessed drove home the necessity of positively demonstrating the capabilities of African Americans. Once he had returned from his travels, Locke moved to Washington, D.C., and quickly accepted a position as an assistant professor at Howard University. He remained at Howard for four years in this role; among his important contributions during this time was the cofounding of the Stylus Society there in 1916. This society, which would last for more than seventy years, published *Stylus*, a literary magazine that included contributions from students (Zora Neale Hurston contributed a piece as an undergraduate in 1921) and faculty members.

In 1916, after four eventful years at Howard, Locke was made a full professor in the philosophy department. Having attained this goal, he decided again to follow Du Bois's example and pursue a doctoral degree at Harvard. Following two years of diligent research and teaching, Locke earned his doctorate in 1918 and returned to Howard to resume his professorial post. He published a wide variety of articles during this period, ranging from occasional philosophical discourses and pedagogical polemics to literary and artistic criticism. He began to contribute regular pieces to *Opportunity*, the monthly journal of the National Urban League, after Charles S. Johnson founded that publication in 1923. *Opportunity* quickly became one of the most prominent African American literary magazines of the day. Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston were frequent contributors or subjects of reviews in the early years of the journal, and Locke began to mingle freely among the members of the talented tenth because of his association with it. Locke wrote dozens of reviews and other short pieces for *Opportunity* throughout his life and served as a judge in a number of the literary contests that the publication sponsored.

The New Negro: An Interpretation (1925), the work that would become perhaps the most lasting achievement of Locke's career (and one of the masterpieces of the Harlem Renaissance), arose directly from his collaboration with Johnson in the publication of *Opportunity*. Johnson put together the dinner that became known as the Civic Club dinner of March 1924. The purpose, or presumed purpose, of this dinner was to celebrate the publication of Jessie Redmon Fauset's first novel, *There Is Confusion* (1924). However, Johnson also saw it as an occasion to bring together a large number of the most gifted African American artists and writers—many of whom had already been published in *Opportunity*—with prominent sympathetic white figures in the publishing industry in New York. Fauset was literary editor of *The Crisis* at the time, a position that put her in contact with most of the rising young African American talents in literature. Johnson added to the attractiveness of the event by proposing that Locke serve as the toastmaster. Locke's acceptance of this offer provided the dinner with a marquee name to advertise as its master of ceremonies.

The dinner, although a fairly modest event by the standards of New York's literary world, was a great success and brought Locke and Johnson into contact with Paul U. Kellogg, the editor of *Survey Graphic*, a popular magazine dealing with issues related to social work. The magazine was set to publish a "Mexico number" in May 1924, and Locke proposed a similar African American issue to Kellogg. This "Harlem number" would feature the work of many of the artists represented at the dinner, as well as a number of specially commissioned pieces and commentaries. Locke also nominated himself for the role of editor, a move that gave him a chance to put his own theories of elite-centered racial uplift into practice. Kellogg agreed, and the March 1925 issue of *Survey Graphic* came out with poems by Cullen, Hughes, McKay, Angelina Grimké, Jean Toomer, and Anne Spencer, as well as essays and stories by Du Bois, Rudolph Fisher, James Weldon Johnson, Albert Barnes, and others.

During the production of this issue of *Survey Graphic*, Locke and some of the other principals began to consider producing a book-length volume that would include much of the same material but with a wider scope. Albert Boni, who had recently started a publishing company along with his brother Charles, approached Kellogg in January 1925 and made preliminary inquiries about the possibility of republishing a large portion of the "Harlem number" in a book, of which Locke would again be the editor. Boni wished to

produce a work that would expand the focus outward from Harlem to include more of the general cultural revitalization within African American society. Kellogg agreed to allow the Boni brothers and Locke to use much of the material from the "Harlem number"; Locke's work on *The New Negro* began almost as soon as he had finished the work for *Survey Graphic*.

The title of the anthology came from a phrase that had been in use to varying degrees since before the turn of the century. Booker T. Washington, Fannie Barrier Williams, and N. B. Wood had put together the collection *A New Negro for a New Century* in 1900 as a call for a general revision of the role of African Americans in the twentieth century. The "New Negro" movement predated the anthology that bore its name by at least ten years, and its membership took on a distinctly urban, middle-class, educated character. The racial pride that was associated with this group fell somewhere between the assimilationism of Washington and the outright separatism supported by more radical figures. Much like the talented tenth before it, the New Negro movement was represented by the poets, painters, politicians, businessmen, scholars, and musicians who made up the African American cultural elite. This movement intended to demonstrate the ways in which the rest of the race could find its own identity without being assimilated into the dominant white culture. The inherent pluralism of the New Negroes meshed well with Locke's personal philosophy about the nature of race, as well as his somewhat elitist ideas about the means by which African Americans could find a place for themselves.

As Locke transformed the *Survey Graphic* number into *The New Negro*, he reduced the three-part structure of the original into two sections: "The Negro Renaissance" and "The New Negro in a New World." This new division is illustrative of Locke's desire for his contributors to create art not *for* African Americans but *as* African Americans. Locke's essay "The New Negro" led off the first section, stating the manifesto of the New Negro movement in no uncertain terms:

The younger generation is vibrant with a new psychology; the new spirit is awake in the masses, and under the very eyes of the professional observers is transforming what has been a perennial problem into the progressive phases of contemporary Negro life. (47)

Two additional essays on African American art and literature follow Locke's introduction and provide

a historical context for the creative material collected in the first part of the anthology, situating the Harlem Renaissance at the leading edge of a long line of creative art by blacks in America. The New Negroes involved in the artistic flourishing of the 1920s are thus rightly not seen as a spontaneous outburst of creativity but as the most recent high point in long, upward-moving cultural curve.

The anthology contains original fiction and poetry by many of the most celebrated artists of the Harlem Renaissance. Toomer contributed (albeit apparently without his consent) two of the short stories that made up his masterpiece *Cane* (1923): “Carma” and “Fern.” Also included are short stories by Fisher (“Vestiges: Harlem Sketches” and “The City of Refuge”), John Matheus (“Fog,” winner of *Opportunity’s* literary prize in 1925), Fauset (“The Gift of Laughter”), Hurston (“Spunk”), Bruce Nugent (“Sahdji”), and Eric Walrond (“The Palm Porch”), as well as a one-act folk play by Willis Richardson called “Compromise.” The poetry section features contributions (many of which appeared in the “Harlem number” as well) from Cullen, Toomer, James Weldon Johnson, Hughes, McKay, Georgia Douglas Johnson, Spencer, Grimké, and Lewis Alexander.

Locke contributed several essays to the anthology, including a piece on the development of traditional African American religious songs (“The Negro Spirituals”). Other prominent contributors of nonfiction included Montgomery Gregory (“The Drama of Negro Life”), Charles S. Johnson (“The New Frontage on American Life”), James Weldon Johnson (“Harlem: The Cultural Capital”), Kelly Miller (“Howard: The National Negro University”), E. Franklin Frazier (“Hampton-Tuskegee: Missioners of the Mass” and “Durham: Capital of the Black Middle Class”) and Elise Johnson McDougald (“The Task of Negro Womanhood”). The anthology closes with a strikingly revolutionary piece by Du Bois called “The Negro Mind Reaches Out.” Like Locke, Du Bois places racial issues before class issues, but he asserts that there is an important connection between the two, as befits his more socialistic political perspective. In sum, *The New Negro* showcased a broad range of African American artistic and intellectual achievement and proved to be an instant success and source of pride, not only for its contributors but for its readers as well.

Locke’s editing of *The New Negro* was not without controversy, however. His opinions about the unquestioned leadership role of the cultural elite were not universally accepted in the African American artistic

community. Furthermore, his insistence on the pragmatic purpose of African American art and literature as a means of building racial consciousness ran contrary to the goals of writers like Cullen or Toomer who were seeking to break away from the limitations inherent in being labeled “black” writers. Criticism of Locke’s judgment in his editorial decisions has been expressed by those who claimed that Locke was actually furthering the goals of assimilation and by those who claimed that he was advancing a black nationalist position in his selection of material for the book. Hutchinson (1995) attempts to negotiate a solution to this seeming contradiction by outlining the various different forces with which Locke had to contend in putting the volume together, such as including both black and white audiences, considering questions of marketability and profitability, and—perhaps most difficult of all—finding a way to blend the many different ideologies of African American thought into a coherent whole. This last point is the one for which Locke is most frequently attacked, either for over-accentuating writers who agreed with his own racial philosophy or for excluding dissenting voices. Locke had significant and largely permanent fallings-out with Cullen, McKay, and Hurston in the decade following the publication of *The New Negro*.

Countee Cullen resented Locke’s insistence on writing predominantly for the purpose of culture building. Although Cullen deals with African themes and images in his poems, their form is derived more from the romanticism of English writers like Keats and Shelley than from the traditional folkloric forebears that Locke would have preferred. Cullen did make some attempts to follow Locke’s advice and experimented with primitive elements as much as (if not more than) any of the other major poets of the 1920s. However, to Cullen’s Anglophile poetic sensibility, this was simply too narrow a stricture for his artistic expression. Following a squabble about compensation for his poetic contributions to the “Harlem number,” Cullen largely broke away from Locke’s influence, although he still allowed Locke to use his work on occasion.

Claude McKay, on the other hand, was already politically and aesthetically at odds with Locke before 1925. He became enraged when Locke used his poetry without permission (or with unauthorized alterations) on several occasions, including in *The New Negro*. This led McKay to refuse categorically to allow Locke any further use of his poems in anthologies. When Locke charged that McKay was hurting the New Negro movement by this refusal, McKay angrily



Portrait of Alain LeRoy Locke, 1943–1944, by Betsy Graves Reyneau (1888–1964); oil on canvas. (© National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution/Art Resource, N.Y.)

replied by letter that Locke was being tyrannical in his desire for aesthetic control over African American arts. Locke made a public reply of sorts in 1937, in an article for *New Challenge* entitled “Spiritual Truancy,” in which he accused McKay of being selfish in writing solely according to his personal tastes. The great schism between individual expression and communal responsibility that cleaved the Harlem Renaissance apart is clearly present in this exchange.

Locke had greatly assisted Zora Neale Hurston in the beginning of her career, both by including her work in *The New Negro* and by publicly extolling the virtues of some of her later writings. However, their relationship soured quickly after Locke’s negative review (oddly negative, given the work’s subject matter and somewhat folkloric tone) of her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). She subsequently referred to Locke, in a letter to James Weldon Johnson, as a

“malicious, spiteful little snout” and an intellectual hypocrite. She eventually almost entirely disavowed Locke’s positive influence on her career, claiming that it was Charles S. Johnson who was responsible for her inclusion in *The New Negro*.

Although the ultimate cause of the disagreements between Locke and his onetime protégés is still open to question, Locke’s aestheticism was certainly at odds with the values of many members of this younger generation of African American writers. This conflict was felt very keenly by the younger generation of the Harlem Renaissance, many of whom pointedly departed from the classical scholasticism of Locke and experimented with more radical forms of literary and social endeavor in the decades to come.

One key figure in African American letters with whom Locke maintained a close (albeit occasionally antagonistic) relationship was Du Bois, even though the latter’s political stance was increasingly distant from that of Locke. Du Bois had criticized Locke’s belief in the power of art to effect political change. However, when Locke, by then chair of the philosophy department, was peremptorily fired from Howard in 1925, it was chiefly Du Bois who came to his defense. Du Bois petitioned Jesse Edward Moorland, one of the trustees of the university, on Locke’s behalf. His argument was predicated not on his friendship with Locke (which was lukewarm) but rather on an insistence that Locke, as one of the finest scholars in America, belonged at the best African American university in America. Locke was somewhat grudgingly reinstated two years later and remained at Howard until 1953.

Despite the growing antagonism toward Locke among some of the literati of Harlem, *The New Negro* received considerable acclaim and remains a seminal text of the period. It also led Locke to produce a number of other works that continued to aim at an expression of the New Negro aesthetic. Two years after *The New Negro* was published, he produced two separate collections of African American literature—*Four Negro Poets* (1927) and *Plays of Negro Life: A Sourcebook of Native American Drama* (1927)—which he coedited with Montgomery Gregory. *Four Negro Poets*, a thirty-two-page chapbook, includes poems by Cullen, Hughes, Toomer, and McKay, and an introductory essay by Locke entitled “The Poetry of Negro Life.” *Plays of Negro Life* is a collection of twenty “plays for the Negro theatre” by both black and white writers. While neither work breaks much new ground, both provide elaboration on means of expressing the artistic ideals associated with *The New Negro*.

As a bibliographic companion to these two pieces, Locke published *A Decade of Negro Self-Expression* (1928). This work, produced while he was a visiting professor at Fisk University in Nashville, consists mainly of an annotated list of books written by African Americans from the outbreak of World War I through the mid-1920s. Locke also began writing what would become a twenty-four-year series of annual publications in which he reviewed the preceding year's books by and about African Americans. From 1929 through 1943, these reviews appeared in *Opportunity*; thereafter, until 1952, they were published in *Phylon*, a leading African American scholarly journal founded by Du Bois in 1940. These pieces represent Locke's greatest contribution to scholarship following the height of the Harlem Renaissance, bringing together his insightful and often opinionated annotations and a comprehensive catalog of information that greatly facilitated the study of African American history and culture.

Biography

Alain LeRoy Locke was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 13 September 1885. He studied at Ethical Culture and at Central High School in Philadelphia; Philadelphia School of Pedagogy, 1902–1904; Harvard University (A.B., 1907; Ph.D., 1918); Oxford University, 1907–1910; and the University of Berlin, 1910–1911. He was an assistant professor of philosophy and English at Howard University, in Washington, D.C., 1912–1916; a professor, 1916–1953; and chair of the philosophy department, 1921–1953. He founded the literary magazine *Stylus* and the Stylus Society at Howard, 1916. Locke was a visiting professor, Fisk University, Nashville, 1927–1928; cofounder of Associates for Negro Folk Education, 1935; Inter-American Exchange professor, Université de Port-au-Prince, Haiti, 1943–1944; visiting professor, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 1945–1946; president of the American Association for Adult Education, 1946–1947; visiting professor, New School for Social Research, New York, 1947; visiting professor, City College of New York, 1948. His awards included a Rhodes scholarship, 1907; and an honorary doctorate from Howard University, 1953. Locke died in New York City on 10 June 1954.

DEREK MAUS

See also Civic Club Dinner, 1924; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Howard University; New Negro; New Negro

Movement; New Negro, The; Opportunity; Stylus; Survey Graphic; Talented Tenth; *specific individuals*

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Loggins, Vernon

For his doctoral work at Columbia University, Loggins studied African American literature written before the twentieth century, producing the first serious scholarly analysis of this literature. In 1931, Columbia University Press published the dissertation as a book, *The Negro Author: His Development in America to 1900*. The book was and is significant because it presented the literature as worthy of serious study, and because Loggins included virtually all the major and minor African American authors known at the time. In his research, he relied heavily on the Arthur A. Schomburg collection of the New York Public Library, and on suggestions made by Charles S. Johnson, James Weldon Johnson, and others. Loggins's analysis is frequently marked with the racial stereotyping common to the period, as when he praises the "African temperament," the "mystic Negro mind," or the "primitive mind" of various writers. Examining Phillis Wheatley, he finds her poems uninteresting but is amazed by the fact that a slave had composed poetry at all.

Works produced during the late nineteenth century by W. E. B. Du Bois and Charles W. Chesnutt, two important figures in the Harlem Renaissance, are analyzed in *The Negro Author*. Additionally, Loggins uses a quotation from Countee Cullen to support his claim that "it is unfair criticism to expect too much" of black poets like Paul Laurence Dunbar, because of the disadvantages they faced.

In 1937, Loggins published another critical work, *I Hear America . . . : Literature in the United States since 1900*. In this volume, Loggins writes approvingly of Julia Peterkin and Paul Green, two white southern writers who created sympathetic black characters, but he does not include any African Americans who were among the important writers of the first third of the twentieth century. Later in his career, Loggins published other books of literary criticism, including studies of the works of Nathaniel Hawthorne and William Shakespeare.

Biography

Vernon Loggins was born on 10 January 1893, in Hempstead, Texas. He studied at the University of Texas (A.M., 1917), University of Chicago (A.M., 1917), and Columbia University (Ph.D., 1931), and additionally at New York University, the University of Montpelier, and the Sorbonne. He taught at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis (1917–1918); Alabama Polytechnic Institute, Auburn (1919–1920); New York University, New York City (1920–1925); and Columbia University (1925–1960). Loggins was a scholar of American literature and the author of books, short stories, reviews, essays, and poems (1924–1968). He was a member of the Poetry Society of America and the International Institute of Arts and Letters. Loggins died on 3 October 1968 in New York City.

CYNTHIA BILY

See also Chesnutt, Charles Waddell; Cullen, Countee; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Dunbar, Paul Laurence; Green, Paul; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Johnson, James Weldon; Peterkin, Julia Mood

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Lovinggood, Penman

Penman Lovinggood Sr.—an author, tenor, and composer—was born in Texas in 1895. During the first decades of the twentieth century he was active in New York City as a church soloist, concert tenor, music columnist, and music teacher.

In 1921, in Brooklyn, he published a slender volume, *Famous Modern Negro Musicians*: brief essays on nineteen contemporary figures. His criteria for selection were that “these here included are famous, and likewise Modern Musicians.” Eileen Southern, in her introduction to a reprint edition (1978), notes that this was “the first survey of black music since the epochal publication in 1878 of James Monroe Trotter’s *Music and Some Highly Musical People*, and there was not to be another study until 1934, the publication date of Maude Cuney-Hare’s *Negro Musicians and Their Music*.” Lovinggood’s work is also noteworthy because his approach is in accordance with the ideas of W. E. B. Du Bois and Alain Locke regarding the New Negro and the advancement of the race—ideas that encouraged “classical” performance and composition rather than the blues and jazz genres of Harlem.

Lovinggood tended to omit biographical information but assessed the musicians in terms of their contribution to the race. Following are some examples. Samuel Coleridge Taylor: “He burned his vital energy up in successive musical creations. He stands with the Masters, and is the greatest Negro Musician.” Henry T. Burleigh: “America’s greatest Art-Song writer, and the American Negro’s foremost composer. His work with the Negro Spiritual has been a devoted and masterful achievement . . . [conveying] the full beauty of the music of his own people.” R. Nathaniel Dett: the “most characteristically racial composer.” J. Rosamond Johnson: “His moving style is always graceful and his

insight into the weaving of harmonies . . . is indeed illuminating.” (Johnson was Lovinggood’s vocal teacher, and later Lovinggood was a member of Johnson’s vocal quartet.) Will Marian Cook (as a violinist): “One forgets the structure, form and style of the piece and is conscious only of the delight in the pure, unalloyed movement.” Carl R. Diton: “Creative effort reveals more and more the pure gold of the native musical mine, and well-spring.” Roland W. Hayes: “Hailed as the race’s greatest singer.” Marian Anderson: “Miss Anderson possesses the most perfect vocal organ in itself in the race.” Clarence Cameron White (as a violinist): “Mr. White is recognized by the musical people of both races, as one of the race’s greatest musicians.”

In November 1925 Lovinggood made his own musical debut at Town Hall; in October 1927 he appeared at Steinway Hall. A reviewer in the *New York Times* (23 October 1927) said of the latter performance that Lovinggood had “revealed a smooth, velvety tone, which was well produced and of fair range and volume. His performance was especially enjoyable in the spirituals, which he imbued with true expressiveness and simplicity.” During the 1930s Lovinggood performed with J. Rosamond Johnson’s quartet and also with W. C. Handy’s orchestra.

In 1936 Lovinggood’s opera *Menlelek* was performed by the American Negro Opera Association; the cast included Carl Diton. In 1942 Lovinggood organized the Drum and Bugle Corps in Englewood, New Jersey.

Biography

Penman Lovinggood Sr. was born 25 December 1895 in Austin Texas. He studied at Samuel Houston College in Austin (which his father had founded), and later with William Happich in Philadelphia and with J. Rosamond Johnson in New York City. Lovinggood was active in New York during the first decades of the twentieth century as a church soloist, concert tenor, music columnist, and music teacher. He published *Famous Modern Negro Musicians* in 1921. He made his debut at Town Hall in November 1925; in October 1927 he gave a well-received performance at Steinway Hall. In 1936 his opera *Menlelek* was performed by the American Negro Opera Association. Lovinggood received the Wanamaker prize for composition and the Griffith Music Foundation’s silver-bronze medal. In 1945 he settled in Compton, California, and established a publishing firm, Lovinggood Company (1947–1963).

At this time he changed the spelling of his name and added the designation "Sr." Lovinggood died in Compton on 4 August 1993.

JOHN GALM

See also Burleigh, Harry Thacker; Cook, Will Marion; Dett, Robert Nathaniel; Handy, W. C.; Hayes, Roland; Johnson, John Rosamond; White, Clarence Cameron

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Evangeline and Gabriel. (Opera.)

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Lowe, James

James B. Lowe's acting career included three Hollywood productions during the 1920s, but he is best known for having played the leading role in Universal Studios' 1927 film adaptation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, directed by Harry Pollard. Other than Paul Robeson, Lowe was the only African American actor to play the lead in a Hollywood film with white actors in the lesser roles. Lowe was also the first black actor to be ballyhooed by his studio. Despite these credits, though, he is mainly associated with the racist stereotype of the "Tom." The Tom had originated earlier than the movies—in popular entertainments of the nineteenth century—but it took on startling staying power on film.

Bogle (1998) describes the Tom as a docile male character with a nearly religious faith in the whites who abuse him; and Noble observes that "the term 'Uncle Tom' has in a hundred years come to mean all that is considered most contemptible in Negro mentality" (1948, 32). As portrayed by Lowe, Uncle Tom is doggedly devoted to Little Eva, his white master's daughter, and thus is a conventional character, but Lowe's own charisma added a new dimension to the role.

An effusive press release about *Uncle Tom's Cabin* read as follows:

James B. Lowe has made history. A history that reflects only credit to the Negro race, not only because he has given the "Uncle Tom" character a new slant, but because of his exemplary conduct with the Universal company. They look upon Lowe at the Universal Studio as a living black god. . . . Of the directors, critics, artists, and actors who have seen James Lowe work in the studio there are none who will not say he is the most suited of all men for the part of "Tom." Those who are religious say that a heavenly power brought him to Universal and all predict a most marvelous future and worldwide reputation for James B. Lowe. (quoted in Bogle)

Bogle argues, however, that "Tom still came off as a genial dandy, furnished with new color but no new sentiments." He adds, though, "Yet to Lowe's credit, he did his tommying with such an arresting effectiveness that he was sent to England on a promotional tour" (6). Such a tour was an entirely novel practice on the studio's part.

Lowe made no further films, but his collaboration with Universal and Pollard remains the best remembered of half a dozen film versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. (In one of these, made twelve years before, Harry Pollard himself had played the role of Tom in blackface.)

Biography

James B. Lowe was born 12 October 1879 in Georgia. His performances include Tom in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1927), Rastus in *Blue Blazes* (1926), and Cook in *The Demon Rider* (1925). Lowe died on 19 March 1963 in Los Angeles, California.

TERRI FRANCIS

See also Film: Actors; Film: Blacks as Portrayed by White Filmmakers

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Lulu Belle

Lulu Belle (1926) is a play by Charles MacArthur (1895–1956) and Edward Sheldon (1886–1946). MacArthur was a highly successful newspaper columnist before becoming a playwright; in later life, he edited the magazine *Theatre Arts*. His best-known plays were *The Front Page* (1928) and *Twentieth Century* (1932), both written in collaboration with Ben Hecht. *Lulu Belle* was MacArthur's first play; he completed it with the assistance of Edward Sheldon, an established and influential dramatist. Sheldon was the author of *The Nigger* (1909), a dramatic portrait of a white southern politician who rises to the governorship of his state and then faces a crisis when he learns that he is one-eighth black.

Lulu Belle is about a character who has much in common with Carmen in Bizet's opera. The first of the play's four acts is set in San Juan Hill, near Fifty-ninth Street in Manhattan; this was the major black

community before the development of Harlem. Lulu Belle is a blues singer, dancer, and vamp who seduces George Randall, an honest barber, and takes him away from his wife and children. Throughout the play Lulu Belle has premonitions of death, but she refuses to change the course she has set for herself. In the second act, set in a furnished room in Harlem that she now shares with George, she drugs and robs a male victim and forces George to help her conceal the crime. By the third act, bored with George's jealousy, Lulu Belle jilts him in a Harlem nightclub. In rapid succession, George finds out that his son is dead; George refuses to leave Lulu Belle even though she no longer wants him; Lulu Belle has George beaten by another of her boyfriends, a boxer; George stabs the boxer; Lulu Belle turns George over to the police; and Lulu Belle leaves both George and the boxer for a French vicomte who has been slumming in the club. The last act is set in Paris, five years later. George, who has been released from prison, finds Lulu Belle and, in a jealous rage, kills her. As the curtain falls, he cradles her in his arms.

Lulu Belle opened on 9 February 1926; it was produced and directed, with spectacularly realistic scenery, by the legendary David Belasco at the theater that bore his name. The play had more than fifty speaking parts, and the cast consisted of 100 African American and fifteen white actors. This use of an integrated cast was viewed as a progressive step, but the leading roles were filled by two white performers in blackface: Lenore Ulric playing Lulu Belle and Henry Hull playing George. Evelyn Preer, a veteran of the Lafayette Players, had the role of Ruby Lee, Lulu Belle's best friend.

Brooks Atkinson, the critic for the *New York Times*, was most impressed by the acting, dancing, and scenery: "*Lulu Belle* is splendid showmanship; but it retains few of the elements of drama" (10 February 1926, 20). James Weldon Johnson also admired the acting, considering Hull's makeup and dialect "beyond detection" (1977, 205). Though he considered the play no more than "sensational melodrama," he thought that it was significant because of the realistically staged scenes of black life in New York and the mixed cast. *Lulu Belle* was a major success in its time, running for 461 performances.

FREDA SCOTT GILES

See also Johnson, James Weldon; Lafayette Players; Preer, Evelyn; San Juan Hill

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Lyles, Aubrey

Through his partnership with Flournoy Miller, Aubrey Lyles was a significant influence in black comedy. Lyles was born in Jackson, Tennessee, in 1883. He attended Fisk University as a medical student in the early 1900s. When tiny Lyles faced tall Flournoy Miller in a boxing bout, they hammed it up to the delight of their fellow students. This led to their theatrical partnership. In 1906 Lyles and Miller became resident playwrights and performers for the innovative Pekin Stock Company in Chicago.

They wrote a succession of light entertainments for the Pekin, including *The Mayor of Dixie* (1906), *The Husband* (1907), *Doctor Knight* (1908), and *The Colored Aristocrats* (1909)—their first starring vehicle. Their characters Steve Jenkins (Miller) and Sam Peck (Lyles) became their stage personae thereafter. Lyles and Miller's comedy style broke from the tradition of Bert Williams and George Walker, which featured a comedian and a straight man with singing and dancing. Miller and Lyles, by contrast, were equal partners in straight comedy.

Following their successes at the Pekin, they toured on vaudeville circuits in the midwest. Their appearances in New York earned them a tour of the east coast on the prestigious Keith circuit. The conventions of the time decreed that they perform in blackface, but their style was far from the stereotypes of minstrelsy. In addition to their famous slapstick boxing, they intro-

duced several much-imitated routines. These included “mutilatin’ the language” (“You gotta be repaired for that”) and “indefinite talk,” in which they anticipated the completion of each other’s sentences.

In 1915 they played successfully in the well-known *Charlot’s Revue* in England. On their return they starred in *Darkydom*, which had an impressive black cast including Abbie Mitchell. After more years in vaudeville, they collaborated (in 1921) with the composer-lyricists Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake on a musical about a mayoral contest in the mythical town of Jimtown (based on the earlier *Mayor of Dixie*). The result was *Shuffle Along*, which many believe launched the Harlem Renaissance.

Shuffle Along brought fame and fortune, but Lyles was shy (in contrast to his boastful stage persona). He compensated by using his wealth to give lavish parties. He kept a menagerie of exotic animals and owned a Rolls Royce whose luxurious appointments were legendary in Harlem. After *Shuffle Along* closed in 1923, Miller and Lyles created another great black show of the 1920s, *Runnin’ Wild*, and other similar shows (*Rang Tang*, *Keep Shufflin’*) but never managed to re-create the magic of *Shuffle Along*. Between 1922 and 1925, Miller and Lyles also made about a dozen 78-rpm recordings on the OKEH label.

Lyles was angered by the producers of the radio series *Amos ‘n’ Andy*, who, he believed, had plagiarized his material; and by Carl Van Vechten, who had accused him of stereotyping. *Time* magazine reported Lyles’s angry outburst against Van Vechten at a welcome-home gathering for Florence Mills in 1927.

In 1929 Lyles split from Miller. Influenced by Marcus Garvey’s ideas, he spent a year in Africa. On his return, his solo production *Runnin’ de Town* flopped. He then teamed with Miller again. They made two short talkies for RKO and a brief unsuccessful radio series on CBS. Their unconventional musical drama *Sugar Hill* received mixed reviews.

While working on a revival, *Shuffle Along of 1933*, Lyles underwent surgery for gastric ulcers. During his convalescence in New York, he died of preexisting pulmonary tuberculosis on 28 July 1932.

Biography

Aubrey Lyles was born in Jackson, Tennessee, in 1883. He studied at Fisk University. He was a resident playwright at the Pekin Theater Stock Company (1906–1909), with his partner, Flournoy Miller. Lyles

Lyles, Aubrey

and Miller then toured in vaudeville, performed in revues and musicals, and in 1921 collaborated on *Shuffle Along*. In 1929 Lyles split from Miller; they later collaborated again, though not as successfully as before. Lyles died in New York on 28 July 1932.

BILL EGAN

See also Blake, Eubie; Miller, Flournoy; Mills, Florence; Mitchell, Abbie; Musical Theater; *Runnin' Wild*; *Shuffle Along*; Sissle, Noble; Van Vechten, Carl; Vaudeville

Theatrical Productions and Performances

- 1906: *The Man from 'Bam*.
- 1907: *The Mayor of Dixie*; *The Oyster Man*; *The Husband*.
- 1908: *Doctor Knight*; *The Colored Aristocrats*.
- 1912: *The Charity Girl*.
- 1913: *The Cabaret*.
- 1915: *Charlot's Revue* (London); *Darkydom*.
- 1918: *Who's Stealin'*.
- 1919: *Upstairs and Down Below*.
- 1920: *Tunes and Funnies of 1920*.
- 1921: *Shuffle Along*.
- 1922: *Step On It*; *The Flat Below*.
- 1923: *Runnin' Wild*.
- 1924: *Going White*; *Honey*; *Negro Nuances*; *Struttin' Along Liza*; *Struttin' Time*; *Backbiters*.
- 1927: *Rang Tang*.
- 1928: *Keep Shufflin'*.
- 1930: *Runnin' de Town*.
- 1931: *Lazy Rhythm*; *Sugar Hill*.

Films

- 1929: *Harlem Knights*; *Harlem Mania*.

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Lynching

Lynching is a means of social control in which a mob serves as prosecutor, jury, judge, and executioner. The phrase "lynch law" derives from the unofficial court of Charles Lynch, a planter in Virginia who tried Tory loyalists during the Revolutionary War. Owing to a lack of a standardized judicial system, lynch law was a common practice in the rapidly expanding United States. After the Civil War, the lynching of African Americans in particular served as a crucial means of maintaining white supremacy. Because justifications for lynching and the lynching ritual itself constituted a particularly sexualized attack on black bodies, lynching during the Harlem Renaissance is perhaps most usefully approached in both psychosexual and socioeconomic terms.

History

The lynching of African Americans peaked after radical Reconstruction, as southern whites worked



Two men are lynched in Marion, Indiana, 9 August 1930.

(© Bettmann/Corbis.)

to prevent blacks from participating in the economy and in politics. The withdrawal of northern troops in 1877 paved the way for the systematic economic, social, and political disenfranchisement of the newly emancipated slaves. Lynching functioned as the extralegal counterpart to Jim Crow and to the “separate but equal” legal system. Though the rate of lynching had decreased significantly by the 1920s, 477 African Americans were lynched between 1919 and 1930, according to statistics compiled by the Tuskegee Institute.

In this era, lynching typically occurred in a rural or semirural community in a southern or border state. The mob, composed largely of working-class whites, usually assembled through word of mouth. Sometimes, however, a lynching was advertised in advance in a newspaper or broadside. Legal authorities generally overlooked the lynching. The victim was first physically brutalized—shot, castrated, or otherwise dismembered—then often set on fire and hanged in public view. Before or after death, the victim might be dragged through the white and black sections of town. Afterward, participants salvaged “souvenirs” such as body parts, bone, hair, and scraps of clothing. For some whites, a lynching was a spectacle that served as a ritualized celebration of racial supremacy; and many black communities were terrorized by the constant threat of lynching. In this way, lynching maintained the institutionalized racial and economic hierarchies of Jim Crow.

Explanations

There is no single explanation for lynching. At the time a lynching took place, the reason—that is, the accusation involved—might range from a criminal act to a petty infraction of the social code. Relatively recent scholarship has offered economic and psychosexual explanations. Tolney and Beck (1995) correlate lynching in the South with vacillations in the cotton market. Although their conclusions cannot be applied universally, because the lynching rate decreased as terrorized laborers fled north, their findings support theories linking the “great migration” to the threat of lynching. The threefold rise in lynching that occurred after the stock market crash of 1929 also suggests a link between this form of violence and economic crises.

A very common reason, or pretext, for lynching was an accusation of rape. Although Raper (1933) and Franklin (1967) found that only one-third of all male

victims of lynching had been accused of sexual assault, the influence of this rationale indicates a link between psychosexual forces and socioeconomic explanations. The pervasive stereotype of the sexually uncontrollable black man (as opposed to the “civilized” white gentleman) was offered to justify the disenfranchisement and oppression of blacks. The presumed object of the black male’s sexual desire, the chaste white woman, symbolized wealth and privilege. An accusation of interracial rape, then, was a call for white men to assert their “natural” rights of social, economic, and political domination over blacks and over white women. Smith (1990) argues that a “homosocial triangle” defined the mythology of rape and lynching and obscured the rape of black women. Just as white and black men were opposed with regard to violence and sexuality, so were white and black women. If black women, like black men, were thought naturally promiscuous, the rape of a black woman could not be considered a crime. The mythology of interracial rape and lynching, then, served an ideological function in terms of the economic and social competition between the races. The Scottsboro case of 1931 seems to illustrate this complex of forces.

Representations

In the creative art of the Harlem Renaissance, scenes of lynchings expressed tension regarding differences of gender, class, geography, and race. For instance, in Jean Toomer’s *Cane* (1923) the threat of lynching emasculates and silences the black male artist who is attempting to voice racial pride—one quality that, according to Alain Locke, characterizes the New Negro (1925, 11). Toomer dramatizes this situation through Kabnis’s hysterical fear of whites, the lynching of Mame Lamkins and her unborn child, the poem “Portrait in Georgia,” and the story “Blood-Burning Moon.”

Similarly, in James Weldon Johnson’s *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912), a lynching causes the protagonist to abandon the South and to vow “to voice the joys and sorrows, the hopes and ambitions, of the American Negro” (147–148). For the ex-colored man, the lynching both reinforces and dissolves the color line, as fear propels him to flee northward and pass as a white man. Southern male characters in Richard Wright’s *Uncle Tom’s Children* (1938) are also impelled northward by the threat of lynching. In these stories, Wright explores how lynching furthers

class exploitation, revealing how stereotypes of black masculinity and white femininity frustrate the possibility of interracial labor solidarity. Wright's influential *Native Son* (1940) also powerfully indicts this system.

The visual artists Jacob Lawrence and Aaron Douglas produced notable representations of lynching. In panel 15 of Lawrence's series *Migration of the Negro*, a figure is shown grieving under an empty noose. The caption, "It was found that where there had been a lynching, the people who were reluctant to leave at first left immediately after this," links the great migration to lynching. Lawrence does not show either the victim's body or the lynch mob; this seems to suggest his condemnation of the mob and the crowd of spectators, since he refuses to validate their point of view. Aaron Douglas contrasts a lynching with working and dancing figures in panel 3 of his famous mural *Aspects of Negro Life*. The juxtaposition of life and death in this panel, which has the title *The Idyll of the Deep South*, suggests the strength and resilience of African Americans.

Unlike Lawrence, other artists made a point of representing the brutal spectacle itself. Billie Holiday's song "Strange Fruit" (a setting of a poem by Lewis Allen), and Claude McKay's sonnet "The Lynching," use vivid representations to incite protest. Two works concerned with visual convention are Langston Hughes's "Christ in Alabama" (about the Scottsboro boys) and Countee Cullen's "Black Christ"; both use the image of crucifixion to point out Christians' racism.

Dramas about lynching offer another perspective. These plays arose from a convergence of the "little theater" movement and the Harlem Renaissance; they include works by Georgia Douglas Johnson, Alice Dunbar Nelson, and Angelina Weld Grimké (among others) and suggest one kind of tension characterizing Locke's aesthetics of the New Negro. Using aspects of the folk tradition such as call and response, the plays emphasize Negroes' "difference" in the context of demands for equal treatment under American law. In the literature of the Harlem Renaissance—and in fact Harris (1984) argues that this is true of African American literature in general—representations of lynching serve as symbols of shared experience testifying to black people's protest, resistance, and survival.

SONDRA GUTTMAN

See also Antilynching Crusade; Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man; Cane; Civil Rights and Law; Cullen,

Countee; Douglas, Aaron; Grimké, Angelina Weld; Holiday, Billie; Hughes, Langston; Jim Crow; Johnson, Georgia Douglas; Johnson, James Weldon; Lawrence, Jacob; Lynching: Silent Protest Parade; McKay, Claude; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Nelson, Alice Dunbar; Racial Violence: Riots and Lynching; Scottsboro; Toomer, Jean; Wright, Richard

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Lynching: Silent Protest Parade

The first massive African American protest in American history took place when some 8,000 to 10,000 African Americans marched down Fifth Avenue in New York City on 28 July 1917 in a “parade of silent protest against acts of discrimination and oppression” (“Negroes in Protest March” 1917, 12). The silent protest parade—which had been organized by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), church officials, and civic leaders shortly after riots broke out in East St. Louis—was a dramatic appeal to President Wilson to address lynching, disenfranchisement, Jim Crow, and mob violence. Because the march “turned protest into something like organized and conspicuous theater” Douglas contends that the silent protest parade marks the true beginning of the Harlem Renaissance (1995, 328).

The paraders assembled at Fifty-ninth Street and Fifth Avenue and marched thirty-six blocks downtown to Madison Square Park. They were led by about 800 children, some no older than six, dressed entirely in white. Following the children were white-clad women, then rows of men dressed in black. The marchers walked wordlessly to the sound of muffled drumbeats. Despite their silence, their concerns were articulated on neatly stenciled banners and signs.

According to news reports, the march drew attention, respect, and support from whites and blacks alike. The mayor of New York City, John Purroy Mitchel, had diverted traffic and established a protective police presence; an estimated 20,000 spectators, some in tears, were as silent as the marchers. One newspaper reported that “the parade in all respects was one of the most quiet and orderly demonstrations ever witnessed on Fifth Avenue” (“Negroes in Protest March,” 12).

Although the police ordered the removal of one banner, which depicted a black woman kneeling before President Wilson and begging him to secure democracy in America before taking it abroad, they had no objection to the other banners and placards, some of which read:

“Thou shalt not kill.”

“America has lynched without trial 2,867 Negroes in thirty-one years and not a single murderer has suffered.”

“We have fought for the liberty of white Americans in six wars; our reward is East St. Louis.”

“Memphis and Waco—Centers of American Culture?”

“Taxation without representation is tyranny.”

“We are maligned as lazy and murdered where we work.”

“Your hands are full of blood.”

“Mother, do lynchers go to heaven?”

During the parade, black Boy Scouts handed out leaflets which posed the question, “Why Do We March?” and answered: “We march because we deem it a crime to be silent in the face of such barbaric acts. . . . We march in memory of our butchered dead, the massacre of honest toilers who were removing the reproach of the laziness and thriftlessness hurled at the entire race” (Du Bois 1917, 241).

The riots in East St. Louis, to which some of these statements were referring, had taken place in May and July and had destroyed at least \$400,000 worth of property, driven 6,000 African Americans out of their homes, and resulted in the death of at least forty African Americans. In an extensively researched article for *The Crisis*, W. E. B. Du Bois and a white social worker, Martha Gruening (1917), attributed the riots to the hostility of white union workers toward black strikebreakers. The strike involved had ended in May, but white laborers in the packing industry, troubled by the mass migration of African Americans from the South, had remained wary. Tension was exacerbated by union leaders who continued to call for “drastic action” against the “influx of undesirable negroes” (phrasing that appeared in a letter from Edward F. Mason, reprinted as a facsimile in *The Crisis*, 1917, 221). On 2 July 1917 drastic action was taken. Rioting ensued when a group of white policemen, who may have been mistaken for gun-wielding joy-riders, drove into a black neighborhood and were fired on by

the residents. The next morning, the city erupted. Eyewitnesses likened the mob to a manhunt, describing how rioters sought out blacks to beat, mutilate, stab, shoot, hang, and burn.

Stunned by the events in East St. Louis, leaders of the Harlem branch of the NAACP met to discuss a method of protest. The field secretary James Weldon Johnson, recalling an idea developed years before by Oswald Garrison Villard, suggested a silent protest parade. In order to reach all African American citizens of New York, Johnson formed a parade committee that included pastors from several leading churches and influential members of the black community.

Johnson also hoped that the march would draw attention to the NAACP's antilynching crusade. The crusade was spurred on by an article that appeared in *The Crisis* in 1916, about a mob that had attacked a mentally retarded adolescent in a courtroom in Waco; Johnson himself investigated the lynching of an accused ax-murderer who was burned alive in Memphis. In April 1917, *The Crisis* featured a letter from the NAACP to Woodrow Wilson requesting that in his inaugural address he "say something against the barbaric system of lynching which prevails in various parts of this country" ("A Letter to the President," 284). By 1919, in *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States 1889–1918*, the NAACP would report that, nationwide, 3,224 lynchings had claimed the lives of 702 whites and 2,522 blacks.

Yet despite the direct appeal to the president, and despite the national publicity surrounding the violence, black leaders had been turned away from the White House, and Samuel L. Gompers of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) had publicly excused the white workers of East St. Louis. Thus a new kind of "drastic action" seemed to be in order. Joining in Johnson's strategy of "firm but friendly pressure" were the parade's organizers: the grand marshal, Captain W. H. Jackson; the parade president, Reverend Dr. H. C. Bishop; the vice president, Reverend F. A. Cullen; the secretary, Reverend Dr. Charles Martin; and the first deputy marshal, J. Rosamond Johnson. The parade committee also included Allen Wood, A. B. Cosey, C. H. Payne, Reverend E. W. Daniels, and John Nail. Marching with these leaders was W. E. B. Du Bois, who had just returned from his research in East St. Louis.

In the years following the march, James Weldon Johnson lobbied strenuously for the Dyer antilynching bill. That bill ultimately failed, but the silent protest parade heralded the rise of a new militancy among blacks. Without uttering a word, African Americans

had expressed their unity, and in so doing had developed a powerful new voice.

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See also *Antilynching Crusade; Crisis, The; Cullen, Frederick Asbury; Johnson, James Weldon; Johnson, John Rosamond; Lynching; Nail, John E.; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Riots 1: Overview, 1917–1921; Villard, Oswald Garrison*

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Lyrical Left

When Floyd Dell, a bohemian extraordinaire (although he had been raised in Iowa), declared 1912 the "lyric

year," he praised Edna St. Vincent Millay's seamless sonnets about free love. But he also extolled the rise of a new American progressivism that was reconciling clashing styles of rebellion and that promised to revolutionize both private life and the nation's public business. For Dell and his comrades in the bohemian stronghold of Greenwich Village, New York, at its height in the 1910s and 1920s, the expressive energy and integrative logic of lyric verse suggested a model for politics as much as a postromantic literary ideal. Now that the traditionally isolated lyric poet was learning to emerge from his or her quiet solitude, they assumed, the most sensitive young American rebels could learn to break down the doors between contemplation and action, sexual and economic liberation, the studio and the barricades. *The Masses*, the exemplary magazine of bohemia in the Village, preached the gospel of synthesis through eight worthy passions: "fun, truth, beauty, realism, freedom, peace, feminism, revolution." As leftist positions hardened during the Great Depression, Dell and his associates' hope for an inclusive lyric socialism, with headquarters in the cafés and walk-up apartments of downtown Manhattan, began to seem self-indulgent, naïvely utopian, even decadent. A more flattering revisionist view was prompted by the renewal of "personal politics" in the late 1960s—politics willing to discover a usable past in the thought and manners of Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Mabel Dodge, Crystal and Max Eastman, John Reed, and other artist-rebels in the Village. Since the 1970s, historians have been unembarrassed to declare that the "lyrical left" created by these rebels was the first, the heartiest, and perhaps the most indigenous American left of the twentieth century.

In its early years, the native habits of the lyrical left included indifference to the emergence of Harlem as a black intellectual capital. Although this left had an unprecedented openness to American Jews, southern and eastern European immigrants, and products of the white working class—Dell himself was the son of a butcher—few Harlemite thinkers other than the feminist Grace Nail Johnson and the socialist Hubert Harrison regularly participated in Village circles before World War I. Recent scholarship has nevertheless emphasized that the lyrical left was a force shaping the self-conscious Harlem "renaissancism" of the late 1910s. Lewis (1994), for example, argues that the Village bohemia was in fact the major incubator of the renaissance during its primary stage. From 1917 to 1923, he contends, Harlem's rebirth was piloted from

Washington Square more frequently than from any uptown address.

Lewis's notion of a first-phase "bohemian renaissance" is supported by the fact that Claude McKay and Jean Toomer—perhaps the foremost pioneers of, respectively, the poetry and prose of the Harlem Renaissance—both had links to, or even entanglements in, the Village. McKay was born in Jamaica, and his initial travels along the track of the great Afro-Caribbean migration were followed by a similarly crowded bohemian itinerary once he arrived in the United States. Like thousands of others who made the escape from the provinces to downtown New York "the defining cultural journey of most of the century" (Stansell 2000), McKay concluded that Manhattan, Kansas, was too small for great achievements. In 1914, before he knew the ins and outs of Harlem, he was patronizing the larger Manhattan's Greenwich Village, where what he conceived as his atheistic socialism and peasant "pagan" temperament harmonized with its post-Christian era. McKay's frequent publications in organs of the lyrical left such as *The Masses* and *Seven Arts* led to an editorship at the *Liberator*, then the world's only Marxist journal to pattern its content and working method on Village conversation. By the time that *Harlem Shadows*, the first poetry collection of the Harlem Renaissance, appeared in 1922, McKay was one of the most visible and influential people in the bohemia of the lyrical left—a referee at its signature magazine, an epitome of its innovative left-literary synthesis, and an intimate friend of its famous figures.

Jean Toomer's affiliation with the lyrical left was more fitful and less conspicuous. Unlike McKay, who chose some of the first ingredients of *Cane* (1923) for the *Liberator*, Toomer never assumed a formal position within the literary institutions of bohemian Manhattan. Nevertheless Toomer's literary identity took shape on contact with the lyrical left. In the aftermath of a brief trip to the Village in 1920, the aristocratic wanderer and serial college dropout known as Nathan Pinchback Toomer read Romain Rolland's *Jean Christophe* (1904), reconceived his artistic fate, and rechristened himself Jean Toomer. The new Toomer's intensely lyrical prose, freshly dedicated to African American voices, was received as grist for the mill by many journals of the lyrical left—not just the *Liberator*. *Broom*, *Dial*, *Double-Dealer*, and *S4N* ran pieces by Toomer which inspired people like Sherwood Anderson who were searching high and low for a way to "get inside the niggers and write about them with some intelligence" (Lewis 1994, xxi). Toomer took from the

Village nearly as much as he gave. White critics downtown were “receptive of what the English, the Irish, the Teuton, the Latin, the Slav, the Chinese, the Japanese, the Jew, the Negro, have to give,” he said. Their transcendence of “the narrow implications of the entire Anglo-Saxon ideal”—if not the entire vocabulary of antiblack racism—had much to teach “we who have Negro blood in our veins, who are culturally and emotionally the most removed from the Puritan tradition,” but who “are its most tenacious supporters” (Hutchinson 1995, 131). In particular, one white critic with connections to the Village, Waldo Frank, author of the influential anti-Anglo-Saxon meditation *Our America* (1919), went with Toomer on a southern expedition that partly inspired the setting of *Cane*—Georgia. Significant traces of the styles, values, and prejudices of the lyrical left can be found in *Cane* as well as in *Harlem Shadows*, both classics of the literature of the Harlem Renaissance.

The impact of the lyrical left on the movement in Harlem did not end in 1923 with the appearance of Toomer’s novel and the official closing of the bohemian renaissance. As Hutchinson notes, the concept of cultural pluralism, crucial to Alain Locke’s thinking in and beyond the anthology *The New Negro* (1925), owed a good deal to theorists of the lyrical left such as the “transnationalist” Randolph Bourne; Locke’s dialogue with Horace Kallen—who was his classmate at Harvard and a fellow Rhodes scholar—was not the sole inspiration for his abandonment of “Anglo-conformity.” Locke’s controversial proposal that African Americans could pursue political liberation through artistic means was similarly informed by a fundamental presumption of the lyrical left: that the arts could rewire the American mind and thus remake the American social order. The core strategy of the Harlem Renaissance, which Lewis (1994) calls “civil rights by copyright,” appears much less fantastic when viewed in relation to the insistence of the lyrical left on the indissolubility of art and life.

Ideas of sexual liberation that characterized the lyrical left played a comparably long-lasting role in attacks by members of the Harlem Renaissance on black Victorianism. In the free-love poetry and prose of such New Negroes as McKay, Toomer, Langston Hughes, and Helene Johnson, there are plentiful and sometimes queer linkages between rebellious black bodies; these echo Village bohemians’ interweaving of the bonds of love, practical morality, and radical politics. In general, the positive influence of the lyrical left on Harlem’s erotic literature has been

underexamined. No less underexamined, however, is the critical response of Harlem’s authors to the silence of the Village on the ties among race, free-love bohemia, and everyday wage labor. Consider, to take just one example, McKay’s sixteen-line lyric “Alfonso, Dressing to Wait at Table,” a poem prominently featured in *Harlem Shadows*. Although he must prepare himself to serve, the figure who lends the poem its name lives far from the uninspired work the title predicts. In the eyes of McKay’s approving speaker, Alfonso removes any self-ridicule from the waiter’s required parody of aristocratic dress; in his case, the man makes the clothes, and his beauty outstrips fashion in everything but its capriciousness: “His moods are storms that frighten and make glad,/His eyes were made to capture women’s hearts.” Praise is not confined to Alfonso’s sexual charisma; the poem’s desired object is also flattered as a self-conscious free lover, a winning propagandist of “wine and clinking glasses/And riotous rakes . . .,” and an artist of literally moving talent: “Alfonso’s voice of mellow music thrills/Our swaying forms and steals our hearts with joy.” To indulge in a contradiction in terms, Alfonso is thus revealed to be a natural bohemian, by rights a prince of the Village, readier than most to muddle the distinction between passion and art, not to mention the distinction between male feminism and womanizing. The last stanza of Alfonso’s unveiling, however, brings bohemian canonization to a sudden, apostrophizing halt: “O Alfonso! wherefore do you sing/. . . Soon we shall be beset by clamouring/Of hungry and importunate palefaces.” The nearly ridiculous formality of rhyme and diction underscores the disproportion between the waiter’s job and the waiter’s capacity. The bohemian idyll of enlivening, cross-class conversation over food and wine is drowned out by unreasonable, racially loaded orders.

In *Harlem Shadows*, “Alfonso” is followed by a suite of three analogous poems sketching harassed workers, all of which take aim at the poet-celebrity who made Village bohemia sensible to a national audience. The intimate addressee of McKay’s lyrics “Dawn in New York,” “The Tired Worker,” and “When Dawn Comes to the City” is Edna St. Vincent Millay; their intertextual task is to remember skeptically her poem “Recuerdo” (1920), the bohemian rhapsody that begins with the hypnotic lines “We were very tired, we were very merry—/We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry.” As Miller (1998) observes, “Recuerdo” testifies that its “we”

are merry precisely because they are tired, not in spite of it; they meet a lazy dawn with a code “of bohemian antiproductivity and a dynamic of pure circulation,” having preempted the morning commute with an evening whirl, a floating purposefulness without a purpose. The would-be bohemians in McKay’s poems, by contrast, are trapped in a circular desire for antiproductivity. Their spirit also thrills to dawn in New York, but for them the protective shadows wane; the bohemian love connection to the city ends at eight in the morning. The culprit, typically revealed in a puncturing final couplet, is the need to “go darkly-rebel to . . . work” (“Dawn in New York”).

What McKay dramatizes in these poems of New York’s dawn is something close to Marcuse’s notion of the “temporal dismemberment of pleasure,” the shattering distribution of happiness into “small separated doses” through the regimentation of the working day (1974). American “Freudo-Marxism” began in Greenwich Village, after all, with its premonition that eros could flower within civilization if socialism repealed both surplus value and surplus repression. Given the poems’ signifying take on Millay, however, it would be mistaken to ignore McKay’s less neighborly additions to Village conversation. The dark and rebellious speakers of *Harlem Shadows* enter the cross-talk of middle- and working-class bohemians straight from workplaces difficult to libidinalize—a pantry rather than a garret office, say. They bring with them more skepticism about the pairing of wage work and equality than did many Village feminists, who audaciously invested such work with redemptive force adequate to emancipate “new women” from Victorian motherhood. Above all, however, McKay’s speakers infiltrate the bohemian public sphere to caution that unfree

labor could break bohemia’s faith in a smooth transit between private and public liberty, free love and civic good. By the conclusion of *Harlem Shadows*, these speakers have thus created a genre of bohemian lyric *interruptus* with morals of its own—McKay’s would-be bohemians not only confess that the lyrical left is part of the lineage of the Harlem Renaissance but advise Villagers against great expectations for “no more separate spheres.”

WILLIAM J. MAXWELL

See also Broom; Cane; Eastman, Crystal; Eastman, Max; Frank, Waldo; *Harlem Shadows*; Harrison, Hubert; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, Helene; *Liberator*; McKay, Claude; *Seven Arts*; Toomer, Jean

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Mabley, Jackie “Moms”

The vaudevillian, stand-up comic, and star of stage and screen Jackie “Moms” Mabley (1897–1975) had a long, productive career that spanned the years from the Harlem Renaissance through the black arts movement. Her original name was Loretta Mary Aiken; she claimed that she acquired her stage name by “taking it” from a Canadian-born boyfriend—they had only a brief relationship but she decided to keep his name because she liked it. Her ability to find humor in unlikely situations such as this one was something she attributed to her determination to overcome the many adversities she encountered in her daily life.

Following a difficult and short childhood, during which she had experienced the death of her father when she was eleven and had been raped by two local men, Mabley left home just before her fourteenth birthday to join a minstrel show. She changed the date of her birth from 1897 to 1894 and entered the adult world of African American performers on the Theater Owners’ Booking Association (TOBA) circuit, during the days of segregation and Jim Crow. The husband-and-wife dance team Butterbeans and Susie were among the first well-known professional acts with whom she performed, very early in her career.

By the 1920s, Mabley began performing in Harlem, in venues such as the Cotton Club, Connie’s Inn, and the Savoy Ballroom, where she shared billings with Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, and Cab Calloway, among others, and perfected her stand-up comedy routines. Her credits as a performer in musical theater included *Bowman’s Cotton Blossoms* in 1919, and *Look Who’s Here* and *Miss Bandana* in 1927. In the following

decade she was cast in *The Joy Boat*, *Sidewalks of Harlem*, *Red Pastures*, *Blackberries*, *Swingin’ the Dream*, and the Broadway production *Fast and Furious*, in which she performed with the writer and folklorist Zora Neale Hurston. During this period, Mabley also began to develop the character “Moms” that would make her famous.

Mabley made her film debut in 1933 in *The Emperor Jones*, which starred Paul Robeson. In the 1940s she performed in the films *Killer Diller* and *Boarding House Blues*. Even during her difficult days on the road, Mabley was able to help provide for three generations of family members, and she bought a house in Washington, D.C., where Mabley’s mother lived until her death in 1946.

Mabley’s career received a huge boost when she appeared on television in the 1960s and 1970s, in the shows of the Smothers brothers, Bill Cosby, Merv Griffin, Mike Douglas, Ed Sullivan, Garry Moore, and Flip Wilson. Her growing popularity led to performances at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, and the White House, and on college campuses across the country.

Mabley’s classic comedy routines are preserved on more than twenty-five recordings, including *Moms Mabley: The Funniest Woman in the World* (on the Chess label), which sold one million copies. For many people, the crowning achievement of her career was the making of *Amazing Grace*, her first full-length motion picture, in 1974, just before her death in 1975. Mabley was a multitalented artist, but she is best remembered as “Moms,” a granny who wore a floppy hat, seemed to be toothless, loved children, and was a churchgoer—but for whom few topics other than religion were off

Mabley, Jackie "Moms"

limits. Mabley's humor included comments about racism, homosexuality, and her own flings with younger men. "Moms" was eulogized as someone who had enjoyed a good laugh whenever or wherever she could find or create one.

Biography

Jackie "Moms" Mabley (Loretta Mary Aiken) was born in 1897 in Brevard, North Carolina, where she attended public schools. Her parents were James P. and Mary Aiken. She left school and home at the age of thirteen to join a minstrel show. Mabley performed on the Theater Owners' Booking Association circuit in comedy and musical theater; appeared in several films during the 1930s and 1940s; appeared on stage, on television, and in films in the 1960s and 1970s; and made numerous audio recordings in the 1960s and 1970s. She died 23 May 1975.

REGENNIA N. WILLIAMS

See also Armstrong, Louis; Calloway, Cabell "Cab"; Cotton Club; Ellington, Duke; Emperor Jones, The; Hurston, Zora Neale; Savoy Ballroom; Theater Owners' Booking Association

Selected Films

The Emperor Jones. 1933.
Boarding House Blues. 1948.
Killer Diller. 1948.
Amazing Grace. 1974.

Discography

Moms Mabley at the Playboy Club. 1961.
Young Men, Si, Old Men, No! 1962.
Live at Sing Sing. 1970.
Stars of the Apollo Theater. 1973.

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Macaulay

Macaulay was a publishing company based in New York City, which was probably founded around 1909. The earliest documentation of its existence is from 1909: an advertisement for Hornor Cotes's novel of the Civil War, *The Counterpart*. Macaulay specialized in histories, poetry, criticism, literary translations, and inexpensive popular literature. It also published non-fiction under the imprint Gold Label Books, which was launched in 1931. The most noteworthy of Macaulay's publications came out between 1927 and 1933 and include the following: Macaulay's anthology *American Caravan: A Yearbook of American Literature* (1927), Malcolm Cowley's translations of Henri Barbusse's *Jesus* (1927), William Carlos Williams's *A Voyage to Paganry* (1928), Matthew Josephson's *Zola and His Time* (1928), John Dos Passos's *Airways, Inc.* (1928), Maurice Barrés's *The Sacred Hill* (1929), Robert M. Coates's *The Eater of Darkness* (1929), Wallace Thurman's *The Blacker the Berry* (1929) and *Infants of the Spring* (1932), George S. Schuyler's *Black No More* (1931), Wallace Thurman and A. L. Furman's *Interne* (1932), and Robert M. Coates's *Yesterday's Burdens* (1933). The company also published works by Michael Gold.

In addition to publishing work by George Schuyler and Wallace Thurman, Macaulay's main connection to the Harlem Renaissance came through V. F. Calverton (George Goetz), who founded the magazine *Modern Quarterly* (1923–1940) and compiled *An Anthology of American Negro Literature* in 1929. Calverton was a new editor for Macaulay in 1929 and tried to lure Langston Hughes away from Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. He did not succeed with Hughes, but Calverton did encourage George Schuyler to write *Black No More*

and was influential in getting the book published by Macaulay in 1931. Calverton was most likely also responsible for the firm's hiring of Wallace Thurman for an editorial position in 1932. Thurman's position was advertised in *Crisis* in September 1932; according to Hughes, Thurman "was the only black to hold such a prominent position with a major publishing firm during the Renaissance" (Wintz 1988, 89). Thurman seems to have been mainly concerned with the publication of popular fiction, and he left the company early in 1934.

In June 1934, more than half of the Macaulay's employees participated in the first strike to take place in a publishing house. This strike, along with a second strike in September 1934, led to changes in the relationship between the National Labor Relations Board and publishing houses. The last work of fiction published by Macaulay was *The Strange Death of Adolf Hitler* (1939), by an anonymous author. The firm declared bankruptcy in 1941. The printers J. J. Little and Ives obtained the company, and Citadel Press bought its publications.

APRIL CONLEY KILINSKI

See also Calverton, V. F.; Hughes, Langston; *Infants of the Spring*; Publishers and Publishing Houses; Schuyler, George S.; Thurman, Wallace

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Mack, Cecil

Cecil Mack was an enterprising figure in the New York music world during the early twentieth century. He was involved in the biggest dance craze of the period and, more significantly, played an integral role in

the first African American–owned music publishing company. Today, however, he is little remembered, and few details are known about his life.

Mack, whose birth name was Richard Cecil McPherson, was born in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1883. He took private music lessons and soon headed for New York, where he worked steadily under the professional name Cecil Mack. His first published song was "Never Let the Same Bee Sting You Twice" (1900), written with the composer Chris Smith. The vaudeville team of Bert Williams and George Walker recorded Mack's "Good Morning, Carrie" (music by J. Tim Brymn) for the Victor Company in 1901. Soon thereafter, Mack scored his first big hit with "Teasing."

In 1905 Mack organized the Gotham Music Publishing Company. The actual ownership is unknown, and the company lasted only four months before merging with another firm in New York, Attucks Music (named after Crispus Attucks, the first black soldier killed in the Revolutionary War). Both firms had published mostly songs written by African Americans. Gotham-Attucks, also known as the "House of Melody," released work by Will Marion Cook, Mack, and others, as well as tunes from Williams and Walker's Broadway shows, *In Abyssinia* and *Bandanna Land*. The cover art of Gotham-Attucks's output notably broke with the tradition of racist stereotypes, and the material itself avoided the denigrating excesses of the "coon songs" popular at the time. Along with Cook, Mack was very likely the firm's guiding force (R. C. McPherson is listed as "secretary and treasurer and general business director").

In 1910 Gotham-Attucks published "That's Why They Call Me Shine" (later known as simply "Shine"), which Mack had probably written about a real man who had been badly beaten by the New York City police in a race riot. James Weldon Johnson probably drew from the same source for his character Shine in *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912). Other songs by Mack—mostly written for various musicals—include "Please Go Away and Let Me Sleep," "You're in the Right Church but the Wrong Pew," and "The Little Gypsy Maid."

With James P. Johnson, Mack wrote the songs for the musical *Runnin' Wild* (1923). By far the most popular was "Charleston," a tune Johnson had written ten years earlier, for which Mack provided lyrics. The song, which Elisabeth Welch performed in the show, took on a fevered life beyond Mack's now forgotten verses. The Charleston became the signature dance of the jazz age, easily eclipsing the bunny hug, the

turkey trot, and even the shimmy. In 1925 the *New York Times* reported that the dance had become so popular that black domestic workers often needed to demonstrate knowledge of it so they could teach the steps to their prospective white employers. At the peak of the craze, fifty people died in the Pickwick Club in Boston when the dance hall collapsed because of overvigorous "Charlestoning."

Mack's career continued at its same busy pace. In 1925, he became a member of ASCAP (such membership was extremely rare then for African Americans); later that year he formed Cecil Mack's Southland Singers. He also led the Cecil Mack Choir, which was prominently featured in Lew Leslie's production of *Rhapsody in Black* (1931). Mack contributed lyrics for this show and provided arrangements for its folk songs and spirituals. He died in 1944.

Biography

Cecil Mack (Richard Cecil McPherson) was born in Norfolk, Virginia, 6 November 1883. He was educated at Norfolk Mission College and Lincoln (Pennsylvania) University; spent one semester at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School; and studied music with Melvin Charlton. Mack was associated with the vaudeville team Williams and Walker. He organized the Gotham Music Publishing Company, 1905; and was codirector, secretary, and treasurer of the Gotham-Attucks Music Publishing Company, 1905–1911. He joined ASCAP in 1925. Mack died in New York City on 1 August 1944.

GREGORY MILLER

See also *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*; Cook, Will Marion; Johnson, James P.; Leslie, Lew; *Runnin' Wild*; Williams, Egbert Austin "Bert"

Selected Works

- "Never Let the Same Bee Sting You Twice." 1900.
- "Good Morning, Carrie." 1901.
- "Good Night Lucinda." 1902.
- "The Little Gypsy Maid." 1904.
- "Teasing." 1904.
- "Zona, My Congo Queen." 1904.
- "He's a Cousin of Mine." 1906.
- "I'm Miss Hanna from Savannah." 1908.
- "That's Why They Call Me Shine." 1910.

"Charleston." 1923.

"Mistah Jim." 1925.

"You for Me, Me for You." 1925.

"Ain't We Got Love." 1937.

"Huggin' and Muggin'." 1937.

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Madame Sul-Te-Wan

Madame Sul-Te-Wan (Nellie Conley, 1873–1959) was born in Louisville, Kentucky, and introduced to show business at an early age by her mother, a laundress for burlesque performers. She began her career under the tutelage of and with the encouragement of two burlesquers, Mary Anderson and Fanny Davenport. Sul-Te-Wan's first performance was in a tap-dancing contest in which she won the first prize, a granite dishpan and spoon. Later, she worked in Cincinnati, Ohio, at the Dime Museum with a vaudeville company called the Three Black Cloaks. She then formed her own troupes, the Black Four Hundred and the Rare Black Minstrels. Her father, Silas Crawford Wan, reportedly either a Hawaiian or a Hindu priest, supposedly called her Sul-Te, which became her stage name.

Although she already had a budding career in traveling circuses and Negro vaudeville by design, her career in Hollywood movies was purely accidental, stemming largely from an introduction to the director-producer D. W. Griffith, who was a fellow Kentuckian. Madame Sul-Te-Wan's motion picture career coincided with a watershed in cinema history—Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915). Working as a domestic on the set, Sul-Te-Wan aligned herself closely with

Griffith, who upgraded her position and cast her in what was her own first role in motion pictures and also the first for an African American woman. This was a departure from Griffith's usual policy: he had previously refused to hire African American actors, especially males who would have direct contact with white actresses, and instead had used white actors in black-face to portray all the African American characters. Sul-Te-Wan was the only exception. She played a maid, a role that posed little threat to the sanctity of white womanhood; her character did have the dubious distinction of taunting another character, Dr. Cameron, and spitting on him, however. The spitting scene became her most memorable. The Majestic Motion Picture Company fired Sul-Te-Wan soon after filming ended, accusing her of stealing a book from the set and inciting African Americans to protest against the film on its release.

Throughout the 1920s, Madame Sul-Te-Wan acted in a series of Negro comedies produced by L-KO studios. In the major Hollywood studio pictures in which she appeared, however, she almost always played one-dimensional domestics and supernatural savages. Many of her performances went uncredited or were simply given descriptions such as "harmonica player" and "woman at slave auction." Even when she played the pivotal role of Tituba, an accused witch, in *The Maid of Salem* (1937), she received only fifteenth billing. Nevertheless, she was perhaps the first African American actress to work consistently in Hollywood, and she appeared in a number of notable films, such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1927) and *Ladies They Talk About*, with Barbara Stanwyck (1933).

Madame Sul-Te-Wan's legacy included the careers of her daughter, Ruby Dandridge, who appeared in

several comedies as a domestic; and her granddaughter, Dorothy Dandridge. Of the three women, Dorothy Dandridge was the most popular and received the most acclaim from critics; she also was nominated for an Academy Award as best actress (the first such nomination for an African American actress), for her performance in *Carmen Jones* (1954); Madame Sul-Te-Wan also had a small part in that film. Madame Sul-Te-Wan died in 1959 at the Motion Picture Country Home in Woodland Hills, California.

Biography

Madame Sul-Te-Wan (Nellie Conley) was born 7 March 1873 in Louisville, Kentucky. She performed in circuses and Negro vaudeville and was the first African American actress in motion pictures, appearing in D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915). She was the grandmother of actress Dorothy Dandridge. Madame Sul-Te-Wan died in Woodland Hills, California, 1 February 1959.

CANDICE LOVE

See also *Birth of a Nation*, *The*

Selected Filmography

The Birth of a Nation. 1915.
Hoodoo Ann. 1916.
Intolerance. 1916.
The Children Pay. 1916.
Stage Struck. 1917.
Manslaughter. 1922.
The Lightning Rider. 1925.
The Narrow Street. 1925.
Uncle Tom's Cabin. 1927.
Queen Kelly. 1929.
Sarah and Son. 1930.
The Thoroughbred. 1930.
Pagan Lady. 1931.
Heaven on Earth. 1931.
King Kong. 1933.
Ladies They Talk About. 1933.
A Modern Hero. 1934.
Imitation of Life. 1934.
Black Moon. 1934.
Maid of Salem. 1937.
In Old Chicago. 1937.
The Toy Wife. 1938.
Kentucky. 1938.



Madame Sul-Te-Wan in *Maid of Salem*, 1937. (Photofest.)

Madame Sul-Te-Wan

Tell No Tales. 1939.
Torchy Plays with Dynamite. 1939.
Safari. 1940.
Maryland. 1940.
King of the Zombies. 1941.
Sullivan's Travels. 1942.
Revenge of the Zombies. 1943.
Carmen Jones. 1952.
Something of Value. 1957.
The Buccaneer. 1958.
Tarzan and the Trappers. 1959.

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Madame X

Madame X was originally a three-act French courtroom drama, *La femme X* (1908), by Alexandre Bisson (1848–1912). It was translated into English by John Raphael and was adapted for both the British and the American theater, made into six American motion pictures, and made once into a television drama. The dates of some of the American versions coincided with the Harlem Renaissance, and *Madame X* was one of the productions of the Lafayette Players.

The basic story has been modified in various ways, depending on the resources that were available to stage and film directors. Despite the different settings and the different identities created for the characters, however, it remains a conventional cautionary tale. A woman's love affair is exposed by her husband, and the woman—impelled either by him or by her own guilty conscience—leaves their baby son with him and sets out to live alone. Without the protection of her respectable family, the woman sinks lower and lower, eventually becoming directly or indirectly involved with prostitution, blackmailing, trafficking, and other criminal offenses. After many years, she becomes embroiled in a murder case and is put on trial. Too poor to pay for her defense, she is assigned a young lawyer who happens to be her grown-up son. She becomes aware of this during the course of the trial, but to protect his reputation and her husband's,

she herself simply remains Madame X, even when facing the threat of being convicted. Different versions of the story have different endings. In some, she dies during the course of the trial; in others, her son exonerates her, though still without knowing who she is.

Madame X had its British premier at the Globe Theater on 1 September 1909, with a cast that included Lena Ashwell, Winifred Harris, Sydney Valentine, O. P. Heggie, and Edmund Gwenn. It had its American premiere in 1910, evidently on 7 February (though according to some records the date was 1 February or 2 January), at the New Amsterdam Theater in New York. A total of 125 performances were recorded. *Madame X* was played by Dorothy Donnelly, who would repeat the role in the first (silent) film adaptation of the play in 1916. In 1927 the play was presented at the Earl Carroll Theater, for twenty-two performances.

Silent film versions of *Madame X* were directed by George F. Marion (in 1916) and Frank Lloyd (in 1920). The first talking film of the story was a celebrated adaptation in 1929, directed by Lionel Barrymore and starring Ruth Chatterton; a version in 1937 was directed by Sam Wood and starred Gladys George; the first color version was a famous production of 1966 starring Lana Turner; and a film version was made for television in 1981. Attempts to update the characters and the events have in general been discouraging.

AMY LEE

See also Lafayette Players

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Madden, Owen Vincent “Owney”

Owen Vincent (Owney) Madden was born in Liverpool, England, of Irish stock in June 1892. He came to America in 1903, at age eleven, and was soon engaged in street gang activities in New York, in a notorious

neighborhood called Hell's Kitchen. In 1910, he became the leader of the Gopher Gang, which engaged in petty crime and street violence. In 1912, he was shot at least six times by members of a rival gang; he survived, but his injuries would cause him problems in later years. By 1914 he had been arrested forty-four times but never convicted, until a rival for the leadership of the Gophers was slain. Protesting his innocence, Madden was sentenced to ten to twenty years and entered Sing Sing in 1915.

Madden was a model prisoner, earning the warden's trust and keeping a low profile, and he was paroled in 1923. He had recognized the potential offered by the arrival of Prohibition in 1919. Behind a veneer of respectability, avoiding the ostentation that characterized other mobsters such as Legs Diamond and Dutch Schultz, he became the elder statesman of New York's underworld. With a large network of trusted partners and lieutenants, he operated rackets in brewing, bootlegging, illegal gambling, laundries, protection, speakeasies, and boxing. In spite of his reputation for ruthlessness, Madden was considered a man of integrity and loyalty by his associates.

As a front for his rackets Madden operated nightclubs, including the Silver Slipper, Hollywood Paradise, Kit Kat Club, Connie's Inn, and most famously Harlem's Cotton Club, which was started in 1923 and was run by his lieutenant Frenchy De Mange. Lew Leslie originally developed the entertainment side, assisted by the songwriter Jimmy McHugh. All the performers were black; all the other staff members were white; and only white patrons were admitted. Performers and musicians found that the gangsters treated them well, even generously. They helped maintain the gangster's legitimate front. For many white tourists, the strictly segregated Cotton Club epitomized the Harlem Renaissance.

Typical of Madden's style was an episode in 1930 when rival mobsters threatened to compete with him in Harlem by starting up the fancy Plantation Club. Cab Calloway, who had been newly contracted, turned up on opening night to find that the club had been wrecked. It never opened. Shortly afterward, Madden offered Calloway an engagement at the Cotton Club, forcing Calloway's agent to relinquish a tight contractual arrangement.

Madden, still on parole, carefully avoided publicity, but he could not completely avoid the attention of the police. He had been linked to a stolen liquor truck in 1924, and in 1925 the Cotton Club had been charged with violations of Prohibition. Madden stayed out of prison despite many such incidents, but eventually, in

1932, he went back to Sing Sing for parole violations. Again a model prisoner, he was released for reasons of health in 1933.

In 1935, after his first marriage ended in divorce, he married the daughter of a postmaster in Hot Springs, Arkansas—a town that was then notorious as a gangsters' playground and a center of illicit gambling. Madden lived there quietly for thirty years, contributing generously to charities. He died of chronic emphysema in 1965.

Biography

Owen Vincent "Owney" Madden was born in Liverpool, England, in June 1892. He arrived in America in 1903. He became the leader of the New York Gopher Gang (1910), was convicted of manslaughter (1914), and was imprisoned in Sing Sing (1915–1923). He established the Cotton Club in 1923. He was imprisoned in Sing Sing again in 1932 and was paroled 1933. Madden died in Hot Springs, Arkansas, 24 April 1965.

BILL EGAN

See also Calloway, Cabell "Cab"; Cotton Club; Ellington, Duke; Leslie, Lew; Nightclubs; Nightlife; Numbers Racket; Organized Crime

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Magazines and Journals

The magazines and journals of the Harlem Renaissance indicate much of the range of expression in African American thought and art during the 1920s and 1930s.

No single magazine, however, adequately captures the character of the artists, critics, and thinkers who appeared in various publications. This is due to the often differing ideologies and visions of the magazines and the individuals and organizations behind them, the economic trends of the time, and the diverse contributors and works. The most significant contribution of these magazines and journals is the plethora of voices that emerged from their pages to further explore and define an African American literature.

Crisis, the monthly magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), was founded by W. E. B. Du Bois and began publication in 1910. It received a higher degree of support than had been achieved by any previous African American magazine (Johnson and Johnson 1979, 31; subsequent page citations are to this source). Its full title was *The Crisis: A Record for the Darker Races*, after a popular poem by James Russell Lowell, "The Present Crisis." Du Bois edited the magazine; its objective, as stated by him, was to "set forth those facts and arguments which show the danger of race prejudice, particularly as manifested today toward colored people" (33). From the beginning, Du Bois issued a call for a renaissance of African American art, essays, and literature, and *Crisis* went on to publish established authors as well as new voices; these included Gwendolyn Bennett, W. S. Braithwaite, Charles Chessnut, Countee Cullen, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Jessie Redmon Fauset, Rudolph Fisher, Langston Hughes, Georgia Johnson, James Weldon Johnson, Alain Locke, Claude McKay, and Jean Toomer. Jessie Fauset, literary editor of *Crisis* from 1919 to 1926, worked with Du Bois to publish works of many of the most esteemed African American writers of the time. These artists enjoyed increasingly widespread attention that was due in large part to their exposure in *Crisis*. From 1925 to 1928, the magazine sponsored an annual contest with money prizes for stories, plays, poems, essays, and illustrations. The pages of *The Crisis* were also dedicated in part to reviews of literature for children. An issue dedicated entirely to children appeared once a year, and Du Bois and Fauset edited a children's magazine called *The Brownies' Book* in 1919 and 1920. During his reign at *Crisis*, Du Bois also called for a greater production of drama by and about African Americans (42). The circulation of the magazine peaked in 1919 at nearly 100,000 copies. According to Ray Wilkins, *Crisis* was so widely read because it contained news about African Americans not available anywhere else (35). Du Bois attributed a large

part of the magazine's success to the fact that it was very much, in his words, "a personal organ and the expression of myself" (34). The magazine promoted Du Bois's politics, notably pan-Africanism. Du Bois used his editorials to espouse his ideological interests and offer his own commentary. His colleagues and the NAACP's board of directors often fought with him about the personal direction the magazine took in its editorials and overall vision but *The Crisis* attained such popularity that the arguments ceased for a number of years, resuming again only when circulation decreased. A number of factors contributed to this downturn: the Depression, competing periodicals, reactions to the effects of Du Bois's own shifting ideals, and a lack of big-money advertisers. Du Bois became involved in the debate over art versus propaganda during the 1920s, initially supporting art—and the open, honest portrayal of African American life—rather than propaganda. On reading Alain Locke's *The New Negro*, however, Du Bois came out in strong opposition to the idea of art for art's sake and openly criticized writers who exposed the seedier elements of African American life. He felt that writers should focus on and tell the stories of educated African Americans, not, as he put it, those of "beggars, scoundrels, and prostitutes" (quoted, 46). This new stance, along with Du Bois's outspokenness regarding particular writers of the time, caused a notable decline in support for him and undermined the magazine's position as the leading African American literary voice. As *The Crisis* lost much of its readership, the board of directors informed Du Bois that he would no longer have complete control over the magazine. He resigned his editorship in 1934 and was replaced by the more moderate Ray Wilkins. *Crisis* is still in publication as a bimonthly magazine, although it is no longer owned by the NAACP.

The Messenger (1917–1928), established by A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, is considered one of the first radical African American journals. It was created to espouse socialist ideals but eventually shifted its focus to union politics, becoming "a platform for the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters," a group headed by Randolph (31, 57). *The Messenger* had a succession of subtitles. In the beginning, it was alternately subtitled *Journal of Scientific Radicalism* and the *Only Radical Negro Magazine in America*. In 1923, when the magazine became more literary in focus, the subtitles were *New Opinion of the New Negro* and *World's Greatest Negro Monthly*. In its initial stage, the journal criticized Du Bois and other African American leaders

of the time and eschewed apolitical or moderately political art and literature. During its second stage, in 1923–1925, George Schuyler and Theophilus Lewis achieved primary editorial control. Together they shifted the literature that was published in it away from socialist verse and toward more creative work by poets and short-story writers such as Josephine Cogdell, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Thomas M. Henry, Georgia Douglas Johnson, and Eric Walrond. Lewis and Schuyler also reviewed artistic and cultural events and news. Schuyler created a column in which he often promoted his views on integration, race, and culture (59). Lewis contributed a column dedicated to discussing African American drama. The third phase of the magazine came in about 1926, when Wallace Thurman took over briefly as editor. Thurman put a call out for submissions of literature by and about African Americans, stating that the magazine would “pay liberally” for those it published (60). This policy proved successful: *The Messenger* published works by Arna Bontemps, Anita Scott Coleman, Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, Helene Johnson, Richard Bruce Nugent, and Dorothy West, among others. After Thurman left *The Messenger*, other contributing editors followed, but the ultimate leadership of the magazine still rested with Randolph and Owens. *Messenger* stopped publishing in 1928 when Randolph decided to concentrate his efforts and money on the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. During its years of publication, the magazine’s circulation never exceeded 5,000 copies a month (62).

Opportunity (1923–1949) was the journal of the National Urban League (NUL, an organization founded in 1911 to meet the housing and occupational needs of southern black migrants). Charles S. Johnson, a member of NUL, edited its first periodical, the *Urban League Bulletin*, during 1921 and 1922. The bulletin, a bimonthly publication, included information about the local leagues and national body and had space for editorials and topics of current interest (48). In October 1922 the organization successfully pushed to expand beyond the bulletin to a magazine that would be “an official organ,” with “advertisements and second-class mailing privileges (48). In January 1923, *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life* became that magazine. Although *Opportunity* had an active readership, its circulation eventually peaked at 11,000, never reaching the magnitude of *Crisis*. Also, unlike *Crisis*, *Opportunity* was never self-supporting and therefore had to depend on an outside annual grant. Its contributors were never paid for their work (48). *Opportunity*

started without “poems or stories, but there were articles on such topics as black labor, housing, and child placement”; later issues of the magazine, however, included more and more creative work, such as art, fiction, and poetry, along with articles and news of local current events (49). Writers whose work appeared in the magazine include Gwendolyn Bennett, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Georgia Douglas Johnson, and Claude McKay. *Opportunity* sponsored literature and art contests and published the work of the winners, between 1925 and 1927, in a yearly issue dedicated to the contests. Charles Johnson took a different approach from Du Bois, avoiding personal editorials; in fact, Johnson clearly expressed his dislike for Du Bois’ style of editorship and thus helped to create a definite philosophical difference between the two magazines (50). This division became more clear cut when Johnson took up the argument against Du Bois’s position in the debate over art versus propaganda. Johnson reacted to Du Bois’s conservatism by encouraging writers to express themselves openly and freely (51). Johnson had great success at the helm of *Opportunity* but resigned in 1928 when he accepted the chairmanship of the department of social sciences at Fisk University. Also in 1928, *Opportunity* lost its yearly grant. The editorship was taken up by Elmer A. Carter, who largely shifted the magazine’s focus away from the arts and toward sociology and economics (57). In the 1930s, *Opportunity* did not have a definitive identity, as the editor and the board argued over its purpose and direction; it vacillated between the literary and the political. Publication ceased with the winter issue of 1949.

Fire!! was a single-issue magazine, appearing in November 1926, that was initially conceived by Langston Hughes and Richard Bruce Nugent and then edited by Wallace Thurman with an editorial board consisting of Hughes, Nugent, Zora Neale Hurston, Gwendolyn Bennett, John P. Davis, and Aaron Douglas. *Fire!!*, subtitled *Devoted to Younger Negro Artists*, was the first African American magazine that was “both independent and essentially literary” (77). Hughes wrote that the magazine’s creators wanted “to express [themselves] freely and independently—without interference from old heads, white or Negro” and “to provide . . . an outlet for publishing not existing in the hospitable but limited pages of *The Crisis* and *Opportunity*” (quoted, 78). The title *Fire!!* is significant: the magazine was intended to ignite the consciousness of its readers, and its writers boldly challenged conservative elements of the African American literati. The one issue had commentary

promoting a full spectrum of African American stories and representations, as well as short stories, Nugent's drawing depicting a naked African woman, and potentially controversial selections of poetry and fiction. *Fire!!* received general support from *Opportunity*, from writers such as Countee Cullen, from smaller African American magazines, and—unexpectedly, months after its release—from Du Bois. It was also greeted with some negative reviews, notably from Alain Locke; poor distribution and insufficient financing, however, contributed most to its demise. The board members initially agreed to share expenses for the publication, as the magazine had no outside funding. However, Wallace Thurman, the only member with a steady income, had to shoulder most of the financial burden of publishing it. The first issue cost so much to produce that there was no money for further issues—in fact, Thurman would spend the next few years paying off debts to the printer. Most of the copies of that first issue were later burned in a fire that broke out in the building where they were being stored (78, 79).

After the demise of *Fire!!*, Zora Neale Hurston unsuccessfully attempted to obtain support to start another magazine while Wallace Thurman created and edited *Harlem: A Forum of Negro Life*, a journal that he intended be a more moderate version of *Fire!!* (84). *Harlem*, like *Fire!!*, lasted for only one issue, which was published in November 1928. It included essays by Theophilus Lewis, Alain Locke, Richard Bruce Nugent, and Walter White; poems by Helene Johnson, Georgia Douglas Johnson, Alice Dunbar Nelson, and Effie Newsom; stories by Roy de Coverly and George Little; and illustrations. Thurman abandoned his moderate stance in the later pages of the issue, where he criticized Du Bois and promoted the unwholesome side of life in Harlem (87). Further issues of *Harlem* had been planned, but readers did not respond favorably to Thurman's initial effort.

Fire!! and *Harlem* were the first of what would be called African American "little magazines" of Harlem. Such magazines were not limited to Harlem, however. *Black Opals* (1927–1928) was a magazine from Philadelphia created by Jessie Redmon Fauset's brother, Arthur Huff Fauset (89), and intended for the work of young Philadelphians. The first issue was published in spring of 1927 and was followed at the end of that year by a Christmas issue edited by Gwendolyn Bennett. The third and final issue appeared in June 1928 under the direction of an editorial board (90). Along with the work of young Philadelphians, *Black Opals* had pieces by Alain Locke and Langston

Hughes. The Boston Quill Club, an African American literary group, published *Saturday Evening Quill* (1928–1930), an annual magazine with works mostly by Bostonian poets, dramatists, essayists, and illustrators. Other contributors included Waring Cuney, Helene Johnson, and Dorothy West. *Stylus*, named after a literary group at Howard University, first appeared in 1916 under the leadership of Alain Locke. Its initial issue contained mostly student submissions and special contributions from better-known writers (68). *Stylus* did not publish its next issue until May 1921; and the third issue did not appear until 1929. While Zora Neale Hurston was a student at Howard and a member of the *Stylus* literary group, two of her short stories were published in this magazine. In the mid-1930s, near the end of the Harlem Renaissance, the little magazine *Challenge*, edited by Dorothy West, was produced in Chicago. Its first issue included an editorial by James Weldon Johnson calling for conservatism in African American literature; West herself, though, eventually called for more social realism (she went through shifts of political ideology and focus during her editorship). *Challenge* included works by Arna Bontemps, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Helene Johnson, and Claude McKay, as well as works by unknown and younger writers. It lasted until 1937 and was quickly followed by what would be the sole issue of *New Challenge*, a politically leftist magazine edited jointly by Dorothy West, Marion Minus, and Richard Wright (116).

At the end of the 1920s and into the years of the Depression, African American popular magazines published apolitical entertainment fiction along with their regular columns and features. Two of the most successful of these magazines were *Abbott's Monthly* (1930–1933) and *Bronzeman* (1929–1933). *Abbott's Monthly* was introduced one month after the stock market crash, yet it sold as many as 100,000 copies (110). Along with light fiction, both magazines published works by J. Max Barber, Chester Himes, Langston Hughes, and Richard Wright. *Metropolitan* (1935), also a popular magazine, published work by Jessie Redmon Fauset, Rudolph Fisher, and Countee Cullen. Other popular magazines of the 1930s, such as *Dawn*, *Mirror*, and *Brown American*, were read mostly by local or regional audiences (110).

During the second half of the 1920s, single issues of magazines managed by whites began to appear. In March 1925, *Survey Graphic* published a "Harlem number" edited by Alain Locke. The issue included essays, stories, and drawings that focused on life in

Harlem. Its cover described Harlem as a mecca; and in an editorial and an article, Locke extolled Harlem as a cultural promised land and predicted that the people of Harlem would be responsible for a birth of a “vital folk literature” (70). Also in this issue, Locke defined his use of the term “New Negro.” Locke chose for the “Harlem number” works by Countee Cullen, W. E. B. Du Bois, the cultural anthropologist Melville Herskovitz, Langston Hughes, Charles S. Johnson, Claude McKay, Arthur Schomburg, Jean Toomer, and Walter White. In October 1926, the poetry journal *Palms* published an issue focusing on African American poetry; this issue was edited by Countee Cullen and included work by Lewis Alexander, Gwendolyn Bennett, Arna Bontemps, William Braithwaite, Countee Cullen, W. E. B. Du Bois, Jessie Redmon Fauset, Langston Hughes, Helene Johnson, and Richard Bruce Nugent. *Carolina Magazine*, a literary journal of the University of North Carolina, published a “Negro number” in May 1927, a “Negro poetry number” in May 1928, and a “Negro play number” in April 1929 (74).

RACHEL DAVIS

See also *Black Opals*; *Brownies’ Book*, *The*; *Carolina Magazine*; *Challenge*; *Crisis*, *The*; *Du Bois*, W. E. B.; *Fauset*, Arthur Huff; *Fauset*, Jessie Redmon; *Fire!!*; *Harlem: A Forum of Negro Life*; *Johnson*, Charles Spurgeon; *Lewis*, Theophilus; *Locke*, Alain; *Messenger*, *The*; *New Challenge*; *Opportunity*; *Owen*, Chandler; *Palms*; *Randolph*, A. Philip; *Saturday Evening Quill*; *Schuyler*, George S.; *Stylus*; *Survey Graphic*; *Thurman*, Wallace; *West*, Dorothy; *Wright*, Richard; *specific writers*

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Manhattan Casino

The Manhattan Casino (later the Rockland Palace) was an elaborate hall at 280 West 155th Street and Eighth Avenue, established in about 1910. It had a ca-

capacity of 6,000 and was used for balls and dances; benefits; sports; and religious, civic, and promotional events. During the Harlem Renaissance, a number of famous figures appeared there.

For example, the composer and conductor James Reese Europe engaged the Manhattan Casino on 27 May 1910 for the debut of the new Clef Club Orchestra, which had more than 100 players and performed ragtime, blues, and jazz. The Clef Club was a fraternal organization and union for black musicians; Europe was one of its organizers, and its president. He was also associated with Vernon and Irene Castle, a famous white dance team who popularized ballroom dancing and performed many popular steps that came from black culture. On 22 April 1915, the Castles supervised a dance competition at the Manhattan Casino, the “Castle Cup Contest,” for which Europe’s Society Orchestra supplied the music.

During the 1920s, Fletcher Henderson and his band—considered the foremost early big jazz ensemble—played at the Manhattan Casino. At various times his group included famous musicians such as Louis Armstrong (trumpet), Coleman Hawkins (tenor saxophone), and Don Redman (alto saxophone).

The popular blues singer Lucille Hegamin appeared at the Manhattan Casino on 30 April 1920, 25 September 1920, and 22 April 1921. Hegamin was among the earliest black women to make recordings; she also performed in the second company of the black musical *Shuffle Along*. Noble Sissle, who wrote the lyrics for *Shuffle Along* (1921), later organized his own orchestra (1928). It made its first appearance in New York City at the Manhattan Casino—which by then had been renamed the Rockland Palace—in the late 1930s. Sissle’s orchestra included Sidney Bechet, a jazz pioneer from New Orleans.

The Frogs (1908–mid-1920s), a fraternal organization of black theater professionals (and later of other professionals as well), held one of the largest social events in Harlem at the Manhattan Casino: the “Frolic of the Frogs,” a fund-raiser for indigent performers, presented annually in August. Famous Frogs included Bob Cole, James Reese Europe, J. Rosamund Johnson, George Walker, and Bert Williams; the “Frolic,” which lasted all night, featured a dance and vaudeville revue and prizes for the costumes.

During this period as well, Marcus Garvey invited the journalist and activist Ida B. Wells Barnett to address a crowd of almost 3,000 at a meeting of his Universal Negro Improvement Association held in the Manhattan Casino. And the National Association for

the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) gave its annual whist tournament and dance there.

On 7 December 1924 the National Ethiopian Art Theater, a black “little theater” group (1924–1925), presented a program of one-act plays at the Manhattan Casino.

A famous event held at the Manhattan Casino in the 1920s and early 1930s was the annual drag costume ball given by Hamilton Lodge No. 710 of the Grand Order of Odd Fellows. Hamilton Lodge was a black social club, but its drag ball, which attracted some 2,000 men and women, was nonsegregated. Whites attended it, and sometimes whites such as Carl Van Vechten and the playwright Avery Hopwood served as judges.

The lindy, or lindy hop, a popular dance, was born at the Manhattan Casino—in 1928, at the Harlem Dance Derby marathon. One of the remaining contestants, the dazzling Harlemite dancer “Shorty George” Snowden, broke away from his partner and began executing some steps alone. When asked what he was doing, Snowden, thinking of Charles Lindbergh’s famous solo flight across the Atlantic, answered, “The lindy.”

As of the present writing, the site of the Manhattan Casino is a parking lot.

MARVIE BROOKS

See also Armstrong, Louis; Barnett, Ida B. Wells; Bechet, Sidney; Clef Club; Cole, Bob; Europe, James Reese; Garvey, Marcus; Hegamin, Lucille; Henderson, Fletcher; Homosexuality; Johnson, John Rosamond; National Ethiopian Art Theater; Shuffle Along; Sissle, Noble; Van Vechten, Carl; Williams, Egbert Austin “Bert”

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Maran, René

In the 1920s, René Maran was a literary star: his novel *Batouala* (1921) had received the prestigious Prix Goncourt in France; in the United States, in September 1922, a headline in *The Crisis* proclaimed, “The Whole World is Reading It!” Black magazines were filled with pictures and discussions of Maran. Critics discerned Maran’s influence in works such as Claude McKay’s *Banjo* (1929) and Carl Van Vechten’s *Nigger Heaven* (1926) and acclaimed Maran as the precursor of the burgeoning New Negro movement. Along with such hyperbole, there was also anxiety and dissension over the novel’s primitivism and its episodic structure. The story is about a “grossly sensuous” tribe under the subjection of a cruel chief—Batouala—in the Oubangui-Chari region of French Equatorial Africa; some critics feared that it would reinforce racist stereotypes (Martin 1983, 96). Nevertheless, Maran continued to be celebrated, and the brisk sales of the first English translation of *Batouala* in the United States indicated that the Harlem Renaissance had a diasporic aspect.

Maran’s stellar debut actually stymied his literary career. He spent much of the 1920s and 1930s perfecting each page of *Batouala* for a “definitive edition,” which was published in 1938. His other novels, including *Djouma* (1927), were less celebrated and were never translated into English, despite the best efforts of Alain Locke, who became a lifelong friend. Although Maran was disappointed, he promoted the writing of the Harlem Renaissance in Paris. He wrote the first French-language article praising Jessie Fauset, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, and Walter White

in December 1925. In 1924, Maran helped edit the short-lived *Les Continents*, the first black newspaper in Paris; its edition of September 1924 featured poetry by Cullen, Hughes, McKay, and Jean Toomer. Locke wrote a preface in French, his first published description of the new spirit of young “Africo-Américaine” poets that he would praise in *The New Negro* (1925).

Locke singled out Cullen’s poem, “The Dance of Love (after Reading René Maran’s *Batouala*)” as an illustration of a “new intellectual commerce between the continents” sparked by Maran’s international acclaim (quoted in Edwards 2003, 113; subsequent page citations are to this source). Cullen alluded to the controversial chapter “Ga’nza” in *Batouala* and suggested the interest that black writers “in the life” had in the “glorious dance [during which] all things are permitted, even perversions and sins against custom” (85). That dance features *Batouala*’s wife Yassigui’ndja acting “as the male” with “an enormous painted wooden phallus” tied about her waist, and another woman who “had never known a man” (86). After little resistance, Yassigui’ndja’s woman “melted to the ardor of the phallus as a fog melts in the rising sun” (86). So does Yassigui’ndja, when her partner “stirred the desire in the male figure by delaying his satisfaction” (86). The two end in “a breathless convulsion of short shivering movements, . . . immobile, happy, enraptured” (87). This orgasmic gender play offers Cullen a mitigating metaphor “to voice his own sensuality mingled with an American puritan ethic” and indicates another legacy influenced by Maran (Dixon 1977, 756). If *Batouala* “did more to encourage the return of the Harlem Renaissance to the sources of blackness,” same-sex desire was evidently a factor in that homecoming (Fabre 1975, 342).

Biography

René Maran was born in Martinique on 15 November 1887. His family moved to Gabon (west Africa) in 1890, but he was educated in France, graduating in 1909. His novel *Batouala* appeared in 1922 and won the Goncourt prize. Maran then worked in the French colonial service but resigned (1923), returned to Paris, and became a pan-African activist. He worked as an editor at *Les Continents* (1924) and later (1930) at a literary journal, *Revue du Monde Noir*. Maran died on 9 May 1960.

SETH CLARK SILBERMAN

See also *Batouala*; Francophone Africa and the Harlem Renaissance; Locke, Alain; McKay, Claude; New Negro, The; Nigger Heaven; Van Vechten, Carl

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Mason, Charlotte Osgood

Charlotte Osgood Mason has become one of the best-known white patrons of the Harlem Renaissance—somewhat ironically, because she required that the artists she supported refer to her as “Godmother” and not reveal her identity. In turn she referred to her protégés as “godchildren.”

Mason came from a wealthy family and became still wealthier when, in 1886, she married Rufus Osgood Mason, a physician. On her husband’s death in 1905, Mason used some of her money to finance anthropological studies of American Indians, especially those from the Southwest; she herself participated in some of the fieldwork. In addition to her interest in American Indians, Mason found psychology and studies of the psychic world intriguing; she wrote *The Passing of the Prophet*, which was published in 1907 in *North American Review*.

During the 1920s, Mason’s interest in “primitive” art forms and the people she associated with

primitivism—such as American Indians and African Americans—increased. Consequently, Mason used some of her wealth to finance the artistic production of some of the most talented black artists associated with the Harlem Renaissance. She invested thousands of dollars to pay for research, travel, and living expenses for black artists such as Aaron Douglas, Arthur Huff Fauset, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Hall Johnson, Alain Locke, Claude McKay, and Louise Patterson Thompson, to name a few.

Mason's interest in black art began with her fascination with Alain Locke, whom she referred to as her "precious brown boy." Locke introduced Mason to some of the most talented visual artists, singers, and musicians of the Harlem Renaissance. Mason used Locke as a liaison between herself and black artists; in fact, Locke arranged and took responsibility for persuading various black artists to accept financial support from Mason. In addition to individual artists, Mason provided financial support for the Negro Art Institute, which Locke founded in 1924. One purpose of this institute was to help support black writers so that they could produce works challenging the stereotype of blacks as intellectually and socially inferior. Mason's support of the institute came with strings attached: she insisted that the literature of writers associated with the institute must maintain the "primitive purity" she associated with African American people and culture. In short, Mason insisted on art which reinforced her belief that African Americans had a special affinity with the primitive and the world of the spirit.

Mason's own stereotypical notions about what constituted black art and her desire to claim ownership of the art being produced by her protégés caused serious conflict between herself and the artists she supported. A number of the artists associated with the Harlem Renaissance used their art as a vehicle not only for artistic expression but also for other purposes: to protest against American racism, violence, and the overall discrimination African Americans experienced; and to counter the prevailing stereotype of blacks as exotic primitives. As a result, although several writers benefited from Mason's financial generosity, many of the relationships she developed with black artists during this period were short lived. In addition to the conflicts over the content and ownership of the art, there were other problems: many of Mason's protégés thought that she herself was racist and described her as, at times, cruel.

Mason's relationship with Hurston and Hughes was the most controversial and seems to reveal the

racism and cruelty which many of her protégés complained about, and which led them to sever their ties with her. Both Hughes and Hurston were impressed by Mason's wealth and admired her for her philanthropy and for the learned company with which she surrounded herself. At the same time, these two talented young black writers became troubled because Mason wanted them to produce work that would reinforce and perpetuate current racial stereotypes.

Mason met Hughes during one of his weekend visits to New York in early 1927. Initially, he was struck not only by her material wealth but by her apparent kindness and her intellectual acumen. Their meeting ended with her giving him \$50, because he had fascinated her with his discussion of his poetry. One week later, Hughes sent Mason a thank-you card, and she invited him back to her apartment in New York to discuss his goals as an artist. During this second meeting, in April of 1927, Hughes revealed to Mason that his main goal was to write a novel. She encouraged him to pursue this dream and offered to provide monetary support for the summer so that he could focus on his novel (Hughes 1940). Helped by Mason's financial support, Hughes wrote a draft of *Not without Laughter*. He revised it during his senior year at Lincoln University, and on his graduation Mason decided to give him a monthly allowance so that he could focus on his art. She also read the first and revised drafts of Hughes's novel and offered him feedback as an unofficial editor.

Early in their relationship, Hughes had given Mason unwavering admiration. But as time went on and he began to write pieces that were more overtly critical of the status quo, he became repelled by Mason's ostentation—her apartment on Park Avenue, her servants, and so on. He wrote a number of political and satirical works that exposed the disparity between upper-class and lower-class Americans; and he became preoccupied with exploring race and class as social and political themes—a preoccupation that is illustrated in his poems "Advertisement for the Waldorf-Astoria" and "Park Bench," among others. The publication of these two poems, in particular, marked a turning point in his relationship with Mason (Wintz 1996). She found his political poetry disturbing and tried to persuade him to move away from such overtly political work. During this period, Hughes and Hurston were in the process of writing their play *Mule Bone*, and Louise Patterson Thompson, an educator and labor organizer, was working as a secretary for them, at Mason's request. Mason's paternalistic, controlling personality caused Thompson to end her own relationship with her

patron; Thompson then worked diligently to influence Hughes as he grappled with the problem of when and how to break his dependence on “Godmother.” As it happened, when Hughes refused to abandon his political writing, his relationship with Mason was irreparably damaged; in addition, he continued to resist Mason’s attempts to force him to reproduce stereotypes of the “primitive” in his work. Eventually, he asked Mason to stop providing him with financial support. Hughes (1940) notes Mason’s belief that African Americans were “America’s great link with the primitive, and they had something very precious to give the Western world” and adds that he himself did not “feel the rhythms of the primitive surging through me, and so I could not live and write as though I did.”

Mason became Hurston’s patron in December 1927, providing money—\$200 a month—so that Hurston could do research on African American folklore. This money was paid on the condition that Mason would maintain ownership of the folklore Hurston collected; once again, the relationship became strained because of a conflict between the desires of the artist and desires of the patron. In this case, the relationship was complicated by additional factors. First, some of Hurston’s contemporaries accused her of playing a stereotypical “darky” role in order to win Mason’s favor. Second, Hurston’s apparent admiration for Mason led some of these contemporaries to question Hurston’s allegiance to other African Americans. Third, many historians and literary scholars suggest that a degree of adoration existed between Hurston and Mason. A close reading of Hurston’s commentary on Mason suggests, rather, that Hurston, in the tradition of the trickster, was shrewdly manipulating the relationship in order to maintain a privileged position among the artists Mason supported; in any case, Hurston came to have misgivings about Mason. After having been, or having played the role of, an appreciative, dutiful protégé, at various stages she began to question her patron’s desire to impose control over her artistic creativity. The monetary support Mason provided did allow Hurston to produce a number of literary works; however, Hurston did not reach her full artistic potential until she broke with Mason and published *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in 1937.

The relationship Mason had with Hughes, Hurston, Locke, Thompson, and a number of others exemplifies the complex dynamics that existed between white patrons and African American artists during the Harlem Renaissance, and it also suggests an underlying racial conflict. Eventually, many of the artists Mason supported created satirical pieces criti-

cizing their patron for her paternalism and racism. For instance, Hughes, in his collection of short stories *The Ways of White Folks* (1933), satirized Mason and other supposedly liberal supporters of African Americans and especially of African American artists: Mason’s desire to control her protégés and their art is illustrated by his characters Dora Ellsworth (in “The Blues I’m Playing”) and Anne and Michael Carraway (in “Slave on the Block”). Similarly, Rudolph Fisher satirized Mason through his character Agatha Camp in *The Walls of Jericho* (1928). Hurston offered a critique when she ironically described Mason as a “benevolent” benefactress in *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942).

By insisting on primitivism, Mason stifled, or was in effect attempting to stifle, some of the most prominent artists of the period. Ultimately, though, the constraints Mason placed on her “godchildren” became too much for at least some of them. As the Harlem Renaissance came to a close, many of Mason’s “godchildren” ended their relationship with her. Mason then shifted her emphasis from African American culture to other cultures, and eventually she died in obscurity.

Biography

Charlotte Osgood Mason (Charlotte Vandervere Quick) was born 18 May 1854. She married Rufus Osgood Mason in 1886 and was widowed in 1905. She then turned her attention to anthropological studies of southwestern American Indians. She published *The Passing of the Prophet* in 1907. Beginning in the 1920s she became a patron of African American arts and provided financial support to African Americans including Aaron Douglas, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Alain Locke, and Claude McKay. Mason died in New York 15 April 1946.

DEIRDRE J. RAYNOR

See also Douglas, Aaron; Fauset, Arthur Huff; Fisher, Rudolph; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; Johnson, Hall; Locke, Alain; McKay, Claude; Negro Art Institute; Not without Laughter; Patterson, Louise Thompson; White Patronage

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Matheus, John Frederick

Despite his relatively small reputation as a writer of the Harlem Renaissance, John Frederick Matheus was a pioneer in the movement as a creative artist and an instructor. Besides being a prolific author, he was fluent in seven languages, traveled extensively, and was a respected professor at several universities in the United States and in Haiti.

Matheus was born in West Virginia in 1887. His main vocation was teaching; he taught for more than thirty years at West Virginia State College, and after his retirement in 1953 he was a sought-after visiting professor, teaching for another twenty years at several colleges and universities. However, his writing never abated. His literary work can be divided into two periods, dominated by different interests that led to shifts in form and style.

In the first period, 1925 to 1934, Matheus wrote almost entirely fiction. In 1925, his story "Fog"—probably his best-known work—won an award in *Opportunity's* literary contest, appeared in Alain Locke's *The New Negro*, and was included in the honors list in Edward J. O'Brien's *Best Short Stories of 1925*. "Fog" explores the racial attitudes of passengers on a train during a fateful ride in a coal-mining region in West Virginia. In 1926, Matheus's sketch "Sand" took first place in the "personal experience" category in *Opportunity's* contest; his one-act drama "Cruiter" also won a first prize from *Opportunity*; and his short story "Swamp Moccasin" won a first prize in the Krigwa (originally Crigwa; an acronym of the Crisis Guild of Writers and Artists) contest for *The Crisis*. "Cruiter" tells of the separation of a rural southern grandmother and her grandson when a northern recruiter encourages the young man to take a factory job in Detroit.

Matheus also wrote poetry, which appeared in *The Crisis*, *Opportunity*, and *The Chronicle*. His poem "Requiem" was included in Countee Cullen's anthology *Caroling Dusk* (1927). "Ti Yette," a play published in *Plays and Pageants from the Life of the Negro* in 1930, focuses on conflict between two siblings, one light-skinned, the other dark-skinned, in New Orleans. Matheus's early fiction often explored the lives of rural southern African Americans.

During the second period of Matheus's writing, roughly 1934–1970, his work consisted largely of articles—journalistic essays, educational statistics, translations, and book reviews. Many of his reviews appeared in *CLA Journal*, *Modern Language Journal*, *Negro History Bulletin*, and *Quarterly Review of Higher Education among Negroes*. In 1936, he won an award for best reviews of the year from *Journal of Negro History*. Several of Matheus's essays explored the role of foreign languages in African American life.

Matheus continued to write fiction occasionally during this period, though infrequently. He published two short stories in 1937: "Sallicoco" in *Opportunity* (a story inspired by his trip to Liberia), and "What Kind of Man" in *Arts Quarterly*. As a result of a trip to Haiti in 1927 (the first of two; the other was in 1945) with the composer Clarence Cameron White, he wrote *Ouanga* ("charm for evil" in Creole), a drama and operatic libretto with music by White; it had its premiere in 1949. Matheus and White also collaborated on an uncompleted opera, "Cocomaque: a Musical Drama of Haiti."

Matheus was engaged in international activities as well. In 1930, for example, he spent six months in Liberia as secretary to Dr. Charles S. Johnson, who was the American member of a commission investigating charges of forced labor there; in 1945–1946, he was director of the teaching of English in the national schools of Haiti. He was also involved in many professional organizations, including the College Language Association (he was its treasurer from 1938 to 1975); the Modern Language Association; and Alpha Iota Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha.

At the time of his death in 1983, Matheus may have been the last surviving writer of the Harlem Renaissance.

Biography

John Frederick Matheus was born 10 September 1887 in Keyser, West Virginia. At age twelve he published

poems in two newspapers in Steubenville, Ohio, where his family had moved when he was nine; at fourteen he won a prize in an essay contest sponsored by a local women's club. He studied at Steubenville (Ohio) High School (1905); Western Reserve (A.B., 1910); Columbia University (M.A., with a Teachers College diploma as teacher of French, 1921); the Sorbonne in Paris (1925); and the University of Chicago (graduate work, 1927). He taught at Florida A&M College in Tallahassee (1911–1913); was an auditor at Florida A&M (1911–1913); and was head of romance languages at West Virginia State College (1922–1953). He was a foundation director in 1945–1946 and was then at Maryland State College (1953–1954), Dillard University (1954–1957), Morris Brown College (1958–1959), Texas Southern University (1959–1961), Hampton Institute (1961–1962), and Kentucky State University (1962). He wrote stories, plays, poems, and articles for *Opportunity*, *The Crisis*, and other journals and was included in several anthologies, such as Alain Locke's *The New Negro* (1925). He wrote the libretto for *Ouanga* (1949), with music by Clarence Cameron White. His awards included prizes in the literary contests run by *Opportunity*, *Krigwa*, and *The Crisis*. He was married to Maude Roberts and later to Helen Taylor. Matthews died in Tallahassee, Florida, on 21 February 1983.

STEVEN G. FULLWOOD

See also *Crisis*, *The*: Literary Prizes; Cullen, Countee; *Krigwa* Players; Locke, Alain; *Opportunity* Literary Contests; White, Clarence Cameron

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Matthews, Ralph

Ralph Matthews had a long career as one of the most widely read black journalists in the United States. He began in 1924 as a reporter with the *Baltimore Afro-American*, which became the largest-selling black newspaper on the eastern seaboard, reaching its highest circulation in the late 1930s. Its staff developed a reputation for excellent national and international coverage of news; its motto was "Independent in all things—neutral in none." At the *Afro-American*, Matthews worked alongside respected journalists such as Lula Jones Carrett, Arthur Carter, Jimmy Hicks, Max Johnson, Cliff Mackay, Herb Mangrum, Bob Maynard, Bettye Moss, I. Henry Phillips, Al Sweeney, and Vincent Tubbs, on a floor of the building known as the "Ivory Castle" because of the inhabitants' lofty talent. Like other *Afro-American* editors, Matthews held high standards for political, social, and economic equality.

After eleven years in Baltimore, Matthews was named editor of the *Afro-American* in Washington, D.C., where he stayed until 1947. He continued working in a series of editorial posts at *Afro-American* papers: Newark, New Jersey (1947–1951); Washington, D.C. (1951–1954), Philadelphia (1959–1964), and back to Washington from 1964 until his retirement in 1968. He left the *Afro-American* chain, where he had developed a role as a troubleshooter, for a five-year stint as editor of the *Cleveland Call and Post* from 1954 to 1959. Over the course of his career, he covered some of the leading stories of his time, including civil rights, the coronation of George VI of Great Britain in 1936, and the Korean War. For sixteen years he ran “New Faces Guild,” a variety show sponsored by the *Afro-American* for the benefit of a children’s hospital and other charities.

Matthews received the Wendell L. Wilkie public leadership award for national political reporting; in 1977, he was cited by the National Newspaper Publishers Association for his writing and for his “ability to establish great newspapers and watch them make their mark in history as fighters for the black cause.” Matthews died in 1978.

Biography

Ralph Matthews was born in about 1904 in Harford County, Maryland; he grew up in Baltimore and attended Morgan State College and the Columbia University School of Journalism in New York. He became a reporter with the Baltimore *Afro-American* in 1924; eleven years later he became editor of the *Afro-American* in Washington, D.C., where he stayed until 1947. He then worked at the *Afro-American* papers in Newark, New Jersey (1947–1951); Washington again (1951–1954); Philadelphia (1959–1964); and Washington once more (1964–1968.) During 1954–1959 he left the *Afro-American* chain to work at the *Cleveland Call and Post*. Matthews retired in 1968 and died in 1978.

KATHLEEN COLLINS

See also Baltimore *Afro-American*; Journalists

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McClendon, Rose

The distinguished actress Rose McClendon (Rosalie Virginia Scott) was born in Greenville, South Carolina, in 1884; her parents moved the family to Harlem in 1890. She began singing at Saint Mark’s African Methodist Episcopal Church and developed her love of theater while sponsoring, directing, and performing in plays there. Her professional career was launched in 1919, when she had a small part in the Bramhall Players’ production of *Justice*; she also appeared in another Broadway production, *White Mule*, and performed on radio in the series *John Henry*.

McClendon was one of the strongest actresses of the Harlem Renaissance; although she was short and slight, she had an impressive command of the stage, and she was capable of affecting the emotions of the audience with a simple gesture or just a change of expression. She was acknowledged as the “first lady of Negro drama,” and critics called her the “Negro Duse,” after the famous Eleonora Duse (1858–1924). Like Duse, McClendon had an acting style that enabled her to portray human suffering and to convey powerful emotions realistically but with extraordinary economy of means. Playwrights called on Rose McClendon when they wanted the *crème de la crème*.

In 1924, McClendon starred opposite Charles Gilpin and later Paul Robeson in *Roseanne*. She gained prominence in 1926 as an aging mulatto madam in Clement Wood’s *Deep River*, an opera with jazz staged and produced on Broadway by Arthur Hopkins. As the legend goes, Ethel Barrymore came to see *Deep River*, having been advised not to leave before the end so that she would be sure to see McClendon’s performance. The critic Alexander Woollcott of *New York World* reported that Barrymore did stay till the end and then sought out Hopkins to say that Rose McClendon could teach all actresses distinction. Also in 1924, McClendon played the role of Goldie McAllister opposite Jules Bledsoe and Abbie Mitchell in Paul Green’s folk tragedy *In Abraham’s Bosom*; the play won a Pulitzer Prize, and McClendon won an acting award from the *Morning Telegraph*. In the late 1920s, McClendon toured in Dorothy and DuBose Heyward’s play *Porgy*, as Serena, the wife of Crown’s victim. Despite some

opposition by blacks to the production, McClendon and the Theatre Guild cast achieved a hit in New York and London from 1927 to 1929.

In the 1930s McClendon was supposed to appear in John Houseman's production of *Medea*, with a cast including mulatto children and black choruswomen but otherwise white; however, this daring plan had to be put aside when McClendon fell ill. In 1931, McClendon collaborated with Richard Bruce Nugent to write the one-act play "Taxi Fare"; that year she also starred in Paul Green's *House of Connelly*. In 1932, along with Langston Hughes and others, McClendon was appointed to the "Sponsoring Committee for Production of a Soviet Film on Negro Life." Also in 1932, she appeared in James Knox Millen's *Never No More*; Brooks Atkinson, the drama critic of the *New York Times*, described her performance as both majestic and humble: "She acts from the inside out . . . and confirms the high esteem in which she has long been held." McClendon became familiar to theatergoers in *Black Souls*, *Brain Sweat*, *Roll Sweet Chariot*, *Panic*, and—especially—*Mulatto* (1935), in which she played the slave Cora, the mother of the colonel's mulatto child. *Mulatto*, which was written by Langston Hughes, ran for 375 performances, the second-longest run for a work by a Negro playwright. Hughes was delighted that McClendon had set Broadway afire, but the producer, Martin Jones, was evidently not; Jones refused to give McClendon her full salary as a star, considering it too much for a Negro. Moreover, Jones refused to provide her transportation to the theater (she had to take the subway back and forth from her home in Harlem), and neither she nor Hughes was welcome to attend Jones's whites-only postproduction party. During the run of *Mulatto*, McClendon became ill and had to leave the cast; Cora was her last "mammy" role.

To fight stereotyped roles such as mammies, McClendon was one of the organizers of the Negro People's Theater (1935). She wanted black performers, especially women, to have parts in legitimate theater productions that would portray black America in a more positive light and thereby empower African Americans. She and John Houseman also headed the sixteen "Negro Units" established by this Federal Theater Project (FTP). McClendon was the spokeswoman for the Negro Units and, interestingly, blocked an attempt by Hallie Flanagan, the director of FTP, to give the directorship of the Harlem unit to a black person. McClendon argued that it would be advantageous for blacks to have an apprenticeship under a white leader. McClendon was on the advisory

board of Actors Equity Association (the actors' union); directed plays at the Harlem Experimental Theater; and gave a great deal of her time to advising amateurs. In her last days, she recorded her hope for a "Negro theater that would develop not an isolated Paul Robeson, an occasional Bledsoe or Gilpin, but a long line of first-rate actors."

The Rose McClendon Players (1938–1941)—a semiprofessional group founded after her death in 1936—continued her legacy.

Biography

Rose McClendon (Rosalie Virginia Scott) was born 27 August 1884, in Greenville, South Carolina; her parents, Sandy Scott and Tina Jenkins, moved to Harlem in 1890, when she was six years old. McClendon attended Edina Public School—P.S. 40 and Sergeant Dramatic School in New York City; she won a scholarship to the American Academy of Dramatic Art in 1916. On 27 October 1904 she married Henry Pruden McClendon, who was a chiropractor and a porter on the Pennsylvania Railroad. Her Broadway credits included *Justice* (1919), *White Mule* and *Roseanne* (1924), *Deep River* (1926), *In Abraham's Bosom* (1926), *Porgy* (1927–1929), *The House of Connelly* (1931), *Never No More* (1932), and *Mulatto* (1935); her regional credits include *The Cat and the Canary*, *Brain Sweat*, *Black Souls*, *Roll Sweet Chariot*, and *Panic*. She also performed on radio. McClendon was a cofounder of the Negro People's Theater; a codirector of sixteen Negro Units of the Federal Theater Project (Works Progress Administration); and a coauthor of "Taxi Fare." McClendon died at her home in Harlem on 12 July 1936; she is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery in Westchester County, New York.

SHIRLEY BASFIELD DUNLAP

See also Black and White; Bledsoe, Jules; Gilpin, Charles; Green, Paul; Hughes, Langston; Mitchell, Abbie; Mulatto; Nugent, Richard Bruce; Porgy: Play; Robeson, Paul; Saint Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church

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McGuire, George Alexander

Bishop George Alexander McGuire (1866–1934) is best-known for his prominence in Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). He was also an important theological figure in his own right. McGuire, a naturalized American, was born in Antigua. He immigrated to the United States in 1894 and became an ordained minister in the Protestant Episcopal Church. By 1901 he had risen sufficiently to be appointed rector of Saint Thomas's Episcopal church in Philadelphia. Saint Thomas's served the African American elite of Philadelphia and was one of the most prestigious congregations in African America, having been started in 1794 by Absalom Jones, one of the founders—together with Richard Allen of the African Methodist Episcopal Church—of organized African American Christianity.

In 1905 McGuire was made the Protestant Episcopal church's archdeacon for Colored Work in the Diocese of Arkansas, thus becoming the church's highest-ranking African American and the first to achieve the rank of archdeacon. His next major appointment was to the parish of St. Bartholomew's in Cambridge, Massachusetts. During this period, he also studied medicine at Jefferson Medical College. In 1913 McGuire returned home to Antigua, where he practiced medicine and served as a minister in the Church of England, the English counterpart of the Episcopals.

McGuire returned to the United States in 1919, just as Garvey's UNIA was gathering momentum. Like thousands of other race-conscious intellectuals who joined UNIA, McGuire eagerly embraced the organizational framework Garvey provided to combat racism and to articulate an independent philosophy of racial uplift. Long before UNIA, McGuire had fought his own battles against racism in the Protestant Episcopal church.

McGuire was elected first chaplain-general of UNIA at its inaugural international convention in New York in August 1920. In this position, he wrote two important documents of UNIA: *Universal Negro Ritual* and *Universal Negro Catechism*. The latter had both religious and historical sections, reflecting his interest in religion and race history. (At Saint Thomas's, he had been an early member of African America's first historical association, the American Negro Historical Society.) In September 1921, McGuire founded the African Orthodox Church (AOC), envisaged as a home for blacks of the Protestant Episcopal persuasion who wanted ecclesiastical independence.

McGuire would have liked to have seen AOC designated as the official church of UNIA, but Garvey was unwilling to grant such an exclusive privilege to any denomination. McGuire accordingly resigned from his position at UNIA on the formation of AOC. He ensured official "orthodox" status for his new church by arranging apostolic succession for himself. He had himself reordained bishop in the American Catholic church; he was then ordained first bishop of the new AOC by a representative of the Russian Orthodox church.

McGuire seems to have briefly joined some of Garvey's adversaries in late 1921, but by 1925 he wrote a moving preface to Volume 2 of *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, edited by Garvey's wife Amy Jacques Garvey shortly after her husband's imprisonment in Atlanta. In 1924, the newly organized conclave of AOC unanimously elected McGuire archbishop of the church. During the remaining decade of his life McGuire built AOC into a thriving international church. Branches were eventually established in Canada, Barbados, Cuba, South Africa, Uganda, Kenya, Miami, Chicago, Harlem, Boston, Cambridge (Massachusetts), and elsewhere. The official organ of AOC, *The Negro Churchman*, became an effective link for the far-flung organization. Wherever it existed, AOC remained a sort of ecclesiastical reflection of Garvey's ideas of racial independence and uplift.

Biography

George Alexander McGuire was born in Antigua, in the then British West Indies, 26 March 1866. He was educated at Mico College and Nisky Theological Seminary in the Danish (later U.S.) Virgin Islands; immigrated to the United States in 1894; was ordained in the Protestant Episcopal church; became rector of Saint Thomas's Episcopal Church in Philadelphia in 1901; became the Protestant Episcopal church's archdeacon for Colored Work in the Diocese of Arkansas in 1905; was appointed to Saint Bartholomew's parish in Cambridge, Massachusetts; studied medicine at Jefferson Medical College; returned to Antigua in 1913, practicing medicine and serving as a minister; returned to the United States in 1919; joined the Universal Negro Improvement Association and was elected its chaplain-general (1920); and founded the African Orthodox Church in 1921 and resigned from UNIA. McGuire died 10 November 1934.

TONY MARTIN

See also Garvey, Marcus; Universal Negro Improvement Association

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McKay, Claude

The poet, novelist, essayist, and political activist Claude McKay was one of the most versatile and talented intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance. Although his standing among twentieth-century intellectuals has never been in doubt, McKay has always been surrounded by controversy. It is easy to see why: he was politically radical; he was not only a

freethinker but also a militant rationalist and vociferously anti-Christian; he was, as he put it himself, "suicidally frank," and what he was frank about was seldom flattering. Though he taught the virtues of group life, he was an individualist, a freelance, and a loner; he hated bourgeois civilization and its pretensions and consistently identified himself with the black working class against all comers; as a proud black man, he despised the "superstitions"—his word—of racism as well as colorism; he saw his role as a writer and intellectual as that of truth teller, however embarrassing and discomfiting the truth might turn out to be; he was decidedly anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist and never refrained from saying so; he was a man of peace but advocated the virtues of retaliatory violence; he loved passionately and hated passionately—he was especially known for his hatred. Given such a complex character, it is little wonder that McKay remains the most misunderstood figure of the Harlem Renaissance.

McKay's relationship to the Harlem Renaissance is in many ways quite peculiar. He looked at the artistic dimension of the movement, if movement it was, with great interest but a jaundiced eye—and from afar. As he makes clear in *A Long Way from Home* (1937), McKay never thought much of those who claimed to lead the renaissance. Alain Locke, regarded by some as the "dean" of the movement, was in McKay's eyes a cowardly "pussy-footing professor," especially after Locke, on political grounds, censored McKay's militant submissions to *The New Negro* (1925), the influential anthology Locke edited. Two of the other leading figures of the Harlem Renaissance, W. E. B. Du Bois and Walter White, McKay thought, subordinated artistic integrity to shortsighted, reformist racial goals. McKay said that White was a "propaganda angel" who, like Du Bois, believed that the Negro should always be made to put his best foot forward in depictions by black artists: no washing of dirty linen in public—it hurts the race. James Weldon Johnson was the only other major figure of the older generation of renaissance writers for whom McKay had genuine affection and respect, as an artist, as a critic, and as a man. The feeling was mutual, and when McKay published *Harlem: Negro Metropolis* (1940), he dedicated it to the memory of Johnson, who had died two years earlier.

Despite his formidable literary presence, McKay was physically absent from not only Harlem but the United States for almost the entire period of the renaissance. In the autumn of 1919, soon after writing his militant sonnet "If We Must Die," McKay left the United States to spend more than a year in London.

He returned to New York in January 1921 but was off again by September 1922, this time to bolshevik Russia. After eight months in Russia, he moved to Berlin, thence to Paris, the South of France (mainly Marseilles), Barcelona, and finally Tangiers, where he lived for six years before returning to the United States in 1934, by which time the Harlem Renaissance was over.

Despite his misgivings and his absence, however, McKay's work constitutes a major contribution to the Harlem Renaissance and today is a crucial part of its literary canon. "If We Must Die," which Richard Wright called a "new and strange cry," is often considered the opening salvo of the renaissance. It was published during the "red summer" when African Americans across the nation defended themselves against racist violence, and it urged them not to be hunted, penned, and slaughtered like hogs but to fight back, even while dying:

O kinsmen! we must meet the common foe!
 Though far outnumbered let us still be brave,
 And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow!
 What though before us lies the open grave?
 Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
 Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

As Joel Augustus Rogers later noted, this poem became the "Negro Marseillaise." And McKay became, according to the poet Melvin Tolson, "the symbol of the New Negro and the Harlem Renaissance." In praising McKay, the black socialists—congregated around A. Philip Randolph and the *Messenger* magazine—and the black nationalist Garveyites for once sang from the same hymnal. Black preachers recited "If We Must Die" from their pulpits, black schoolchildren learned it by heart, and black newspapers across the country reprinted it, beginning the process of making it the most widely anthologized work written by a black poet. A similarly rapturous reception awaited *Harlem Shadows* when it appeared in 1922; *Negro World*, for instance, ran not one but two rave reviews of the volume.

By the end of the year, however, McKay was once again gone. As early as 1919, despite the persecution of radicals during the "red scare," he had openly come out in favor of the Bolshevik revolution. "Every Negro who lays claim to leadership," he wrote in *Negro World*, "should make a study of Bolshevism and explain its meaning to the colored masses. It is the greatest and

most scientific idea afloat in the world today," which if put into practice "might make these United States safe for the Negro." He was now off to Lenin's Russia and would not return until more than a decade had passed. Although he continued to write poetry, he now increasingly turned his hand and time to prose. The first major public fruit of this endeavor was *Home to Harlem*, a picaresque novel revolving around the adventures of Jake, an African American deserter from World War I, and his return to Harlem. The novel also features Ray, McKay's alter ego, a Haitian intellectual driven into exile by the American occupiers of Haiti. Drawing substantially on McKay's experience as a Pullman waiter and its attendant black proletarian life, the novel is resolutely set in the African American working class, eschewing those whom McKay derisively called "nice Negroes," the Afro-American elite. Indelicate and uncompromising, but in many ways tender, in its depiction of Harlem's working class at work and play, *Home to Harlem* was the first novel by a black person to head the list of best-sellers in the *New York Times*. Not surprisingly, however, it was trounced in the black press. Garvey, in a front-page editorial review of the book, called McKay a "literary prostitute" to the white racist public, a traitor to his race; he said that *Home to Harlem* was "a damnable libel against the Negro." Du Bois, who rarely agreed with Garvey, concurred. Du Bois said that the book, though "not wholly bad," catered to the "prurient demand" of a decadent white readership, and that he himself, after reading certain passages— "the dirtier parts of its filth"—had felt "distinctly like taking a bath." McKay did not take this lying down. From Barcelona he wrote to Du Bois, saying that he did not care about Du Bois's opinion of *Home to Harlem*, since Du Bois's own writings never revealed "any comprehension of esthetics" and Du Bois was therefore "not competent or qualified to pass judgment upon any work of art." As for Garvey, McKay contemptuously dismissed him as "a West Indian charlatan" (before he died, however, McKay would revise his appraisal of Garvey in a radically more favorable direction). But despite his bravado, McKay was hurt by his black critics. Similar objections arose after *Banjo* came out the following year. James Weldon Johnson was the only member of the older generation to publicly write favorable comments about McKay's fiction. Even McKay's old friend Arturo (Arthur A.) Schomburg wrote an unfavorable review of *Home to Harlem* and questioned McKay's motives for writing it.

The clash between McKay and his critics was more a matter of philosophy than a question of venal

motives. McKay, through circumstances and to a lesser extent by choice, had worked and lived among the African American proletariat. (He consistently referred to himself in his post-Jamaican exile as “not only a Negro, but a worker.”) This was the world he knew best, and this was the world he depicted in both *Home to Harlem* and *Banjo*. As McKay points out in his riposte, “A Negro Writer to His Critics” (1932), as an artist he cannot go along with the “nice Negroes” who believe that “Negroes in literature and art should be decorous and decorative.” Like Langston Hughes (“The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” 1926), he sees no crime in depicting black proletarian life as he found it. “I want to see Negro artists express themselves to the limit,” McKay wrote to a friend in 1927. “They should exclude nothing, limit themselves to nothing. They should make their voices as strong, sweet, broad, strange, sad, happy and varied as all Negro life itself is.” He expressed sympathy for his critics’ position, but as an artist he could not help them by censoring himself in the way they desired; it was shortsighted and inimical to the artistic enterprise. “We must leave the real appreciation of what we are doing to the emancipated Negro intelligentsia of the future,” he told James Weldon Johnson, adding sarcastically, “while we are sardonically aware now that only the intelligentsia of the ‘superior race’ is developed enough to afford artistic truth.” It is noteworthy that none of McKay’s critics claimed that the world he depicted did not exist, or that his depiction was inaccurate; the criticism instead focused on the very depiction of that world for public gaze.

Despite the reaction of black critics, McKay had his defenders among the people who really counted in the forward movement of the artistic side of the Harlem Renaissance: the young writers. Langston Hughes, the most gifted of the lot, adored McKay—from his first encounter with McKay’s poetry as a schoolboy in Cleveland right up to his death. It was McKay, he said, who had set him on the road to becoming an artist. He loved *Home to Harlem* and declared McKay “the best.” Gwendolyn Bennett expressed a similar love for McKay. As late as 1928, Wallace Thurman, despite misgivings about McKay’s attachment to the sonnet as a literary form, acknowledged McKay’s mental depth. More than the rest of the black poets, Thurman observed, McKay “has really had something to say”; moreover, “he is the only Negro poet who ever wrote revolutionary or protest poetry.” Eric Walrond, Arna Bontemps, Zora Neale Hurston, Dorothy West, and even Countee Cullen, the

most straitlaced and conservative of the group before the 1930s, expressed deep admiration for McKay and his work, both privately and publicly. McKay became close friends with many of them after he returned to the United States in 1934.

During the 1920s, McKay served as the chief conduit for the work of renaissance writers in Europe. Through a close friendship with sisters Paulette and Jeanne Nardal in particular, he put African Americans in contact with African and Caribbean intellectuals in Paris. It was McKay who first introduced Locke to the Nardal sisters, who were Martinican writers and editors of an influential and pioneering journal, *La Revue du Monde Noire*. McKay’s poetry was translated and published in France; all his novels, including *Home to Harlem* and *Banjo*, set in Marseilles, were quickly translated into French. *Banjo*, in particular, exercised an enormous influence on the *négritude* movement that developed in the 1930s, led by Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sedar Senghor, and Léon Gontran Damas.

Despite his focus on fiction during the 1920s, McKay continued to write poetry. Many of his poems remain unpublished, but a substantial number appeared in American journals such as *The Crisis* and *Opportunity*. He also wrote essays; the most remarkable is “Soviet Russia and the Negro,” published in two parts in *The Crisis* (December 1923 and January 1924), about his “magic pilgrimage” to bolshevik Russia, a powerful apologia extolling the merits of bolshevism for oppressed blacks.

Through the waning days of the Harlem Renaissance, McKay published *Gingertown* (1932), a collection of short stories set in Harlem and the Caribbean, and then his best novel, *Banana Bottom* (1933), set in his native Jamaica at the turn of the century. These works hardly sold; the Depression had annihilated the market for black novels. McKay returned from Tangiers in 1934 to a Harlem in such a desperate situation that it was hardly recognizable. He soon found work with the Federal Writers’ Project (FWP) and tried to form an all-black Negro Writers’ Guild among the black writers of FWP; due to vociferous opposition from black members of the Communist Party, however, the Negro Writers’ Guild was destroyed. By 1938, McKay was out of work, largely, he plausibly claimed, because of the machinations of his communist enemies in FWP. He had offended both the Communist Party and the establishment in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) by his critical and “suicidally frank” travelogue, *A Long Way from Home*, published the previous

year. After *Harlem: Negro Metropolis* appeared in 1940, matters got worse: McKay was more isolated than ever, and he suffered severe hardship and ill health, including several strokes, in the 1940s. McKay's black nationalist tendencies became even more pronounced during the Depression years. He powerfully propounded them in newspaper articles, including his column in the *Amsterdam News*; most forcefully in the final chapter of *A Long Way from Home*; and in his blistering attack in *Harlem: Negro Metropolis* on the hypocrisy and shenanigans of the Communist Party regarding the "Negro question."

Through the efforts of Ellen Tarry, a black Catholic member of FWP, McKay received needed help from the Catholic church. In 1944 he moved to Chicago, where he did work with progressive Catholics. To the consternation of his closest friends, who had admired his forthright atheism, McKay converted to Catholicism toward the end of 1944. He died on 22 May 1948 and was buried in New York. He was fifty-six years old.

The final, so-called Catholic, phase of McKay's life is the most misunderstood and therefore deserves the mention of a few basic facts. McKay worked for Bishop Bernard Sheil and the Catholic Youth Organization; both the man and the organization were among the most progressive forces in Chicago during the Depression. Sheil delivered stirring May Day speeches to workers, and he was highly respected in Chicago's African American community. The pacifist-socialist Catholic Worker Movement, led by Dorothy Day, was the other organization with which McKay established the closest ties. He contributed some important later poems to its newspaper, the *Catholic Worker*. As he wrote to a friend in 1946, there is "a formidable left wing" in the Catholic church, to which he belonged. He denounced American imperialism and sided with the Soviet Union against Britain and the United States in the early days of the cold war. In an angry letter to Max Eastman, his former Trotskyist friend who had become a vehement "cold warrior," he wrote:

I try to see things from the standpoint of right and wrong and when Soviet Russia is wrong I will say so. When the U.S. and Great Britain are wrong I will say so too, and the two latter in my mind are more often wrong than the Soviet nation. I am certainly never going to carry the torch for British colonialism or American imperialism abroad.

McKay—a longtime admirer of the vanquished Leon Trotsky, whom he met during his sojourn in Russia—

now developed a grudging admiration for the cunning and "genius of His Satanic Majesty," Joseph Stalin, and for Stalin's chess game with the western powers in Europe. Writing in February 1945, he confessed, however, that he was awaiting the denouement "in fear and trembling."

He denounced America and Britain as hypocrites and fascists and spoke of the "fascist-oppressed Negroes" in the United States and the British empire at a time when both the United States and Britain claimed to be fighting a war against fascism. He published "Look Within" in the *Catholic Worker* in January 1945:

Lord, let me not be silent while we fight
 In Europe Germans, Asia Japanese
 For setting up a Fascist way of might
 While fifteen million Negroes on their knees
 Pray for salvation from the Fascist yoke
 Of these United States.

The following year, again in the *Catholic Worker*, he published "Tiger," describing the white man as a tiger at his throat drinking his blood as his life ebbs away, "And muttering that his terrible striped coat/Is Freedom's and portends the Light of Day."

Europe and Africa and Asia wait
 The touted New Deal of the New World's hand!
 New systems will be built on race and hate,
 The Eagle and the Dollar will command.
 O Lord! My body, and my heart too, break—
 The tiger in his strength his thirst must slake!

In the "Cycle Manuscript"—his last major work, his testament—McKay sang in sonnet form in praise of Garvey, declaring at the end "nothing the professors do can sever / You from the people to whom you belong forever."

McKay's so-called anticommunism was largely aimed at white communists in the United States whom he saw as opportunistic and untrustworthy with regard to the struggles of African Americans. Despite his bitter disagreements with the Communist Party, however, McKay never cooperated with the agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation who came to him for information. When an emissary from the Dies Committee (an anticommunist congressional outfit) came to see him in September 1939, McKay said, "I'm sure that the real America would not think

I was contributing anything to good citizenship by being a son-a-bitch." An agent came again the year before McKay died, and the answer was the same. The agent's notes of the meeting read: "McKay was somewhat reluctant to discuss his past activities and stated that he had no desire to discuss individual Communists as he did not care to get anyone in trouble."

As McKay repeatedly said, he was always pro-union and pro-working class, and in many ways he remained a socialist, stating in one of his last pieces of writing: "I can see nothing wrong about a planned economy. . . . If the richest country in the world had planned beforehand, it might have avoided a ten-year depression and a second world war." He repeatedly expressed his admiration for Henry Wallace, who ran for president on the American Labor Party ticket in 1948. The fact that Wallace was the candidate supported by the Communist Party did not deter McKay. He especially liked Wallace's anti-racist and anti-imperialist positions.



Claude McKay, photographed by Carl Van Vechten, c. 1920–1940. (Library of Congress.)

McKay's abiding loyalty was to the black working class, the kind of people with whom he worked on the Pullman trains and in other menial jobs. Those were his people. As he put it in "The Negro's Tragedy," another of the sonnets from the "Cycle Manuscript," which was also published in the *Catholic Worker*:

It is the Negro's tragedy I feel
Which binds me like a heavy iron chain,
It is the Negro's wounds I want to heal
Because I know the keenness of his pain.

Grappling with the Negro's tragedy was a constant in McKay's turbulent life, including the period after his unexpected turn to Catholicism. And despite his failing health, powers, and resources, after his conversion he remained—as he told Max Eastman at the time—"no less a fighter."

Biography

Claude McKay (Festus Claudius McKay) was born 15 September 1889 in James Hill, Clarendon, Jamaica. He was the youngest of eleven children, eight of whom lived to maturity, born to Hannah Ann Elizabeth Edwards McKay and Thomas McKay, prosperous peasant proprietors. In 1897, he went to live with his eldest brother, Uriah Theodore McKay, a schoolmaster in Saint James, western Jamaica, who educated him. He went to Kingston to train as a tradesman, but left soon afterward as a consequence of an earthquake in 1907. He met the English aristocrat and folklorist Walter Jekyll in 1909. McKay went to Kingston and worked in a match factory before joining the Jamaican constabulary in 1910; he left the constabulary in October 1911, having served for seventeen months. He published his first volume of verse, *Songs of Jamaica* (1912), quickly followed by *Constab Ballads* in the same year. In July 1912 he left Jamaica, a freethinker and a Fabian socialist, for study at Tuskegee Institute in the United States; he left Tuskegee the same year for Kansas State College in Manhattan, Kansas. He abandoned college in 1914 and went to New York; with a friend, he opened a restaurant in Brooklyn that soon failed. In 1914 he married his childhood sweetheart, but the marriage effectively ended within six months when his wife returned to Jamaica pregnant. McKay then led an itinerant proletarian life, at one point working as a Pullman waiter. In 1916, he published his first

poem since leaving Jamaica, in *Seven Arts* under the name Eli Edwards. In 1918, an autobiographical sketch was published in *Pearson's Magazine*, edited by Frank Harris; McKay established close friendships with Harris and with Max and Crystal Eastman, editors of the *Liberator*. McKay joined Industrial Workers of the World in 1919 and in the same year published "If We Must Die" in the *Liberator* to both notoriety and wide acclaim. He left for London and the Netherlands in the autumn of 1919. He joined Sylvia Pankhurst's Workers' Socialist Federation and worked with her on the *Workers' Dreadnought*, in which he published many articles and some of his most radical poems. In 1920 he published *Spring in New Hampshire and Other Poems*, his first collection since leaving Jamaica. He returned to New York in January 1921 and was soon made associate editor of the *Liberator*. He joined the African Blood Brotherhood—a black revolutionary socialist organization—and became a member of its supreme council. He published *Harlem Shadows* in 1922 and soon thereafter left for Russia, where he stayed for more than eight months, leaving for Berlin in June 1923. He wrote "Soviet Russia and the Negro," published in two parts in *Crisis* (1923–1924). He left Berlin for Paris, then settled in Marseilles. In 1926 he finished a novel, "Color Scheme," which he destroyed after failing to find an American publisher. In 1928, *Home to Harlem* was published to acclaim and derision; *Banjo* was published a year later, followed by *Gingertown* (1932) and *Banana Bottom* (1933). In the late 1920s McKay moved between Marseilles and Barcelona; in 1928 he finally settled in Tangiers, where he remained until his return to the United States in 1934. He worked in the Federal Writers' Project up to 1938, when he was dismissed (ostensibly because he was not a citizen); he wrote a column for the *Amsterdam News* and articles in various journals including the *Nation*, *New Leader*, and *Jewish Frontier* in the 1930s. He published a travelogue, *A Long Way from Home* (1937). McKay was attacked by members of polite Negro society (such as Alain Locke) as well as the Communist Party. (Zora Neale Hurston spoke up in his defense.) In 1940 he published *Harlem: Negro Metropolis*, which offended the Communist Party and fellow travelers. He wrote a novel, *Harlem Glory*, but failed to find a publisher. In 1942 McKay became ill and was unemployed and almost destitute. He was cared for by Catholics, in particular the black writer Ellen Tarry, and became associated with a Catholic organization, Friendship House in Harlem. He got work in a shipyard in Newark in 1943 but suffered a severe stroke;

he began writing "Cycle Manuscript" while recovering in Connecticut. In April 1944 he moved to Chicago to work for the Catholic Youth Organization led by Bishop Bernard J. Sheil, a progressive force in the Catholic Church. McKay reestablished contact with Dorothy Day of the socialist-pacifist Catholic Worker movement, whom he had known from his days at the *Liberator*. On 11 October 1944 he was baptized and received into the Catholic church. He finished "My Green Hills of Jamaica" in 1946. McKay died in Chicago on 22 May 1948, age fifty-six.

WINSTON JAMES

See also African Blood Brotherhood; Amsterdam News; Bennett, Gwendolyn; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Eastman, Max; Federal Programs; Garvey, Marcus; Harlem: Negro Metropolis; Harlem Shadows; Home to Harlem; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, James Weldon; *Liberator*, The; Locke, Alain; Negritude; New Negro, The; Riots: 2—Red Summer of 1919; Rogers, Joel Augustus; Schomburg, Arthur A.; Thurman, Wallace; *Workers' Dreadnought*; Wright, Richard; *specific writers*

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McKinney, Nina Mae

The actress, singer, and dancer Nina Mae McKinney was the first black woman to play a significant role in a Hollywood film: *Hallelujah* (1929), in which she initiated the character of the sultry black temptress. This film also marked the beginning of an irksome stereotype; for years to come, lighter-skinned black women would be cast as exotic sexual objects.

McKinney was born in South Carolina in 1912 and lived with an aunt, Carrie Sanders, who was a maid for a rich white couple. As a girl, McKinney was talented and eager to woo an audience. She performed stunts on her bicycle while riding to the post office to pick up mail for her aunt's employer, and she acted in plays at a local industrial school for black children. At age thirteen, she joined her mother, Georgia Crawford McKinney, in New York City. Soon she was performing in nightclubs in Harlem; in 1928 she was given a role in Lew Leslie's Broadway musical *Blackbirds*; while still in her teens, she went to Hollywood during its brief period of interest in producing all-black films. After starring as the seductive Chick in *Hallelujah*, she was called "the screen's first black love goddess." In this film, a "bad girl"—Chick—lures a country preacher (played by Daniel Haynes) away from his congregation and into a life of sin; her death frees him to reclaim his virtue. *Hallelujah* was hugely successful, but some black critics considered it trite and stereotypical. According to some black film historians, it suggests that blacks have a natural bent toward violence and immorality, and its ending has disturbing social implications: the immoral racially mixed black woman serves as an object lesson against miscegenation and represents a threat to racial harmony.

McKinney received glowing reviews for her performance in *Hallelujah*, obtained a five-year contract with MGM, and appeared in two other films while she was under contract—*Safe in Hell* (1931) and *Reckless* (1935). She was not able to repeat her success, however; like many other African American artists of the period she went to Europe, where she found acceptance. She

sang in cafés in Paris and London and was billed as the "black Garbo"; she also toured in Dublin and Budapest. In 1930, having returned from Europe, she appeared on Broadway in *Congo Road*; however, she still found Hollywood indifferent to her when she returned there in 1932.

Later, she met Paul Robeson abroad and starred with him in a stylized British production, *Sanders of the Rivers* (1935). McKinney played an African princess, with a southern accent, glitzy costumes, and makeup. Most of her film work during the late 1930s and 1940s consisted of roles in all-black independent productions such as *Gang Smashers* (1938), *The Devil's Daughter* (1939), *Straight to Heaven* (1939), *Mantan Messes Up* (1946), and *Night Train to Memphis* (1946). She starred as a discontented mulatto in *Pinky* (1949); some critics consider this her most notable role.

During the 1930s and 1940s, McKinney toured the United States with her own band. (When she returned to South Carolina with the band for a benefit performance in Columbia, the seating in the auditorium was segregated.) In the 1950s and 1960s, she lived in Athens, Greece, where she was called the "queen of nightlife." She returned to New York shortly before she died. In her honor, her likeness was placed on a brick wall near the courthouse in her hometown, Lancaster, along with pictures of other famous natives, including President Andrew Jackson.

Biography

Nina Mae (Nannie Mayme) McKinney was born 12 June 1912 in Lancaster, South Carolina. She attended public schools in Lancaster and New York City. She began her professional career as a dancer in nightclubs in Harlem. Her first film, *Hallelujah* (1928), established her as the archetypal tragic mulatto. She performed in several other films from the 1930s through the 1940s, including *Pinky* (1949), which is considered her strongest role. She launched a singing career in Europe and led a band in United States; her credits also include *Congo Road* on Broadway and several black independent films. She was married to the jazz musician Jimmy Monroe. McKinney died in New York City on 3 May 1967, at age fifty-four.

AUDREY THOMAS MCCCLUSKEY

See also *Blackbirds*; *Hallelujah*; Robeson, Paul

Filmography

Hallelujah. 1929.
They Learned about Women. 1930.
Safe in Hell. 1931.
Pie, Pie, Blackbird. 1932.
Kentucky Minstrels. 1934.
Sanders of the River. 1935.
Reckless. 1935.
The Black Network. 1936.
On Velvet. 1938.
Gang Smashers. 1938.
Straight to Heaven. 1939.
The Devil's Daughter. 1939.
Swanee Showboat. 1940.
Together Again. 1944.
Dark Waters. 1944.
The Power of the Whistler. 1945.
Night Train to Memphis. 1946.
Mantan Messes Up. 1946.
Danger Street. 1947.
Pinky. 1949.
Rain. 1951.

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Mencken, H. L.

In the 1920s, Henry Lewis (H. L.) Mencken was one of the most publicly recognized intellectuals of the day. A journalist, editor, prolific author, and social and literary critic, Mencken turned his satiric wit on the cultural

landscape of the United States, in particular battling the “genteel tradition” and the vestiges of Puritanism that he saw as stifling America’s artists and thinkers.

Many luminaries of the Harlem Renaissance expressed admiration for Mencken at one time or another. In his autobiography, James Weldon Johnson wrote that in the 1910s, “Mencken had made a sharper impression on my mind than any other American then writing.” In 1918, Johnson called Mencken “the cleverest writer in America today,” and went on to express his admiration for the controversial stands that Mencken often took, saying that “the best part of Mencken is truth.” Nella Larsen, W. E. B. Du Bois, Countee Cullen, Zora Neale Hurston, and the editor of the influential black newspaper the *Pittsburgh Courier* all read Mencken with interest and often praised him. Mencken earned their respect, in part, by using his own editorial position to challenge prevailing views of race, attacking the Ku Klux Klan and other such groups and drawing attention to African American cultural contributions through his reviews and essays.

Mencken was also an advocate for black writers, encouraging their work and helping to get it into print. Walter White, for example, said that Mencken encouraged him to write his first novel, *The Fire in the Flint*. When the manuscript was rejected by one publisher, Mencken persuaded his own publisher, Alfred A. Knopf, to take it. As the editor of the magazines *Smart Set* and *American Mercury*, Mencken often opened their pages to black writers, including White, Cullen, Du Bois, and Eric Waldron, providing them with a national forum at a time when they were usually restricted to black-oriented periodicals. Mencken



H. L. Mencken, photographed by Carl Van Vechten, 1932.
(Library of Congress.)

avored no writer of the Harlem Renaissance more than George Schuyler, whose satiric bent was similar to Mencken's, and who appeared in *American Mercury* more than any writer other than Mencken himself during Mencken's tenure there.

Like most whites associated with the Harlem Renaissance, Mencken has not escaped controversy. Some commentators have accused him of harboring racist (and anti-Semitic) views. Often these charges are based on Mencken's frequent use of derogatory terms for African Americans. His essays on African Americans are filled with terms such as "coon," "darky," and "niggero," although in most cases his intention was obviously satiric. The appearance of such terms in his posthumously published diary is more difficult to dismiss, however.

Biography

Henry Louis Mencken was born 12 September 1880 in Baltimore, Maryland. He graduated from the Baltimore Polytechnic Institute as valedictorian (1896). He was a reporter at the *Baltimore Herald* (1899–1901); editor, *Baltimore Sunday Herald* (1901–1903); city editor, *Baltimore Morning Herald* (1903–1904); city editor, *Baltimore Evening Herald* (1904–1905); editor in chief, *Baltimore Herald* (1906); news editor, *Baltimore Evening News* (1906); editor, *Baltimore Sunday Sun* (1906–1910); editor, *Baltimore Evening Sun* (1910–1916); coeditor, *Smart Set* (1914–1923); coeditor, *Parisienne* (1915–1916); coeditor, *Saucy Stories* (1916); coeditor, *Black Mask* (1920–1921); contributing editor, *Nation* (1921–1932); editor, *American Mercury* (1924–1933); and columnist and political correspondent, *Baltimore Sunpapers* (1919–1941). He married Sara Powell Haardt on 27 August 1930. In 1948 he had a stroke that ended his career. Mencken died on 29 January 1956 in Baltimore.

ERIK BLEDSOE

See also *American Mercury*; Cullen, Countee; Du Bois, W. E. B.; *Fire in the Flint*, The; Hurston, Zora Neale; Johnson, James Weldon; Larsen, Nella; *Pittsburgh Courier*; Schuyler, George S.; Walrond, Eric; White, Walter

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Messenger, The

Founded in 1917 by coeditors A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, *The Messenger* was published erratically until 1919 and thereafter monthly until 1928. As a result of its opposition to World War I and its advocacy of radical labor unionism (the Industrial Workers of the World), the editors were indicted and charged with offenses under the Espionage Act, although they were not convicted. After the war, its support for the Bolshevik revolution and for socialism at home led the federal government to describe it as "the most dangerous of all the Negro publications." The editors muted its militancy in the early 1920s while leading a

campaign against Marcus Garvey. In 1925, *The Messenger* became the official publication of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, which Randolph undertook to organize. When the fortunes of the fledgling union plummeted in 1928, however, the magazine folded for lack of finances.

The Messenger, *The Crisis* (the magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, NAACP), and *Opportunity* (the magazine of the National Urban League) were perhaps the only nationally circulated black periodicals to actively promote the Harlem Renaissance. *The Messenger's* political-economic orientation, however, dictated the view that cultural nationalism was secondary to more activist "New Negro" strategies for the progress of the race. Nevertheless, *The Messenger* opened its pages to poems and short stories by new and unknown writers as well as writers with already established reputations, and it gave additional space to cultural criticism—although without developing a unifying philosophy for the renaissance. Four individuals were primarily responsible for the magazine's literary emphasis: Randolph, who had a prior interest in amateur theater; the theater critic Theophilus Lewis; George S. Schuyler, managing editor in the mid-1920s; and Wallace Thurman, who, although he was on the staff only a short time, used his literary contacts to solicit contributions from, among others, Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps.

One of *The Messenger's* two greatest contributions to the Harlem Renaissance was opening its pages to aspiring writers. Although its motive was to radicalize the black proletariat rather than to promote literature, *The Messenger* printed Claude McKay's "If We Must Die" in 1919 when *The Crisis* feared to do so. Other poems followed, but it was not until 1923 that the magazine began to print works for their literary rather than their political merit. In sum, in 101 issues *The Messenger* published more than 250 poems by about ninety individuals, most of whom did not establish a literary reputation but did consider themselves participants in the renaissance.

In addition to unsolicited poetry by unknown writers, work by most of the significant poets of the Harlem Renaissance was printed in *The Messenger*. Langston Hughes was recognized as a literary "hot property"; sixteen of his poems appeared in the magazine, along with eight by a fellow student at Lincoln University, Edward L. Silvera. Others of the Harlem group besides Hughes and McKay who had poems published in *The Messenger* were Bontemps, Countee

Cullen, Wesley Curtwright, and Johnathan Henderson Brooks. Georgia Douglas Johnson, the doyenne of a literary circle in Washington, D.C., published sixteen poems; other poets from that group who appeared in the magazine were Lewis Alexander, Angelina Grimké, and Walter Everett Hawkins. Members of Boston's Saturday Evening Quill Club who published in *The Messenger* included Helene Johnson (poems), Eugene Gordon (a monthly feature on the best editorials in the black press), and Dorothy West (a short story). The magazine also printed thirty-five short stories, including some by Zora Neale Hurston, Eric Walrond, and Thurman, and three autobiographical stories by Hughes which were later incorporated into *The Big Sea* (1940). Finally, Schuyler published a Menckenesque monthly column, "Shafts and Darts," using wit and satire to skewer the likes of Marcus Garvey.

The second major contribution of *The Messenger* was its thoughtful and consistent commentary on black theater during the Harlem Renaissance. This was the work of the drama critic Theophilus Lewis, whose honest but sympathetic monthly columns from 1923 to 1927 sought to develop an ideology for a national black theater. He applauded popular musical revues for their irreverence and their accessibility to the masses, although he believed that only serious drama, based on black values and rooted in a black consciousness, could produce a genuinely racial theater. Despite this view, he applauded works by white playwrights that offered meaningful roles to black actors, like Eugene O'Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings*. Lewis believed that a greater number of such meaty roles would eventually emerge from black "little theater" groups, and he invariably found something positive in reviewing even the most pedestrian plays. Such efforts, he hoped, would lay the foundation for a future national black theater.

Regarding music, however, *The Messenger* took a conservative stance. Jazz and blues were not art, but merely raw materials from which a higher culture might be built. The magazine instead sought to encourage interest in classical music through articles on the composers Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and Robert Nathaniel Dett, the pianist Helen E. Hagen, and the tenor Roland Hayes. The magazine longed for productions of black opera to replace the "musical pabulum" of blues.

Despite *The Messenger's* unwillingness to appreciate black popular musical culture, it made a number of important contributions to the Harlem Renaissance. Theophilus Lewis was, in the opinion of writers like Bontemps, simply the best theater critic of the era. The magazine published as many poems and short stories

as did *The Crisis* and *Opportunity*, although major figures like Cullen, Hughes, and McKay published much less in *The Messenger* than in the other two magazines, regarding it as a distinctly third choice. On balance, *The Messenger* was a major proponent and encourager of the Harlem Renaissance, although it suffers somewhat in comparison with the other two monthlies because its circulation was less than theirs and because it never had someone who functioned exclusively as a literary editor. The renaissance would have been much poorer without any of these magazines: their ultimate significance lies in their encouragement of aspiring artists by publishing these artists' works.

THEODORE KORNEWIBEL

See also Bontemps, Arna; Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; Crisis, The; Dett, Robert Nathanie; Garvey, Marcus; Grimké, Angelina Weld; Hayes, Roland; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; Johnson, Georgia Douglas; Johnson, Helene; Lewis, Theophilus; McKay, Claude; Opportunity; Owen, Chandler; Randolph, A. Philip; Schuyler, George S., Thurman, Wallace; Walrond, Eric; West, Dorothy

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Meyer, Annie Nathan

Annie Florance Nathan Meyer was born 19 February 1867 in New York City to Annie Florence Nathan and

Robert Weeks Nathan. The Nathan family is of a notable U.S. Sephardic Jewish lineage and can be traced to Gershom Mendes Seixas, who served as minister of Congregation Sherith Israel in New York during the Revolutionary War. Meyer spent most of her life in New York except for a brief time in Green Bay, Wisconsin, where the family moved following her father's financial losses on the stock market in 1875. The family fell apart after this financial setback; her mother turned to drugs and died in 1878. Following their mother's death, Annie and her three siblings returned to New York to live with their grandparents.

The Nathan children attended public schools, but when her older sister Maud married, Annie Nathan quit school to manage the family's household. Through outside tutoring, she prepared for college and enrolled in the Collegiate Course for Women at Columbia University in 1885. To her disappointment, she learned that the women's curriculum was not the same as that for men at Columbia. After marrying a prominent physician, Alfred Meyer, on 15 February 1887, she left Columbia and studied independently, developing her literary skills. Her experience at Columbia University sent her on a quest to establish a college for women. On 28 January 1888, in an article in *The Nation*, Meyer began her campaign for the creation of New York's first women's college. Barnard College, named for a former president of Columbia University who supported higher education for women, formally opened on 7 October 1889 with seven students. Meyer maintained close ties with the college throughout her life and served on the board of trustees from 1893 through 1942. In 1915, her daughter Margaret was among the graduating class. On Meyer's seventieth birthday, the Annie Nathan Meyer Drama Library was established by Barnard College.

Meyer, a liberal, was active in numerous causes, some of which were controversial, such as the anti-suffrage movement. She also participated in numerous organizations, including the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), the League of Women Voters, and the National Council of Women. Her liberal ideas facilitated her willingness to work with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); to sponsor Zora Neale Hurston as Barnard's first black student; and to donate books on black history and culture to Hunter College. In 1932, the Provincetown Players produced her play *Black Souls*, which dealt with racial problems. Meyer was a prolific writer, having written twenty-six plays, three of which were produced on Broadway; eleven books;

numerous short stories, essays, and addresses; and hundreds of letters to newspapers. Her last book, *It's Been Fun*, was scheduled for publication at the time of her death. Following her death in 1951, an editorial in the *New York Times* described her as "a lively and constructive force for good in this city," possessing a "sense of humor that was one of her useful weapons in winning an argument."

Biography

Annie Florance Nathan Meyer was born 19 February 1867 in New York City, where she would spend most of her life. Her parents were Annie Florence Nathan and Robert Weeks Nathan. She enrolled at Columbia University in 1885; married Alfred Meyer, a physician, on 15 February 1887; left Columbia to study independently; was instrumental in the founding of Barnard College in 1889; and served on Barnard's board of trustees from 1893 to 1942. She was an activist in many causes; a participant in many organizations; and an author of books, plays, and essays. Meyer died of a heart attack on 23 September 1951.

KAREN COTTON MCDANIEL

See also Hurston, Zora Neale; Provincetown Players

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Micheaux, Oscar

Few African American artists have had a career spanning such a breadth of time and genres, or have

achieved such a high degree of popularity, as Oscar Micheaux. Following his first novel, which was published just before World War I, Micheaux would go on to write half a dozen full-length works of fiction over the next four decades. Yet it was in the new twentieth-century medium of film that he gained his greatest success as a storyteller, directing and producing more than forty movies between 1919 and 1948. Micheaux's movies—part of the genre called "race films"—addressed multiple aspects of the African American experience and were aimed specifically at black audiences. Still, his work remained on the periphery of the intellectual and cultural movement known as the Harlem Renaissance. The elite of the movement often regarded film itself as "low-grade" entertainment, and Micheaux's frequent use of negative stereotypes and his emphasis on conservative values earned him much criticism from black leaders.

Micheaux's early life shaped many of the values that he would inject into his novels and films. He was born in 1884 near Murphysboro, Illinois, the fifth of thirteen children. At age seventeen, he joined his older brother in Chicago, the destination of thousands of African Americans during the "great migration." Although Chicago's booming economy allowed for steady employment that helped sustain a growing black community, Micheaux found urban life too hectic and oppressive. Within a year, he took a job as a Pullman porter, which allowed him to travel, save money, and, especially, perfect the kinds of social skills in dealing with whites that would aid him as a young entrepreneur. In 1905, he used his savings to acquire a homestead in southern South Dakota, where he spent several years living in a sod house and raising crops. Black pioneers were a rarity in rural South Dakota, but apparently he gained the trust and respect of his white neighbors. Having removed himself from the urban centers of African American culture in the east, Micheaux often expressed disgust with blacks who huddled in overgrown cities rather than pursue opportunities for land ownership and self-employment in the American west, as he had done.

This was the theme of his first published book, *The Conquest* (1913), an autobiographical account of his experiences as a farmer on the great plains. The hero, Oscar Devereaux (a name very close to Micheaux's own), is a hardworking, enterprising young black man who becomes a western pioneer and rises above his poor, unambitious relatives. Much of *The Conquest* provides a sociological study of agricultural and community life of the area around the Rosebud reservation; later in the

novel there is an explanation of Devereaux's failed marriage to the daughter of a demagogic black preacher, whose interference causes the couple to divorce—a story based directly on Micheaux's experience with his first wife, Orlean McCracken. Indeed, Micheaux's book seemed an attempt both to express his personal bitterness over the divorce and to condemn the values of his former in-laws. Micheaux dedicated *The Conquest* to Booker T. Washington, the black educator whose advocacy of self-help and economic advancement collided with the growing "Niagara movement," popular among black professionals, which encouraged racial solidarity and attainment of social and legal rights. Although the Niagara movement gradually gained strength in subsequent decades, Micheaux would remain steadfastly loyal to Washington's ideas, portraying himself and his fictional heroes as self-made men who won the respect of whites through hard work rather than through confrontations with racism.

Micheaux's ideal self-made man was no mere facade. Having had his previous short stories rejected by publishers, he paid for the costs of printing *The Conquest* (anonymously) out of his own pocket, and even set up his own distribution system for marketing the book, first among his neighbors in South Dakota and then by traveling personally to the homes of black people across the South. His experience as an African American author and bookseller formed the basis for his second novel, *The Forged Note*, in 1915. By this time, Micheaux's homesteading operations had failed—most of his land had been lost to bank foreclosures—and writing appeared the most likely way to make a living. The profits generated by *The Conquest*, although meager, financed the establishment of his new firm, the Western Book and Supply Company. In 1917, the company published his third and longest novel, *The Homesteader*, which amounted to a reworking of *The Conquest* albeit with more melodrama and complexity. Like Oscar Devereaux, the protagonist of *The Homesteader*, Jean Baptiste, is a black pioneer who leaves city life for the openness of the west—and he too searches fruitlessly for romance, first with Agnes, the white daughter of a local farmer; and then with Orlean McCarthy, the daughter of a mean-spirited black minister in Chicago. *The Homesteader* was a success with the reading public and critics alike, though many readers found its ending contrived (Agnes is revealed to be part black and therefore a suitable partner for Baptiste, so that they can marry and live happily ever after).

The Homesteader also served as Micheaux's vehicle into the medium of film. In 1918, he was approached by two young black filmmakers, George and Noble Johnson, about adapting the novel into a movie. The parties signed a contract and began filming in Los Angeles. Micheaux, with his characteristic aplomb, however, insisted on directing the film himself, and so the deal was canceled. Undeterred, he renamed Western Book and Supply the Micheaux Book and Film Company and began selling stock to white farmers in the plains states in hopes of producing the screen version of *The Homesteader* himself. With a budget of \$15,000, he hired a cast of actors and shot the eight-reel production in a leased studio in Chicago. *The Homesteader*—the longest African American film to that date—opened in 1919 just as black veterans were returning from the war in Europe. Thanks to Micheaux's genius in promoting it, the film played in New York, Chicago, and important midwestern cities; was applauded by black newspapers like the *Chicago Defender*; and earned Micheaux a sizable profit.

Little is known about Micheaux's personal life in the 1920s, although judging from the sheer volume of films that his company produced, these were certainly his most prolific years as a storyteller. At the same time as the burst of creative energy in the arts and literature during that decade, African American filmmakers produced silent "race movies" that blacks could see in churches, private homes, armories, and segregated theaters. In films produced by whites at that time, black characters were often depicted as stereotypical clowns and toadies; in race films, by contrast, many black characters were proud, dignified role models. Moreover, the plots of race films often addressed subjects considered taboo in mainstream films, such as lynching, interracial romance, and prejudice. In the aftermath of a series of race riots that erupted in the summer of 1919, such topics could be seen as inflammatory; consequently, Micheaux and other African American directors often had to answer to local boards of reviewers and censors and cut footage that white authorities considered too controversial.

Micheaux did not shrink from controversy and in fact even used it as an opportunity for advertising. *Within Our Gates* (1920) depicted the lynching of a black sharecropper who was accused of murdering his vicious landlord. When southern censors and theaters rejected the film because of at least one very graphic scene, Micheaux ran ads in black metropolitan newspapers promising to deliver the uncut version that "tells it all." In another film, *The Brute*, also

released in 1920, Micheaux presented the story of a black prizefighter and dealt with the complicated subject of domestic abuse in African American families. In *The Symbol of the Unconquered*, he returned to a western theme: a gallant black frontiersman helping a young woman to defend her land. The ending is reminiscent of *The Homesteader*: the protagonist learns that the heroine has been passing for white, and so she becomes his love. Several of Micheaux's other films also have this theme: a black hero and a white woman are kept apart by society's fear of miscegenation until the revelation of "a drop of black blood" makes their union possible. Some critics have faulted Micheaux for apparently condoning the "one-drop rule," but others have seen in his stories an attempt to mock white America's insistence on rigid racial boundaries.

Despite the popularity of his work, the financial pressures of independent filmmaking gave Micheaux little time to enjoy his success. As his company expanded, he insisted on personally supervising all its functions, from writing scenes to directing and even to handling routine accounting. Micheaux often financed his productions by selling theater owners first rights to a new release, sometimes accompanied by actors who would perform a scene for the benefit of a prospective investor.

By the late 1920s, race films—unable to compete with the high-quality films produced by the major studios—were suffering a decline. As a consequence, the Micheaux Book and Film Company declared bankruptcy in 1928. A year later, Micheaux married the actress Alice Russell, whose financial and emotional support revived his career. In 1931, with the backing of white theater owners in Harlem, he released his first sound picture, a full-length feature film called *The Exile*, yet another romanticized account of his experiences in the west.

While *The Exile* did reasonably well and enjoyed a long run, Micheaux's "talkies" never attained the same level of success as his silent pictures. His films in the 1930s were basic reworkings of themes he had established earlier: for example, *Veiled Aristocrats* (1932) was an attack on African American elites and *God's Stepchildren* (1938) was about a railroad porter who saves money to buy a farm. Although social commentary remained important in all his works, the Great Depression also caused Micheaux to be more mindful of market demands. Increasingly, he augmented his plots with singing, dancing, or comedy acts, some of which were popular numbers known to patrons of the Cotton Club in Harlem and other nightspots. By the

late 1930s, reviewers were regularly lambasting his films as predictable and amateurish.

Micheaux returned to writing novels during the years of World War II, an endeavor he had abandoned after his initial successes as a filmmaker. Struggling with arthritis and often confined to a wheelchair, he relied more on his wife, Alice, who sometimes appeared in his films, to edit his manuscripts and assist with their sale and distribution. *The Case of Mrs. Wingate* (1945) deals with an interracial romance between a white woman in Georgia and her black chauffeur, with an added melodramatic plot involving fascist spies and an attempt to assassinate Eleanor Roosevelt. International spies also appeared in his detective tale, *The Story of Dorothy Stanfield* (1946). By this time, Micheaux had such a loyal following for both his books and his films that these works sold quite well. However, critics faulted him for telling unrealistic stories in which African Americans appeared in roles and situations improbable for the time; these critics also objected to Micheaux's habit—which bordered on libel—of retaliating against actual persons who had offended him by depicting them as thinly disguised villains. After an eight-year hiatus, Micheaux returned to film with *The Betrayal* (1948), an adaptation of his last pioneer novel, *The Wind from Nowhere*. Once again, black audiences appeared to enjoy the movie whereas black and white critics alike described



Oscar Micheaux. (Photofest.)

it in terms such as “ridiculous” and “a preposterous, inept bore.” *The Betrayal* proved to be Micheaux’s last major project; his health continued to suffer, and he died of a heart attack while on a trip to Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1951.

Micheaux’s personal and professional lives were truly inseparable. Not only did his own experiences provide the plots for many of his works, but the marginalization—both geographic and ideological—that he felt, relative to the leaders of African American society, became the standard conflict of his stories. Micheaux’s contributions to black culture rest in the enormous popularity of his books and films with ordinary African Americans, in his insistence that film could do more than entertain but could address social issues relevant to race relations, and in the shaping of his own persona as a role model for independent black filmmaking. That tradition would be revived following the civil rights movement, some twenty years after his death.

Biography

Oscar Micheaux was born 2 January 1884 near Murphysboro, Illinois. He moved to Chicago to work as shoeshine boy and Pullman porter in 1901; bought a homestead and became a farmer near Gregory, South Dakota, in 1905; and in 1913 wrote and published his first novel, *The Conquest*, which was followed by two additional novels, *The Forged Note: A Romance of the Darker Races* (1915) and *The Homesteader* (1917). He founded the Micheaux Book and Film Company in 1918 and produced a film version of *The Homesteader* in 1919. Micheaux released numerous films through the 1920s: *Within our Gates*, *The Brute*, and *The Symbol of the Unconquered* (1920); *The Gunsaulus Mystery* (1921); *The Dungeon* (1922); *The House behind the Cedars* (1923); *Body and Soul* and *Son of Satan* (1924); *The Conjure Woman* (1926); and *The Wages of Sin* (1928). The book and film company went bankrupt in 1928. Micheaux married the actress Alice Russell in 1929. The first all-black feature-length film, *The Exile*, was produced in 1931; *The House behind the Cedars* was remade as *Veiled Aristocrats*, a sound version, in 1932. *Swing* and *God’s Stepchildren* were released in 1938; *Lying Lips* was released in 1939. Micheaux returned to writing fiction with the publication of *The Wind from Nowhere* (1944), *The Case of Mrs. Wingate* (1945), *The Story of Dorothy Stanfield* (1946), and his last novel, *The Masquerade* (1947). His last film, *The Betrayal*, was

released in 1948. Micheaux died in Charlotte, North Carolina, on 26 March 1951.

JAMES N. LEIKER

See also Film; Film: Black Filmmakers; Johnson, Noble; Niagara Movement; Race Films

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Miller, Flournoy

Flournoy E. Miller was born in Columbia, Tennessee, in 1887, the son of a black newspaper editor and the second of three brothers, all significant in black entertainment (the other two were Irvin and Quintard). While studying at Fisk University, he and Aubrey Lyles formed a comedy act, writing their own material.

In 1906 Miller and Lyles joined the innovative Pekin Stock Company in Chicago as performers and resident playwrights. Working at the Pekin gave them contact with major figures like Will Marion Cook, Jesse Shipp, Joe Jordan, and Will Vodery. They contributed material to Ernest Hogan's last production, *The Oyster Man*, and wrote original shows. One show, *The Colored Aristocrats*, introduced the comic Jimtown personae, Steve Jenkins (Miller) and Sam Peck (Lyles), that would be associated with them evermore, significantly influencing the history of black—and blackface—entertainment. Another show, *The Husband*, helped launch Charles Gilpin's career.

In 1909 Miller and Lyles embarked on a vaudeville career that took them to New York. The conventions of the time dictated that black comedians perform in blackface, but Miller and Lyles's witty verbal humor and clever slapstick were far removed from the inanities of minstrelsy. They perfected several comedy devices that were imitated by comedians, black and white, for many years. These included a famous prizefighting routine; "indefinite talk," in which they anticipated the completion of each other's sentences; and "mutilatin" the language ("I's regusted.")

After several successful years in vaudeville, including an English season in 1915 (*Charlot's Revue*), they achieved even greater fame in 1921, collaborating with the musical duo Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake on the sensational *Shuffle Along*. This set the style for black shows for more than a decade, inspiring many imitations, including use of the Jimtown pair, Jenkins and Peck, in shows written by others.

After *Shuffle Along*, Miller and Lyles continued writing, producing, and performing in musicals and

dramas, with mixed success. Their biggest successes were *Runnin' Wild* (1923) and *Rang Tang* (1927). Numerous attempts to re-create the magic of *Shuffle Along*, such as *Keep Shufflin'* (1928), fell flat, though they provided opportunities for black entertainers. In 1928 the pair split. Miller continued writing and performing—for instance, in *Blackbirds of 1930*, a reunion with Eubie Blake. Miller and Lyles themselves reunited in 1930, collaborating on shows and short films.

By 1930 the radio show *Amos 'n' Andy*, by Correll and Gosden, white performers similar in style to Miller and Lyles, had become highly successful. Miller and Lyles's own radio show failed, though, and in 1932 they threatened to sue Correll and Gosden for plagiarism. Lyles died shortly afterward.

During the 1930s, Miller's career moved increasingly toward film. Teamed with the comedian Mantan Moreland, he performed in, and wrote for, many black movies from 1933 to 1956, including westerns like *Harlem Rides the Range* (1939). He moved to Hollywood but was occasionally still involved in theater, as in the final unsuccessful *Shuffle Along* of 1952. By 1940 he had made peace with the producers of *Amos 'n' Andy*, becoming a scriptwriting consultant for the show and later recommending Tim Moore for the role of Kingfish in the television version.

Flournoy Miller died in Hollywood on 6 June 1971. His association with *Shuffle Along* ensures that his memory will endure. He was an innovator who advanced black comedy and entertainment significantly, although his achievements are partly overshadowed today by association with the stereotypes of the blackface era.

Biography

Flournoy E. Miller was born in Columbia, Tennessee, on 14 April 1887. He studied at Fisk University. He was a resident playwright at the Pekin Theater Stock Company, 1906–1909; and founder of the Bijou Stock Company in Jacksonville, Florida, 1908. Between 1922 and 1925 he and Aubrey Lyles made about a dozen 78 rpm recordings on the OKEH label. Miller died in Hollywood on 6 June 1971.

BILL EGAN

See also Amos 'n' Andy; Blackbirds; Blackface Performance; Blake, Eubie; Cook, Will Marion; Gilpin, Charles; Jordan, Joe; Lyles, Aubrey; Miller, Irving; Miller, Quintard; Moore, Tim; Moreland, Mantan;

Musical Theater; *Runnin' Wild*; Shipp, Jesse A.; *Shuffle Along*; Sissle, Noble

Theater Productions and Performances

- 1906: *The Man from 'Bam*. (Pekin Stock Company.)
 1907: *The Mayor of Dixie*; *The Oyster Man*; *The Husband*. (Pekin Stock Company.)
 1908: *Doctor Knight and The Colored Aristocrats*. (Pekin Stock Company.)
 1908: *Ephraim Johnson from Norfolk*. (Bijou Stock Company, Jacksonville, Florida.)
 1912: *The Charity Girl*.
 1913: *The Cabaret*.
 1915: *Darkydom*.
 1915: *Charlot's Revue*. (London.)
 1918: *Who's Stealin*.
 1919: *Upstairs and Down Below*.
 1920: *Tunes and Funnies of 1920*.
 1921: *Shuffle Along*.
 1922: *Step On It*.
 1922: *The Flat Below*. (Dama, Lafayette Theater.)
 1923: *Runnin' Wild*.
 1924: *Going White*; *Honey*; *Negro Nuances*; *Struttin' Along Liza*; *Struttin' Time*; *Backbiters*.
 1927: *Rang Tang*.
 1928: *Keep Shufflin'*.
 1929: *Great Day*; *A Great Day in N'Orleans*.
 1930: *Blackbirds of 1930*.
 1931: *Lazy Rhythm*; *Sugar Hill*.
 1933: *Shuffle Along of 1933*.
 1934: *Get Lucky*.
 1935: *Cotton Club Parade*.
 1938: *Dixie Goes High Hat*.
 1939: *Hollywood Revue*.
 1942: *Harlem Cavalcade*.
 1947: *Kitchen Opera*.
 1949: *Sugar Hill*. (Revival, California; also known as *Meet Miss Jones*.)
 1952: *Shuffle Along of 1952*.

Films

- 1929: *Harlem Knights*; *Harlem Mania*.
 1933: *That's the Spirit*.
 1938: *Mystery in Swing*; *The Bronze Buckaroo*; *Harlem Rides the Range*.
 1939: *Harlem on the Prairie*; *Double Deal*.
 1940: *Mr. Washington Goes to Town*.

- 1941: *Professor Creeps*; *Lucky Ghost*.
 1943: *Stormy Weather*.
 1946: *Mantan Runs for Mayor*.
 1948: *She's Too Mean for Me*; *Come On, Cowboy*; *The Return of Mandy's Husband*.
 1951: *Yes Sir, Mr. Bones*.
 1956: *Rockin' the Blues*; *Untamed Mistress*.

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Miller, Irvin

Irvin C. Miller was a producer, comedian, and playwright, active from 1908 to the 1950s. He was one of three brothers in show business, the most famous being the actor-impresario Flournoy Miller and the youngest being the producer Quintard Miller.

Irvin Miller was educated at Fisk University. He performed at Chicago's Pekin Theater in 1908, in shows produced by Flournoy. He was with Scott's Black American Troubadours in 1910 and wrote his first show, *Happy Sam from 'Bam*, while with this company. He wrote and produced *Mr. Ragtime* in 1914, while he was with Kid Brown's company, and he costarred with Brown. For fifteen years Miller performed as a duo act with different partners: in 1913–1918 with the singer Esther Bigeou, his wife at the time; in about 1918–1919 with Henry "Gang" Jines; and in around 1920–1928 with Emmett "Gang"

Anthony. He and Anthony became quite prominent in black show business.

Miller specialized in revues featuring beautiful showgirls, snappy dancing, and comedy. Several of his shows appeared repeatedly in new editions from year to year, in the manner of the Ziegfeld Follies. *Broadway Rastus* was mounted in 1915, 1919, 1920, 1921, 1923, 1924, 1925, and 1928; *Brown Skin Models* annually from 1924 to 1954; and *Brown Skin Revue* in 1925. Miller was still sending companies out to tour the hinterlands with shows of this type after World War II.

Miller reached the height of his creativity and success in the early 1920s. He had two successful shows in 1921: *Alabama Bound* (based on a version of *Broadway Rastus*), and *Put and Take*. His greatest success came in 1922 with his script for *Liza* (original title, *Bon Bon Buddy, Jr.*), produced by Al Davis.

Miller's other shows included *Georgia, Runnin' Wild, Sugar*, and *Desires of 1927* (all in 1927); *Carolina Nights, That's My Baby, Blue Baby, Desires of 1928, Bad Habits of 1928*, and the "oriental" show *Tokio* (all in 1928); *Circus Showman* (1929); *Red Pastures* (1930); *Club Hollywood Revue* (1931); *Harlem Scandals* (1934); *Harlem Broadcast* (1936); and *Harlem Express* (1945). Particularly in the late 1920s, these shows were of variable quality; in some cases, Miller's involvement with them went no farther than allowing his name to be used and collecting some of the box office receipts. In the season of 1927–1928 alone he mounted ten productions at the behest of the Theater Owners' Booking Association alone, in addition to other shows in the same years. Not all his shows were aimed exclusively at the African American market; he sent his "Mikado Entertainers" (apparently an early version of *Tokio*) out on the Pantages vaudeville circuit.

Miller was adept at getting publicity. In 1927 he announced his intention to build a home in New Jersey for unwed chorus girls and the offspring of their liaisons. By this time, he was also involved in the career of a boxer, Joe Boykins. In 1941 Miller was instrumental in the capture of the murderer of a theater owner in Helena, Arkansas. Miller remained active into the mid-1950s, hiring small companies of young chorus girls, comedians, and musicians to tour the remnants of the black vaudeville circuit in late editions of his *Brown Skin Models*. He died in 1967.

Miller's shows were noted for the beauty of their showgirls; several also involved talented figures of the Harlem Renaissance. *Broadway Rastus* of 1919 featured songs from the Pace and Handy catalog, including

Handy's hit "Beale Street Blues"; Maceo Pinkard ("Sweet Georgia Brown") wrote music for the 1925 edition, as well as for *Liza*, which featured some fine dancers and comedians; and Shelton Brooks ("Some of These Days," "The Darktown Strutters' Ball") appeared in the *Brown Skin Models* of 1927.

Biography

Irvin C. Miller was born in 1884 in Columbia, Tennessee; he was one of three brothers in show business (the others were Flournoy and Quintard). Irvin Miller was educated at Fisk University; he performed at the Pekin Theater in Chicago in 1908 and with Scott's Black American Troubadours in 1910; wrote his first show, *Happy Sam from 'Bam* while with Scott's company; wrote, produced, and costarred in *Mr. Ragtime* in 1914, while with Kid Brown's company; worked for fifteen years as a duo with various partners; and produced or otherwise contributed to numerous revues. Miller died in 1967.

ELLIOTT S. HURWITT

See also Brooks, Shelton; Handy, W. C.; Liza; Miller, Flournoy; Miller, Quintard; Theater Owners' Booking Association

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Miller, Kelly

Kelly Miller's life and work place him squarely among the savants of his time. He was a major contributor to the thought, institution building, and consciousness raising among African Americans between 1880 and 1915 that were a necessary precondition for the birth of the "New Negro" of the 1920s and the Harlem Renaissance. He was "a leader whose

instincts favored moderation, reasonableness, harmony, and whose preferred terrain was the common ground between extreme positions" (Wright 1978, 180). Miller served with distinction as an inspiring teacher and administrator at Howard University for most of his academic career, but his national importance derived from his intellectual leadership both as an advocate for his race and as a mediator between supporters and opponents of Booker T. Washington. According to Meier (1966, 267), Miller "voiced the aspiration toward a cultural nationalism not only in his call for the study of Negro history, but also in his belief in a Negro genius in music literature and the arts." Miller is usually overlooked as a contributor to the Harlem Renaissance, but his philosophical outlook put him in the ranks of thinkers such as Alain Locke and W. E. B. Du Bois.

Long before the Harlem Renaissance, Miller embraced the notion of stimulating African American cultural development, serving as a cofounder and president of the American Negro Academy. The academy was limited to forty members, and its mission included promoting literature, science, and the arts; fostering higher education; publishing scholarly work; defending African Americans against vicious attacks; and stressing the importance of a "talented tenth" to lead the masses. "Upon the enlightened Negro has been imposed unusual responsibility and opportunity for service," he wrote in 1908. "He becomes the inevitable leader and exemplar of his people. They look to him as their guide, philosopher, and friend."

Miller was a noteworthy scholar. In *Educational Review*, *Dial*, *Journal of Social Science*, and other leading journals, he argued that African Americans needed wise leadership and that only higher education could provide such leaders. His monograph-length chapter "The Education of the Negro" in a report of the Bureau of Education in 1900–1901 not only displayed a careful marshaling of facts and figures from raw local and state data, but also offered a penetrating analysis of the socialization of African American children through the manipulation of the formal educational process by southern whites and the stratagems of African American teachers to counteract the process and promote race consciousness among these children. Miller's essay "The Harvest of Race Prejudice" appeared in March 1925 in the landmark "Harlem number" of the magazine *Survey Graphic*, which was republished in expanded book form as *The New Negro* (1925).

Miller was one of the first African American scholars to write regularly for the black press, with a syndicated column that appeared weekly for nearly twenty years in more than 100 newspapers. At the height of his fame, Miller estimated that his column was read by some half a million newspaper subscribers. He was an extremely forceful and prolific essayist, pamphleteer, and public speaker, whose frank analysis of race relations was directed at friend and foe alike, ranging from the segregationist Thomas Dixon Jr., to Oswald Garrison Villard of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). To those who objected to his pessimism about race relations, he replied, "I want the younger generation to open its eyes. I want to inspire them with courage. Not a blind impotent inane optimism which exults in vain conceit and empty boasting. . . . History discounts and discredits such fatal optimism" (Eisenberg 1960, 185).

In his lectures, books, and essays Miller sought to delineate the basic issues of race relations. Though devoid of elaborate statistical tables, Miller's publications were nonetheless marked by prescient observations derived from his careful study of the raw data. In "Enumeration Errors in Negro Population," Miller explained how the U. S. Census Bureau had compounded some relatively minor initial errors into a serious undercount in the census of 1920.

The emergence of Marcus Garvey and his movement following World War I created a leadership crisis among African Americans. In response to Garvey's challenge and competing visions of group progress among middle-class African American leaders, Miller proposed that the warring factions meet in a great council or "Sanhedrin" to formulate a common program of action for African American progress and achieve a unity of effort. Held in Chicago during February 1924, the Sanhedrin was attended by more than fifty organizations represented by approximately 500 delegates, including James Weldon Johnson of the NAACP, George Edmund Haynes of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, Channing H. Tobias of the African American branch of the YMCA, and a future president of Howard University, Mordecai Johnson. Delegates presented recommendations on a number of issues, including health care, the participation of women in civic affairs, financial assistance to farmers and students, and conditions of urban life for African Americans. Critics of the conference such as Du Bois, however, noted the meeting's weak stand on lynching, segregation, and racial discrimination in industry, as well as its failure to say

much of value about housing, intermarriage, union labor, or the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan. In the end, the conference accomplished virtually nothing. A second attempt to hold a unity conference under the auspices of the communist-controlled National Negro Congress in 1936 also failed. Sadly, old jealousies, poor planning, and Miller's inability to institutionalize the idea of the Sanhedrin led to the eventual collapse of the drive for unity.

By the 1930s Miller's leadership of the race had come to an end. In an era dominated by the competing ideologies of Marxism and capitalism, his pragmatism and lack of a definite philosophy made him a leader of the "old crowd." He would continue to write his weekly newspaper column, but the younger and more militant generation of African Americans thought that his views on important issues were out of step with the realities of the modern age. Ironically, that newer generation owed its existence, in large part, to Miller's tireless efforts as a teacher and advocate for the race.

Biography

Kelly Miller was born 23 July 1863 in Winnsboro, South Carolina. His parents were Elizabeth Roberts and Kelly Miller Sr.; he was the sixth of ten children. He received his primary education at Fairfield Institute in Winnsboro, South Carolina; attended the preparatory department, Howard University, 1880–1882; attended Howard University, 1882–1886 (bachelor of science, 1886); served as a clerk in the U. S. Pension Office, 1882–1886; studied advanced mathematics with Captain Edgar Frisby at the United States Naval Observatory, 1886–1887; was the first African American admitted to the graduate school of John Hopkins University in mathematics, philosophy, and astronomy, 1887–1889; and was awarded a master of arts degree in mathematics (1901) and a doctor of laws degree (1903) from Howard. Miller was a teacher at M Street High School in Washington, D. C. (1889–1890) and was appointed a professor of mathematics at Howard University in 1890. He married Annie May Butler in 1894; they had five children: Newton, Paul, Irene, May, and Kelly Jr. He was a co-founder of the American Negro Academy in 1897. In 1907 he was appointed dean of the college of arts and sciences at Howard, a post he held for twelve years. He founded Howard's sociology department in 1895 and was a professor of sociology at Howard from 1895 to 1934 and its chairman of sociology from 1915 to 1925.

Miller organized Howard's Moorland Foundation in 1914; it was reorganized as the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center in 1973. He was a board member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People as well as the National Urban League. Miller was the author of *Radicals and Conservatives* (1908), *Race Adjustment* (1908), *Out of the House of Bondage* (1910), *The Disgrace of Democracy—An Open Letter to President Wilson* (1917), *History of the Negro in the World War for Human Rights* (1920), and *The Everlasting Stain* (1924). He organized the Negro Sanhedrin in Chicago, Illinois, 1924. Miller died in Washington, D. C., 29 December 1939.

MONROE H. LITTLE JR.

See also Garvey, Marcus; Haynes, George Edmund; Howard University; Johnson, James Weldon; New Negro, The; Survey Graphic; Talented Tenth; Villard, Oswald Garrison

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Miller, Quintard

Quintard Miller was born in Columbia, Tennessee, in 1895. His father was the editor of a black newspaper,

the *Nashville Globe*. He was the youngest of three brothers, all prominent in black musical theater. His early career is obscure. There is a suggestion that he may have spent some time with the Pekin Stock Company, perhaps in association with his elder brothers. He also spent some time with the Sandy Burns Stock Company, where he met his future stage partner, Marcus Slayter.

Miller emerged in 1920 as a full-blown producer, as well as a comedian-actor, with the show *Broadway Gossips*, and from then until the late 1930s he was a prolific producer and performer. He occasionally collaborated with his more famous brothers, Irvin C. and Flournoy Miller, but he mostly operated independently of them. From 1920 to 1922, he wrote and produced nine shows on his own, as well as performing in his brother Irvin's productions *Bon Bon Buddy Jr.* and *Liza*.

In 1923 he teamed up with the comedian-actor Marcus Slayter, who was also a dancer and choreographer. Slayter had also worked with Sandy Burns, as well as stock companies run by Billy King and Eddie Hunter. Known as Miller and Slayter, the pair produced and performed in twelve shows from 1923 to 1926, including a production of *Shuffle Along* in Kansas City. Their show *Dixie Brevities* ran in an annual form from 1926 to 1928. Miller also performed during this period in several more of his brother Irvin's productions.

None of Quintard Miller's shows had an impact comparable to Flournoy Miller's *Shuffle Along* and *Runnin' Wild*, or even to Irvin Miller's *Put and Take* and *Liza*. Quintard Miller's productions had no original music of significance; they relied on a speedy revue format. The book was typically a rehash of familiar themes, even including Flournoy Miller and Aubrey Lyles's "Jimtown" characters, Jenkins and Peck. Nevertheless, these shows were a significant feature of black Broadway during the 1920s and created employment for a regular troupe of capable performers including the character actor George Wiltshire, as well as occasional opportunities for big names like Bessie Smith, Johnny Hudgins, Greenlee and Drayton, Butterbeans and Susie, and Willie Covan.

These were mostly touring shows, and their travels included the circuit of the black-owned Quality Amusement Company. In the early 1920s Quality Amusement controlled eight theaters in major cities, including the Lafayette in New York; the Howard in Washington, D.C.; and the Dunbar in Philadelphia.

This gave black audiences in regional centers some idea of what the new black Broadway phenomenon was about.

With the onset of the 1930s and the Depression, the frenetic pace of Quintard's productions slackened off; only four shows are recorded from 1930 to 1936. His final show as a performer, along with his partner Slayter, was in his brother Flournoy's *Dixie Goes High Hat* (1938). He retired from the theater in the 1940s and died in 1979.

Biography

Quintard Miller was born in Columbia, Tennessee, 9 May 1895. He was the younger brother of Flournoy Miller and Irvin Miller, who were also prominent in theater. He emerged as a producer and comedian-actor in 1920 with the show *Broadway Gossips* and was a performer and producer from then through the 1930s. In 1923 he and Marcus Slater became stage partners; they produced and performed in twelve shows. Miller retired from theater in the 1940s and is reported to have run a catering business in Los Angeles. He died in Los Angeles in March 1979.

BILL EGAN

See also Hunter, Eddie; King, Billy; Lafayette Theater; Liza; Musical Theater; Miller, Flournoy; Miller, Irvin; *Shuffle Along*; Smith, Bessie

Theater Productions and Performances

1920: *Broadway Gossips*.

1921: *Darktown Scandals of 1921*; *Folly Town*; *Some Baby*; *Tunes and Topics*; *Why Worry?*

1922: *Bon Bon Buddy Jr.*; *The Devil*; *Liza*; *This Way Out*; *Hearts of Men*.

1923: *The Mayor of Jimtown*; *Broadway Rastus of 1923*; *Sheik of Harlem*; *Tunes and Topics*.

1924: *Annie Oakley*; *Step Along*; *The Flat Above*; *Take It Easy*.

1926: *Broadway Brevities*; *Charleston Fricassee*; *Dixie Brevities*; *Harlem Butterflies*; *Miss Dinah of 1926*; *Shuffle Along* (Kansas City edition).

1927: *Bare Facts*; *Dixie Brevities of 1927*.

1928: *Dixie Brevities of 1928*.

1930: *Cabaret Prince*.

1934 and 1935: *Get Lucky*.

1936: *Harlem on Parade*.

1938: *Dixie Goes High Hat*.

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Mills, Florence

Florence Mills was a celebrated entertainer and the first black female star to win international acclaim at the beginning of the twentieth century. During the Harlem Renaissance and the jazz age of the 1920s, Mills enthralled audiences around the world with her talent for comedy, her phenomenal ability as a dancer, and her flutelike singing voice. She was known as “Harlem’s dainty singer” and the “queen of happiness”; James Weldon Johnson described her voice as “full of bubbling, bell-like, birdlike tones.” When she performed her signature song, “I’m a Little Blackbird Looking for a Bluebird,” Johnson said, “she did it with such exquisite poignancy as always to raise a lump in your throat.” Mills excelled in a number of forms of jazz and tap dancing, distinguishing herself from other dancers with her legendary acrobatic movements.

Mills was born in 1895 in Washington, D.C. She displayed her exceptional musical talents early in life, performing in local amateur hours and dance contests; she won her first dance contest, a buck-and-wing competition, at the age of three. Mills was already becoming popular locally and was invited to perform for diplomats and dignitaries. Billing herself as “Baby Florence,” she made her professional debut in 1903 in the road company of Bert Williams and George Walker’s show *Sons of Ham*. This brought her under the tutelage of a renowned black entertainer, the ragtime singer and cakewalker Aida Overton Walker, who had performed in the original company of *Sons of Ham* and had made the song “Miss Hannah from Savannah” a hit. Walker became a mentor and role model to Baby Florence and taught her the song, which Mills then sang in the show. As a result of her

success in *Sons of Ham*, Mills—at age eight—joined the touring company of the white vaudeville team Bonita and Hearn as a dancing “pick,” or pickaninny. The role of the pick was to dance and sing onstage with the white performers to enhance their routines. Mills’s tenure as a pick ended when she was arrested for being under age. Her family then moved to Harlem, and Mills began attending school.

In 1910, Mills, then age fourteen, returned to show business. She and her sisters, Olivia and Maude, formed the Mills Sisters, a song-and-dance team that performed in theaters in Harlem, including the famous Lincoln Theater, and in black vaudeville houses along the East Coast. The Mills Sisters specialized in ballads and popular songs. Eventually, Mills grew tired of the vaudevillian’s demanding lifestyle—constant traveling, the uncertain living conditions that black entertainers faced while on the road, low pay, and long hard hours—and left to try her hand as a cabaret entertainer. In 1916, Mills moved to Chicago and became a member of the Panama Trio with Ada “Bricktop” Smith and Cora Green. The trio performed in the black-and-tan Panama Café, a notorious honky-tonk on State Street on Chicago’s South Side. At the Panama Café, Mills worked with the jazz legends Alberta Hunter, Glover Compton, and Mezz Mezzrow and became acquainted with the renowned Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, who began giving her tap-dancing lessons. After a shooting scandal resulted in the closing of the Panama Café, the Panama Trio disbanded. Mills returned to vaudeville, joining the Tennessee Ten, a successful black traveling show. The dance director of the Ten, Ulysses “Slow Kid” Thompson—who was himself an acrobatic tap and “rubberlegs” dancer—eventually became Mills’s husband, and her extraordinary dancing style was greatly influenced by the combination of Thompson’s acrobatics and Robinson’s tap technique.

Mills’s big break came in 1921 when she replaced Gertrude Saunders, star of the hit black musical *Shuffle Along*, when Saunders left the show. Opening off-Broadway, *Shuffle Along* took theatergoers by storm with its high-stepping dancing and lively jazz. Mills, now age twenty-six, was a sensation and became an overnight star. Her success in *Shuffle Along* prompted the white promoter Lew Leslie to hire her and Kid Thompson to perform nightly at his Plantation Restaurant on Broadway. Leslie’s all-black floor show was built around Mills (although the show also had notable visiting performers such as Paul Robeson); and it was so successful that he turned it into a Broadway production, the *Plantation Review*, which opened on 22 July 1922 at the Forty-Eighth

Street Theater. This was a milestone in Mill's career: her work would be seen by New York critics and she was expanding the racial boundaries of show business. Mill's debut on Broadway was a tremendous success; the magazine *Billboard* noted that her name appeared in lights, "an even one hundred of them."

Mill then had a series of triumphs and "firsts," even though at times her successes were tarnished by racism. In 1923, famous British impresario C. B. Cochran brought the *Plantation* show to the London Pavilion, renaming it *From Dover to Dixie*. In London, Mills faced opposition from white performers, and newspaper headlines announced that the "Negro problem" was being brought to London; she was a huge success, however, and each night received an ovation from the packed house the moment she walked onto the stage. When she returned to New York, she was invited to be a guest star in the *Greenwich Village Follies* at the Winter Garden Theater. White cast members threatened to walk out in protest against a black performer's receiving a higher billing than theirs, but they backed down and the show went on. In 1924, Mills opened in a new show, *Dixie to Broadway*, in which she introduced her theme song, "I'm a Little Blackbird Looking for a Bluebird" (considered a thinly veiled protest against racial injustice). In June 1924, she became the first black headliner in vaudeville at the famous Palace Theater. This honor was followed in 1925 by her show *Blackbirds*, in which she also performed in France and England.

Mills always saw herself as representing her race. She was known for her charitable activities and for speaking out on racial issues and promoting the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She sought not only personal recognition but recognition for African Americans, "believing that every white person pleased by her performance was a friend won for the race." Mills died of appendicitis in 1927.

Biography

Florence Mills was born 25 January 1895 in Washington, D.C. She was the youngest daughter of John and Nellie Winfrey, two former slaves. Her professional debut was in Williams and Walker's show *The Sons of Ham*, 1903. Her professional performances included *Bonita and Hearn Vaudeville Show*, 1904; Mills Sisters, 1910; Panama Trio, Chicago, Illinois, 1916; Tennessee Ten, 1917; Panama Trio (re-formed), tour of Canada and the West,

1918; Tennessee Ten, 1919; Lincoln Theater, Harlem, 1920; *Shuffle Along*, Broadway, 1921; *Plantation Review*, Broadway, 1922; *Dover to Dixie*, London, 1923; *Greenwich Village Follies*, New York, 1923; *Dixie to Broadway*, Broadway, 1924; Palace Theater, New York, 1925; *Blackbirds*, New York, France, and England, 1925 and 1926; Aeolian Hall, New York, 1925. Mills was the first to star in a review built exclusively around black female singing and dancing, *Dixie to Broadway*; created the first major show made up solely of black American music, *Blackbirds*; was the first black woman to be offered a part in a major white show, *Greenwich Village Follies*; and was the first black woman headliner at the Palace Theater. She died in New York City, 1 November 1927, at age thirty-one.

JANICE TUCK LIVELY

See also Black and Tan Clubs; *Blackbirds*; Hunter, Alberta; Johnson, James Weldon; Leslie, Lew; Lincoln Theater; Robinson, Bill "Bojangles"; *Shuffle Along*; Smith, Ada; Willams, Egbert Austin "Bert"

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Minstrelsy

The minstrel show, which originated in America in the 1840s, was a highly popular form of entertainment

during the nineteenth century. Its phenomenal success in the United States, as well as in Europe and the far east, demonstrates its appeal to audiences of many social classes. The minstrel show became the training ground for many performers; it also provided a foundation for other popular theatrical entertainments. It was in decline during the first two decades of the twentieth century, but audiences were able to see acts that were similar to minstrelsy in many venues, including vaudeville, the variety show, burlesque, and Broadway musicals—and as late as 1910, more than ten minstrel troupes were still touring the United States.

A number of African American troupes that featured songwriters such as Sam Lucas (1848–1916), James Bland (1854–1911), and Gussie Davis (1863–1899) toured North America, Europe, east Asia, and Australia during the latter part of the nineteenth century, but by the turn of the twentieth century, the only well known black minstrel who was still performing regularly in minstrelsy was Billy Kersands (1842–1915). Kersands's long career had begun in the 1870s when he was as part of Callender's Georgia Minstrels. He appeared with many other companies, and at his death he was the lead comedian of the Dixie Minstrel troupe.

African American minstrel troupes appeared soon after the conclusion of the Civil War. The troupes followed the accepted practice of “blacking up” when they appeared onstage. Even after they left minstrelsy for variety, vaudeville, and musical theater, some comedians continued to “blacken up.” In their appearances in genres other than minstrel shows, African American comedians perpetuated the burnt-cork characters familiar to audiences who attended popular entertainments. Several other traditions also migrated to the other popular entertainments, including the use of stock minstrel characters with descriptive names, the use of dialect for some roles, the use of plots derived from farce, and the use of African American dance steps as the basis of the choreography.

The most prominent of the blackface performers who continued minstrel traditions after the turn of the twentieth century was Bert Williams (1876–1922). As one of the most popular acts on Broadway, Williams, with his partner, George Walker (1872–1911), portrayed stock characters known to audiences from the after-piece farces that concluded each minstrel show. Walker portrayed a fast-talking dandy who was always eager to inflict his shady schemes on everyone who met him; Williams's stage persona was a slow-witted,

slow-speaking, gullible but wily and canny survivor who usually had the last laugh. Their characters were based, in part, on the antebellum minstrel characters Zip Coon and Jim Crow, respectively. Williams and Walker's important shows include *The Sons of Ham* (1900), *In Dahomey* (1902), and *Abyssinia* (1905). In all these full-length musicals, the names of the characters recall those used in nineteenth-century minstrel shows, such as Shylock Homestead; Dr. Straight, a fakir; George Reeder, an intelligence officer; Henry Stampfield, a letter carrier; Leather, a bootblack; Hustling Charlie, promoter of the Get the Coin Syndicate; and Miss Primly. The extant scripts confirm that a number of brief humorous skits were joined together to make a full-length evening. Many were built around a song or dance that featured one of the stars. In *Sons of Ham*, for example, Williams, in disguise, is introduced by Walker as a doctor whose specialty is phrenology. After attracting a crowd by imitating a barker at a medicine show, Williams sings one of the earliest hits, “The Phrenologist Coon”; in this song, he parodies the pseudoscience of phrenology by telling the crowd that as long as they put some coins in his hand, he can tell them anything they want to hear.

After Walker's death in 1911, Williams continued playing similar roles as he starred in various editions of the *Ziegfeld Follies*. In one of his most famous performances, Williams portrayed a railroad porter who helped an English tourist, played by Leon Errol, to navigate his way out of the recently rebuilt Grand Central Terminal. The skit takes place during the reconstruction; Williams and his customer make their exit through the terminal on narrow girders and beams. While they are balancing on girders and lurching through the construction site, the two comedians discuss politics and social issues of the day. But mishaps continue to occur. After saving Errol several times from falling off girders, Williams receives a five-cent tip for his services. He grumbles at the stinginess of his customer. At that point, when Errol slips once again, Williams lets him fall into the excavation and throws his suitcase after him. Though long suffering, he has had the last laugh again. Bert Williams was revered as one of the greatest comedians of his time. He composed more than sixty songs, and he was a recording star for Victor and Columbia. He made several silent films; *A Natural-Born Gambler* (1916) preserves his famous pantomime poker game, which was seen in *Follies of 1914*. His character Jim Crow served as the prototype for stereotypical African American characters of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, including

those played by Flournoy Miller and Stepin Fetchit, as well as the character Andy in *Amos 'n' Andy*.

During the 1910s, black musical theater continued to show that it had roots in minstrelsy. Although the plots of these musicals were somewhat more substantial, they replicated the types of plots that audiences knew from the previous decade; minstrel caricatures, old jokes, and descriptive names still appeared in almost every show. Several new teams toured the country, including that of Flournoy Miller and Aubrey Lyles and the team of J. Homer Tutt and Salem Tutt Whitney. In Tutt and Whitney's *How Newtown Prepared*, for example, audiences saw the "grand old veterans," Private Arsenal, Sergeant Duposal, Major Bragg, and Colonel Hullabaloo, as well as Eagle Eye (an Indian chief) and Said Pasha (a Turkish prince). The use of double entendre and descriptive names was one of the major characteristics of minstrelsy from its earliest days. Their continuing use through the nineteenth century and the first three decades of the twentieth demonstrates the long-lasting influence of the minstrel show.

The presence of dialect roles in African American musicals is another characteristic associated with minstrelsy. The character types who speak in dialect are generally represented as ignorant and lower class, but streetwise. They are prone to mispronouncing polysyllabic words (as in the stump speeches that were heard in the minstrel show), and to mangling the niceties of grammar. Characters who spoke in dialect were seen in virtually every African American theater during the Harlem Renaissance.

Most of the scripts for African American book musicals during the renaissance still had only a thread of a plot; the narrative was regularly suspended at various points in the show to allow performers to present their specialties. Book musicals in the 1920s, like those earlier in the century, were, in effect, a collection of brief skits that were strung together. Their plots, which usually featured up-to-date post—World War I topical references and unsubtle references to famous people in the news, continued in the tradition of nineteenth-century low-comedy farces and were familiar to contemporary audiences not only through minstrelsy but from early black musicals and the African American vaudeville circuit. Plots were usually centered on an illegal or crooked scheme. In *Shuffle Along* (1921), two friends who own a grocery store in Jimtown and who want to be mayor of the town try to outwit each other in fixing the election; at the end, neither of them succeeds. In *The Chocolate Dandies* (1924),

the scheme is to "fix" a horse race. Some of the horses in the musical were named after recent African American shows: *Runnin' Wild*, *Shuffle Along*, and *Liza*. The plot opens with a race between horses that have been "doped" by one of the jockeys; the race is held and is won by Dumb Luck. The odds on Dumb Luck were 100 to 1, so the horse's owner, Mose Washington, collects \$10,000 on his \$100 bet. Washington then becomes president of the town's bank, and the former owners rob the bank and send him a letter informing him that he will go to jail for ten to thirty years because he has not protected the bank from robbers. As he is absorbing the bad news, there is a run on the bank—the depositors storm it to withdraw their money—but he escapes. In *Rang Tang*, two barbers steal an airplane from Jimtown's airport and land in Africa. Their comic adventures are the basis for most of the musical, which compares and contrasts the customs of American and African society.

African American revues, which gained in popularity during the Harlem Renaissance, were similarly influenced. The revue did not have to maintain the logic of a story line for the entire evening, since, by definition, it is a collection of separate scenes and acts. In *Dixie to Broadway* (1924), the opening "Evolution of the Colored Race," is followed by a plantation scene in which a song and dance, "Put Your Old Bandanna On," celebrates antebellum life in the South. Florence Mills (1896–1927) then appeared to sing "Dixie Dream," which also refers nostalgically to the plantation, with its "fields of white"; she dreams that she is back "once more in my Dixie home." In the subsequent scenes of Act 1, the audience saw a haunted-house skit in which the comedian Hamtree Harrington pantomimed fright at seeing a ghost; a double-entendre song, "He Only Comes to See Me Once in a While," sung by Cora Green; another number by Florence Mills, "Jungle Nights in Dixieland"; a tap dance by several of the men; a cross-dressing skit, "Mandy, Make Up Your Mind," in which Florence Mills played the groom; and a closing number, "Jazz Time Came from the South," performed by the entire company. In *Blackbirds of 1928*, the opening prologue, "Way Down South," again celebrated life on the old plantation; it was followed by Aunt Jemima's stroll and a scene in Jungleland, which featured eccentric dances while Adelaide Hall sang Dorothy Fields and Jimmy McHugh's "Diga, Diga, Do." Other scenes included a boxing sequence, a card game in a gin mill in Harlem, and a marriage ceremony in a minister's apartment on 135th Street in the middle of Harlem. In all these

scenes, the traditions of the minstrel show is apparent: a nostalgic look at the old way of life, as exemplified by the plantation; a caricature of African American superstition, in a haunted house or graveyard; a parody of African dances; the cross-dressing that was an important part of nineteenth-century minstrelsy; and the double-entendre low humor of the farce. Dialect performers; specialty acts; blackface comedians; and skits all reflected comically, in the minstrel tradition, on African American life.

Although professional minstrel shows were rapidly disappearing from theaters, they were still popular with audiences. Many were produced by amateur groups, who used the published manuals, with jokes for the end men in the opening semicircle, brief skits, music, and suggestions for staging and costumes. Amateur minstrel shows continued to be performed in many communities across the country at least through the 1950s.

JOHN GRAZIANO

See also Amos 'n' Andy; Blackbirds; Blackface Performance; Chocolate Dandies; Fetchit, Stepin; Fields, Dorothy; Hall, Adelaide; Harrington, James Carl "Hamtree"; Liza; Lyles, Aubrey; Miller, Flournoy; Mills, Florence; Runnin' Wild; Shuffle Along; Williams, Egbert Austin "Bert"

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Mitchell, Abbie

Abbie Mitchell was a child prodigy who, in her early teens, took voice lessons from Harry T. Burleigh; Burleigh had studied with Antonín Dvořák at the National Conservatory of Music. In 1887, when she was not yet fourteen years old, she auditioned for Paul Lurance Dunbar and Will Marion Cook's one-act musical *Clorindy, or the Origin of the Cake Walk*. Dunbar and Cook recognized her talent, and during the summer of 1898 she appeared in *Clorindy* with Ernest Hogan at the Casino Roof Garden. The following year she married Cook and starred in his *Jes' Lak White Fo'ks*, another one-act musical presented at the Roof Garden. In 1902, she played the ingénue in Bert Williams and George Walker's *In Dahomey*, which was one of the first African American musicals on Broadway and was also a huge hit in London.

On her return to New York, Mitchell was seen in *The Southerners* (1904), another musical by Cook. In 1905, she joined the Memphis Students, a singing and dancing group. Their act at Proctor's Twenty-Third Street Theatre was so successful that they were booked in Hammerstein's Victoria Theater, where they gave more than 150 performances. A tour of Europe included performances at the Olympia Theater in Paris, the Palace Theater in London, and the Schumann Circus in Berlin. Mitchell toured briefly with the Black Patti Troubadours and in early 1908 starred in Williams and Walker's *Bandanna Land*. As her marriage to Cook was ending, Mitchell joined a tour of the Nashville Students. In 1909, she starred as Minnehaha in Cole and Johnson's *The Red Moon*, which toured Europe after its New York run.

In 1912, because of a throat ailment, Mitchell turned to acting. In 1915, as a member of the original Lafayette Players of Harlem, she was seen in many dramas, including *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *Charley's Aunt*, and *Othello*. After World War I, Mitchell joined Cook and his Southern Syncopated Orchestra on a tour of Europe; she decided to

remain in Paris to study voice with Jean de Reszke and his teacher Giovanni Sbriglia. During the 1920s, she performed in concerts throughout Europe, singing French *mélodies*, German *lieder*, and African American spirituals. On her return to the United States in 1927, Mitchell appeared with Jules Bledsoe in Paul Green's *In Abraham's Bosom* at the Provincetown Playhouse. She was also seen in *The House of Shadows*, and with Helen Hayes in George Abbott's *Coquette* (1928), and she sang on the radio station WNBC.

Mitchell joined the faculty of Tuskegee Institute as head of the voice department in 1931. She also continued to perform, giving an "all-Negro" song recital in New York's Town Hall in 1931; in addition, she appeared as Santuzza in Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* in 1934, as Clara in Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, in Langston Hughes' *Mulatto* in 1935, and as Addie in Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes* in 1939. Although she had studied the title role in Verdi's *Aida*, and she hoped to sing in opera regularly, her dream never materialized. Mitchell served as executive secretary of the Negro Actors' Guild. In 1959, she was asked to appear in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, but her deteriorating eyesight prevented her from joining the cast.

Mitchell was sometimes described as a mezzosoprano, though she sang the soprano aria "Ritorna vincitor!" from *Aida*. Photographs show that she had an elegant bearing, and it was noted that her voice was natural, pure, and mellifluous.

Biography

Abbie Mitchell was born 25 September 1884 on the lower east side of Manhattan, to an African American mother and German-Jewish father. She was raised by a maternal aunt in Baltimore, where she was enrolled in a convent school and was soon recognized as a child prodigy. In her early teens, she returned to New York, where she studied with Harry T. Burleigh. In 1898 she appeared in Paul Laurence Dunbar and Will Marion Cook's *Clorindy, or the Origin of the Cakewalk*; in 1899 she married Cook and starred in his musical *Jes' Lak White Fo'ks*. She appeared in Bert Williams and George Walker's *In Dahomey* (1902) and Cook's *The Southerners* (1904); joined the Memphis Students, a singing and dancing group (1905); toured with the Black Patti Troubadours; starred in Williams and Walker's *Bandanna Land* (1908); joined the Nashville Students; starred in Cole and Johnson's *The Red Moon*

(1909); became an actress (1912) and performed with the Lafayette Players (1915); studied voice again in Paris after World War I; performed in concerts around Europe (1920s); returned to the United States and appeared in plays such as Paul Green's *In Abraham's Bosom* (1927); joined the faculty of Tuskegee Institute (1931) but continued to perform; appeared in Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* (1934), George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* (1935), Langston Hughes's *Mulatto* (1935), and Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes* (1939); and was executive secretary of the Negro Actors' Guild. Mitchell died 16 March 1960.

JOHN GRAZIANO

See also Bledsoe, Jules; Burleigh, Harry Thacker; Cook, Will Marion; Dunbar, Paul Laurence; Green, Paul; Lafayette Players; Mulatto; Porgy and Bess; Singers; Williams, Egbert Austin "Bert"

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Modern Quarterly

In March 1923, in the inaugural issue of the *Modern Quarterly*, the opening editorial declared that it was a "socialist magazine." It was published in Baltimore, Maryland, by the editor V. F. Calverton (a pseudonym for George Goetz) and his associates, and it reflected their leftist views. It included socialist commentary, literary criticism, book reviews, poetry, fiction, and articles on sociology and science. It differed from other radical journals of the time (e.g., *Seven Arts*, *Masses*, and *Liberator*), however, by publishing opposing viewpoints together in the same issues. In addition to editing the magazine, Calverton contributed to it regularly as a writer. The content of *Modern Quarterly* was

closely tied to Calverton's views, and he was the driving force behind the publication. Over the years, it featured more social, literary, political, and economic criticism and less creative work. The magazine ran from 1923 to 1940.

Modern Quarterly had developed from gatherings Calverton held in his home in Baltimore. He spearheaded fund raising for the publication, raising money from annual dinners and from lecturing. The magazine was intended for an intellectual audience and had subscribers in the United States and abroad. In 1933, Calverton's magazine changed to a monthly publication schedule, and its name was changed to *The Modern Monthly*.

Calverton frequently featured black writers in *Modern Quarterly*. W. E. B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Charles S. Johnson, Alain Locke, George Schuyler, Melvin B. Tolson, and other writers of the Harlem Renaissance were published in the magazine. Its open commentary on race and its promotion of desegregation reflected Calverton's views. He held social intellectual gatherings with blacks and whites and lectured at black institutions. *Modern Quarterly* also carried advertisement for black publications such as *Opportunity* and *Crisis*. Calverton was a contributor to *Opportunity* and other black periodicals.

Modern Quarterly offered black intellectuals a rare opportunity to present their views in a white publication. Hubert Harrison, who had been born in the Caribbean, put forth an alternative view of America's racial problems in the issue of September–December 1926, in his article "The Real Negro Problem." Alain Locke discussed the past and future of blacks in American literature in "American Literary Tradition and the Negro" (May–July 1926). Charles S. Johnson reviewed Locke's anthology *The New Negro* in the pages of *Modern Quarterly*. Other writing by blacks included Du Bois's essay "The Social Origins of American Negro Art" (October–December 1925) and Hughes's poem "Listen Here Blues" (May–July 1926).

As an anti-Stalinist, Calverton was frequently at odds with the Communist Party; he was also critical of the party's segregationist policies. He also differed from moderate conservative black leaders such as Du Bois by advocating class struggle within the black community. However, the openness of *Modern Quarterly* to writers of differing viewpoints made it a popular publication among intellectuals. This popularity subsided when many intellectuals became loyal to the Communist Party and to the fight of the Soviet Union against fascism. Calverton's stance against World

War II—which was thus the stance of *Modern Quarterly*—also caused a dwindling of readership and of financial support. *Modern Quarterly* ceased publication with Calverton's death in 1940.

HEATHER MARTIN

See also Calverton, V. F.; Communist Party; Crisis, The; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Harrison, Hubert; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, Charles S.; Liberator, The; Locke, Alain; Opportunity; Seven Arts; Schuyler, George S.; Tolson, Melvin

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Modernism

The Armory Show of 1913 in New York City introduced Americans to European modernism. The term "modernism" encompassed a broad range of avant-garde artistic expression that broke with the forms, images, and ideas of nineteenth-century western art. At the time of World War I, art critics applied the term to such nonrepresentational painting as cubism, fauvism, post-impressionism, futurism, and dada but also used it to describe avant-garde movements in all the arts. Modernists often disdained naturalistic representation and conventional narratives and rejected the values and sensibilities of the western genteel classes, including middle-class attitudes toward sexuality, class, gender, and race. Before World War I, most American modernists lived and worked in New York's Greenwich Village, not Harlem. Nonetheless,

the modernist assault on everything bourgeois led New York's modernists to Harlem and many Harlemite artists to modernism.

Several things beckoned modernists to Harlem. Because it was a virtually all-black neighborhood, many modernists, themselves bound by racial and class stereotypes, imagined its residents to be unscathed by debilitating bourgeois traits; in their minds, Africans and African Americans were thus more authentic. Moreover, the police of New York City failed to enforce many municipal ordinances in Harlem, especially laws that involved petty crime and vice. Unpoliced and morally unregulated, individuals in Harlem could freely pursue almost any activity, including the consumption of illegal alcohol and drugs and the gratification of a wide variety of sexual passions and whims. For many, this meant the freedom to be modern. Finally, during World War I Harlem became the showcase of a revolutionary new music. Following the war, jazz transformed American music and brought African American musicians and composers to center stage. By 1920 Harlem had become a major center of jazz, a music that many considered synonymous with "modern."

The African American musicians of Harlem altered the rhythm and sound of New York, giving the city's modernists an explicitly American and modern music. In nightclubs in Harlem, New York's modernist avant-garde discovered jazz. With the jazz revolution, the modern art of New York acquired an American voice, not just in sound and rhythm but also in its very spirit. Owing to its west African influences, jazz gave New York's modernists, black and white, a means to express their modernity in less narrowly western modes. During the jazz age, Harlem's African American artists redefined what it meant to be modern and American. They created a new, more encompassing notion of the modern—free of the racism implicit in European-based modernism—as they challenged the limits and frustrations dictated by western racism.

In the winter of 1924, Paul Whiteman's "First American Jazz Concert" introduced white New Yorkers to jazz. Downtown, far from Harlem, in the comfortable confines of the Aeolian concert hall, Whiteman offered a watered-down version of Harlem's jazz. The concert received a positive if condescending reaction. Olin Downes, the music critic for the *New York Times*, wrote sympathetically that *Livery Stable Blues* "is a glorious piece of impudence, much better in its unbuttoned jocosity and Rabelaisian laughter than other and

more polite compositions that came later" (13 February 1934). American avant-garde composers, however, understood from the start that jazz was far more than light entertainment. The modernist composer Aaron Copland recounted, "When I finished with my studies in Europe, I returned home with a strong desire to write recognizably American music. Jazz seemed to supply the basic source material for such music" (quoted in Thompson 1941, 46). Writing in 1924, the art critic Gilbert Seldes of New York pronounced: "Jazz is . . . the symbol, or the byword, for a great many elements in the spirit of the times—that as far as America is concerned it is actually our characteristic American expression" (1924, 83). American moderns saw in jazz an indigenous source for an American music, rich in new themes, interesting rhythms, and novel sounds, an expression of a "primitive" people, uninhibited by bourgeois culture.

Such attitudes both pleased and concerned Harlem's intellectuals. The year after white New York discovered jazz, these Harlemites launched an offensive against western intellectual racism. In 1925 Alain Locke (who was the first African American Rhodes scholar) inaugurated the Harlem Renaissance—or propelled it forward—with his anthology *The New Negro*, published by Albert and Charles Boni's modernist press in Greenwich Village. In this remarkable document, Locke offered an expansive collection of modern poetry, fiction, and essays that set the agenda for Harlem's cultural flowering. *The New Negro* brought to public attention the work of several unknown writers, outlining the enormous possibilities for black creativity. Locke's belief in Harlem's nascent renaissance was warranted. In the interwar decades, Harlem offered black artists and writers resources and an appreciative audience for their work. For example, during the 1920s the periodicals *Crisis* and *Opportunity*, which were based in Harlem, published many works of literature, and in turn Harlem's writers and artists produced an impressive number of modern works, some of exceptional quality—especially Claude McKay's novels; Zora Neale Hurston's fiction inspired by folklore; and Langston Hughes's poetry inspired by blues.

Locke, however, was disquieted by the infatuation that many modernists had with primitivism and their association of primitivism with Africa and African Americans. He cautioned:

Liberal minds today cannot be asked to peer with sympathetic curiosity into the darkened Ghetto of a

segregated race life. . . . Nor must they expect to find a mind and soul bizarre and alien as the mind of a savage, or even as naive and refreshing as the mind of the peasant or the child. . . . No more Uncle Remuses, Aunt Chloe's or Jemimas or pickaninnies. (1936, 48)

Locke asked Harlem's artists to transcend the narrow conventions of western art, creating a genuinely modern and human art: "Negro art does not restrict the Negro artist to a ghetto province, but only urges him to sustain his share in its interpretation, with no obligation but the universal one of a duty to express himself with originality and unhampered sincerity" (61).

Art, however, required patronage, and African American art found few patrons. In 1926, the William E. Harmon Foundation established an annual competition and exhibition for African American artists, awarding a gold medal and \$400 in eight fields of artistic expression. Although modest, the Harmon prizes granted black artists formal recognition for their work, and the annual Harmon exhibitions brought to public attention scores of previously unknown black artists. The artists and prizewinners included the sculptors Augusta Savage and Richmond Barthé and the painters William Henry Johnson, Palmer Hayden, and Archibald Motley. The Harmon Foundation ended its awards and exhibitions in 1934.

For painting and sculpture, the Harlem Renaissance proved a time of planting and nurturing. In the 1920s, however, perhaps only one artist in Harlem, Aaron Douglas, had a significant impact. Douglas had grown up and received his professional training in Kansas. In 1925 he came to Harlem. Responding to Locke's artistic imperative for the "New Negro," Douglas adopted a cubist-precisionist manner and committed himself almost exclusively to African American themes. Douglas illustrated several publications of the Harlem Renaissance, including *Crisis*, Locke's *New Negro*, and James Weldon Johnson's *God's Trombones*. In *God's Trombones*, Douglas combined stylized African imagery with cubist shapes and flattened perspectives.

Before the Harlem Renaissance, African American artists had generally failed to achieve recognition in painting and sculpture. In music, however, African American spirituals, ragtime, blues, and jazz came to define American popular music and dance. In the 1920s, several black singers fulfilled Locke's hopes for an African American music, including Roland Hayes, Marian Anderson, and Paul Robeson, all of whom

received national recognition in the 1920s and all of whom sang music inspired by African Americans. William Grant Still, however, was the pride of the Harlem Renaissance. Still had been educated at Wilberforce University and Oberlin College in Ohio and during World War I had composed for W. C. Handy. In the 1920s, Still focused almost exclusively on African American themes. His modern compositions included *Darker America*, *From the Black Belt*, *La Guiblessé*, and his masterpiece, *Afro-American Symphony*, performed in 1931 by the Rochester Philharmonic Symphony, the first major orchestra to play a symphony composed by an African American (Floyd 1990; Southern 1983, 395–456).

In Harlem, modern art often expressed itself commercially. In 1921 Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle produced the runaway hit *Shuffle Along*, featuring Josephine Baker and Florence Mills, the first Broadway musical produced and performed by blacks in more than a decade. In the 1920s, Mills, Charles Gilpin, Paul Robeson, and Bill "Bojangles" Robinson consistently received top billing on Broadway; Fletcher Henderson, at the Roseland Ballroom, just off Times Square, directed the first important jazz orchestra, opening the way for the big swing bands of the 1930s and 1940s. Harlem's entertainers affirmed the same racial pride championed by the Harlem Renaissance. Like its painters and writers, Harlem's musicians realized that their art contributed much to American life. Finally, it seemed, their day had come.

After World War I, despite persistent and pervasive racism, modern American culture became suffused with African American culture. In the great migration to northern cities, southern blacks carried with them far more than their meager material possessions. Leaving the rural South, they brought to America's cities a rich, complex, evocative culture. Drawing on their west African and southern folk roots, African American blues singers, dancers, artists, and jazz musicians provided modernist American artists with an alternative, nonwestern mode of expression. African American colors, patterns, rhythms, and values became a part of American culture. Such art challenged the boundaries between art and entertainment, western and nonwestern, male and female, white and black. Duke Ellington, Langston Hughes, Aaron Douglas, and other participants in the Harlem Renaissance bridged the racial chasm that had fragmented modern life. In the 1920s and 1930s, however, Harlem and most of its residents remained apart,

distant from the rest of the city. Despite the pervasive presence of jazz and other modern arts, racism continued to separate New York's modern artists.

PETER M. RUTKOFF
WILLIAM B. SCOTT

See also Anderson, Marian; Barthé, Richmond; Black Bohemia; Blake, Eubie; Crisis, The; Douglas, Aaron; God's Trombones; Harmon Foundation; Hayden, Palmer C.; Hayes, Roland; Henderson, Fletcher; Jazz; Johnson, William H.; Locke, Alain; Motley, Archibald J., Jr.; New Negro, The; Primitivism; Robeson, Paul; Roseland Ballroom; Savage, Augusta; Shuffle Along; Sissle, Noble; Still, William Grant

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Moore, Frederick Randolph

The newspaper publisher Frederick Randolph Moore (1857–1943) was a lifelong and active member of the Republican Party; was personally acquainted with every president from Ulysses Grant to Herbert

Hoover; was present at the assassination of President James Garfield in 1881; and attended every Republican National Convention from 1908 to 1920. Unlike many black leaders, Moore never shifted allegiance to the Democrats, but he did not hesitate to criticize the Republican Party when it disappointed African Americans' hopes. He bitterly attacked President William Taft for giving in to the "lily-white" faction within the party in the South. Nevertheless, Taft appointed him minister to Liberia in 1912, although the appointment was merely symbolic; Woodrow Wilson had already won that year's presidential election, and Moore served only one month, during which he remained in New York.

From age eighteen on, Moore was a messenger to seven successive secretaries of the Treasury; he accompanied Secretary Daniel Manning on overseas business and was named a temporary assistant secretary of the Treasury. After leaving the Treasury Department, Moore took a position with the Western National Bank in New York. In 1905 he resigned to become publisher of *Colored American Magazine*. Moore had been an ally of Booker T. Washington in the 1890s and to some degree was his spokesman at *Colored American Magazine* and later at *New York Age*. Moore was also connected with Washington's other lieutenants in black politics and business, such as T. Thomas Fortune and Emmett Scott. In association with these men, Moore became active in the Negro Protective League (a business organization), its successor the Afro American League, and, most important, the Afro-American Building and Loan Association.

In 1907 Moore purchased *New York Age*, a leading black paper that had formerly been published by *Fortune*. Moore had written for the paper for decades. He moved *New York Age* from its original offices in Chatham Square (today's Chinatown) to West Forty-Sixth Street in 1910, and to West 135th Street in Harlem in 1919. He built his own printing plant for *New York Age*, at a time when few black papers owned one. Moore continued to publish the paper until his death in 1943.

Despite his moderate politics, Moore was a fierce and outspoken opponent of lynching and Jim Crow laws in the south. In this respect, he broke firmly with the gradualism of Booker T. Washington's group. He also joined progressive campaigns in the North, particularly a movement of the 1930s whose slogan was "Don't buy where you can't work." However, he never abandoned Washington's conservative emphasis on an economic rather than an educational model for racial success.

Moore, Frederick Randolph

Moore was elected an alderman of New York City twice, in 1927 and 1929. During this period he worked tirelessly for the Colored Merchants Association (CMA), but, particularly with the onset of the Great Depression, it became virtually impossible to persuade black consumers to buy according to racial loyalty rather than price. In 1933, Moore turned against CMA, which folded the following year. In his later years he was particularly active with the National Urban League and in numerous local organizations in Harlem.

Biography

Frederick Randolph Moore was born 16 June 1857, the son of a slave woman and a white father; he was raised in Washington, D.C. He worked as a newsboy and then (from age eighteen) as a messenger to seven secretaries of the Treasury, as well as accompanying one, Secretary Daniel Manning, on overseas business. He later worked for the Western National Bank in New York; he resigned in 1905 and became publisher of the *Colored American Magazine*; in 1907 he bought *New York Age*, which he continued to run until he died. He was a lifelong active member of the Republican party and was elected an alderman of New York City in 1927 and 1929. He was also active in business associations and, later in life, in the National Urban League. Moore married Ida Lawrence in 1879. They had eighteen children, of whom six survived to adulthood. Moore died 1 March 1943 in New York City.

ELLIOTT S. HURWITT

See also Fortune, Timothy Thomas; National Urban League; *New York Age*; Scott, Emmett Jay; Washington, Booker T.

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Moore, Richard B.

Richard Benjamin Moore was an Afro-Caribbean intellectual and radical activist who contributed to the development of black Marxism, organized labor, and cultural nationalism in the United States. He immigrated from Barbados to New York City in 1901, settled in Harlem, and became involved in grassroots politics. He was a founding member of the Harlem branch of the Socialist Party in 1918 but grew disheartened by its failure to attack racism and abandoned it in 1921. He then joined the Workers Party, the local branch of the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) in Harlem. With Cyril Briggs, Grace Campbell, and others, Moore established the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB), a secret organization for people of African descent that emphasized armed self-defense against white supremacists. Though ABB was short lived, it marked an attempt by the Communist Party to merge racial concerns with labor politics. Moore also served on the executive board and council of directors of the American Negro Labor Congress (ANLC) in 1925 and became a contributing editor of its organ, *Negro Champion*. In 1931 Moore was elected vice president of International Labor Defense (ILD), which had a crucial role in the Scottsboro case. Moore was instrumental in pushing ILD and the Communist Party to demonstrate a commitment against racism. By the 1940s, however, Moore moved away from Marxism and toward pan-Africanism as a means of black liberation. He was charged with racial chauvinism and expelled from CPUSA in 1942.

Moore also contributed to the Harlem Renaissance by promoting literary and intellectual developments rooted in the black experience. He became a wholehearted pan-Africanist intellectual and studied informally throughout the 1930s with figures such as anthropologist Louis Leakey and historian William Leo Hansberry. In the 1940s, he lectured on the history and political affairs of the African diaspora, in accordance with his heightened race-consciousness.

In 1940 Moore formed a partnership with Angelo Herndon and started Pathway Press, specializing in racially conscious texts such as a commemorative edition of *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. Also in 1940, Moore founded the Frederick Douglass Historical and Cultural League as a public forum for the local Harlem community. In 1942, he established the Frederick Douglass Book Center, which specialized in the African diaspora; it remained a cultural and intellectual hub in Harlem until it burned down in 1968. Moore acquired some 15,000 books on the experience of black people around the world (the collection is now housed in Barbados), and he was directly involved with developing a curriculum to promote greater racial sensitivity in the educational system of New York City.

Moore also focused on decolonization. His earliest foray into this movement was his effort to organize mass demonstrations and relief during the Italian-Ethiopian crisis of 1935. Two years later he became involved with endorsing Caribbean independence and help found the American-West Indian Defense Committee. He participated more intensely in Caribbean advocacy organizations during the 1940s and 1950s, hoping to establish a federation of West Indian nations. In 1953, he delivered a speech in Harlem, to British representatives and many supportive Harlemites, about this proposed federation. Although the federation movement faltered in the 1950s, many Caribbean islands did gain political independence from European powers a decade later; in 1966, Moore was invited to return to Barbados for a celebration of its independence.

Throughout his life, Moore devoted himself to ending white supremacy. His most profound contribution to that struggle was *The Name "Negro"—Its Origin and Evil Use* (1960), in which he argued that the word "Negro" was unacceptable because of its "slave origin" and detrimental connotations; he proposed "Afro-American" as a more positive alternative.

Biography

Richard Benjamin Moore was born on 9 August 1893 in Hasting, Christ Church, Barbados. His family immigrated to New York City in 1901 and settled in Harlem. He was a founding member of the African Blood Brotherhood, 1919–1924; was a member of the executive board and council of directors of the American Negro Labor Congress (ANLC), 1925; was a contributing editor to *Negro Champion*; was elected vice president of International Labor Defense, 1931; was a

cofounder of Pathway Press, 1940; and established the Frederick Douglass Book Center, 1942–1968. Moore died on 18 August 1978 in New York.

J. M. FLOYD-THOMAS

See also African Blood Brotherhood; American Negro Labor Congress; Briggs, Cyril; Communist Party; Pan-Africanism; Scottsboro

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Moore, Tim

Harry Roscoe "Tim" Moore is best known today for his role as George "Kingfish" Stevens in the television version of *Amos 'n' Andy* during the 1950s. However, this came at the tail end of a long career in black entertainment.

While dancing for pennies on the streets of Rock Island, Illinois, around 1900, Moore was recruited to join a vaudeville act, Cora Miskel and Her Gold Dust Twins, as one of the twins. He toured England with this act. On his return in around 1901–1902 he joined Dr. Mick's Traveling Medicine Show. He left show business to be a jockey briefly, before taking up a successful career as a professional boxer (he claimed to have won 84 of 104 fights).

He returned to the stage in 1908 with a notable one-man show of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in which he presented a profile in blackface or whiteface depending on which character he was playing. With his first wife, Hester, he formed a vaudeville troupe, the Georgia Sunflowers, which lasted several years. They toured in Asia, Australia, and the Pacific. In 1916, with his second wife, Gertie, he created *Tim Moore's Chicago Follies*. They regularly toured the Theater Owners' Booking Association (TOBA) circuits until 1925, building up a strong following among black audiences.

As well as his own touring productions, Moore played in numerous other shows as a featured comedian in the 1920s, and also in an early black silent film, *His Great Chance* (1923). Though he worked in the blackface tradition, he had established a reputation as a clever stand-up comedian writing and performing his own material. He had perfected a con-man routine developed in his early vaudeville years and also sometimes portrayed a blackface Scotsman, complete with kilt. His success brought him to the attention of Lew Leslie, who gave him the leading comic role in the highly successful *Blackbirds of 1928*. Moore continued to be featured in most of Leslie's later *Blackbirds* shows, including the European-based versions in 1934 and 1936, as well as the final version in 1939, which also featured Lena Horne.

Moore appeared in several other black revues throughout the 1930s, such as *Fast and Furious* (1931), which included Jackie "Moms" Mabley. He was a regularly featured comedian at Harlem's Apollo Theater and the Alhambra. In 1931 he had a role in Oscar Micheaux's movie *Darktown Revue*. Moore continued playing nightclub and cabaret engagements into the 1940s. His last theater engagement was Ed Sullivan's *Harlem Cavalcade* in 1942. His final film role was as a transvestite in *Boy! What a Girl!* (1947).

While he was living quietly in retirement at home in Rock Island in 1950, he was recommended by his old friend Flournoy Miller for the part of "Kingfish" in the planned television version of *Amos 'n' Andy* (which had begun as a radio series). Despite the show's controversial racial image, Moore's reworking of his con-man routine created a memorable portrayal that is still recalled with affection by many people, both black and white. The show ended in 1953. Moore died in Los Angeles in 1958.

Biography

Harry Roscoe "Tim" Moore was born in Rock Island, Illinois, 9 December 1887. He joined a vaudeville act

in around 1900; joined Dr. Mick's Traveling Medicine Show in about 1901–1902; was a jockey (briefly) and then a professional boxer; had a one-man show of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1908; formed a vaudeville troupe, the Georgia Sunflowers; produced *Tim Moore's Follies*, 1916–1925; performed in numerous shows as a comedian in the 1920s and 1930s; he also performed in nightclubs, cabarets, films, and—memorably—in the television series *Amos 'n' Andy* in the early 1950s. Moore died in Los Angeles 13 December 1958.

BILL EGAN

See also Alhambra Theater; Amos 'n' Andy; Apollo Theater; Blackbirds; Blackface Performance; Leslie, Lew; Mabley, Jackie "Moms"; Micheaux, Oscar; Miller, Flournoy; Theater Owners' Booking Association

Theater Productions and Performances

- 1908: *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. (One-man show.)
- 1909: *Georgia Sunflowers*.
- 1916–1925: *Chicago Follies/Tim Moore's Follies*.
- 1919: *A Wedding in Jazz*.
- 1923: *Rosie's Wedding Day*.
- 1924: *Aces and Queens*.
- 1925–1926: *Rarin' to Go*.
- 1925: *Lucky Sambo*. (*Aces and Queens* renamed.)
- 1927: *Southland Revue; Take the Air*.
- 1928–1929: *Blackbirds of 1928*.
- 1931: *Fast and Furious*.
- 1932: *Harlem Scandals of 1932; Blackberries of 1932*.
- 1934: *Blackbirds of 1934*.
- 1936: *Blackbirds of 1936*.
- 1939: *Blackbirds of 1939*.
- 1942: Ed Sullivan's *Harlem Cavalcade*.

Films and Television

- 1923: *His Great Chance*.
- 1931: *Darktown Revue*.
- 1946: *Boy, What a Girl*.
- 1951–1953: *Amos 'n' Andy*.

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Morand, Paul

Paul Morand, a French modernist author, published more than sixty books of fiction, travel, criticism, and autobiography during a career that lasted some sixty years. By the end of the twentieth century, his fame had dimmed in France and he was little known in the English-speaking world, but two of his early books were widely read in translation and discussed during the Harlem Renaissance.

Magie noire (1928; issued in the United States as *Black Magic*, 1929) is a collection of eight short stories, inspired by Morand's travels through Africa as part of his diplomatic duties for the French government. The stories show black Africans in Europe and the United States struggling to deal with the changing world, and generally finding themselves incapable of keeping pace with whites. In "Syracuse, or the Panther Man," for example, a wealthy and educated African American becomes a screaming naked savage when he sees an African mask for the first time in a museum in Brussels; in "Good-Bye, New York," a light-skinned black woman from New York takes a cruise around the world and is driven mad by prejudice. It seems that Morand was attempting to treat those of African descent sympathetically, but his black characters are mere stereotypes; most of them long to return to Africa or revert to a supposed ancestral black essence, and they are unable to find peace and success in modernized societies like those found in Harlem, New Orleans, or Liberia. The stories are sprinkled with specific details of life in these locations, and several critics commented that Morand had a better feel for skyscrapers, music, and costume than he did for people. The book is illustrated with drawings by Aaron Douglas, an important artist of the Harlem

Renaissance. The drawings, incorporating both western and African elements, were among Douglas's most influential works.

For one of his nonfiction travel books of the period, *New York* (1929, translated 1930), Morand drew on official visits he had made to the United States in 1925 and 1927. The book reveals a writer who finds New York fascinating and amusing. He celebrates museums and hockey and shopping, and he demonstrates his fascination with Harlem's nightlife and with the opportunities New York offered for members of different races to interact. His passages describing Harlem are lively and detailed, presenting an interesting outsider's point of view.

Both books were controversial in the 1930s, as intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance debated the extent to which Morand's portrayals were insightful or patronizing.

Biography

Paul Morand was born in Paris, France, on 13 March 1888. He was educated at the Institution Sainte-Marie; Lycée Carnot, 1899–1903 (degree not completed); was tutored privately by Jean Giraudoux, 1905; and studied at the Écoles des Sciences Politiques, 1909–1912. He was an attaché, diplomat, and ambassador for the French government, 1913–1927, 1932–1944, 1953–1955; an editorial board member at the newspaper *Figaro*, 1933–1939; and a writer and translator, 1919–1976. He was elected to the Académie Française in 1968. Morand died in Paris on 23 July 1976.

CYNTHIA BILY

See also Douglas, Aaron

Selected Works

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Moreland, Mantan

Most scholars would agree that, with regard to his career, Mantan Moreland is about as far removed from the goals and ideas of the Harlem Renaissance as an artist can get. A highly successful comic, Moreland appeared in more than 300 films during the 1930s and 1940s, playing nervous black characters who fled at every sign of danger. The diminutive Moreland delighted white and black audiences alike with his rolling eyes and exaggerated facial expressions, but his humor seemed totally at odds with the efforts of the renaissance to produce works that portrayed African Americans as dignified role models rather than as offensive caricatures. Whatever the attitude toward his legacy, Moreland left a mark as a comedian that is difficult to ignore.

Moreland was born in 1901; his penchant for entertaining emerged during his childhood years in Monroe, Louisiana, where his friends nicknamed him "Google Eyes." At around age fourteen (some accounts say he was as young as twelve), Moreland ran away at least twice, once to become a dancer with a carnival, and later to join a traveling medicine show; in both cases, he was forcibly returned to his home by the juvenile authorities. In the 1920s, Moreland toured briefly with a minstrel troupe before playing on the "chitlin circuit," the colloquial term for all-black vaudeville shows. There, he perfected his craft as a comedian by playing backup for famous comics such as Flournoy Miller, Benny Carter, and most notably Tim Moore, a former prizefighter who later played the role of Kingfish on the television program *Amos 'n' Andy*.

The slapstick-burlesque road shows in which Moreland developed his style evolved from nineteenth-century minstrel troupes and the crude "coon humor" that was popular around the United States. Middle-class professionals, particularly those of the Harlem Renaissance, derided such comedy as racist and demeaning, an opinion shared by contemporary historians. Yet,

as some cultural theorists have pointed out, vaudeville shows required more skill than minstrelsy, and overall they marked a shift toward a more respectable image for black comedians. "Mutilatin' the language" (as in "you gotta be repaired for that") became a staple of Flournoy Miller's act, whereas Moreland's own "indefinite talk" routine, which he regularly performed live and unrehearsed with his partner Ben Carter, required ample skills in delivery and timing:

- A. How come you can't pay me now?
B. Horse races
A. What track you play at?
B. I play over there at . . .
A. That track's crooked. Why don't you play over here around . . .
B. That's where I lost my money! . . . I bet on a horse and that rascal didn't come in until . . .
A. Was he that far behind?
B. Yeah!
A. Who was the jockey ridin' him?
B. A jockey by the name of . . .
A. He can't ride! I thought he went out there to ride for . . .
B. He did! But they fired him. He came on back . . .

Moreland and Carter could continue such patter indefinitely, each finishing the sentences of the other without allowing the conversation to reach a stopping point. Despite the stereotypical content, the grammar and dialect of such exchanges was probably a more accurate reflection of the speech patterns of average, uneducated African Americans in the 1920s than the literary accomplishments of the black elite.

Moreland's background in live comedy provided much of the style that later defined him as a movie actor. A typical stage buffoon, he used physical mannerisms and gestures that held the audience's attention: delivering his lines at a staccato pace, punctuating a joke by rolling or popping his eyes, or affecting a facial expression with his elastic features to convey a range of emotions from surprise to terror to lechery. His popularity earned him offers to perform in *Connie's Inn Frolics of 1927* and *Blackbirds of 1928, 1930*, and *1932*. Though he received mostly secondary roles with little dialogue, Moreland's antics were such that observers found it difficult to watch anyone else with whom he was sharing the stage.

Hollywood studios had a need for black men with such talent. Lazy black characters like Rastus or “coon servant” types like Stepin Fetchit drew the laughter of white audiences even while confirming their prejudices. Moreland’s film debut came with *That’s the Spirit* in 1932; it was followed five years later by a supporting role in *The Spirit of Youth*, which was about the life of a professional boxer and had an all-black cast including Joe Louis. As in his stage work, Moreland would be typecast in minor, insignificant roles where he provided his formulaic routines and gestures. His films were mostly low-budget independent productions, although he worked with some great comedy teams like Laurel and Hardy, and also with figures such as Redd Foxx and Lucille Ball who later became famous in the transition to television. Through the late 1930s and 1940s, Moreland was almost ubiquitous in American films, making cameo appearances in literally hundreds of grade-B productions.

Moreland found his niche playing the sidekick in comic mystery tales such as *Cosmo Jones*, *Crime Smasher* (1943) and in horror films like *King of the Zombies* (1943). The inane writing and plots were partly redeemed by Moreland’s humor, as in his use of signature lines like “Feets, do your duty.” His most recurrent role was Birmingham Brown, the black chauffeur of the Chinese detective Charlie Chan. The Chan films capitalized on a dual set of ethnic images by contrasting the calculating Asian sleuth and his sons, who spoke broken English and were given to philosophical musings, with Brown’s perpetually frightened demeanor and hilarious avoidance of danger. American audiences identified with Brown because of the way that Moreland imbued the character with a commonsense instinct of self-preservation, juxtaposed against the cold rationality of the Asians:

Number 1 son: Confucius remind us, Birmingham, that he who fights and runs away . . .

Brown: I know . . . will live to run another day!

Number 1 son: If you’re scared, Birmingham, just keep saying to yourself, “I’m not afraid . . . I’m not afraid.”

Brown: I’m not afraid. I’m not afraid. I’m not afraid.

Number 1 son: How do you feel now?

Brown: I feel like a liar!

In other mystery films, Moreland’s characters could be seen commenting on the action from the

sidelines or occasionally even rescuing the protagonist from danger, though always with extreme reluctance.

Although the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) regularly denounced Moreland’s work as perpetuating ignorance and stereotypes, his films undeniably did well with African American moviegoers. At theaters in Harlem, he had top billing in advertisements for the Chan films. In the late 1940s, Toddy Studios commissioned him to star in a series of cheap but raucously funny movies produced for all-black cinemas. Moreland occasionally did have roles in grade-A pictures as well as in numerous radio programs, and apparently he was even considered as a replacement for Shemp Howard in the Three Stooges comedy team. Through the decade of World War II, his trademark role of the “fainthearted Negro” would be endlessly repeated by imitators, but Moreland’s expert use of physical expressions and body language somehow conveyed the individuality of each character, despite the banal dialogue given to him by unimaginative screenwriters.

The black civil rights movement of the 1950s brought a downturn in Moreland’s popularity. As African Americans defied a century of discrimination and segregation laws, the image of a clownish, scared black man no longer held much power to entertain. No longer in demand in movies, Moreland tried to revive his stage career by turning to the nightclub circuit. His finances suffered, and by the early 1960s, when a severe stroke left him incapacitated, he was nearly bankrupt. After 1964, however, Moreland’s health and reputation experienced an amazing recovery. He appeared in 1964 in the horror picture *Spider Baby* with Lon Chaney Jr., and he went on to play cameos in two prominent films directed by Carl Reiner later in the decade. As the television and motion picture industries became more open to African Americans, experienced black actors like Moreland enjoyed a resurgence. He worked on a few situation comedies such as the *Bill Cosby Show*, and even revived his “indefinite talk” routine for television commercials. His last roles included a part in Melvin Van Peebles’s satire *The Watermelon Man* (1970) and in *The Young Nurses* in 1973. Moreland died of a heart attack in Hollywood that same year, at age seventy-two.

Film critics of the post-civil rights era have not been kind in their analyses of Mantan Moreland and other black actors who portrayed tricksters, lethargic servants, and lovable cowards in the early decades of moviemaking. Yet Moreland carved a place for himself in the film industry during a time of intense racial

oppression and when the doors of major studios were almost universally closed to people of color. Evidencing what W. E. B. Du Bois called “double consciousness,” Moreland developed a physical repertoire that allowed him to produce ambiguous images that whites perceived as clownish and unthreatening, but that fellow blacks could interpret as sly and clever. At the very least, his work testifies to the expertise of an entertainer who could assess the mood of his audiences and use self-parody to keep them laughing.

Biography

Mantan Moreland was born 4 September 1901 in Monroe, Louisiana. He left home at age fourteen, in 1915, to join a traveling circus; toured with a minstrel troupe and became a well-known vaudeville circuit actor in the 1920s; appeared in *Connie's Inn Follies of 1927* and *Blackbirds of 1928, 1930, and 1932*; and moved to Hollywood and began appearing in low-budget independent films in the late 1930s. His most famous role was “Birmingham Brown,” assistant to the detective Charlie Chan in a series of fifteen films from 1944 to 1948. Moreland was considered as a replacement for Shemp Howard in the comedy team the Three Stooges in 1955. He began appearing in nightclub acts in the late 1950s. He suffered a severe stroke in the early 1960s but made numerous cameo appearances in films and television sitcoms in the late 1960s. He appeared in his last major film, *The Watermelon Man*, in 1970. Moreland died of a heart attack in Hollywood, California, 28 September 1973.

JAMES N. LEIKER

See also Miller, Flournoy; Moore, Tim

Selected Filmography

That's the Spirit (1932); *The Spirit of Youth* (1937); *Shall We Dance* (1937); *Next Time I Marry* (1938); *There's That Woman Again* (1938); *Harlem on the Prairie* (1938); *Two-Gun Man from Harlem* (1938); *Irish Luck* (1939); *One Dark Night* (1939); *Riders of the Frontier* (1939); *Tell No Tales* (1939); *Frontier Scout* (1939); *Laughing at Danger* (1940); *Millionaire Playboy* (1940); *On the Spot* (1940); *Star Dust* (1940); *Chasing Trouble* (1940); *Drums of the Desert* (1940); *Up in the Air* (1940); *Hi'Ya, Sailor* (1941); *Let's Go Collegiate* (1941); *Mr. Washington Goes to Town* (1941); *You're Out of Luck* (1941); *Cracked Nuts* (1941);

Dressed to Kill (1941); *Ellery Queen's Penthouse Mystery* (1941); *Sign of the Wolf* (1941); *Four Jacks and a Jill* (1941); *The Gang's All Here* (1941); *Hello Sucker* (1941); *Cabin in the Sky* (1942); *Footlight Serenade* (1942); *Law of the Jungle* (1942); *Mexican Spitfire Sees a Ghost* (1942); *The Palm Beach Story* (1942); *Phantom Killer* (1942); *Andy Hardy's Double Life* (1942); *Eyes in the Night* (1942); *The Strange Case of Dr. Rx* (1942); *Tarzan's New York Adventure* (1942); *Footlight Serenade* (1942); *Freckles Comes Home* (1942); *Girl Trouble* (1942); *Phantom Killer* (1942); *A-Haunting We Will Go* (1942); *Cosmo Jones, Crime Smasher* (1943); *King of the Zombies* (1943); *Hit the Ice* (1943); *Melody Parade* (1943); *You're a Lucky Fellow. Mr. Smith* (1943); *Revenge of the Zombies* (1943); *Sarong Girl* (1943); *She's For Me* (1943); *Slightly Dangerous* (1943); *Swing Fever* (1943); *We've Never Been Licked* (1943); *Mystery of the Riverboat* (1944); *Bowery to Broadway* (1944); *Charlie Chan in the Secret Service* (1944); *Moon over Las Vegas* (1944); *Pin Up Girl* (1944); *Charlie Chan in Black Magic* (1944); *The Chinese Cat* (1944); *Chip off the Old Block* (1944); *See Here, Private Hargrove* (1944); *South of Dixie* (1944); *This is the Life* (1944); *Meeting at Midnight* (1944); *The Scarlet Clue* (1945); *The Jade Mask* (1945); *Captain Tugboat Annie* (1945); *The Shanghai Cobra* (1945); *The Spider* (1945); *She Wouldn't Say Yes* (1945); *Dark Alibi* (1946); *Riverboat Rhythm* (1946); *Shadows over Chinatown* (1946); *Tall, Tan and Terrific* (1946); *The Chinese Ring* (1947); *The Trap* (1947); *Juke Joint* (1947); *Sky Dragons* (1948); *The Mystery of the Golden Eye* (1948); *Docks of New Orleans* (1948); *The Feathered Serpent* (1948); *The Shanghai Chest* (1948); *The Chinese Ring* (1948); *Spider Baby* (1964); *The Patsy* (1964); *Enter Laughing* (1967); *The Comic* (1969); *The Watermelon Man* (1970); *The Young Nurses* (1973).

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Morrison, Frederick Ernest

As a baby, Frederick Ernest Morrison (c. 1912–1989) was thrust into films by his father, a cook based in New Orleans whose own ambitions for a film career had led him to Hollywood, where he eventually found himself working for a movie producer. Thanks to his father's connections in Hollywood and to his infectious beaming smile, little Ernie Morrison came to the attention of the father of the child star Baby Marie Osborne, who was looking for a black youngster to appear alongside his daughter in one of her films. Morrison made his film debut with Baby Marie Osborne in 1917 at the age of five.

In 1919, Morrison came to the attention of the white comedy producer Hal Roach, who wanted to sign Morrison to appear under the sobriquet "Sunshine Sammy" in a series of short films starring the popular white comedians Snub Pollard and Harold Lloyd. Roach's films were a far cry from the early motion pictures called "race films" produced by independent black filmmakers such as Oscar Micheaux. Roach understood that stereotypes of blacks were what sold at the box office. In these shorts, Morrison played the role of a tiresome pest who constantly interfered with everyone else's affairs. His performances were so impressive that Roach decided to showcase his talents and make him a member of a new comedy series called *Our Gang*, about the adventures of a group of white and black children from a

working-class background. The series was innovative in that it featured the white and black children on equal terms rather than as foils against one another. As far as children were concerned, audiences had no problem with this arrangement. As a child actor, however, Morrison had little choice in the roles he played. Whether they were children or adults, white audiences were comfortable with seeing African Americans portray stereotyped comic or clown characters who were nonthreatening—and what better example could there be than a smiling black youngster? From 1922 to 1924, Morrison, now referred to exclusively as "Sunshine Sammy," appeared in twenty-eight *Our Gang* shorts and became the highest-paid black performer in the movies.

Sometime in 1924, at the ripe age of twelve, Morrison was persuaded by his frustrated father-manager to leave cinema for the vaudeville circuit as a tap dancer, singer, and comedian with his own band called "Sunshine Sammy and His Hollywood Syncopators." He continued on this path for the next fifteen years, learning a great deal about entertaining along the way. In 1940, Morrison returned sporadically to films and played the character Scruno in Monogram's *East Side Kids*. He was also periodically cast in a few Twentieth-Century-Fox musicals as a member of the dancing Step Brothers.

During World War II, Morrison found time to entertain troops with the USO. After the war, he gave up show business and took a job as a quality-control inspector at an aerospace firm based in Los Angeles. He retired in the early 1970s, but he emerged briefly to appear in guest spots on such television series as *Good Times* and *The Jeffersons*. In 1987, Ernie "Sunshine Sammy" Morrison was inducted into the Black Film-makers Hall of Fame.

Biography

Frederick Ernest Morrison was born in about 1912. He made his film debut with Baby Marie Osborne in 1917 at the age of five. In 1919, he was signed by the white comedy producer Hal Roach to appear as "Sunshine Sammy" in a series of short films starring Snub Pollard and Harold Lloyd. From 1922 to 1924, Morrison appeared in twenty-eight *Our Gang* shorts. In 1924, he went on the vaudeville circuit as a tap dancer, singer, and comedian with his own band; in 1940 he returned to films. Morrison retired in the early 1970s and died in 1989.

JAMES SMALLS

See also Film: Blacks as Portrayed by White Filmmakers; Micheaux, Oscar; Race Films

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Morton, Ferdinand Q.

The politician and attorney Ferdinand Quentin Morton was born in Mississippi in 1881 and grew up there and in Washington, D.C. He studied for three years at Harvard, where he was a star of the debating team, and then studied law at Boston University. He received his bachelor of laws degree in 1909, moved to New York City, passed the bar exam, entered the firm of Wheaton and Curtis, and allied himself with the Tammany Hall Democratic Party under the sponsorship of Charles F. Murphy. In 1916, Morton was elected leader of the United Colored Democratic Association (United Colored Democracy) and was appointed assistant attorney general. In 1922, he was named to the Civil Service Commission by Mayor John F. Hylan; Morton would serve on this commission for twenty-six years, surviving four investigations that resulted in the resignations of several colleagues (he was chairman of the commission for several years in the 1940s). In 1924, Morton declined the offer of a judgeship. During the 1920s, he had a close friendship with Mayor Jimmy Walker and was also connected with Governor Al Smith. When Smith ran for the presidency in 1928, Morton initially refused to campaign for him after discovering that the campaign headquarters was segregated; he then relented and did work for Smith, but refused reimbursement of expenses on the grounds that the funds were tainted by racism. In 1932, Morton initially opposed Franklin D. Roosevelt's nomination for the presidency because Roosevelt, as governor of New York, had quarreled with Tammany Hall. In 1935, Morton ran for the state assembly but lost the seat for

Harlem to a white candidate and openly decried the election as having been corrupt and rigged.

Throughout his long career in politics, Morton worked for the people of Harlem, particularly in matters involving government jobs. He was instrumental in the appointment of several black judges. A staunch opponent of racial separatism, he quarreled over this matter with W. E. B. Du Bois in the pages of *Crisis*. On both tactical and psychological grounds, Morton took positions that in retrospect seem prescient as well as sensible:

You advocate withdrawal behind the barriers because members of the majority group . . . "refuse to treat me like a man." That psychological reaction is precisely the thing that must be discouraged in our youth. . . . We will not build separate institutions . . . when our country's institutions are our birthright. There is not one which we have not helped to establish.

A stoic by nature, and a tough and persistent political brawler, Morton received the following unusual accolade in the magazine section of the Baltimore *Afro-American* in 1935: "astute politician . . . never cries when hit." And the *Tattler* noted, in 1930: "Morton . . . taught the Negroes of New York that politics is a business that calls for hard selfish thinking instead of idealistic sentiment." Morton had his critics, however, one of whom, the columnist "Capitan" in the *Louisiana Weekly*, wrote some incisive and telling attacks.

Morton never married, and he claimed to live entirely for his work. An enthusiastic baseball fan, he served a term as commissioner of Negro Baseball. His last years were marred by Parkinson's disease, and he retired from the Civil Service Commission at the beginning of 1948. He entered a sanatorium in Washington, D.C. and died in 1949.

Biography

Ferdinand Quentin Morton was born 9 September 1881, in Macon, Mississippi, and was raised there and, from age nine, in Washington, D.C. His father was a schoolteacher in Macon and later a clerk in the Treasury Department. Morton attended public schools in Washington; Phillips-Exeter Academy, graduating in 1902; Harvard (for three years); and Boston University (bachelor of laws, 1909). He joined the law firm Wheaton and Curtis in New York City; allied himself

with Tammany Hall; was elected leader of United Colored Democracy (1915); was appointed assistant attorney general (1916); and was named to the Civil Service Commission (1922), on which he served for twenty-six years (including several years as its chairman in the 1940s). He also served a term as commissioner of Negro Baseball. He developed Parkinson's disease, retired from the Civil Service Commission in 1948, and entered a sanatorium in Washington, D.C. He died in a hospital there in November 1949, following injuries suffered when he fell asleep while smoking.

ELLIOTT HURWITT

See also Baltimore Afro-American; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Inter-State Tattler; Party Politics; Politics and Politicians; United Colored Democracy

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Morton, Jelly Roll

Jelly Roll Morton (Ferdinand Joseph La Menthe)—a pianist, composer, arranger, and bandleader in classic jazz—is among the most colorful and controversial figures in the history of this music. During the 1920s, Morton brought jazz to new heights with a series of recordings that demonstrated the greatness of early New Orleans ensemble playing and also influenced the future big band style by showing that swinging jazz could result from combining solo improvisation with complex written arrangements. However, Morton's

adventurous life and his constant self-aggrandizement, sometimes at the expense of others, often overshadowed his importance as a pioneering genius in jazz composing, arranging, and piano playing.

Morton was born in New Orleans, probably in 1885 or 1890, and as a child was drawn to the music of his surroundings: ragtime, spirituals, opera, blues, marches, vocal quartets, and Spanish guitar music. These experiences would lead to his love of the piano, and they would influence the development of his highly original concepts of jazz improvisation and form. Morton's brief period of formal piano instruction was supplemented by learning from blues pianists and the ragtime piano "professors" of New Orleans' Storyville red-light district, where he soon worked as a soloist.

After being ejected from home for working in brothels, Morton began an errant lifestyle that took him throughout the South, trying his hand at gambling, pimping, and pool hustling. He also became a traveling vaudevillian and adopted the name Jelly Roll (and Morton, based on his stepfather's last name, Mouton). He traveled about the country, challenging and defeating lesser pianists with his style of ragtime, blues, jazz, and even classical pieces. By 1914 Morton began to write out the original compositions that he had made up and refined over the years. He published his "Jelly Roll Blues" (the first published jazz score) in 1915. From 1914 to 1917, Morton was active in Chicago's Southside night life as a bandleader, using his handwritten musical arrangements for the first time.

Morton moved to Los Angeles in 1917 and for the next five years wrote new compositions, led bands, and performed up and down the West Coast. In 1923, seizing new opportunities presented by the publishing and recording industries, he moved back to Chicago, where he had his greatest period of productivity, renown, and artistic success. He wrote, published, and recorded songs at a rate that surpassed anyone else in jazz at the time. Among his earliest sessions were band recordings and piano solos, including some of his best works, like "King Porter Stomp" and "New Orleans Joys." Morton's piano style was his own unique creation: a blend of the forms and techniques of ragtime and the feeling of the blues with his own laid-back sense of swing. In his early solo piano style, Morton often conveyed the sounds of other instruments with lines, melodies, riffs, and effects that appear later in versions recorded by full bands.

During this time, he began a collaboration with the Melrose brothers' publishing company and record store, which served as his base of operations for putting out new material, rehearsing bands for recordings, and gaining exposure in the music community. He continued to record band numbers and produced two duets with Joseph "King" Oliver. National exposure came when compositions like his "Wolverine Blues" were recorded and played by bands all over the country.

On the heels of Louis Armstrong's recordings with the Hot Five and Hot Seven—which helped to shift attention toward improvised solo playing in jazz—Morton recorded his greatest body of work, which focused on collective ensemble playing. Morton's sessions with the Red Hot Peppers in 1926 and 1927 are among the most significant body of jazz recordings. Here his extended concept of New Orleans—style jazz is beautifully displayed with a series of colorful melodies, shifting moods, solo breaks, arranged harmony parts, improvised solos, surprising effects, and driving rhythms. Morton was a true artist who experimented with instrumentation, tone colors, rhythms, and form. His band orchestrations were extensions of his solo piano style and were thus tinted with blues inflections, Afro-Caribbean rhythms, subtle dynamics, dissonance, and counterpoint, all of which he saw as crucial to jazz. Morton's work of the mid-1920s also introduced new elements in jazz recording, such as trios, arranged clarinet "choirs," and improvisation based on a single chord.

When activities on Chicago's Southside slowed down, Morton toured for a year and then moved to New York in 1928. Despite his best efforts, he was never a big success in New York. The man who had been at the top of Chicago's jazz world now experienced a downward spiral in his career and his life, from which he never recovered. During his five years in New York, Morton constantly had problems finding competent musicians and work. His insistence on regular rehearsals and on strict adherence to sometimes difficult written scores—and his preference for musicians from New Orleans—made it hard for him to assemble and keep a good band.

In the late 1920s, jazz was growing in many directions—all of them away from Morton's New Orleans concept of an ensemble. In the mind of the public and of forward-thinking jazz musicians, Morton was no longer in fashion. The flashy hot improvised solos of Louis Armstrong and the emerging big bands that depended more on arrangements were now in vogue.

Morton's laid-back, bluesy piano style seemed tame compared with the trendy faster, fuller, more aggressive, technically complex Harlem stride piano, the style of James P. Johnson, Willie "the Lion" Smith, and Fats Waller. Some musicians saw Morton as a second-rate has-been. To make matters worse, Morton became a target of scorn and ridicule as a result of his own continual bragging about being the world's greatest pianist and the inventor of jazz and about the superiority of New Orleans musicians, and as a result of his complaint that New York musicians were thieves who could not play jazz or swing. However, Morton also had a reputation for being able to back up his claims, and on occasion he proved that he could at least hold his own with the stride players.

In 1928 and 1929, Morton recorded several piano solos and a new version of the Red Hot Peppers, who had been working with him at a dance hall in Harlem called Rose Danceland. Although he was able to find work over the years playing at ballrooms and college dances in the area, Morton's engagements became fewer and fewer. Due to poor record sales and the economic effects of the Depression, he was dropped by the Victor recording label in 1930. He now spent much of his time standing outside the Rhythm Club in Harlem, arguing with and preaching to musicians about organizing, protecting their rights, the shortcomings of other musicians, and of course his own greatness.

The main targets of Morton's verbal assaults were organizations like ASCAP, Melrose Publishing, MCA booking agency, and the musicians' union, which he felt were either stealing from him or preventing him from collecting the royalties that were rightfully due to him as a composer and a recording artist. He believed that a concerted effort by these agencies and a voodoo curse placed on him were the causes of his declining career and his other misfortunes. Some of Morton's beliefs were not completely without merit. The Melrose brothers had been cheating him out of royalties for years; he had also been denied membership in ASCAP for several years because of its racist practices, so that had had received no payment for other people's performances of his songs. Although his own piano and band style was considered old fashioned, several of his compositions, such as "Wolverine Blues," "Milenburg Joys," and especially "King Porter Stomp" (in versions for big bands) had become hits for Benny Goodman, Fletcher Henderson, and others, and they were constantly being recorded and played on radio across America.

Much has been made of the fact that, although Morton and Duke Ellington (as the first and second great jazz composers) had some similar artistic and conceptual ideas, there was a long-standing and sometimes viciously outspoken bitterness between them. In interviews, Ellington belittled Morton as a pianist and composer. Morton, for his part, called Ellington a fake and a thief whose acclaimed “jungle style” had been stolen from Morton’s earlier recordings. Actually, Ellington’s style of the late 1920s and early 1930s showed considerable influence from New Orleans jazz, and it is unimaginable that he would have been unaffected by the greatest composer in that tradition, Morton. Morton’s “Jungle Blues” (1927)—which has the same title as a different tune written by Ellington in 1929—does have the dark “primitive” minor mood, bluesy effects, and general feeling of Ellington’s later work. And several of Ellington’s recordings of the period have melodic devices, breaks, and attention to sound, mood, and form that were introduced by Morton. Ellington’s recording of “Dicty Glide” (1929) has very similar elements as those in Morton’s classic version of “The Pearls” (1927): a steady staccato bass line, melodic and rhythmic saxophone solo quotations, and Ellington’s brief phrase in Morton’s style that opens his piano solo.

Feeling jinxed and overpowered, unable to succeed in New York, and fed up with the music business, Morton moved to Washington, D.C., in 1935. He ended up serving as entertainment, bartender, bouncer, and barrel opener in a small dive called the Jungle Inn. Though his customary fancy clothes, big car, and front tooth diamond helped to keep up appearances, the proud Morton was broke and slipping deeper into obscurity. With the help of a friend and business associate, Roy Carew, Morton started a publishing company and began a vigorous campaign to reestablish his career and collect royalties from the Melrose brothers and ASCAP. He sent letters seeking justice everywhere, even to the U.S. Supreme Court and the White House.

In 1938 Morton created a stir in the jazz world when *Down Beat* magazine published a letter he wrote in which he affirmed his claim to having invented jazz and also called the respected “father of the blues,” W. C. Handy, a fraud and an imposter. He may have done this to get attention, but, if so, the plan backfired: he was now being perceived by some people as laughable or even crazy, a jealous egomaniac who blamed others for his own failure. Morton’s attempt to be heard did have one positive result, however: Alan

Lomax taped a series of interviews with him for the Library of Congress that same year. The many hours of Morton talking, playing, and singing make up one of the most detailed and important oral histories in American music.

These sessions eventually led to the publication of Morton’s biography, *Mr. Jelly Roll* (1949). Morton provides descriptions, names, dates, places, and musical examples as they relate to the early history of jazz in New Orleans. He demonstrates examples of influential musical genres and shows how he transformed them into his own personal style of jazz. He becomes the first major early jazz figure to give insight into the unwritten rules and principles of melody, harmony, rhythm, effects, instrumentation, and color, as they relate to different styles.

After recording several piano solos for small labels, Morton moved back to New York in 1939 with high expectations of reviving his career. He recorded several fresh-sounding piano solos and band sides for the Bluebird label. The band recordings are of standard New Orleans material, done in a much looser and less arranged form than the material of the Red Hot Peppers. These sessions feature several prominent New Orleans musicians, including Sidney Bechet and Albert Nicholas. In 1940 Morton made his last recordings, introducing his popular ballad “Sweet Substitute.” He spent his last months in New York playing in clubs and trying to sue his former publishers for not paying his royalties. When ASCAP finally granted Morton membership, it was in the lowest category, which yielded insultingly low payments. His last national exposure came when he performed two songs in a show on NBC radio.

In the winter of 1940, the broke and ailing Morton drove across the country to Los Angeles to handle family business and to try to restart his career there. As he grew weaker (from heart failure), Morton rehearsed a big band in music that he had written shortly before leaving New York. Morton’s last compositions included several revolutionary pieces containing advanced harmonic ideas. He had hoped that his new music and band would rival the leading swing orchestras of the day, like Count Basie’s and Duke Ellington’s. Jelly Roll Morton died in July 1941 without having a chance to perform or record his new material.

Given the range and scope of Morton’s recordings (nearly 200 songs), compositions (more than 100 songs), and arrangements, he was one of the greatest creative forces in jazz. He invented his own virtuoso solo piano style. He was among the first to conceive of jazz

compositions in terms of written arrangements, and he published written music long before jazz recording began. Morton was also among the first to announce the new New Orleans sound and spread it across America. Through his experimentation with melodic and rhythmic variation, nuance, sound textures, effects, color, and moods, he expanded and inspired new possibilities in jazz composition and arranging.

Nearly fifty years after Morton's death, his music began to be revived and his life began to be reexamined. Both the music and the life were presented in numerous ways: in theater, documentaries, tribute concerts, books, radio shows, and endless record reissues. While much of the attention has focused on his contribution to jazz, some of it has had to do with the more sensational aspects of his life: in particular, there has been a popular but distorted analysis of Morton, a light-skinned Creole, as a self-loathing man who despised his own race. This distortion may have developed because outsiders can rarely understand the eccentric character terms, views, and humor of the black Creole culture of New Orleans. In Morton's case, his actions spoke louder than his words. He spent his entire life working in the context of a black folk tradition, surrounded by black musicians whom he considered the

greatest performers of jazz. He spoke out against injustices to blacks (including himself) that came from a racist entertainment industry. Moreover, Morton did not pass himself off as being of another race (although his appearance would have allowed this) even when he was living in California, where it was a common practice for insecure New Orleans Creoles to "become Hispanic." Musicians who were close to Morton have said that he did not harbor any deep-seated hatred for other blacks; he merely expressed a "Crescent City version" of black signifying and self-humor that was, and remains, a common cultural characteristic.

Late in his life, Jelly Roll Morton predicted that he would gain his due recognition and make an impressive return, and eventually he proved to be right.

Biography

The exact birth date of Jelly Roll Morton (Ferdinand Joseph La Menthe, or Lamothe) remains unclear; it is often cited as either 20 September 1885 or 20 October 1890. He came from a Creole family in New Orleans, Louisiana. He briefly had formal piano instruction; also learned from blues pianists and ragtime piano "professors" in Storyville, the red-light district in New Orleans; and was soon performing as a soloist there. He then became a traveling vaudevillian and pianist and adopted the name Jelly Roll; began writing down his compositions c. 1914; was a bandleader in Chicago, 1914–1917; moved to Los Angeles in 1917 and back to Chicago in 1923; composed, performed, and made recordings in Chicago; moved to New York in 1928 but had difficulties there; moved to Washington, D.C., in 1935; made taped interviews for the Library of Congress in 1938; moved back to New York in 1939; made his last recordings in 1940 and moved back to Los Angeles. Morton died 10 July 1941 in Los Angeles, California.

MICHAEL WHITE

See also Armstrong, Louis; Bechet, Sidney; Blues; Ellington, Duke; Handy, W. C.; Jazz; Johnson, James P.; Music; Oliver, Joseph "King"; Smith, Willie "the Lion"; Waller, Thomas "Fats"

Selected Compositions

"Black Bottom Stomp"
"The Crave"
"Dead Man Blues"



Jelly Roll Morton. (Brown Brothers.)

"Fingerbreaker"
"Freakish"
"Frog-I-More Rag"
"Georgia Swing"
"Jelly Roll Blues"
"Jungle Blues"
"King Porter Stomp"
"Milenburg Joys"
"Mr. Jelly Lord"
"New Orleans Blues"
"The Pearls"
"Shreveport Stomp"
"Sidewalk Blues"
"Sweet Substitute"
"Tom Cat Blues"
"Wild Man Blues"
"Winin' Boy Blues"
"Wolverine Blues"

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Ferd "Jelly Roll" Morton. Retrieval 79002. (Piano solos, 1923–1926.)
Jelly Roll Morton Centennial: His Complete Victor Recordings, 1926–1939. Bluebird 2361.
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Motley, Archibald J. Jr.

The painter Archibald J. Motley Jr. of Chicago consciously dedicated himself to depicting African Americans. Through his portraiture and genre scenes, Motley created a visual legacy that extended the issue of representation beyond the boundaries of New York's Harlem. Optimistically, he believed that art could end racial prejudice by dispelling negative stereotypes, a sentiment espoused by both W. E. B. Du Bois and Alain Locke. Motley's striking paintings of stylish urban African Americans correspond to the image and concept of the "New Negro." During his academic training at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago from 1914 to 1918, Motley synthesized a variety of approaches to the composition, color, and meaning of art. He believed that each element of a painting should be carefully considered for both its significance and its aesthetic contribution to the overall composition.

After graduation, Motley began to exhibit works in Chicago, winning prestigious prizes and critical acclaim. In 1919 the *Chicago Defender* published his article "The Negro in Art," in which he urged other black artists to paint African American subjects and to uphold academic principles, avoiding modernist expressionism. His own *Mending Socks* (1924), a portrait of his paternal grandmother Emily, shows his skill at rendering the texture of objects realistically, as well as his ability to capture a sitter's likeness. Each object that the artist included in this work was selected for its aesthetic and iconographic meaning. For example, the portrait of Emily Motley's former mistress, shown on the wall in the upper left of the painting, adds visual balance to the composition yet is also an unsettling reminder of slavery. This painting was voted the most popular work when it was exhibited at the Newark Museum in 1927; its sentimentality reflects

the artist's commitment to portraying both the appearance and the character of his subjects.

Motley's success led to his first solo exhibition at the New Gallery in New York City in 1928. Because of the commercial success of works that exoticized black culture, the dealer of the New Gallery requested that the artist expand his repertoire to include depictions of "voodoo" and African cultures. After doing research on his assigned subject in sources such as *National Geographic* and *Asia: The Magazine of the Orient*, Motley created a series of five paintings reflecting the biases and misunderstandings that were perpetuated in these magazines. Although Alain Locke had urged African American artists to reestablish a connection with African cultures by adopting the geometric forms of African sculpture, Motley maintained a critical distance by depicting Africa as mirage from the past, complete with demons, dinosaurs, and giant apes. Reviewing Motley's exhibition, a critic for the *New York Times Magazine* (Jewell 1928)—who was evidently racially prejudiced—rhapsodized over the "jungle works," largely ignoring the portraits and urban scenes and claiming that Motley's creative urge was linked to superstitions and mysteries rather than to ambition and skill. Some other critics reacted similarly, conflating the artist's imagery and his racial identity. For example, a reviewer for the *Chicago Daily News* (Williams 1928) concluded that although the African images were derived from the artist's research, "there was something innate" in his "makeup that made him sense and express the mystery that hovers over such themes." Not all the reviewers acclaimed the series; one of them (Mannes 1928) described the paintings as "the cheapest most blatant ten-twenty-three illustrations." Another (M.P. 1928) described such works as the "imaginings of boy's Voodooland," but praised the portraits that compared favorably "with the best output of the Academy." Nearly every painting in the exhibition was sold, including a portrait sold to John E. Nail, a real estate magnate in Harlem.

Also in 1928, Motley won a gold medal for the fine arts from the Harmon Foundation for his portrait *Octoroon Girl* (1925). As the antiquated title indicates, this work depicts a woman of mixed race: an octoroon was supposedly one-eighth African American and seven-eighths Caucasian. During Motley's time, the validity of determining racial identity through biological characteristics was hotly debated, as anthropologists such as Franz Boas argued that race was in fact a social construction. The artist's position on this issue

remains ambiguous. Through what he referred to as "scientific studies," he painted various "Negro types" such as the "octoroon," the "quadroon," the "mulattress," and "pure" African Americans, apparently equating external appearance with internal character. Yet he also called into question the reliability of such methods of classification and the social consequences. Motley stated that their different skin tones and facial features made African American subjects far more attractive and interesting to paint than European-Americans. Through his interest in documenting these differences in portraiture, he refuted the concept of a uniform blackness and provided a "visual rebuttal" to the negative stereotype of African American that was common in popular culture during this period (Patton 1998, 123). But although Motley was aware of the pressure to produce "positive images," he rejected the demand for art as propaganda, repeatedly stating that he intended to depict African Americans "honestly," including the humor and pathos of black life. In genre scenes of the street life of Chicago's "Bronzeville," with its cabarets and pool halls, he frequently exaggerated spatial perspective, color, and the posture and physiognomy of his figures. Because visual art has a strong and enduring impact, and because it could presumably have a harmful effect on people's perception of African Americans, race leaders such as Locke criticized Motley's works as "lurid" and "grotesque" (1936, 69). Other viewers disagreed, though, appreciating the provocative, satirical nature of these scenes.

Despite his criticism, Locke supported Motley's successful application for a Guggenheim fellowship. This fellowship allowed Motley to travel to Paris in 1929. During his year abroad, Motley studied the works of old masters in the Louvre and painted several portraits, street scenes, and cabarets. His most famous work from this period is *Blues* (1929), a close-up view of dancers and musicians in a Parisian club that seems to suggest the syncopation of jazz through the artist's use of alternating forms.

Returning to Chicago in 1930, Motley continued to paint and exhibit his works both locally and nationally. In 1935 he was invited to be a visiting artist at Howard University, where he taught art classes. He also won a commission from the United States Treasury Relief Project for a mural at the post office in Wood River, Illinois. From 1935 to 1940, Motley joined other artists in Chicago who were employed by the Illinois Art Project, a division of the Federal Arts Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which provided employment for artists during the



Archibald J. Motley Jr. (1891–1981), *The Jazz Singers*, c. 1934; oil on canvas, 32 1/8 by 42 1/4 inches. (Provenance: WPA, 1934.

Permanent collection, Western Illinois University Art Gallery, Macomb, Illinois. Courtesy Western Illinois University Art Gallery.)

Depression. He created murals and easel paintings, adapting his style to the didactic narratives favored by the WPA. Motley's commitment to promoting social and racial equality is especially apparent in his paintings from this period, such as *Playground (Recess)* of c.1940, which shows a diverse group of children playing together. After the WPA was disbanded, Motley and many other artists had to find employment elsewhere. Resourcefully, Motley joined the graphic design crew of Styletone, a manufacturer of hand-painted shower curtains in Chicago. He also continued his artistic work, broadening his subject matter by traveling to Mexico in 1953. For several years afterward, Motley painted images inspired by the landscape and people of Guanajuato and Cuernavaca. During the 1960s and 1970s, he returned to depictions of African American life. Although his productivity slowed, he continued to paint until his death in 1981.

Motley's contribution to the Harlem Renaissance continues to be appreciated and investigated. Recent scholarship has focused on his concept of racial identity. His determination to expand the canon of American art to include images of African Americans by African Americans remains a relevant concern.

Biography

Archibald John Motley Jr. was born 7 October 1891 in New Orleans, Louisiana. In 1893 his family moved to Chicago, where he attended public schools in the Englewood district. He began studies at the School of

the Art Institute of Chicago in 1914 and graduated in 1918. He worked at various odd jobs while submitting paintings to group exhibitions. His first solo exhibition was at the New Gallery in New York City. Motley studied in Paris while on a Guggenheim fellowship in 1929–1930; was a visiting instructor at Howard University in Washington, D.C., in 1935–1936; was employed by the Works Progress Administration Illinois Art Project intermittently from 1935 to 1940; was commissioned by the Treasury Department to paint a mural for the Wood River, Illinois, post office in 1937; taught art at South Side Community Art Center in Chicago in 1941; and painted for industrial design firms in Chicago (Styletone from 1948 to 1956 and Artistic during 1957). His awards included the School of the Art Institute of Chicago Joseph N. Eisendrath and Frank G. Logan prizes, 1925; Harmon Foundation Gold Medal, 1928; John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship, 1929–1930; recognition by President Jimmy Carter for his contribution to American art; and an honorary doctorate from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1980. Motley died in Chicago on 16 January 1981.

AMY MOONEY

See also Artists; Chicago Defender; Federal Programs; Harmon Foundation; Locke, Alain; Nail, John E.; Works Progress Administration

Individual Exhibitions

- 1928: New Gallery, New York.
- 1933: Chicago (Illinois) Women's Club.
- 1957: Chicago Public Library.
- 1991: Chicago Historical Society.

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 1917: "Paintings by Negro Artists." Arts and Letters Society, Chicago.
- 1921: "Twenty-Fifth Annual Exhibition by Artists of Chicago and Vicinity." Art Institute of Chicago.
- 1927: "Painting and Watercolors by Living American Artists." Newark (New Jersey) Museum of Art.
- 1929: "Exhibit of the Fine Arts by American Negro Artists." Harmon Foundation and Commission on the Church and Race Relations, Federal Council of Churches. International House, New York.
- 1929: "Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture by American Negro Artists." National Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Motley, Archibald J. Jr.

- 1930: "Udstilling af Amerikansk Kunst." American-Scandinavian Foundation, American Federation of Arts, and American Institute of Architects, Copenhagen, Denmark.
- 1988: "Three Masters: Eldzier Cortor, Hughie Lee-Smith, Archibald J. Motley, Jr." Kenkeleba Gallery, New York.
- 1989: "The Blues Aesthetic: Black Culture and Modernism." Washington (D.C.) Project for the Arts.
- 1990: "Against the Odds: African American Artists and the Harmon Foundation 1923–1943." Newark (New Jersey) Museum of Art.
- 2000: "Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance." Hayward Gallery, London, England.

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Moton, Robert Russa

Robert Russa Moton, a child of slaves, was a distinguished American educator, an adviser to every president from Woodrow Wilson through Franklin D. Roosevelt, and a consistent advocate of interracial goodwill. His achievements are now largely unknown, however, because Moton, unlike some of the more vocal figures of the era, preferred to induce social, economic, and political change quietly.

Moton's education inspired him to help fellow African Americans. Following early tutoring from his mother, Moton attended a free school for blacks. In 1885 he enrolled in Hampton Institute, a school famous for its industrial offerings. At Hampton, Moton imbibed heavy doses of the "Hampton spirit," a call to lead and serve others. As a result, he abandoned plans to become a tradesman, preferring instead to pursue a teaching career. Once again, however, Moton's plans changed when he became Hampton's assistant commandant of cadets in 1890. In the following year, Moton assumed the post of commandant, which made him the highest-ranking African American administrator at Hampton. Moton's position also entailed a number of speaking and fund-raising engagements. Moton was often accompanied by Booker T. Washington, the founder of Tuskegee Institute and Hampton's most illustrious graduate; thus, Moton could observe Washington's poise and character firsthand. Besides helping Moton polish his skill at public relations, the tours enabled him to assess the nation's race relations and the plight of rural blacks.

In 1915, following Washington's death, Moton accepted the presidency of Tuskegee Institute, an African American institution modeled on Hampton's plan. Moton assumed this responsibility with a determination to transform Tuskegee into a world-class educational institution. When the nation prepared for

war, Moton assisted the mobilization effort by transforming Tuskegee into a technical training school for 1,200 students. He also successfully lobbied for Emmett J. Scott's appointment as an assistant to Newton Baker, the secretary of war. After much wrangling, Moton also secured a training camp for African American officers at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. In addition, he traveled to France to oversee the treatment of African American troops. Moton's investigation and subsequent report silenced the "whispering gallery" by disproving charges that black troops were incompetent and unruly.

When the 1920s began, Moton became involved in the struggle for racial equality. In *Finding a Way Out* (1921), in *What the Negro Thinks* (1929), in newspaper articles, and in his public appearances, Moton regularly addressed the topic of deteriorating race relations in the United States. His comments were always frank and sincere. When a rash of violent race riots erupted just after the end of World War I, Moton helped organize the Council on Interracial Cooperation. He also implored Presidents Wilson and Harding to denounce lynching, mob action, and all other forms of racial injustice. To halt lynchings, Moton authorized Tuskegee's Department of Records and Research to issue annual reports on lynchings in the United States. The findings, combined with widespread editorial condemnation of the practice and the efforts of Ida B. Wells Barnett, substantially reduced the number of lynchings.

W. E. B. Du Bois, William Monroe Trotter (the fiery editor of the *Boston Guardian*), and James Weldon Johnson criticized Moton's strategy of compromise. They resented Moton's apparent willingness to placate rather than antagonize wealthy southerners. Some activists believed that Moton should have been more militant and aggressive in protesting racial injustice, especially in the South. Black intellectuals also feared that Moton's promotion of industrial and vocational training at the expense of academic studies threatened to confine African Americans to positions of perpetual servitude.

Although stung by the harsh criticism, Moton, a man of peace who believed in reason and the power of righteousness, remained committed to his strategy of strengthening black institutions at the local, state, and national levels. Although critical of segregation, Moton believed that African American institutions could enhance black people's participation in the civic life of their communities. He also felt that, as blacks gained enhanced strength through their institutions, they would be better prepared to secure the rights and privileges that other Americans enjoyed. Moton's support was especially evident in the business arena.

In 1924, he played a key role in establishing the National Negro Finance Corporation in Durham, North Carolina. Moton was also the director of the Dunbar National Bank following its establishment in Harlem in 1928, and he served as president of the National Negro Business League throughout the 1920s.

Moton's showdown with the Alabama Ku Klux Klan, however, demonstrated that he would, when necessary, challenge white authorities and confront any attempts to subordinate blacks. In 1923 Moton learned that government officials had selected Tuskegee as the site for a new hospital for black veterans. To his dismay, however, he was informed that, despite previous assurances from President Warren G. Harding to the contrary, the medical facility would be staffed by white physicians and nurses. Refusing to accept the decision, Moton lobbied state and federal officials to allow qualified black professionals to fill positions designed to care for African American veterans. Even death threats failed to dissuade him. At one point during the crisis, Moton informed a hostile crowd that he had always believed in interracial cooperation. If he was mistaken, he said, then perhaps it was best if they followed through with their threats and killed him. Moton's defiance eventually forced military leaders to examine the matter. The controversy subsided when General Frank T. Hines, director of the Veterans Bureau, recommended hiring qualified black nurses and physicians to staff the new veterans' hospital.

Moton, the recipient of the Harmon Award in 1930 and the Spingarn Medal in 1932, never wavered in his belief that people of goodwill, regardless of color, could secure justice and equal opportunity for all Americans. Although he was criticized during the Harlem Renaissance for being a "Washingtonian," Moton was not a timid devotee of gradualism. Throughout his life, he consistently condemned discrimination and the hatred it bred. He also believed that mutual understanding and cooperation would eventually solve the nation's racial, economic, civic, and political problems. Moreover, his efforts to disseminate Mahatma Gandhi's message of nonviolent protest had a powerful influence on future generations of African American activists.

Biography

Robert Russa Moton was born 26 August 1867 in Amelia County, Virginia. He studied at a public school in Prince Edward County, Virginia, and at Hampton

(Virginia) Normal and Agricultural Institute (teachers' course, 1890; postgraduate course, 1895). He was an assistant commandant of cadets at Hampton Institute in 1890–1891 and commandant of cadets from 1891 to 1915; and president of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama from 1916 to 1935. He was a trustee for several educational institutions, including the People's Village School, Mount Meigs, Alabama; Industrial Home School for Colored Girls, Peake, Virginia; Negro Reform School for Boys, Hanover, Pennsylvania; and Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee. Moton was also a member of the Executive Committee on Interracial Cooperation, 1918; director of the American Bible Society, 1921; chair of the Colored Advisory Commission for disaster relief after the Mississippi flood in 1927; and a member of President Herbert Hoover's National Advisory Commission on Education, 1930. He received honorary degrees from Virginia Union University, Wilberforce University, Oberlin College, Lincoln University, Williams College, Harvard University, and Howard University. His awards included the Harmon Award in Race Relations, 1930; and the Spingarn Medal, 1932. Moton died in Capahosic, Virginia, on 31 May 1940.

JON L. BRUDVIG

See also Antilynching Crusade; Barnett, Ida B. Wells; Du Bois, W. E. B.; National Negro Business League; Scott, Emmett Jay; Spingarn Medal; Trotter, William Monroe; Washington, Booker T.

Selected Works

- "A Negro's Uphill Climb." 1907.
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Mulatto

Langston Hughes's play *Mulatto* opened at the Vanderbilt Theater in New York on 24 October 1935. The production ran for 373 consecutive performances, becoming the longest-running Broadway play by a black writer until Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* broke that record in 1959. *Mulatto*, which is based on Hughes' short story "Father and Son," was written in 1930 and was later made into an opera—*The Barrier* (1950)—by the composer Jan Meyerowitz. *Mulatto*'s commercial success on Broadway and during its subsequent tour is notable, for it exposed to a racially mixed audience the issues surrounding miscegenation, a recurrent theme in the literature of the Harlem Renaissance.

Set on a plantation in Georgia, *Mulatto*, like Hughes's poem "Cross" (1931), presented the plight of a young man in conflict with his biracial identity. Eighteen-year-old Robert "Bert" Lewis is the son of Colonel Thomas Norwood, a white plantation owner, and Norwood's black housekeeper and mistress, Cora. Bert returns home after being away at school and is no longer willing to stay in his place (walk through the back door, speak politely to whites, or labor in the fields) as determined by the racial and social codes of conduct in the South. Bert feels entitled to equal treatment and the same privileges as whites. When Norwood tells Bert to leave the state before the townspeople come after him for his public impudence, Bert strangles his father. At the end of the play, Cora wants to hide her son from the lynch mob, but Bert commits suicide before the townsmen can reach him.



Mulatto, scene from the stage production with J. Kirkwood and M. Gilbert. (Billy Rose Theatre Collection, New York Public Library, New York City. © The New York Public Library/Art Resource, N.Y. Photo: White Studio, anonymous.)

The significance of *Mulatto* to the Harlem Renaissance derived from its subject matter and its performance history. It was a very early—if not the first—Broadway drama in which the classic conflict between father and son had a racial dimension. Moreover, Cora, a character that Hughes had created particularly for the actress Rose McClendon, gained more depth as the play progressed; at its conclusion, she scorns her relationship with Norwood and withstands a slap across the face from the overseer. Thus, depending on one's interpretation, Hughes presented two black characters, Bert and Cora, who challenged social codes in order to control their own lives. Martin Jones, the producer of the Broadway production in 1935, however, changed certain passages of the script and added a rape scene without Hughes's knowledge or consent. The changes may have increased box-office sales, but they may have also perpetuated a stereotype of blacks as violent and sexually promiscuous—an image that the playwrights of the Harlem Renaissance sought to dispel.

Mulatto received mixed reviews; the reaction of critics and audience members ranged from disgust

to enthusiasm, and the sensationalism of the altered script caused some people to disregard its political implications. Hughes wrote mostly comedies and musicals for the stage, but this serious drama set off considerable controversy in its attempt to critique the racial caste system of the South. *Mulatto* brought Hughes recognition as a playwright and brought issues of race and class to the forefront of the American stage during a period when Broadway did not usually produce plays by blacks or hire blacks as actors.

MELINDA D. WILSON

See also Hughes, Langston; McClendon, Rose

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Murphy, Carl J.

One of the most important figures in African American history was Carl J. Murphy (1889–1967), the gifted and charismatic publisher-editor of the Baltimore *Afro-American* from 1922 to 1967. He was one of the nine children of John H. Murphy, the owner of the *Afro-American*. Carl Murphy was a newsboy for the paper

but then went to college rather than work his way up through its ranks. He attended Howard University, where he majored in German; he then received a fellowship to Harvard University. Such a fellowship was an honor rarely bestowed on blacks in the early 1900s; in fact, Murphy was one of only two blacks in Harvard's graduate school. He graduated from Harvard in 1913 with an M.A. in German. In 1914 he studied at Jena University in Germany. He was caught in Germany by the outbreak of World War I but returned home in October 1914.

Murphy next became an instructor in German at Howard University. During World War I, he volunteered for the Colored Officers' Training Camp at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, but was determined to be too short (at 5 feet 1 inch) and was rejected. In 1918 Murphy gave up his position at Howard to become the editor of the *Afro-American*. Carl Murphy impressed his family with his editorial and managerial skills, and his brothers chose him to publish the newspaper after their father's death in 1922.

Murphy's academic and scholarly background manifested itself in the extremely high quality of editorials—mostly written by him—that ran in the *Afro-American*, and in the depth and breadth of its columnists and reporters. As a result, the *Afro-American* became one of the most highly regarded newspapers on the east coast. Among the renowned figures whom Murphy hired to write for the *Afro-American* were Countee Cullen, Charles H. Houston, Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson, Claude McKay, Kelly Miller, J. Saunders Redding, Walter White, William Worthy, and the legendary sportswriter Sam Lacy, who, as the paper's sports editor in the 1940s and 1950s, was instrumental in the desegregation of professional athletics.

Throughout the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, Murphy encouraged the *Afro-American* crusade for racial justice and advancement locally, statewide, and nationally. Among the causes Murphy led were equal pay for black teachers in Baltimore, an increase in black membership on the Baltimore city council, and black representation on the local school board and in the police department. Nationwide, the *Afro-American* supported antilynching legislation; it also supported increased federal patronage for black Republicans. With regard to national politics, however, the newspaper was a maverick. Murphy was very progressive for his time and was attracted to leftist views and politicians. Unlike his peers in the black press, he went out on a limb politically. For example, in 1924 he endorsed the

third-party candidate, Robert La Follette, for the presidency. In 1928 he had the *Afro-American* support the Democratic Party's candidate, Alfred E. Smith. Then in the 1930s the newspaper gave covert endorsements to candidates of the Communist and Socialist parties for local, state, and national offices.

Unlike many of its competitors among the black press, the *Afro-American* expanded and prospered during the Great Depression. It established branch offices and editions in Washington, Philadelphia, Richmond, and Newark; by 1940, Murphy presided over a newspaper chain that stretched all along the East Coast. The *Afro-American* sent six reporters overseas to cover World War II, more than any other black newspaper and more than quite a few white newspapers. Consequently, the circulation, income, and influence of the *Afro-American* reached unprecedented highs during these years. The *Afro-American* became a million-dollar company in 1945 and remained at that level for many years afterward.

Murphy was not only a great journalist but also a great civic leader. In the 1930s, he encouraged and helped finance a case, *Murray v. Maryland*, that opened the University of Maryland Law School to blacks. Murphy was a member of the national board of directors of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and in 1935 he was midwife at the rebirth of its moribund Baltimore branch. In the process he launched the career of Lillie B. Jackson, perhaps the most important civil rights leader in Baltimore and one of the most influential in the nation.

Murphy played a vital role in the creation of Morgan State College (later Morgan State University). When Maryland bought this institution from the Methodist Church in 1939, Murphy became a member of its board of regents and then chairman. In that capacity, Murphy used the *Afro-American* and his own influence to ensure that Morgan received an equitable share of state funding. His interest in Morgan was rewarded, as the school's physical plant, faculty, and student services were greatly upgraded. To honor Murphy, Morgan's fine arts center is named for him.

In the 1950s, Carl Murphy's influence extended nationwide as the *Afro-American* supported NAACP's efforts to desegregate public education. For this, Murphy received the NAACP's Spingarn Medal in 1955. Under his still-vigorous leadership, the *Afro-American* crusaded locally and nationally for civil rights in the 1960s.

Little went on in black Baltimore and the nation that escaped Carl Murphy's editorial notice. A man of

extremely high intellectual, moral, ethical, and spiritual standards, Murphy refused to tolerate racism anywhere he found it. Nor would he tolerate failure, or even mediocrity, in any endeavor undertaken by black folk. The *Afro-American* never hesitated to blast individuals, black and white, who did not act in the highest interests of black and white communities. Murphy's unwavering commitment to excellence is shown by the exponential growth of the *Afro-American* in the years he ran the newspaper, his promoting the rebirth and growth of the Baltimore NAACP, and his shepherding Morgan State College to prosperity and growth in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.

Carl Murphy died in 1967, full of years, honors, and success. He left a prosperous and powerful newspaper that is still a meaningful voice for African Americans in Baltimore, in Washington, and elsewhere on the East Coast. Carl Murphy's passing left a void in Baltimore and the nation that has yet to be filled.

Biography

Carl J. Murphy was born in 1889, one of the nine children of John H. Murphy, owner of the Baltimore *Afro-American*. Carl Murphy was educated at Howard University, earned a graduate degree in German from Harvard University, and became a professor of German at Howard. He joined the *Afro-American* in 1918 and was chosen by his family to take it over in 1922 after his father's death. He established branch offices and editions, and by 1940 presided a chain of newspapers that extended throughout the East Coast. Murphy died in 1967.

HAYWARD "WOODY" FARRAR

See also Baltimore *Afro-American*; Black Press; Civil Rights and Law; Cullen, Countee; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, James Weldon; Journalists; McKay, Claude; Miller, Kelly; Redding, Jay Saunders; White, Walter

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Muse, Clarence

Clarence Muse acted for more than sixty years and appeared in more than fifty movies. During the early years of the Harlem Renaissance, he acted on the stage in the South and in the East. In the 1920s, he lived in New York City and was a member of the Lincoln Players. He was also a founder and member of New York's Lafayette Players. Muse moved to Chicago for a while, and then moved to Hollywood after performing in *Hearts in Dixie* (1929), the first all-black movie. For the next fifty years, he worked regularly in minor and major film roles.

Perhaps there will always be controversy about Muse's legacy, because we are still dealing with the issues he wrote about in his pamphlet "The Dilemma of the Negro Actor" (1932). Many early black actors were offered roles that required them to be dutiful servants, thankful menial laborers, buffoons, and happy darkies. If black actors wanted to work, they had, initially, no option other than these types of roles. Muse was a contemporary of Stepin Fetchit but was a different kind of actor, even though his early roles were similar in type to those Fetchit made famous. Many critics have indicated that Muse's talents, range, and capability were, unfortunately, hardly tapped.

Even though Muse was featured in some roles that some blacks found and still find degrading, many have noted that he did not play some of those roles with much enthusiasm, and he was not as involved in the stereotypical roles as he was in the roles that required more of his talent. One of his finer roles was Nigger Jim in *Huckleberry Finn* (1931). Not surprisingly, the roles he wrote for himself were usually better than the roles others assigned him. For example, his acting in *Broken Strings* (1940) is some of his best;

and it has been suggested that Muse's help with the script is the reason for his memorable performance.

When the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and other groups complained about roles for black actors in the early 1940s, Muse at first wanted these groups to be quiet so that black actors could work, regardless of the roles. His point of view changed, however, when he was asked to work on the script of *Song of the South* (1946), but quit after his attempts to upgrade the roles of blacks were disregarded. Muse disliked the images of blacks in this movie, and spoke out against it.

The issues Muse discussed in his pamphlet about the dilemma of the Negro actor proved to be persistent. Is any representation better than none? Does it matter how black actors are portrayed on the screen? Robert Townsend's movie *Hollywood Shuffle* (1987) analyzed essentially the same questions that Muse had tackled more than fifty years earlier. In retrospect, it may be easy to call actors like Clarence Muse, Stepin Fetchit, and Hattie McDaniel Uncle Toms, mammies, minstrels, and coons, but they opened doors so that later black actors, like Canada Lee, could have roles that were more dramatic and multidimensional.

Biography

Clarence Muse was born 7 October 1889 in Baltimore, Maryland. He studied at Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania (international law degree, 1911). He had a career in music and acting in the South; he was acting in New York City by the 1920s with the Lincoln Players and Lafayette Players; and he wrote the screenplay for *The Sport of Gods* (1921). Muse's first major film role was in *Hearts in Dixie* (1929), which had the first all-black screen cast. Muse worked in Hollywood for fifty years; he sang the title role in DuBose Heyward's *Porgy* (1929). He published a pamphlet, "The Dilemma of the Negro Actor" (1932); wrote the song "When It's Sleepy Time Down South," which was performed by Louis Armstrong; composed a black symphony, *Harlem Heab'n*; co-wrote a screenplay with Langston Hughes, *Way Down South* (1939); co-wrote, produced, and acted in *Broken Strings* (1940); was an executive member of the Hollywood Victory Committee during World War II; and was a member of Hollywood Writers Mobilization. He received an

honorary doctor of humanities degree from Bishop College, Dallas, Texas, in 1972. Muse died in Perris Valley, California, 13 October 1979.

LOU-ANN CROUTHER

See also Fetchit, Stepin; Film: Actors; Hearts in Dixie; Lafayette Players; Lee, Canada

Selected Works

Hearts in Dixie (1929), *Hallelujah* (1929), *A Royal Romance* (1930), *Rain or Shine* (1930), *Huckleberry Finn* (1931), *Dirigible* (1931), *Last Parade* (1931), *Secret Witness* (1931), *Woman from Monte Carlo* (1932), *Cabin in the Cotton* (1932), *Winner Take All* (1933), *Washington Merry-Go-Round* (1933), *From Hell to Heaven* (1933), *Broadway Bill* (1934), *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1934), *So Red the Rose* (1935), *Show Boat* (1936), *Follow Your Heart* (1936), *Spirit of Youth* (1937), *Way Down South* (1939), *Broken Strings* (1940), *Maryland* (1940), *Zanzibar* (1940), *Tales of Manhattan* (1934), *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943), *Heaven Can Wait* (1943), *Watch on the Rhine* (1943), *Two Smart People* (1946), *Joe Palooka in the Knockout* (1947), *An Act of Murder* (1948), *Riding High* (1950), *Porgy and Bess* (1959), *Buck and the Preacher* (1972), *Car Wash* (1976).

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Music

The following discussion focuses on the people who were influential creators and performers of music. All achieved distinction and stretched the boundaries of their art, and most of them flourished during the 1920s. Each epitomized the “New Negro” as described by the leaders of the Harlem Renaissance and interpreted by later writers: the idea that African Americans would project a new image and a new sense of worth as a result of outstanding accomplishments.

These “new musicians” excelled as composers and performers of either ragtime, musical theater, jazz, and other popular styles, or of music in European classical forms and styles. Significantly, many of the European-oriented musicians incorporated in their work either quotations or suggestions of traditional songs, such as spirituals and blues, documenting and celebrating, rather than rejecting, their African American heritage.

Although not all the leaders of the Harlem Renaissance shared the same views as to the direction of black culture, they did usually agree that literature and the arts were to be used as a means of securing economic and cultural equality with the white population by bringing honor and glory to the Negro race. Equality would result from outstanding achievements in the arts. Most leaders of the Harlem Renaissance agreed that black Americans should honor their heritage while striving for higher cultural and artistic achievements. For example, a symphonic work by an African American would incorporate some aspect of black culture—perhaps a theme based on a Negro spiritual or a characteristic melody, rhythm, or cultural reference. Also, a vocal recital would include artistic arrangements of spirituals, in addition to western European art songs.

As this new music evolved, western European notation could not adequately reproduce the slides, tone bending, and other fluctuations of pitch and rhythm characteristic of traditional black music. Thus, some degree of melodic embellishment and improvisation and a strong rhythmic impulse became central to the performance of much new black music.

Black folk music is a product of the rural culture of the South, but the large number of black Americans who moved to northern cities during the early part of the twentieth century responded well to a merging of these rural folk traditions and urban, composed music. The minstrel song was a product of these merging traditions. Typically, it was lively, syncopated, and often humorous. But these songs were originally written by white Americans for white Americans, were sung by white Americans in blackface, and were a caricature of the Negro way of life, often portraying black Americans as comical and illiterate. Although this portrayal had little to do with the realities of black culture, the songs became an important part of American popular music.

Popular Music and Jazz

Jazz—like American society—is also a product of many influences. In some ways, it represents a merging of cultures and musical styles, yet in other ways it retains distinct ethnic characteristics. In the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth, Americans—both black and white—sang and danced to syncopated, “jazzy” music. Some roots of jazz were thus in the existing popular music of Americans of the North and the South and could be found in the melodies and rhythms of the songs and dance music of Tin Pan Alley, minstrel shows, vaudeville, blues and gospel traditions, syncopated orchestras, brass bands of New Orleans, and ragtime.

By the 1920s, the nation’s flourishing economy benefited many places of entertainment. Harlem had become the center for nightclubs, floorshows, and other venues for hearing this new black music. Many white people wanted to go out at night to hear it and would go to “whites-only” clubs in Harlem, sometimes after attending classical concerts or theater in downtown or midtown Manhattan. This was the new syncopated music—created and performed by black Americans and listened to, danced to, and enjoyed throughout the 1920s, the jazz age. The following sections highlight major African American artists who contributed significantly to the advancement of American popular music and jazz during this decade.

Blues Songs

Blues songs originally were part of the folk tradition of African Americans, especially in the Deep South.

Antecedents of blues included work songs, field hollers, and sorrow songs—although blues songs existed long before they were called “blues” and long before they were put into twelve-bar choruses with identifiable, predictable chord progressions. Likewise, blues songs existed long before blues poetry was created in aab form. As folk music, it was sung by individuals who usually created the words, often as they were singing—sharing themes and experiences (such as problems concerning work or a relationship) with any listeners who might be near by.

In the early years of the twentieth century, blues songs were collected as folk songs; by the 1920s, however, blues poetry was being newly created and blues songs were being newly composed. They were arranged for singers with instruments—perhaps a single guitar, or perhaps a more elaborate instrumental ensemble. These songs were published, recorded, and disseminated, and many became popular parts of vaudeville and minstrel shows, nightclub floor shows, and musical theater productions. The careers of “blues singers” became firmly established.

W. C. (William Christopher) Handy (1873–1958) was the acknowledged “father of the blues.” He was a composer, bandleader, music publisher, and the first person to popularize blues. In 1908, he and his partner, Harry Pace, established the Pace and Handy Music Company in Memphis, Tennessee. Handy came to Harlem from Memphis in 1918 and became part of the emerging Negro movement—the Harlem Renaissance. Like others, he saw it as an opportunity for personal success. He and Pace moved the music company to New York, but it was dissolved in 1921. Pace then established the Black Swan Phonograph Company, and Handy established—with his brothers—the Handy Brothers Music Company. Handy became active in publishing music by black songwriters and composers, and he organized concerts of black music, including one in Carnegie Hall in 1928. Through these efforts, he brought the music of many black songwriters and performers to the public’s attention. The Handy family, as of this writing, still owns and operates the Handy Brothers Music Company in New York City.

Handy’s first compositions—“Memphis Blues” (1912) and “Saint Louis Blues” (1914)—achieved widespread popularity. His style was to incorporate blues idioms in his songwriting, rather than quoting from preexisting folk-blues songs or spirituals. His autobiography, *Father of the Blues*, was published in 1941.



William Christopher Handy, photographed by Carl Van Vechten, 1941. (Library of Congress.)

The most popular of early-twentieth-century blues singers was Bessie Smith (1894–1937), the “empress of the blues.” Smith was a successful vaudevillian, blues and jazz singer, and recording artist during the 1920s and early 1930s. The “classic” blues style that she brought into the jazz repertoire was intense, expressive, and very personal. Smith began touring professionally in 1912, and she made some 200 recordings from 1923 to 1933. She recorded regularly with such greats as Louis Armstrong, James P. Johnson, and members of Fletcher Henderson’s band. She was the featured performer in the film *Saint Louis Blues* (1929). (For a detailed analysis of Bessie Smith’s singing style, see Schuller 1968, 226–241.)

Other famous classic blues singers of the 1920s included Ma Rainey, Clara Smith, Mamie Smith, and Alberta Hunter.

Ragtime, Stride, and Musical Theater

Other composers and arrangers, such as Will Marion Cook and James Reese Europe, had introduced rag rhythms and bold harmonies in vaudeville and

musical theater. By the 1920s, these innovations had become commonplace. Likewise, the blues style was becoming a significant part of mainstream popular music. Syncopated ragtime music and blues songs were increasingly incorporated into much of the popular music of Tin Pan Alley.

By the 1920s, American popular music was already heavily influenced by ragtime and stride—both solo piano styles. Two significant contributors to ragtime were Scott Joplin (who also contributed significantly to opera) and Eubie Blake (who also contributed significantly to musical theater).

Scott Joplin (1868–1917) died before the “official” start of the Harlem Renaissance, yet his contributions are compatible with its philosophy. Joplin grew up in Texarkana, became an itinerant musician, and by 1896 had settled in Sedalia, Missouri. By 1899, he had composed his first piano rag: “Maple Leaf Rag,” ultimately one of his most popular compositions.

Joplin’s rags are full of energy and vitality, highly syncopated, and immediately appealing. To the extent possible, Joplin insisted that they be played according to the written notes and not too fast. He considered his rags a serious art form—at a higher artistic level than rags played in vaudeville, in minstrel shows, on the streets of New Orleans, or on the showboats on the Mississippi River. He sought to bring care and skill to his compositions. He not only helped shape the “classic ragtime” style but also elevated the composing and performing of piano rags to the functional equivalent of piano miniatures by European classical composers of the nineteenth century.

John Stark, in Sedalia, became the primary publisher of Joplin’s rags and dubbed Joplin the “king of ragtime writers.” Joplin wanted to do more than compose and perform rags, however. He wanted to compose for theater as well, and in 1899 he produced *The Ragtime Dance*, a tableau for dancers and singer-narrator. His Scott Joplin Opera Company presented his ragtime opera, *A Guest of Honor*, in 1903. Both productions were notably unsuccessful.

By 1907, Joplin had moved to New York City, where he spent the final ten years of his life. In 1911, he published his first opera score, *Treemonisha*, but failed to get backers for a staged production. In 1915, he financed his own production at the Lincoln Theater in Harlem—a single performance without scenery, costumes, or orchestra. He did not live to see a full production of *Treemonisha*. In 1972, during the ragtime revival of the 1960s and 1970s, however, *Treemonisha* was given a full-scale production in Atlanta. Robert

Shaw was the conductor, Katherine Dunham was the choreographer, and T. J. Anderson prepared the orchestration. In 1975, the Houston Grand Opera also produced *Treemonisha*. Gunther Schuller prepared the orchestration—for Dixieland band with added winds and strings—and also conducted the orchestra.

Perhaps as a result of the ragtime revival and the renewed interest in his music, Scott Joplin was publicly recognized with a posthumous Pulitzer Prize in 1976 and a commemorative postage stamp in 1983. Compact discs of the Houston Grand Opera production of *Treemonisha* are readily available as of this writing—as are many of Joplin’s rags that have been remastered from piano rolls. His complete works have been collected by Vera Brodsky Lawrence and published by the New York Public Library (1972, 1981).

Eubie Blake (1883–1983) achieved success as a ragtime pianist and composer, as a vaudeville performer, and especially as the composer of two musicals: *Shuffle Along* (1921), which ran on Broadway for 504 performances, and *The Chocolate Dandies* (1924). His collaborator on each was his vaudeville partner, Noble Sissle. Blake and Sissle incorporated into their musicals all the styles that were then extant in black folk and popular music: ragtime, minstrel songs, vaudeville, cakewalks and other dance music, and spirituals.

Blake’s pianistic abilities also influenced the style of “Harlem stride piano,” a term describing principally the piano styles of James P. Johnson and Fats Waller. Stride piano evolved from ragtime and ultimately changed the course of jazz piano style. Pianists such as Johnson and Waller often were hired to play at Harlem cabarets in Harlem, at house-rent parties, and at sophisticated events of the white social set. Listeners responded enthusiastically to the energy of stride piano, its improvisation, and what must have been perceived as highly technical piano wizardry. Stride was designed to entertain, even impress, the revelers; and the pianists accommodated the tastes of their patrons.

Clubs and Floor Shows: The Entertainers

Minstrel songs and shows were popular by the middle of the nineteenth century. By the beginning of the twentieth century, vaudeville became increasingly popular. But by the 1920s, the former patrons of vaudeville were switching their allegiance to movies and to floor shows in nightclubs and huge ballrooms, although some preferred the more seductive cabarets and intimate nightclubs and bars that had emerged in

Harlem. Many restaurant owners introduced dancing and floor shows. These new venues were more respectable—and safer—than the cellar clubs and “below the street” bars. Jazz, the new black music, became one of the ideal forms of music for these new “entertainment centers.”

One of the most noted of the new venues was the Cotton Club. Like many of the clubs, it was “whites-only,” although the patrons were served and entertained by blacks. This “safe” environment made it easier to attract white patrons to Harlem, people who generally lived in downtown or midtown New York. As noted earlier, they would often go to the opera or theater in midtown and afterward go uptown to Harlem to enjoy the black music and the black entertainers.

The careers of black musicians and dancers were often created or stimulated by their participation in these lavish floor shows. For example, Duke Ellington played at the Cotton Club from 1927 to 1932, and this engagement provided him with a large audience (including radio listeners) and an effective showcase for his big band arrangements and compositions. He and his music became well known.

Performers’ careers were also enhanced by appearances in black musical theater on Broadway and elsewhere. Josephine Baker (1906–1979)—a singer, dancer, and entertainer—began her career as a thirteen-year-old in a touring black vaudeville troupe. In the early 1920s she joined the chorus line of Sissle and Blake’s *Shuffle Along*, and she was featured in its sequel, *Chocolate Dandies*. After a stint in a New York nightclub revue, she became a comic dancer in the chorus line of *La Revue Nègre* in Paris. But the show was revised to take advantage of Baker’s beautiful and exotic appearance. Her dancing was featured, but her feather costume was perhaps more memorable. This run lasted three months. After a twenty-five-country world tour in 1928–1929, Baker shifted from novelty dancing to singing love ballads and also became a leading actress in films. She learned the French language and starred in French films, including a remake of Offenbach’s operetta *La Créole* (1934). She became a French citizen and remained professionally active (and politically active) nearly until her death.

Ethel Waters (1896–1977) was a singer of blues, jazz, and popular music and was prominent in the nightclub scene in Harlem during the 1920s and into the 1930s. Her style and technique anticipated and in fact influenced future jazz singers. Waters began recording in 1921, but she was not content just to record songs. She used her recordings to entice people

to come to her live performances, where she used her theatrical flair to draw the audience to her. She was a blues singer—perhaps more of a song stylist—who sang blues in a more refined style than the original, folksy blues singers. Her performances and her recordings were aimed mostly at black audiences; later, though, she became a star on Broadway and in films. Waters began touring with the Billy Graham Crusades in 1960 and continued to do so until 1975; this was a considerable contrast to her previous career.

Syncopated Orchestras and Jazz Bands

The good jazz musicians in the first decades of the twentieth century were mobile, willing to go where the best employment was and, perhaps more important, where the best jazz musicians were. One example of this mobility was the response to a “call” from Charles S. Johnson and Alain Locke to come to Harlem and participate in what was to be the Harlem Renaissance. W. C. Handy came from Memphis; Eubie Blake from Baltimore; Duke Ellington from Washington, D.C.; and Fletcher Henderson from Atlanta. Musicians were also brought by the “lure [of] potential success in an exciting environment” (Floyd 1990, 2).

Most scholars assign the beginnings of jazz to New Orleans—a cosmopolitan city populated by white and black Americans and Creoles. One section of New Orleans, Storyville, was a district where black musicians could find employment—primarily in its clubs, bars, and brothels. In 1917, Storyville was closed down, drying up employment for jazz musicians. The musically able ones went to Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Kansas City, St. Louis, or San Francisco; they included Jelly Roll Morton, Kid Ory, King Oliver, and Louis Armstrong.

Jazz is a merging of cultures and styles: ragtime, blues, syncopated dance music, and popular songs from minstrels and vaudeville. Essentially it evolved from the performance practices of African Americans: the moods and melodic fluctuations of their blues songs, the syncopated rhythms of their dance music, and the freedoms they took in the creative process—that is, their freedom to improvise. These are some of the characteristics that musicians brought from New Orleans to Harlem, to other parts of New York, and to other cities.

James Reese Europe (1881–1919) was born in Mobile, Alabama, to a musical family. The family moved to Washington, D.C., when Europe was ten. In 1903, at

age twenty-two, he moved to New York and began playing piano in Harlem nightclubs. In 1910, Europe founded the Clef Club, an organization that was part social club and part booking agency. It provided musicians to entertain at society parties and dances but also organized performing groups within the club. One group was the Clef Club Orchestra, which had 125 members and included the usual instruments of the string family as well as mandolins and banjos. The orchestra played music by black composers. It first appeared in Carnegie Hall in 1912 and then again in 1913 and 1914. These performances gave the orchestra greater respectability in white society, which in turn resulted in more bookings for elite society functions.

At the start of World War I, Europe enlisted in the army, and his commander asked him to form a military band. This all-Negro band entertained troops and citizens everywhere it visited, and it was always received with great enthusiasm. It was not the typical military band. Members were highly creative in the way they played their instruments and the way they moved. The military band had, in fact, become to a large extent a jazz band.

Louis Armstrong (Satchmo, 1898–1971) became one of the most successful and popular jazz musicians in history. He honed his skills in New Orleans, then moved to Chicago in 1922 to play with King Oliver. In 1924, Armstrong moved to New York to join the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra; he then returned to Chicago, where he made perhaps his most important recordings during the late 1920s with his groups the Hot Five and the Hot Seven. Armstrong had a very successful and illustrious career as a popular entertainer, recording artist, and movie actor.

Armstrong's innovations were formed in New Orleans. They included creative embellishments and improvisations; a swing rhythm; a unique singing quality and style, including scat singing (singing in the manner of instrumental improvisation); and his own personality as a performer. This type of new "hot jazz," in New Orleans and later in Chicago, was typically performed with a small instrumental ensemble, perhaps three melody instruments (cornet or trumpet, clarinet, and trombone) and a rhythm section of string bass or tuba, piano and guitar or banjo, and drums.

Armstrong's impact altered the course of both popular music and jazz, contributing significantly to the development of African American musical styles as a dominant force in twentieth-century music.

Fletcher Henderson (1897–1952) began his professional career in New York as a song demonstrator



Louis Armstrong in *Every Day's a Holiday*, 1937. (AP/Wide World Photos.)

with the Pace-Handy Music Company. When Harry Pace founded his recording company and the Black Swan label, Henderson began putting together instrumental groups to back up the Pace singers. From this experience, he became a bandleader, organizing various groups for clubs and dances. He performed in Club Alabam and then the Roseland Ballroom, where he remained for a decade. These bands were dance bands, not jazz bands, and were little influenced by the new "hot jazz" coming out of New Orleans. But although most bands in northern urban areas were dance bands, meeting a widespread craving for social dancing, the new jazz was becoming popular.

In 1924, Henderson brought in Louis Armstrong from Chicago as the band's jazz specialist. Armstrong's hot swing and melodic invention influenced the musicians in Henderson's band and other musicians in New York, who began to copy Armstrong's solo style. Armstrong left Henderson within a year, but the seed had been sown. By 1926, Henderson's band played excellent jazz. Additionally, Henderson's arrangements—mostly of the work of Don Redman—became the basic pattern of big band arrangements for decades: reed, brass, and rhythm sections with each section alternately taking the lead and providing supportive riffs, always swinging.

Henderson eventually fell into financial difficulties and sold his best arrangements to Benny Goodman, thus initiating the popular swing bands of the 1930s.

Edward Kennedy (Duke) Ellington (1899–1974) was a jazz bandleader, pianist, arranger, and composer, and a leading figure in big band jazz from the 1920s until his death. As previously noted, he and his

band played at the Cotton Club in Harlem from 1927 to 1932. His work earned him honorary doctorates, the Presidential Medal of Honor, and membership in the National Institutes of Arts and Letters. Numerous biographies, discographies, essays, and musical analyses fully document the contributions of this distinguished musician.

Classical Music

Most of the African American classical musicians were highly educated, having studied at the best music schools or privately with outstanding white European-trained musicians. African Americans who wanted to create music in classical forms and styles had to determine individually to what extent and in what ways they would adhere to “higher,” cultivated classical forms and yet retain that which was basic to their black cultural heritage.

One point of view among leaders of the Harlem Renaissance was to keep folk and popular idioms out of classical concert music. However, most writers and musicians valued the concept of black nationalism, which implied incorporating traditional black melodic idioms and dance rhythms into classical music. Spirituals, for instance, were arranged in the style of art songs and were included as thematic material in symphonies, concertos, and symphonic poems. A composer might incorporate a spiritual without modifying it, but most composers would vary a spiritual to suit their own compositional style.

Composers

Harry T. Burleigh (1866–1949) was the first black American to achieve distinction as a classical composer and arranger; he was best-known for his arrangements of Negro spirituals. Burleigh studied at the National Conservatory of Music in New York, most notably with its director, Antonín Dvořák. Burleigh also became a choir member at Saint George’s Episcopal Church, which had a prominent, wealthy, white congregation; he remained there for fifty-two years. In addition, he became a soloist at Temple Emanu-El, an affluent synagogue in New York, and remained there for twenty-five years. He was also a music editor for Ricordi Publishing for thirty-six years.

Burleigh composed or arranged 265 vocal works—mostly for solo voice and piano accompaniment—and 187 choral arrangements of black spiritual

melodies. He died in 1949. At his funeral, his pallbearers included Eubie Blake, Noble Sissle, and W. C. Handy.

William Levi Dawson (1899–1990) was a composer, arranger, and choral conductor. He graduated from Tuskegee Institute and later returned there to direct the Tuskegee Choir for twenty-five years. In his symphonic music, he used folk song idioms. His best-known work, *Negro Folk Symphony*, is a four-movement composition based (as its title indicates) on Negro folk music but having the same symphonic form used by European composers who drew on the folk melodies and idioms of their own cultures. *Negro Folk Symphony* was given its world premiere in 1934 with Leopold Stokowski conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Nathaniel Dett (1882–1943) was a composer, pianist, and conductor. His formal education included a bachelor of music degree from Oberlin Conservatory in 1908 (he was the first black American to receive this degree at Oberlin), and a master of music degree from the Eastman School of Music in 1932. In 1929, he studied with Nadia Boulanger in France. Dett was director of music at Hampton Institute from 1913 to 1931 and was also director of its choir.

Dett is now best known for his numerous arrangements of spirituals, although he also composed three extended works for chorus and orchestra; a widely performed choral piece, “Listen to the Lambs”; and eight suites for piano, of which *In the Bottoms* and *Magnolia Suite* are perhaps best known.

Florence Price (1888–1953) was the first black woman to achieve widespread recognition as a symphonic composer; she was also a teacher. Price graduated from the New England Conservatory of Music in 1906 with diplomas in organ and piano. Her prizewinning *Symphony in E Minor* was performed in 1933 by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra; this exposure led to further performances of her works in the United States and in Europe. Price achieved even more recognition when Marian Anderson sang her arrangement “My Soul’s Been Anchored in de Lord” and her composition “Songs to the Dark Virgin.” The latter was a setting of a text by Langston Hughes.

Price’s compositional style would be considered conservative; she did not use the twentieth-century compositional techniques that were in vogue during the 1920s and the 1930s. Using western European forms, she did incorporate elements of her Negro heritage, however, though she did not quote actual Negro folk or spiritual melodies.

William Grant Still (1895–1978) is undoubtedly the best-known African American composer of classical music in the western European style. Among his most familiar works is Symphony No. 1, the *Afro-American Symphony*. Its was premiered in 1931 by the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, becoming the first symphony composed by a black American to be performed by a major symphony orchestra.

Still worked for Pace and Handy's music publishing company in Memphis and then in New York City. In 1921, he played oboe in the orchestra of Eubie Blake's *Shuffle Along* on Broadway and on tour. In 1923, he studied at the New England Conservatory in Boston and in New York City with Edgard Varèse. In the late 1920s, Still received grants and awards and created jazz arrangements for Artie Shaw. The première of his opera *A Bayou Legend* was broadcast on PBS in 1981.

Still's best-known works used Negro and other African American folk idioms. Still, Burleigh, and Dett can probably be said to represent a culmination of at least one ideal of the Harlem Renaissance—to incorporate Negro folk materials into “higher” forms of western European art.

Performers

This ideal was also pursued by solo recitalists. Marian Anderson, Roland Hayes, and Paul Robeson were among the best singers to incorporate black music, particularly spirituals, into their recitals.

Marian Anderson (1897–1993) was a contralto who performed concerts worldwide, winning critical acclaim for her presentation of art songs, arias from operas and oratorios, and spirituals—usually in the same recitals. In 1925, Anderson won first prize in a competition sponsored by the New York Philharmonic, which enabled her to be featured as a soloist with that orchestra. She made her Carnegie Hall debut in 1928. By 1935, with the help of Sol Hurok (her manager for thirty years), Anderson became a world-class artist, touring across the United States and throughout Europe. She would return to Carnegie Hall more than 150 times. Later in her career, she became the first black singer to join the roster of the Metropolitan Opera, paving the way for many to follow.

Anderson received numerous honorary doctorates and awards, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1963), the United Nations Peace Prize (1977), a Congressional Gold Medal (1978), the first

Eleanor Roosevelt Human Rights Award (1984), and a concert tribute at Carnegie Hall celebrating her seventy-fifth birthday. In 1991, she received a Grammy Award for Lifetime Achievement.

Roland Hayes (1887–1977), a tenor, attended Fisk University and then continued vocal studies in Boston, where he made his debut recital in 1917. He then toured throughout the United States. In 1920, he continued his studies in Europe, gave recitals, and appeared with major orchestras in London, Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin, and Vienna. He returned to the United States, making his Carnegie Hall debut in 1923.

Like Marian Anderson, Hayes shaped a career by presenting recitals of European classics and Negro spirituals—a career that, in his case, lasted for fifty years. At first he was not able to get professional management, so he scheduled his own concerts and tours, becoming well known in African American communities. He financed his own recitals in the major concert halls of Boston, then went to Europe for a series of concerts that included a performance for King George V and Queen Mary of Great Britain. Thereafter, when he returned to America, he now was able to get professional management: the manager of the Boston Symphony, William Brennan, who signed Hayes up for thirty concerts.

Paul Robeson (1898–1976) was a bass-baritone, a movie actor, and a political activist. He received a bachelor of arts degree from Rutgers University and a law degree (LLB) from Columbia University. He became well known for his singing of black spirituals and made his first national tour in 1926. This was followed by stage productions in England (*Show Boat* and *Othello*). His best-known films made in the mid-1930s were *The Emperor Jones* and *Show Boat*.

Robeson's activism was centered in his recognition of the cultural importance of the common people; accordingly, he learned the languages and folk songs of other cultures. He then took on working-class concerns and became a communist. As his political and cultural rhetoric intensified, his popularity as a singer decreased. He became depressed at the loss of contact with audiences and friends and was virtually isolated in the 1960s and 1970s; before then, however, he had received any number of honors and accolades.

DAVID WILLOUGHBY

See also Black Swan Phonograph Company; Blues; Blues: Women Performers; Chocolate Dandies, The;

Cotton Club; Harlem: 3—Entertainment; House-Rent Parties; Jazz; Minstrelsy; Music: Bands and Orchestras; Musical Theater; Musicians; Nightclubs; Roseland Ballroom; Saint Louis Blues; Shuffle Along; Singers; Spirituals; *specific individuals*

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Music: Bands and Orchestras

During the Harlem Renaissance, the very definition of bands and orchestras was altered. Previously, a band was considered an ensemble of wind and percussion instruments playing music for military functions, outdoor funerals, and park concerts; this term now also included small ensembles called “jazz bands.” An

orchestra had been defined as an ensemble of bowed string instruments and fewer wind and percussion instruments. The orchestra was intended to play the music of the western European composers in a concert setting and also to perform at social events for wealthy, aristocratic patrons. In New York City and particularly Harlem in the 1920s, the term “jazz orchestra” began to be used to designate an ensemble of eight to ten players of trumpets, trombones, saxophones-clarinets; and a rhythm section consisting of piano, banjo, string bass, tuba, and drums. Sometimes, in the “sweet orchestras,” two or three violins would be used.

Another important innovation in Harlem and elsewhere in New York City was the establishment of specifically named ensembles, such as the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra and the Cotton Club Orchestra, in which the musicians might change nightly, depending on who was available. This practice was possible because in New York many talented musicians could play in many styles this practice differed significantly from that of traditional ensembles such as the King Oliver Band playing in Chicago, which would have the same musicians every night.

To understand this change in established bands and orchestras, it is useful to look at the social and economic situation of Harlem in the 1920s. During this period, black migration from the southeastern United States to New York—as well as discriminatory real estate policies—caused overcrowding and a housing shortage, and many blacks were forced to live in Harlem. Thus black musicians who worked in the Broadway theaters, society orchestras, or recording studios in downtown or midtown New York typically had to travel to work and return home to Harlem.

Band in a Box

One result of the overcrowding was an economic crisis: limited incomes and limited housing. A popular solution was the “rent party,” a well-advertised event featuring food, alcohol, dancing, and music. The party would begin on a weekend afternoon and end the following morning. Music was provided by a “band in a box,” the piano player. The three famous players most in demand were James P. Johnson, composer of “Carolina Stomp,” the “cutting piece” used for stride piano contests; Thomas “Fats” Waller, called the “summation of the Harlem piano style”; and Willie “the Lion” Smith.

James Reese Europe and the Clef Club Orchestra

The first African American band signed to a recording contract was that of James Reese Europe, which was contracted in 1914 by Victor Records. By this time, Europe had established a booking agency called the Clef Club, which had more than 180 musicians listed who could play at many types of functions and venues. In the Clef Club orchestra, Reese created a unique sound by having the first violins accompanied by the second violin parts played by mandolins and banjos. This strumming effect was enhanced by ten pianos, two clarinets (no oboe), two baritone horns (no French horns), trombone (no bassoons), and saxophones; the musicians also sang as well as played their instruments.

James Reese Europe led the band of the 369th Regimental Military Unit (known as the “Harlem Hell Fighters”) during World War I while serving on active duty as a machine gunner. The band performed many concerts in Paris and gained an international reputation. When the 369th was excluded from the victory parade in Washington, D.C., it held its own parade in New York City on 17 February 1919, starting in lower Manhattan and ending on Lenox Avenue in Harlem playing “Here Comes My Daddy Now.”

James Reese Europe was also important as the musical director for the dancers Vernon and Irene Castle in their ballroom at “Castle House,” where the fox-trot was introduced to America. With all these musical activities, Europe set the stage for the versatility and variety of Harlem’s bands and orchestras.

After Europe’s death in 1919, Will Marion Cook took over the Clef Club orchestra, which presented concerts with Paul Robeson. Cook later established the New York Syncopated Orchestra, also known as the Southern Syncopated Orchestra or the American Syncopated Orchestra, and gave concerts in many parts of the United States. A concert program might include waltzes by Brahms, Cook’s own composition “Rain Song,” Nathaniel Dett’s “Listen to the Lambs,” W. C. Handy’s “Memphis Blues,” and Negro spirituals sung a cappella.

“Sweet” Dance Music Orchestras

As the new dances such as the fox-trot, Castle walk, Charleston, black bottom, shimmy, turkey trot, and lindy hop became popular, public ballrooms were established; one example was the Roseland Ballroom in downtown New York City. The first important band to

play for this “sweet” dancing was Fletcher Henderson’s. Henderson and his orchestra played at the Roseland Ballroom from 1924 to 1926. This orchestra, as recorded playing “Copenhagen” in 1924, consisted of eleven pieces: three trumpets, trombone, three saxes-clarinets, banjo, tuba, drums, and piano. (On this recording, a new trumpet player had joined the band as soloist—Louis Armstrong.) Henderson was experimenting with a concept later known as the “big band,” in which the musicians played arrangements contrasting the different sections and timbres of the ensemble instead of relying on soloistic improvisation.

Another important sweet dance orchestra was that of Paul Whiteman, known as the “king of jazz.” In his recording of “Charleston” in 1925, the orchestra consisted of three violins, two trumpets, two trombones, four saxes-clarinets, banjo, tuba, and drums. Whiteman’s orchestra presented important concerts such as “Experiment in Modern Music” (1924), which featured the premier of George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* as well as “Livery Stable Blues.”

Several society orchestras in Harlem consisted of women, such as the Negro Women’s Orchestra and Civic Association; the Famous Ladies Orchestra, led by Marie Lucas; and the Ladies Orchestra, conducted by the bass player Hallie Anderson.

Benny Carter was typical of the Harlemithe orchestra musician who had to read music, improvise, know the popular styles, and play alternately in two or three different ensembles. Carter, a young player in the 1920s, began a career with Fletcher Henderson as a sax and trumpet player and an arranger. Carter played in

Harlem’s nightclubs, in ballroom orchestras, and in Broadway theater orchestras; later he worked on musical scores for Hollywood films. He had “absolute expertise, musical knowledge, and a brilliant style of arranging. He took advantage of unique sonorities afforded by the jazz big band” (Lowe 2000).

“Hot” Dance Music Orchestras

In 1929 a radio broadcast from the Cotton Club in Harlem began with an A-flat dominant seventh chord from the band. Then the announcer, Irving Mills, manager of the Duke Ellington Orchestra, said: “Welcome to our famous Cotton Club. Introducing the greatest living master of ‘Jungle Music’—that rip-roaring harmony hound, none other than Duke Ellington. Take your bow, Dukie. The first number is the ‘Cotton Club Stomp.’”

With this introduction, Mills presented Ellington’s unique orchestra to the radio audience. In 1927, when Ellington had been invited to lead a house band at the Cotton Club, he needed to enlarge his ensemble from eight players to eleven to accommodate the large production numbers of the singers and dancers. The new orchestra had two trumpets, trombone, three saxophones-clarinets, guitar-banjo, bass-tuba, drums, and piano. Later Ellington added another trumpet, two trombones, and a fourth saxophone-clarinet. Unlike many other orchestra leaders, Ellington was able to keep the same musicians working with him. This enabled him to compose for specific instruments and for the unique qualities of each musician. Thus he wrote “Concerto for Cootie”—that is, Cootie Williams—rather than just a concerto for trumpet.



Miguel Covarrubias (1904–1957), *Rhapsody in Blue*, c.1925; oil on canvas. (CH96189, Christie’s Images, private collection/Bridgeman Art Library.)



Duke Ellington and his band in the early 1930s. (Brown Brothers.)

Ellington's orchestra and other hot dance orchestras featured many soloists, unlike the sweet orchestras that relied on written arrangements.

New Orleans jazz bands were also popular as "hot" ensembles. Wilbur Sweatman's Original Jazz Band, for instance, consisted of the typical instrumentation of clarinet, trumpet, trombone, piano, and drums. Another hot jazz band was that of William "Chick" Webb, who opened the famous Savoy Ballroom in 1926. (In 1934, Webb would introduce the young Ella Fitzgerald to the jazz world.) The Savoy, which was advertised as the "house of happy feet," was open to whites and blacks, unlike the "whites-only" Cotton Club.

As Duke Ellington began to tour nationally and internationally, Cab Calloway and his musicians became the house band at the Cotton Club in 1931. Calloway had started his ensemble a few years before at Connie's Inn, which was a similar venue. His orchestra remained the same size as Ellington's.

It is worth noting that when Louis Armstrong came to Harlem in 1924, he was able to transcend the New Orleans format and play with big bands, blues bands, and jazz bands. Everybody wanted him.

Broadway Theater Orchestras

Shuffle Along, by Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake, was the first successful Broadway musical written, produced, and performed by African Americans. After its opening in 1921 it ran for some 500 performances and spawned three national touring companies. Noble Sissle had worked with James Reese Europe and led a jazz orchestra; Blake was a vaudeville performer and ragtime pianist. Their thirteen-piece orchestra for *Shuffle Along* consisted of violin, viola, cello, bass, flute, clarinet, oboe, alto saxophone, two trumpets, trombone, piano, and drums. The members of the orchestra included William Grant Still, oboe (later musical director of Black Swan Records and composer of the *Afro-American Symphony*), and Hall Johnson, violist with the Negro String Quartet and leader of the Hall Johnson Singers.

Theater ensembles sometimes had musicians onstage as well as in the orchestra pit. These musicians were experienced and versatile, playing not only in the theater but also in recording studios, nightclubs, and jazz sessions, sometimes all in the same day.

Recording Bands and Orchestras

Recording orchestras were developing at the same time as jazz and dance orchestras. Jazz was in fact the

first music to be recorded from its beginnings, or nearly so. However, the recording techniques and equipment imposed many restrictions on the music, such as the three-minute length of a recording, the single microphone, and the limited dynamic range, which excluded certain instruments. Consequently, the early recordings give an incomplete and distorted representation of the actual performance practices of the period. Perhaps innovations such as longer performances, extended compositions, subtler timbres, and an expanded dynamic range could have begun earlier if the recording industry had been more advanced.

Whereas the big bands ruled the ballrooms and variety clubs, blues singers ruled the recordings. The popularity of these singers stimulated a new industry called "race records." In 1921 Okeh Record Company recorded Mamie Smith and the Jazz Hounds playing "Crazy Blues." The recording sold more than a million copies the first year, at seventy-five cents a copy, indicating that there was a market for selling music to African Americans. The other recording companies started to record blues singers, and race records began. The typical blues band consisted of piano, cornet, and rhythm instruments such as guitar, banjo, and drums, but Gertrude "Ma" Rainey recorded Thomas Dorsey's "Chain Gang Blues" in 1925 in New York with a larger blues band: cornet, trombone, clarinet, bass sax (played by Coleman Hawkins), banjo, and Fletcher Henderson on piano.

Although Rainey recorded mostly in Chicago, she had an enormous influence on many blues singers such as Bessie Smith and others who recorded in New York. From 1923 to 1928, Rainey recorded ninety-two songs for Paramount Records. Her story and her recording practices are presented in August Wilson's play *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (1984).

In 1923 the young Bessie Smith recorded "Gulf Coast Blues" and "Down Hearted Blues" with Clarence Williams on piano. That recording sold 750,000 copies in a year, rivaling Mamie Smith's "Crazy Blues." Bessie Smith recorded many songs with Henderson's Hot Six, an ensemble that included Fletcher Henderson on piano, with clarinet, banjo, cornet, and trombone. Bessie Smith's recording of W. C. Handy's "Saint Louis Blues" with Louis Armstrong (1925) is considered a classic of this era.

Clarence Williams recorded a great deal of instrumental blues with his band, Clarence Williams's Blue Five. This band featured Sidney Bechet on soprano saxophone and included Williams playing piano, with clarinet, trombone, and banjo. In 1925, Williams

recorded “Cake Walking Babies from Home” featuring Louis Armstrong on trumpet.

The first recording company owned by African Americans was started by Henry Pace, who recorded Ethel Walters in 1921. The recording, “Down Home Blues,” sold 500,000 copies in six months and made the company a success. With Fletcher Henderson as recording director and William Grant Still as music director, the company, later to be known as Black Swan Records, became very well known. Black Swan arranged a national tour with Fletcher Henderson and the Black Swan Troubadours to capitalize on its success.

Music of the “Talented Tenth”

Some people, impressed by the philosophy of “advancing the Negro race” as espoused by W. E. B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, and James Weldon Johnson, felt that jazz and entertainment music were to be shunned, and that nobler music should be developed. This was the reason for Penman Lovinggood’s book *Famous Modern Negro Musicians* (1921). Lovinggood offered a series of short essays on nineteen composers; classically trained singers, conductors, and instrumentalists; and concert promoters. His subjects included Roland Hayes, James Reese Europe, Paul Robeson, and Marian Anderson. Lovinggood was expressing ideas related to the concept of the “talented tenth,” a term used by Du Bois to refer to the upper 10 percent or so—the leadership—of the African American population.

William Christopher (W. C.) Handy had come to New York to open a publishing house with Henry Pace in 1918. He conducted an orchestra and chorus at Carnegie Hall in 1928 in a program of black music of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Edward Gilbert Anderson established the Harlem Symphony Orchestra and the Renaissance Theater Orchestra in the 1920s. The Negro String Quartet gave many concerts in Harlem and New York City. In 1925, this quartet accompanied the famous tenor Roland Hayes in his Carnegie Hall debut. The members of the quartet were Felix Weir, first violin; Arthur Boyd, second violin; Hall Johnson, viola; and Marion Cumbe, cello. Hall Johnson became the leader of the Hall Johnson Singers, who had their debut in 1928 at the Pythian Temple and Town Hall in New York City. They later recorded for RCA Victor Company.

Another important vocal ensemble was led by Eva Jessye. The *Major Bowes Family Radio Hour* and the *General Motors Hour* both featured the Eva Jessye Choir. At a later date—from 1930 to 1942—the Monarch

Symphonic Band performed in Harlem, led by Fred Simpson. Floyd (1990) notes that in 1917 the Jenkins Orphanage Band played in a production of DuBose Heyward’s *Porgy*—the work on which George Gershwin’s opera *Porgy and Bess* was based.

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See also Clef Club; Cotton Club; House-Rent Parties; Jazz; Music; Musical Theater; Nightclubs; Roseland Ballroom; Savoy Ballroom; Shuffle Along; Talented Tenth; *specific individuals*

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Musical Theater

Young Langston Hughes once claimed that he attended Columbia University so he could see *Shuffle Along*, a Broadway musical of 1921 written and performed by African American artists. He credited the show with giving a “scintillating send-off to that Negro Vogue in Manhattan” known as the Harlem Renaissance: “For nearly two years it was always packed. It gave the proper push—a pre-Charleston kick—to the vogue

that spread to books, African sculpture, music, and dancing." While most studies have concentrated on these aspects of the Harlem Renaissance, they have tended to ignore the role of African American musical theater during this period. African American musicals as a form moved into the mainstream of American culture during the 1920s, bringing black performers, writers, directors, and composers into the mainstream as well. Their innovations spread among their white counterparts as the giants of musical theater history such as George Gershwin, Irving Berlin, and Jerome Kern became inspired by the music, performers, and themes of African American musical theater.

Shuffle Along was not the first musical written, performed, and produced by African American talent. This honor belongs to both Will Marion Cook's *Clorindy, the Origin of the Cakewalk* and Bob Cole's *A Trip to Coontown*, which appeared briefly on Broadway in 1898. Yet in the twenty-three year interim, African American musical productions were few and far between. Some of the original innovators had died early, some were hired away by white producers (Florenz Ziegfeld hired the talented Bert Williams to appear in

his *Ziegfeld Follies*), and others shifted to other forms of cultural production, such as classical music or poetry. As a result, there was no continuing tradition within African American musical theater in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Shuffle Along premiered in May 1921 with few expectations of success; but it soon became a surprise hit, and its 504-performance run was surpassed only by Jerome Kern's *Sally*, which opened the same season. The composer Eubie Blake and the lyricist Noble Sissle created a score that delighted critics and audiences with its modern tempi. The cast of unknowns was catapulted to stardom. The leads Flournoy Miller and Aubrey Lyles (who also wrote the libretto for the show) appeared on Broadway every season throughout the 1920s. Even members of the replacement cast (Florence Mills) and the chorus (Josephine Baker, Paul Robeson, and Adelaide Hall) found *Shuffle Along* the first step to international stardom. *Shuffle Along* legitimized the African American musical. It proved to producers that audiences would support African American talent on Broadway, not always an obvious conclusion in earlier years. As a result, *Shuffle Along* spawned a series of imitators, turning the African American musical into a staple of entertainment during the 1920s. At the same time, it influenced white creators of the genre to acknowledge the talent, the music, and even the themes in their own creations.

The creators of *Shuffle Along* were talented but generally unknown. Flournoy Miller and Aubrey Lyles were the creators of the show's libretto. They had met while students at Fisk University and had entered the world of entertainment as comedians in the black vaudeville circuit. Their comedy skits burlesqued southern life and combined a healthy dose of malapropisms with acrobatic dancing. One of their skits, "The Mayor of Dixie," became the foundation for the plot of *Shuffle Along*. Although they did have their fans in the years before *Shuffle Along*, they had remained generally unknown. Within a year after the show's premiere, they were billed as "America's Foremost Colored Comedians." They remained Broadway stars throughout the 1920s.

The composer (James Hubert "Eubie" Blake) and lyricist (Noble Sissle) of *Shuffle Along* met at a party in Baltimore in 1915 and began a long musical collaboration. Blake, a talented ragtime pianist, joined with Sissle to compose "It's All Your Fault," which was sung by Sophie Tucker. World War I interrupted their partnership, but soon after the armistice they rejoined each other as a performing team, the Dixie Duo,



Shuffle Along, scene with two actors in blackface. © Billy Rose Theatre Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations. Photographer: White Studio.)

on the vaudeville circuit. Miller and Lyles later approached them with the proposition of creating a musical comedy for Broadway—a somewhat outlandish notion, since black musicals had been absent from Broadway for several years.

Sissle and Blake wrote the score for the new show and performed in it as well. While most Broadway musical scores of this period still relied on European models of musical production, Blake introduced jazz and blues rhythms to the Broadway stage, featuring such songs as “I’m Just Wild about Harry” (later Harry Truman’s campaign song), “Love Will Find a Way,” and “I’m Craving for that Kind of Love.” As a result, *Shuffle Along* echoed contemporary popular music in ways that other shows did not.

As white audiences flocked to the show, the crew of *Shuffle Along* also encouraged African Americans to attend. When the show first opened, African Americans were relegated to the balconies of most New York theaters. The *Shuffle Along* company tried to break down these barriers, both by staging performances at times when African Americans might be more likely to attend—midnight performances proved quite popular—and by loosening the informal segregation process that reigned in most New York theaters. As a result, *Shuffle Along* paved the way for the end of theatrical segregation in New York City. James Weldon Johnson noted in 1930, “At the present time the sight of colored people in the orchestras of Broadway theatres is not considered a cause for immediate action or utter astonishment.”

As the audiences became integrated, so too did the Broadway musical theater. *Shuffle Along* was a novelty at the time it opened, but it ultimately legitimized black musical comedy on Broadway. In just three years, New Yorkers saw nine musicals written by and starring African Americans: *Put and Take* (1921); *Strut Miss Lizzie*, *Plantation Revue*, *Oh Joy*, and *Liza* (1922); *How Come?* and *Runnin’ Wild* (1923); and *The Chocolate Dandies* and *Dixie to Broadway* (1924). African American composers also wrote melodies for three shows with white casts in 1923: C. Luckeyeth Roberts’s *Go-Go* and *Sharlee*, and Sissle and Blake’s *Elsie*. By 1922, a song from the *Ziegfeld Follies* noted the new trend, as the star Gilda Gray sang “It’s Getting Dark on Old Broadway.”

Runnin’ Wild was the most successful of the succeeding shows. Not surprisingly, it featured two veterans of *Shuffle Along*—Miller and Lyles—in leading roles. It also continued the tradition of using contemporary African American music and themes in the score. While “Old Fashioned Love” became the immediate

hit of the show, another song from the score swiftly attracted greater attention. The composer James P. Johnson and Cecil Mack included a song and dance number, “The Charleston,” for the new show. Although the Charleston as a dance was not new, the new song ultimately became the symbol of the roaring twenties. Johnson said he composed various “Charlestons” over the years, but the version used in *Runnin’ Wild* became the most popular of the genre. Both the contemporary tone of the music and the farcical libretto continued to draw audiences to the new African American musical.

Although the early African American musicals remained the product of African American performers and writers, as the 1920s progressed more white producers became interested in the profitable genre and reshaped it in a variety of ways. Many of these shows were streamlined into revues—collections of songs, dances, and skits, without the libretto and extensive scenery. These revues, produced by the likes of Lew Leslie and George White, were extremely profitable, efficient, and inexpensive to produce. Shows such as *Dixie to Broadway* (1924) and *Blackbirds of 1928* achieved long runs despite their abbreviated format. During this period, much of the creative control shifted to white producers and writers who used elements and themes from the earlier shows created by African Americans. *Blackbirds of 1928* had a vibrant score, but it was created by a white songwriting team, Jimmy McHugh and Dorothy Fields. As a result, African Americans became recognized as the performers in these hit musical shows, but creative control was slowly draining away.

Although white audiences continued to flock to productions performed by African Americans—on Broadway and in Harlem as well—African American critics found little to praise in them. The musicals of the late 1920s seemed to be borrowing stereotypical elements from the earlier works, and to be pushing African American creative talents to the sidelines. Many of the African American critics of the Harlem Renaissance lost their enthusiasm for this unique genre and criticized the turn to white control. Others, such as Alain Locke and Charles S. Johnson, criticized the form for its escapist tendencies (this was often a complaint about musical comedy in general), arguing that musical comedy ignored the critical social and economic issues of the age.

The African American musical weathered the early days of the Great Depression with some difficulty. On the one hand, African American musicals continued to be produced during these dismal times. One reason for

the genre's survival was its inexpensive production costs. The shows produced during the Depression had minimal scenery (*Rhapsody in Black* in 1931 maintained only a dark curtain), and smaller and smaller casts. Producers continually cut wages during this period; considering the lack of alternatives, African American actors often accepted the cuts. On the other hand, by the early 1930s the genre was recognized to be in decline, as performers as well as the creative talents behind the African American musicals sought other avenues to success and indeed work.

Although the boom in African American musical theater during the 1920s rivaled the successes of the literary lights of the Harlem Renaissance, prominent authors and critics often tended to ignore the remarkable success that the creators of these entertainments had in bringing their work into the American mainstream. The stars of these shows appealed to both white and African American audiences, and the melodies from the shows had a similar appeal. White authors of the musical theater had often ignored African American performers and their culture before the 1920s. After the explosion of talent during the Harlem Renaissance, this became an impossibility. Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II, for example, chose African American performers and musical themes for *Show Boat* (1927), their adaptation of Edna Ferber's novel of the same name. The hit of the show, the enduring "Ol' Man River," was sung first in New York by Jules Bledsoe, and later in London by Paul Robeson. Irving Berlin chose Ethel Waters for his revue *As Thousands Cheer* in 1933, after seeing her perform at the Cotton Club. She sang several numbers in the show, including "I've Got Harlem on My Mind," but the song that stopped the show each evening was her rendition of "Supper Time," a solo about her husband's lynching. This was certainly a serious turn for what is often called an "escapist entertainment." Waters became the highest-paid female performer on Broadway during the show's run. George and Ira Gershwin followed suit a few years later with *Porgy and Bess* (1935), their ambitious African American opera for the Broadway stage. Many of the performers featured in *Porgy and Bess* had earned their stripes in the African American musicals of the 1920s.

As the most prominent composers, lyricists, and librettists looked to African American musical comedy for inspiration during and after the Harlem Renaissance, changes were also occurring in the structure of the audience. African American musicals brought African American audiences into Broadway theaters and slowly helped to break down

the remaining walls of segregation in New York City's theaters. Similarly, talented African Americans, whether onstage or behind the scenes, were no longer a rarity, as individuals moved to the forefront in the various theatrical crafts. Although the harsh days of the Depression slowed the continued integration within the world of legitimate theater, Broadway theater was an integrated force by the late 1930s. This, too, would have a downside: musicals and dramas created by African Americans would tend to diminish as both creators and performers found themselves welcome in the formerly white world of the Broadway theater. Whenever this window of opportunity started to narrow, both African American musicals and drama would find a new place on the Broadway stage.

ALLEN WOLL

See also Baker, Josephine; Blackbirds; Blake, Eubie; Bledsoe, Jules; Chocolate Dandies; Fields, Dorothy; Hall, Adelaide; Johnson, Charles S.; Johnson, James P.; Leslie, Lew; Locke, Alain; Lyles, Aubrey; Mack, Cecil; Miller, Flournoy; Mills, Florence; Music; Porgy and Bess; Robeson, Paul; Runnin' Wid; Shuffle Along; Sissle, Noble; Waters, Ethel

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Musicians

The Harlem Renaissance began in one musical era and ended in another. It was born during the age of the marching band, aptly symbolized by the parade of James Reese Europe and his 369th Regiment "Harlem Hell Fighters" Band up Fifth Avenue, from midtown to Harlem, in the spring of 1919. By the time the Harlem Renaissance ended, with the onset of the Great Depression a decade later, the jazz age was in full cry, blues had been a craze for more than a decade, and brass bands (such as James Europe's) and the

ragtime style that had characterized their most up-to-date repertoire were going into a decline.

Music Publishing

In the early twentieth century, mechanical music reproduction was in its infancy. Musical amateurs were legion, many owned pianos, and the sheet music business was an enormous industry. Leading music publishers of the Harlem Renaissance were located, not in Harlem itself, but in midtown Manhattan, home of Tin Pan Alley. The most important was the Pace and Handy Music Publishing Company, which moved to New York in 1918. In 1921, when Harry Pace left the partnership to found Black Swan Records, the company was reconstituted as Handy Brothers Music Company, under the leadership of its primary songwriter, W. C. Handy (1873–1958), and his brother Charles (1889–1980). This company formed the nucleus around which other publishers clustered. Most important were the Clarence Williams Music Publishing Company, which arrived in New York in 1921, and the Perry Bradford Music Publishing Company. Williams published some major hits, and Bradford was involved in securing the first recordings by an African American blues singer. These entrepreneurs rented offices in the Gaiety Theater Building at Broadway and Forty-fifth Street. They were joined there by lesser companies, run by the songwriters Spencer Williams, Porter Grainger, Henry Troy, and Bud Allen. Some of these enterprises were honest independent efforts; others were “fronts” for white publishers cashing in on the popularity of black music by setting up an office with a couple of black employees as a facade. A few small music publishers were located in Harlem itself, such as the Arrow Music Publishing Company, Q. Roscoe Snowden, and Payton-Brown. Most were short lived, though, and published little music. In Brooklyn, the entertainer Alex Rogers and the ragtime pianist Luckey Roberts ran a small firm from about 1920 to 1924, initially to supply material to Bert Williams, the nonpareil comedian of the era.

Of all the music publishing houses, by far the longest lived has been Handy Brothers Music Company, still run by the Handy Family on Broadway as of this writing. Beginning in Memphis in 1913 as a conduit for hit songs written by Handy himself, it later published successful songs by others, including “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” (1918) by the vaudevillian Eddie Green (1896–1950), and “Sugar” (1926) by

Maceo Pinkard (1897–1962). As an incubator for young talent during the Harlem Renaissance, the company had few peers. The composer William Grant Still and the bandleader Fletcher Henderson both entered New York’s musical life as employees of Pace Handy. So did Daniel Haynes, who went on to fame on the stage, then starred in the first big-budget, all-black Hollywood feature film, *Hallelujah*, in 1929. That same year, Handy was involved in the production of the only film Bessie Smith ever made, *Saint Louis Blues*, named for his greatest song hit. Smith was one of Handy’s illustrious friends in show business who made his office in Times Square a meeting place and a refuge. Others included George Gershwin, J. Rosamond Johnson, and Eubie Blake. In later years it was a hangout for jazz musicians, who sometimes cut “demo” recordings there. Handy was also close to writers and intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance, including Langston Hughes and Carl Van Vechten. He published some songs with lyrics by Hughes, including one, “Golden Brown Blues” (1926), for which Handy himself wrote the music. Finally, Handy’s book *Blues: An Anthology* (1926) was of great importance in the dissemination of African American culture.

Music Promotion

African Americans were also in the business of booking musical talent during the Harlem Renaissance. The Clef Club, in addition to its crucial role in concert production and general musical uplift, served as a musical clearinghouse and booking agency. Long after it fell from the limelight, it continued to function commercially under the leadership of Fred “Deacon” Johnson. The composer and music arranger Will Vodery (1885–1951) was an active booking talent from Times Square as early as 1916. As late as the 1950s, musicians from Harlem such as the songwriter Maceo Pinkard continued to run services providing entertainment for parties. There was also an active promotional network in the press. Some journalists, such as Salem Tutt Whitney of the Indianapolis *Freeman*, promoted mainly their own productions and those mounted by their friends. More independent writers also operated in mainstream publications, such as “Billboard” Jackson, who derived his nickname from the magazine he wrote for and was a leader in the entertainment field. The journalist, diplomat, and entrepreneur Lester A. Walton worked on behalf of the race, including entertainers, while writing for the *New York World* in the 1920s.

Recordings

African Americans were heard on records virtually from the beginning of the recording industry, performing minstrel and comic pieces, spirituals, and other music. The biggest African American recording star was the legendary comedian Bert Williams, whose records for Columbia were immensely popular. Many small record companies still existed in the early 1920s, and several recorded black blues and jazz musicians, mostly in New York. These companies included Okeh, Emerson, Brunswick, Perfect, and Harmony. The dominant record company of the period, Victor (later RCA Victor), made many of its recordings in a converted church building it owned in Camden, New Jersey. In addition, one company, owned and operated by blacks, was of enormous importance for the Harlem Renaissance—Black Swan Phonograph Company.

The Pace Phonograph Corporation, producer of Black Swan Records, was founded at the beginning of 1921 and began issuing recordings the following spring. Unlike the leading music publishers, it was located in Harlem, first at 2289 Seventh Avenue, then at 257 West 138th Street. While this was not actually the first black-owned record company (the short-lived Broom Records has that distinction), Black Swan was the first such company to issue hit records, advertise widely, and become an important presence in American culture. Black Swan reflected the tastes of its proprietor, Harry H. Pace (1884–1943), a highly educated and ambitious businessman and a disciple of W. E. B. Du Bois. Like Du Bois, the real estate magnate John Nail, and most of the Black Swan's other investors, Pace had little use for blues and jazz, preferring classical music and spirituals. He allowed his young employees, such as Fletcher Henderson, to guide him in the recording of pop music, however, and this practice paid off handsomely in a series of hit recordings by Ethel Waters. Nevertheless, much of Black Swan's catalog was taken up with recordings of opera arias and other short classical selections. While these are of lesser interest to music fans today, they are of inestimable worth as historical documents. From the Black Swan records of Florence Cole-Talbert, Revella Hughes, and Ivan H. Browning we can reconstruct the sound of the black concert singers of approximately 1920.

Classical Musicians

In the early decades of the twentieth century, African Americans were not heard in white symphony orches-

tras or opera houses. Classically trained musicians such as Will Marion Cook (1869–1944) and R. Nathaniel Dett (1882–1943) had to find other avenues for the expression of their considerable talent. Cook made his greatest mark in musical theater, with such scores as *Clorindy, or the Origin of the Cakewalk* (1898) and *In Dahomey* (1902–1903), two of the finest shows in the history of American theater. Dett also wrote music of very high quality, such as the piano suite *In the Bottoms* (1913), but he made his career as a teacher at such black schools as the Hampton Institute. Teaching would prove the primary musical outlet for black classical musicians during this period. A few solo pianists attempted concert careers, among them Hazel Harrison and Helen Hagan, both of whom gave recitals in New York in the early 1920s. It was rare to see a black soloist with a white orchestra; nevertheless, Raymond Lawson played concertos with the Hartford Symphony on more than one occasion beginning in 1911. In classical music, as in so many areas of American life, African Americans created their own institutions to support performance and education. Some white musicians and philanthropists showed an interest in providing music instruction to African Americans. In New York, one remarkable example was the Music School Settlement for Colored People, founded by the violinist David Mannes, who was active between 1911 and 1919.

One African American who broke through numerous barriers in the music world was Harry T. Burleigh (1866–1949). He is best remembered today for his arrangements of spirituals, such as “Deep River,” but he also wrote classical songs of distinction. As a staff arranger with the New York office of the Italian music publisher Ricordi, Burleigh was in a central position in New York's classical music world. He was the first African American to become an officer of the American Society of Composers and Publishers, was a prestigious private music instructor, and was a popular recital artist for several decades. Most prominently, he had a remarkable career as a baritone soloist at Saint George's Episcopal Church on Stuyvesant Square from 1894 to 1946, and at Temple Emanu-El from 1900 to 1925. By the late 1930s, his singing during the services had become so popular that music lovers were being turned away at Saint George's doors at Easter. Nor was Burleigh the only African American musician in New York to achieve this degree of success in both Christian and Jewish sacred music. His friend Melville Charlton (1880–1973) was the organist at the Union Theological Seminary for nearly thirty years, and at the Temple of the Covenant from 1914 to 1924.

African Americans were not particularly active in the performance of chamber music during the Harlem Renaissance. However, the Negro String Quartet—consisting of Arthur Boyd and Felix Weir, violins; Hall Johnson, viola; and Marion Cumbo, cello—concertized in the 1920s. Another important cellist of the era was Leonard Jeter, an active freelance musician and teacher. Allie Ross, a capable violinist and conductor, had a notable career in the 1920s. In 1927 he conducted *Jazz Symphony*, a complex and difficult work by the avant-garde composer George Antheil, in a concert at Carnegie Hall. W. C. Handy hired the orchestra for this engagement, and A'Lelia Walker provided a rehearsal space and ample funds to ensure adequate rehearsal time. For classical musicians of the Harlem Renaissance, there was often crossover work to be had in pop, whether in musical theater bands or in recording studios. Marion Cumbo made records with both Clara Smith and Eva Taylor, and Leonard Jeter recorded with Ethel Waters (and also played in the pit band for the show *Shuffle Along*). The presence of a cello on 1920s blues records may seem surprising today, but it reflects common musical practices of the period. The standardized jazz-band format that we now take for granted did not take shape until the dawn of the swing era. Many of the early blues and jazz bands—including New Orleans bands and other hot bands—featured a violin as a melody instrument.

The most remarkable example of a crossover musician in the Harlem Renaissance was William Grant Still (1895–1978), a thoroughly trained musician who studied with the avant-garde composer Edgard Varèse. Still was proficient on both the oboe and the cello, two very difficult and dissimilar instruments. He played cello with W. C. Handy's Memphis Blues Band in the summer of 1916, and also wrote some arrangements for Handy during those months. He rejoined Handy in 1919, now in New York, where he wrote many arrangements for publication by the Pace and Handy Music Company. He also played cello in a large concert band under Handy's direction during this period. In early 1921, he joined Harry Pace in the new enterprise of Black Swan records, where he was soon active as arranger and studio conductor. Later in 1921, he joined the pit band of the Broadway hit *Shuffle Along*, playing oboe. This band also included the choral conductor Hall Johnson (1888–1970) on viola, led by the show's composer Eubie Blake at the piano. In the 1920s and 1930s, Still made a name for himself as a composer of classical music, while writing so-

phisticated arrangements for such pop music figures as Don Voorhees, Willard Robison, and Artie Shaw.

Popular, Dance Band, and Theater Musicians

A broad middle category between the classical and popular categories was occupied by musicians who played light classics, music for dancing, and theater tunes. Many, like Still, were active in several musical genres, the boundaries of which were somewhat more fluid than they are today. Around 1900, the leading bandleader in this area was Professor Walter F. Craig (1854–1920s); his orchestra was popular with African Americans in New York for more than three decades, playing for picnics and other occasions. The career of the bandleader and composer Ford Dabney (1883–1958) encompassed several styles and formats, including a stint leading a brass band, with which he made recordings around 1920. The high point of his performing career was leading the band for Ziegfeld's *Midnight Frolic*, a highly popular late-night entertainment that featured such star entertainers as Bert Williams. For these engagements in 1916–1917, Dabney's Syncopated Orchestra consisted of eleven pieces: flute, clarinet, trumpet (the early jazz star "Cricket" Smith), trombone, piano (Dabney), drums, mandolin, two violins, cello, and double bass. This instrumentation suggests a sound between that of a "palm court" orchestra and a theater pit band; many published "stock" arrangements issued by music publishers had a similar layout of parts.

The most prominent director of popular music in New York at the beginning of the Renaissance was James Reese Europe (1880–1919). Early in his career he was involved in musical theater in New York. With the establishment of the Clef Club in 1910, he became a leader in African American musical uplift, directing a large, unique orchestra made up largely of plucked string instruments. With this massive ensemble, Europe led the first concert of African American music at Carnegie Hall in 1912. Curiously, many of the musicians who played the banjo, bandoneon, and harp-guitar in Europe's Clef Club Orchestra read little if any music. This is not to contradict the reputation Europe and his men had for highly disciplined performances, a renown that was richly deserved. The majority of his men played by ear, however, clustering, in rehearsals, around a few reading colleagues, who learned the parts first. The others then "caught the tune" from them, playing the parts with varying degrees of detail, giving the

overall texture of the sound an extraordinary layered richness.

In 1914, having left the Clef Club, Europe became music director for the popular dance team of Vernon and Irene Castle, playing ragtime to accompany the new social dances such as the fox-trot. In the final phase of his career, he led a brass band of African American and Puerto Rican musicians during World War I. The version of brass band ragtime played by this “Harlem Hell Fighters” unit was immensely popular in France, and the musicians made several exemplary records on their return to America. Some of the musicians associated with Europe, such as the trumpeter Cricket Smith, the trombonists Ward “Dope” Andrews and Herb Flemming, and the drummer Buddy Gilmore, were important in the transition to jazz, the new music of the 1920s. The band’s vocalist, Lieutenant Noble Sissle, went on to a highly successful partnership in vaudeville and songwriting with the pianist Eubie Blake. Their musical *Shuffle Along* (1921) would set the standard for work of its kind.

Musical theater in the Harlem Renaissance was a blend of old and new elements, including holdovers from minstrelsy, particularly in comic routines and in the use of blackface. Newer elements included syncopated forms of black music, first ragtime and then early jazz and blues. Dance was enormously important, and pretty light-skinned chorus girls were as important in the theater as they were in such cabarets and nightspots as the Cotton Club. Some, such as Fredi Washington and Josephine Baker, would become stars in their own right. Musical comedy singers, such as Florence Mills and Gertrude Saunders, were also crucial to a show’s success. Mills was the biggest star of black entertainment between the death of Bert Williams in 1922 and her own sudden, premature death in 1927. The line between singers, dancers, and actors was extremely thin and porous during this period, and a number of recordings were made by performers who were not primarily singers, and not jazz or blues singers by any means. They sang in a style that is extinct today, and their few surviving recordings sound strange to our ears: a shrill, high-pitched warbling, with an overabundance of vibrato and a coy theatricality. A recording made in 1921 of Saunders singing “I’m Craving for That Kind of Love,” a hit by Sissle and Blake from *Shuffle Along*, is a revealing artifact of this culture. Eight decades later, the style is unmistakably archaic.

Ragtime Musicians

Although ragtime was primarily a solo piano genre originating in the midwest, a good deal of ragtime was played and composed in New York. Some of the most important practitioners of the music were there, and much New York ragtime was for instrumental ensemble or was vocal. The brass band of James Reese Europe, previously discussed, was a first-rate ragtime band, and there were others in New York, including those led by Ford Dabney and J. Tim Brymn (1881–1946). Like Europe, Brymn was an army band-leader in France during World War I. As for solo pianists, the ragtime musicians who are best remembered today, New York was host to Scott Joplin, the greatest composer of the genre, for the last decade of his life, 1907–1917. By the time of his death, New York had quite a few fine ragtime pianists in residence. Some were locals, such as Fats Waller (1904–1943); some came from near the city, such as Willie “the Lion” Smith (1897–1973) from New York State and James P. Johnson (1891–1955) from New Jersey. Still others were from the eastern seaboard: Eubie Blake (1883–1983) from Baltimore and Charles Luckey (“Luckey”) Roberts (1887–1968) from Philadelphia. All but Smith were also composers of importance. Some, such as Luckey Roberts, were very successful entertainers in the decades around World War I, supplying music to the same high-society families that danced to the music of James Reese Europe’s band during his time with Vernon and Irene Castle.

Eventually, New York ragtime would evolve into a more virtuosic musical style known as “stride,” which was in full flower by the end of the 1920s. The pianists who were able to master this very difficult art, which required an extremely active and agile left hand, tended to be New York ragtime masters such as Johnson and Waller. Johnson later branched out into the composition of longer symphonic forms. Waller wrote popular song standards with the brilliant lyricist Andy Razaf (1895–1973).

Blues Musicians

Country blues, as performed by male vocalists to the accompaniment of their own guitar, played almost no part in the Harlem Renaissance. Although some folk blues pioneers and “songsters” traveled to New York in the late 1920s to make records, such musicians did not stay in the city long. In “commercial,” “city,” or “vaudeville” blues, however, the situation was quite

different. This was a prevalent new style on the black vaudeville circuit throughout much of the United States, beginning in the southeast and in such cities as Chicago and Memphis. The style had established a foothold in New York by the end of World War I. It is impossible to ascertain when blues was first heard in New York, but in 1918 W. C. Handy, later known as the “father of the blues,” arrived in the city to open a new office for his music publishing business. He had already published his greatest songs in Memphis, among them “Saint Louis Blues,” “Yellow Dog Blues,” “Joe Turner Blues,” and “Beale Street Blues.” (His first song hit, “Memphis Blues,” actually more of a ragtime song, was no longer his property.) Handy’s arrival in New York coincides roughly with the rise of the blues craze nationwide. Blues in sheet music already sold extremely well, and there were a great many false blues (blues in name only) on the market. By 1920, there was enough interest in the music for the record companies to begin releasing blues records by African American women. The vaudevillian and music publisher Perry Bradford (1893–1970) was the first to successfully push for this innovation, and in 1920 Fred Hager of Okeh Records permitted him to record Mamie Smith. The first records were successful, and within the next three years most of the best blues “shouters” were immortalized on disk: Ma Rainey, Lucille Hegamin, Albert Hunter, Clara Smith, Edith Wilson, Ethel Waters, Eva Taylor, and the greatest of them all, Bessie Smith.

Jazz Musicians

Early jazz, from approximately 1915 until about 1930, fell into two broad camps according to performance practice. The one generally given the most attention, purely improvised music by small groups, was actually a minority practice. Small combos numbering approximately five players would work up tunes in rehearsal, weaving their lines around one another’s in a crude polyphony that at its best was quite viscerally exciting. This earliest jazz style originated in New Orleans around 1915. In that year, the Creole Band, led by the trumpeter Freddie Keppard, played New York on a vaudeville tour. The best-known early Dixieland ensemble, and the first to record, was the Original Dixieland Jazz Band (white); some of its members were musical illiterates. Their “routining” (playing of memorized riffs) relates to vaudeville and novelty music, and several leading early jazz performers were in fact more comedians than musicians. Ted Lewis

(white) incorporated a good deal of corny verbiage into his act. Jimmy Durante, a fine early jazz pianist, eventually relegated music to a sideline in his comedy career. Wilbur Sweatman (1882–1961), an African American veteran of minstrel bands, developed an act in which he played three clarinets at once.

The earliest black jazz musicians actually living in Harlem emerged from the older musical genres such as ragtime and from bands such as James Europe’s, or from the minstrel and vaudeville circuit. The first jazz recordings all featured white musicians, and African American players recorded first as accompanists to blues singers. Most of the musicians featured on these records had little sense of what we would consider jazz style, and their performances now sound somewhat stiff and wooden. Nonetheless, such musicians as the trumpeter Joe Smith, the clarinetist Ernest “Sticky” Elliott, and the violinist Leroy Parker reflect the prevailing style of the day. Some of their contemporaries were fine musicians. They were often remarkably versatile: Garvin Bushell (1902–1986) played clarinet, several sizes of saxophone, oboe, and bassoon. Musicians of this caliber never stopped studying and improving themselves; in old age, Bushell viewed his recordings of the 1920s with a certain embarrassment and disdain.

Many musicians on early blues and jazz records were reading from either published or handwritten parts. This was apparently true, for example, of the sessions recorded by the singer Lucille Hegamin for Arto Records in 1921, as surviving parts (now in private hands) attest. As Mark Tucker’s oral history with Bushell (1988) revealed, the boundary between note reading and “cutting loose” (improvising) was forever shifting. The notion that early blues and jazz records were made by illiterate performers who played entirely “from the heart” is a misunderstanding fueled by wishful thinking, a “noble savage” myth that may be romantic but is in any case condescending.

As new musicians arrived in town to take advantage of the boom in recordings and club work during the 1920s, the competition for those already on the scene stiffened. Soloists like Johnny Dunn, a trumpeter from Memphis who reigned as the king on his instrument in the early 1920s, were unable to withstand the arrival of superior practitioners from elsewhere, such as Louis Armstrong, Cladys “Jabbo” Smith, James “Bubber” Miley, and Rex Stewart. There were trombonists like Charlie Green, Jimmy Harrison, and Benny Morton; clarinetists like Buster Bailey and Barney Bigard; saxophonists like Coleman Hawkins,

Gene Sedric, and Don Redman; and a host of others. Exempt from this law of the jungle were Harlem's piano players; New York already had the best in the business. Even a jazz master like Jelly Roll Morton stood no chance of unseating titans like James P. Johnson, Luckey Roberts, Willie "the Lion" Smith, and Fats Waller. In late-night "cutting contests," these virtuosos showed off their tricks and tested one another's mettle.

The busiest recording artists of the 1920s were Fletcher Henderson and Clarence Williams, two pianists with widely diverging backgrounds and careers. Henderson (1897–1952), scion of a middle-class educated family in Georgia, originally came to New York to study chemistry at Columbia University but took a summer job with the Pace and Handy Music Company and soon gave up science for music. He moved with Harry Pace to Black Swan Records the following winter and became the house pianist and recordings manager. Throughout the 1920s, Henderson was in great demand as an accompanist to blues singers. By the mid-1920s he was also the leader of the first important black jazz orchestra. Clarence Williams (1893–1966) came from a rural background near New Orleans. He entered show business early, appearing in traveling shows at the age of twelve. By 1916, he was a bandleader and songwriter, and he soon founded a music publishing company with his duo performing partner, the violinist Armand Piron. The partnership dissolved after the company moved to Chicago in 1918, and Williams arrived on Tin Pan Alley in 1921, a prolific and successful tunesmith and publisher. Less active than Henderson as an accompanist, he formed several bands and made many fine recordings with them. Williams's records featured such jazz greats as the trumpeter Joseph "King" Oliver, the clarinetist Buster Bailey, and the pianist James P. Johnson.

The larger jazz orchestras consisted entirely of reading musicians, many with a good deal of classical training. They played a repertoire that ranged from light classics to the more polite, "sweet" dance music that was also known as jazz in this period. The most famous were well-drilled units led by such white bandleaders as Paul Whiteman and Vincent Lopez. Black bands also played this sort of material, which was popular with both races. The first great African American jazz orchestra, led by Fletcher Henderson, played largely from written arrangements, including doctored versions of "stock arrangements" purchased from publishers. In the mid-1920s, two major developments brought orchestras such as Henderson's

firmly into the jazz age. The first was the arrival in his band of "hot" soloists, such as Louis Armstrong, Buster Bailey, and Coleman Hawkins, who used their solo choruses to enrich the expressive range of the orchestral jazz medium. Equally important was the rise of the jazz arranger. Bandleaders such as Henderson and his brother Horace did some arranging of their own, but they also cultivated talented arrangers within their ensembles. The two greatest figures in this development both worked with Henderson: Don Redman (1902–1964) in the late 1920s, and Benny Carter (1907–2003) in the early 1930s. Both were multi-instrumentalists whose primary instruments were the woodwinds, and both later became important bandleaders. Redman, from West Virginia, played clarinet and alto saxophone. Carter, a native of New York's San Juan Hill (the West Sixties), made hit recordings as a trumpet soloist as well as being one of the greatest alto saxophonists, and in his seventy-five-year career composed a great deal of original music.

Much of the music played by "jazz" bands in the 1920s sounds corny to listeners today; the style of such once-popular bandleaders as "Fess" Williams will probably never experience a revival. The "hotter" variety of jazz came to the fore only gradually. The great hot bands in New York tended to have long residencies at particular jazz clubs, often in Harlem, where they attracted considerable patronage, usually exclusively white. Most famous was the Cotton Club, where the orchestras of Andy Preer, Duke Ellington, and Cab Calloway held sway in succession. The numerous venues ranged from large ballrooms—the Manhattan Casino and the Alhambra Ballroom—to small clubs like the Nest and the Lenox Club. Small's Paradise, a club owned and operated by blacks, catered to African American patrons. Its excellent orchestra, led by Charlie Johnson, though little remembered today, was among the finest in New York in 1927–1928, as surviving recordings confirm. Sidney De Paris and "Jabbo" Smith were featured on trumpet, and Benny Carter and Benny Waters in the reed section; the latter two also wrote arrangements for the band, including the Carter's first. Stylistically, their work, as heard on such records as De Paris's feature "The Boy in the Boat," pointed toward the future: deeply expressive music with a bluesy groove. Other bands of the 1920s playing in this funkier style included Thomas Morris and his Past Jazz Masters and the Gulf Coast Seven, led by June Clark on trumpet.

This was the musical environment in which Duke Ellington (1899–1974) rose to fame at the Cotton Club;

his first trademark was called “jungle music.” With the trumpeter “Bubber” Miley soloing on such features as “East Saint Louis Toodle-Oo,” the Ellington band accompanied the famous Cotton Club chorus lines. Ellington, originally from Washington, D.C., arrived in New York in 1923 and worked as a sideman with the veteran vaudevillian Wilbur Sweatman. Ellington’s next job was with a group known as the Washingtonians, led by the banjo player Elmer Snowden. Early in 1924, Ellington took over this band, which played various club dates, gradually taking shape as the Duke Ellington Orchestra that would become world famous. Among Ellington’s band mates in the early years were musicians who would help to define his sound: Miley; the trombonist Joe “Tricky Sam” Nanton; the bassist Wellman Braud; and the drummer Sonny Greer. They began to make a series of classic recordings for Vocalion in 1926; the following year, on the death of Andy Preer, they became the resident band at the Cotton Club. Over the next four decades, Ellington would outstrip all his rivals as a composer and bandleader, evolving new styles of orchestral jazz.

As the Harlem Renaissance waned, the sound of the jazz band itself was changing. The popularity of the violin diminished; the guitar began to assert itself against the banjo, and the double bass against the tuba. As the swing era dawned, a new, streamlined sound, dominated by synchronized saxophone, trumpet, and trombone sections, would characterize urban dance music in America. Composers such as Ellington, singers such as Cab Calloway and Ethel Waters, and bands led by Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Claude Hopkins, Jimmy Lunceford, and Lucky Millinder ushered in a new era. Arranger-bandleaders like Don Redman and Benny Carter were crucial in defining this new sound, which would be prevalent until the mid-1940s. By the early 1930s, they were creating works of great sophistication. Redman’s “Chant of the Weed,” recorded by Harlan Lattimore and his Connie’s Inn Orchestra in 1932, is still impressive for its harmonic daring, sinuous section work, and aura of mystery. Musically ambitious as well as entertaining, it was a harbinger of things to come.

ELLIOTT S. HURWITT

See also Black Swan Phonograph Company; Blues; Blues: An Anthology; Blues: Women Performers; Clef Club; Cotton Club; Jazz; Music; Musical Theater; Pace Phonographic Company; Saint Louis Blues; Singers; Small’s Paradise; *specific individuals*

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Nail, John E.

John E. Nail was born in 1883. In 1904, he was persuaded by Philip A. Payton to join the Afro-American Realty Company, which was based in Harlem. Nail immediately took advantage of a recession that was lowering real estate prices in Manhattan. Withheld loans and foreclosed mortgages caused landlords to drop rents and accept more diverse tenants as building owners tried to recover their investments. Nail united black renters and white landlords while simultaneously eroding an unwritten "covenant" whereby certain blocks in Harlem blocks were supposed to remain white. Nail and his associates found new black tenants who were willing to pay higher rates for better-quality housing in Harlem, and Afro-American Realty helped thousands move into homes and apartments between Fifth and Seventh avenues despite vocal opposition from the white Property Owners Protective Association of Harlem. Afro-American Realty protected its market by acquiring five-year leases on properties owned by whites and rented them at 10 percent above deflated market prices.

Migration to Harlem increased when displaced families left Manhattan's Tenderloin district during the construction of Pennsylvania Station between 1906 and 1910. Nail and Henry C. Parker left Payton to open their own firm, Nail and Parker, in 1907. Nail served as president, and Parker was the corporate secretary-treasurer. The company expanded into full-service real estate operations by providing mortgages and by purchasing, selling, managing, and appraising properties. Nail argued that black ownership in Harlem would permanently undermine discriminatory

real estate practices. He urged blacks to invest in property in Harlem to secure the future of the black community in the area, a practice that also benefited his business.

Nail was considered one of Harlem's primary "deal makers." His firm acted as agent for Saint Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church when the church bought aggregate properties in Harlem for \$1,070,000. Nail and Parker also sold \$200,000 worth of property to Madame C. J. Walker, who had amassed a fortune developing hair-care products. The company also brokered the move of the black YMCA and the Equitable Life Assurance Properties, which included the sophisticated town houses on Strivers' Row. In 1929, Nail and Parker was granted the management contract for the largest apartment building in Harlem, then owned by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company.

Nail vigorously supported cultural activities and commercial ventures in Harlem. He provided financial support to the Colored Merchants' Association, which had been created to advance racial solidarity and economic stability, and he briefly served as vice president of the New York Urban League. He was chair of the finance committee of the 135th Street branch of the YMCA, and he donated money to programs sponsored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Nail often raised money for independent artists and causes he respected. He and Eugene Kinckle Jones gathered funds for the artist Augusta Savage, who later founded Savage Studio of Arts and Crafts in New York and served as an assistant supervisor at the Works Progress Administration. Nail also joined W. E. B. Du Bois as a director on the board of Black Swan Records.

Nail's detractors said that he was intractable and insensitive to progressive causes. Some tenants claimed that Nail was an exploitative landlord who overcharged his tenants. Nail's philosophy reflected that of Booker T. Washington, who emphasized the importance of establishing an economic foundation on which blacks could build a stronger and more stable community; this philosophy clashed with the visions of Marcus Garvey, the founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Garvey's black nationalism and "back to Africa" program repelled Nail, who was interested in supporting African American economic development rather than establishing unity among African migrants across the world.

Nail joined Robert Abbott, the publisher of the *Chicago Defender*, the entrepreneur Harry Pace, NAACP's field secretary William Pickens, and four additional outspoken African American leaders seeking to discredit Garvey. Nail and this "committee of eight" were convinced that Garvey was undermining their efforts to balance race relations. The group drafted a letter to Harry M. Daugherty, United States attorney general during the Harding administration, in which they said: "The movement known as the Universal Negro Improvement Association has done much to stimulate the violent temper of this dangerous element [a reference to Garvey's coalition of immigrants and frustrated black citizens]. . . Its president and moving spirit is one Marcus Garvey, an unscrupulous demagogue, who has ceaselessly and assiduously sought to spread among Negroes distrust and hatred of all white people." Garvey responded by calling the committee "Uncle Tom Negroes." This episode reflected a split between elite black business representatives and community leaders on the one hand and, on the other, lower-income and middle-class blacks who supported Garvey's celebration of African culture.

Although Nail and Parker temporarily weathered the Depression, the firm collapsed in 1933. Nail eventually formed the John E. Nail Company and continued to solidify his strong reputation among business and real estate leaders. He was the first black member of the Real Estate Board of New York, and he became the only sitting black member of the Housing Committee of New York. Nail also served President Herbert Hoover as a consultant for his Committee on Housing during the Depression. Nail's connections to Harlem's cultural beacons remained strong. James Weldon Johnson married Nail's sister, Grace Nail Johnson, who preserved voluminous writings and letters by Harlemite authors and artists.

Nail died in 1947; obituaries appeared in the *New York Times* and the *New York Herald-Tribune* on 6 March and in *New York Age* on 15 March.

A John E. Nail *Scrapbook* is held at Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. The *Scrapbook* is one element of the James Weldon Johnson Collection, which was founded in 1941 by Carl Van Vechten. Grace Nail Johnson contributed her husband's papers to it. The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture has the personal papers of William Pickens, which include letters from Nail.

Biography

John E. (Jack) Nail was born 22 August 1883 in New London, Connecticut. He was raised in New York City, where his father, John Bennett Nail (d. 1942), managed a profitable restaurant, hotel, and billiard parlor on Sixth Avenue and owned several properties in Manhattan; the elder Nail was the first African American to receive a credit rating from Dun and Bradstreet and was a silent partner in his son's business interests. John E. Nail worked briefly for his father after graduating from high school, then opened his own real estate office in the Bronx. In 1904, Philip A. Payton persuaded him to leave this business and join the Afro-American Realty Company, based in Harlem. Nail and Henry C. Parker left Payton to open their own firm, Nail and Parker, in 1907, with Nail as president and Parker as corporate secretary-treasurer. Nail married Grace Fairfax in 1910; they had no children. Nail and Parker's firm collapsed in 1933; Nail later formed the John E. Nail Company. Nail's sister married James Weldon Johnson. Nail died in New York City 6 March 1947.

R. JAKE SUDDERTH

See also Abbott, Robert Sengstacke; Afro-American Realty Company; Black Swan Phonograph Company; Garvey, Marcus; Johnson, James Weldon; Jones, Eugene Kinckle; Pace, Harry H.; Payton, Philip A.; Pickens, William; Saint Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church; Savage, Augusta; Tenderloin; Walker, Madame C. J.; Washington, Booker T.

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Nance, Ethel Ray

Through her secretarial and administrative work with W. E. B. Du Bois and Charles S. Johnson, Ethel Ray Nance made significant contributions to the Harlem Renaissance and became instrumental in its reconstruction in later years. Nance's relationship with Du Bois began in 1921, when she was twenty-two, and lasted until his death in Ghana in 1963. Nance, the daughter of the president of the Duluth, Minnesota, chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), first met Du Bois at the St. Paul NAACP. Her relationship with Johnson started in 1923: As the director of research for the Urban League, he attended its national conference in Kansas City, Missouri, where the impressive Nance was employed as an executive secretary for the local chapter. Nance moved to New York in 1924 to become Johnson's executive secretary; she assisted him in his sociological research and at *Opportunity* magazine (of which he was the founder and editor) through the winter of 1925. Years later, in 1953, Nance once again joined Johnson's staff, running his office for a short time during his tenure as Fisk University's first black president. At the time of Nance's retirement in 1977, there was a renewed interest in the Harlem Renaissance and her participation in it.

Du Bois and Johnson were only two of the African American executives who wanted Nance to work for

them; she was an enormously gifted young woman who had received national attention in the black press in 1923 for breaking the secretarial color bar in the Minnesota State Legislature. After graduating from high school in 1919, her father had taken her on long trips, by train, during which he had introduced her to black leaders—and also to the racist conditions under which their southern relatives were still living. In 1921, three black men were lynched near her own home in Duluth; this incident left her with a lifelong dedication to the black cause.

When Nance joined Johnson's staff in 1924, in addition to running his office she carried on independent research and functioned as managing editor of *Opportunity*. She wrote news items, screened manuscript submissions, and read proofs. A short sketch by Nance appeared in *Opportunity* in 1924, but she did not envision a writing career for herself; she focused on supporting the work of others, with confidence in her own artistic taste. She knew Aaron Douglas's Afrocentric art from her days in Kansas City, where he taught high school, and she recommended his work for inclusion in Alain Locke's anthology *The New Negro* in 1925. Countee Cullen respected her literary judgment and sought her opinion on some of his poems.

Nance served as Johnson's talent scout and his link to the younger generation; she reviewed new books and literary publications from historically black colleges and universities and brought promising writers to his attention. She waged a campaign to get Douglas to New York and persuaded Du Bois to hire him at *The Crisis*; she also offered Douglas (as she offered Zora Neale Hurston at another time) temporary use of the sofa in "Dream Haven," the apartment she shared with Regina Anderson and Louella Tucker at 580 Saint Nicholas Avenue in Harlem. Nance was the model for a character in Carl Van Vechten's novel *Nigger Heaven*—Olive Hamilton, the "responsible secretary-stenographer"—but she herself deplored the book.

Nance made the first cuts on submissions in *Opportunity's* literary contest of 1925, handled negotiations with the panel of judges, gave Johnson many ideas for the awards dinner, and was in charge of the seating arrangements at the Fifth Avenue Restaurant. At the dinner, she shared a table with two of the winners: Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes, who were both visitors to "Dream Haven."

Although Nance was not actually employed by Du Bois until years later, she spent a lot of time with him while she was working at *Opportunity*, consulting

him, sharing ideas about art and politics, and—as she did for Johnson—putting him in contact with the younger generation. Du Bois respected her organizational skills, which had first come to his attention in 1922 when she sent him petitions she gathered in Minnesota for the Dyer antilynching bill. Nance, unlike many others, was at ease with the formidable Du Bois and brought out his playful side, which was rarely visible. As her meager salary from *Opportunity* dwindled toward the end of each month, she felt free to call Du Bois and get dinner invitations for herself and her roommates. She credited Du Bois with awakening her to intellectual life.

Nance remained in Harlem for less than two years. In late 1925 she took a month's leave from *Opportunity* to care for her ailing mother in Duluth and then decided to stay there as caretaker (a decision she still regretted many years later). However, she retained the spirit of uplift and racial pride of the Harlem Renaissance. She organized book clubs, did volunteer work with civil rights groups, and founded and participated in historical societies devoted to documenting and celebrating the achievements of black America. She became the first black policewoman in Minnesota (1928) and the first black woman ship inspector in Seattle, Washington (1943). In 1945, Du Bois, who was a consultant at the founding meeting of the United Nations, brought her to San Francisco as his secretary, a position she considered the peak of her career. Following a brief period in New York to conduct research for Du Bois, she returned to San Francisco, serving as administrative assistant in the NAACP's new West Coast Regional Office. She had a series of pioneering secretarial and administrative positions, ending with seven years at the San Francisco African American Historical and Cultural Society, which she had helped found decades earlier. She retired in 1977.

During the 1960s, renewed interest in the Harlem Renaissance prompted Nance to publish an article on *Opportunity's* dinner of 1925; it also made her the subject of several valuable interviews for oral histories. She contributed to volumes on the renaissance published by Arna Bontemps, Nathan Huggins, and David Levering Lewis. In 1978, at age seventy-nine, Nance was awarded a B.A. from the University of San Francisco and was honored as the university's oldest graduate. She remained intensely engaged in civic activities and in documenting the black presence in California and also worked on a memoir of Du Bois (which was unpublished as of this writing). When Nance died in

1992, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors adjourned out of respect for her memory.

Biography

Ethel Ray Nance was born 13 April 1899 in Duluth, Minnesota; she was the daughter of a Swedish immigrant mother and a race-conscious black father who had migrated to Minnesota from North Carolina. Nance studied at public schools in Duluth and at the University of San Francisco (B.A., 1978). She was a secretary for the Minnesota State Relief Commission, Moose Lake, Minnesota, 1919–1922; Minnesota House of Representatives, 1923; Urban League, Kansas City, Missouri, 1923–1924; and New York Urban League, 1924–1925. She was associate head resident, Phillis Wheatley Settlement House, Minneapolis, 1926–1928; a policewoman in Minneapolis, 1928–1932; secretary to the commissioner of education, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1937–1940; secretary at the Hampton Institute, 1940–1943; secretary at the Federal Public Housing Authority, Seattle, Washington, 1944–1945; secretary–research assistant to W. E. B. Du Bois, San Francisco, 1945; and administrative assistant, West Coast Regional Office, NAACP, San Francisco, California, 1945–1953. Nance also worked for Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee, 1953–1954; Veterans Administration, San Francisco, 1954–1956; San Francisco Unified School District, 1956–1964; United States Post Office, San Francisco, 1964–1969; and San Francisco Historical and Cultural Society, 1970–1977. Her awards included a certificate of recognition from the San Francisco Unified School District, 1964; a certificate of merit from the San Francisco Negro Historical and Cultural Society, 1965; a scholarship to the University of California, 1968; and the Sojourner Truth Award, San Francisco, 1981. She was a member of the Association for the United Nations, Sickle Cell Anemia Research Federation, San Francisco Historical and Cultural Society, National Council of Negro Women, and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Nance was married twice and had two sons. She retired in 1977 and died in San Francisco on 11 July 1992.

ONITA ESTES-HICKS

See also Anderson, Regina M.; Cullen, Countee; Du Bois, W. E. B.; 580 Saint Nicholas Avenue; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon;

Nigger Heaven; Opportunity; Opportunity Awards Dinner; Opportunity Literary Contests; Survey Graphic; Van Vechten, Carl

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Nation, The

The Nation, a weekly journal devoted to politics and the arts, was founded in 1865. Under the leadership of its first editor, E. L. Godkin, *The Nation* supported the

Fourteenth Amendment's extension of the franchise to black men, but the magazine then failed to support radical Reconstruction and adopted an antiunion and culturally conservative perspective. During the 1920s, under the editorship of Oswald Garrison Villard, it was one of a few white publications to take a major interest in the Harlem Renaissance. Villard served as the magazine's editor from 1918 until 1932 and guided its strong support for trade unions, pacifism, anti-imperialism, women's rights, and racial justice. For most of its history from that time to this, *The Nation* has been one of the foremost left-liberal magazines in the United States.

Throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, *The Nation* published poems, essays, and book reviews by or about many of the leaders of the Harlem Renaissance, including Countee Cullen, W. E. B. Du Bois, E. Franklin Frazier, Langston Hughes, Alain Locke, Claude McKay, George Schuyler, and Walter White. It covered the activities of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Urban League. *The Nation* also reported on and editorialized about a number of topics of interest to participants in the Harlem Renaissance: antiracism movements, the southern "oligarchy," the Ku Klux Klan, segregation, the antilynching movement, prejudice, the achievements of African Americans, race riots, Jim Crow, voting rights, and justice for Haiti and other parts of the Caribbean. There were, however, limitations on the magazine's racially progressive stance, including its relative inattention to black female leaders of the renaissance and its dismissal of Marcus Garvey and black nationalism.

The most famous contribution of *The Nation* to the Harlem Renaissance was the publication, in 1926, of an exchange between George S. Schuyler and Langston Hughes concerning the nature of Negro art in America. In "The Negro-Art Hokum," Schuyler claimed that such art was nonexistent in that there were no racial or cultural differences between blacks and whites in the United States. In "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," Hughes argued that standing in the way of the realization of Negro art was the very attitude of men like Schuyler, which shaped a "racial mountain": the desire of many blacks to be just like whites. In contrast, Hughes argued that the black masses provided the source for an art, best exemplified by jazz, that was based in racial themes.

Perhaps the final essay on the Harlem Renaissance to be published by *The Nation* was Claude McKay's "Harlem Runs Wild." In this essay, McKay argued that the riot in Harlem in 1935, which has been said to mark

the end of the renaissance, was not a race riot but a gesture of despair resulting from extreme poverty and resentment at the refusal of white merchants in Harlem to hire black workers. The progressive racial politics of the magazine continued after the 1930s, but the Harlem Renaissance faded from *The Nation* as it did from the nation.

MICHAEL BENNETT

See also Hughes, Langston; McKay, Claude; Riots: 4—Harlem Riot, 1935; Schuyler, George S.; Villard, Oswald Garrison

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National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is the oldest and most celebrated civil rights organization in the United States. Since its formation in 1909, the group has been at the forefront of numerous struggles for equality in America, calling on the nation as a whole to abide by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments to the Constitution, and to end all racial violence and discrimination—social, political, and economic. The group's activities during the 1920s and the era of the "New Negro" movement are central to its history, for during this period the NAACP matured into the civil rights organization that has been a beacon of light for many African Americans for much of its existence.

Before the creation of the NAACP, other groups had constructed platforms on which it would build. For example, the Afro-American League—later the Afro-American Council—was assembled in 1890 and created



Twentieth annual session of the NAACP, 1929. (Library of Congress.)

a strategy to confront discrimination in America that was similar to that of the NAACP. Around the turn of the twentieth century, a group of radicals, led by W. E. B. Du Bois and William Monroe Trotter, began to challenge what they perceived as the Afro-American Council's conservative leadership and the influence of Booker T. Washington within the organization. By 1905, Du Bois and Trotter created their own group, the Niagara movement, which was dedicated to persistent agitation for civil rights, equal education, and general human rights. Both the Afro-American Council and the Niagara movement would continue their struggles up to the development of the NAACP.

The creation of the NAACP was precipitated by an article by William English Walling, in which he graphically described two days of racial violence that took place in Springfield, Illinois, in August 1908 and lamented that there was no "large and powerful body of citizens" prepared to respond and come to the aid of the black population. Mary White Ovington wrote to Walling, asking him to meet her and a few others in New York to discuss the "Negro problem." During January 1909, Ovington, Walling, Dr. Henry Moskowitz, Oswald Garrison Villard, Charles E. Russell, Bishop Alexander Walters, and Rev. William Henry Brooks met, discussed the race question, and decided to call a larger conference to address the issue. In February, the group presented a call written by Villard and signed by sixty prominent black and white Americans, including W. E. B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells Barnett, Mary Church Terrell, and Jane Addams. The call reflected the platforms of the Afro-American Council and the Niagara movement, emphasizing the protection of black people's rights guaranteed by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments.

In response to the call, the National Negro Conference, held 30 May–1 June 1909, created the Committee of Forty, whose mission was to develop plans for the creation of an effective organization tentatively called

the "Committee for the Advancement of the Negro Race." The committee's plans were implemented the following year at a second annual conference, during which the organization's permanent name was adopted and its first officers were selected. They included Moorfield Storey as president, William E. Walling as executive committee chairman, John E. Millholland as treasurer, Oswald Garrison Villard as disbursing treasurer, Frances Blascoer as executive secretary, and W. E. B. Du Bois, the only black officer, as director of publicity and research.

Once the organization was created, it immediately began what has been nearly a century of militant protest and litigation against the denial of African Americans' constitutional rights. Within the first year, the group began agitating for better job opportunities for blacks and greater protection from racial violence in the South. The group also established its first local branch in Chicago and, under the guidance of Du Bois, launched *The Crisis*, a magazine that quickly became the leading voice in the black struggle. Du Bois published political articles and literary works aimed at educating the readership, white and black, about black culture, black history, and American racism. He hoped to instill pride in the African American community and stir readers of both races to action. *The Crisis* grew from its initial publication of 1,000 copies in 1910 to a circulation of 16,000 the following year, and to almost 104,000 by 1919.

By the end of the association's fifth year, it had twenty-four branches and had initiated numerous crusades against discrimination. Among other things, the group had begun campaigning against the exclusion of black lawyers from the American Bar Association, laid the groundwork for a legal attack on residential segregation, protested against a number of anti-intermarriage bills, and objected to President Woodrow Wilson's policy of segregating African American government employees. During the next few years, the group continued to battle against racism and racial injustice, campaigning, for example, against the film *The Birth of a Nation*. The organization also called for the African American population to "close the ranks" in support of the war effort; the association's president would argue a case, involving residential segregation in Louisville, before the U.S. Supreme Court.

During and just after World War I, a series of race riots in numerous cities took place throughout the nation, the worst occurring in East St. Louis in 1917 and in Chicago in 1919. The NAACP responded in 1917 by conducting a silent parade of 15,000 people in Harlem.

In 1919, the group called for the creation of a Legal Defense Fund to employ lawyers to increase the association's attempts to end such lynching and mob violence and to bring the culprits to justice. Also in 1919, the organization published its famous study *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889–1918*.

Although the migration of African Americans to the North during the 1910s created real as well as imagined competition for jobs, housing, and recreational space and precipitated much of the racial violence during the period, it also aided the development and growth of the NAACP. During this period of turmoil, many northern and southern African Americans joined the organization. In fact, the number of black members grew so quickly that by 1920 their membership fees were supplying most of the association's income. More important, during this period African Americans began to play a role in the organization's leadership. In 1916, James Weldon Johnson was hired as field secretary, and in 1918, Walter White became assistant executive secretary.

During the next decade, the organization entered "young adulthood," maturing and increasingly taking actions that laid the foundation for full adulthood. In the 1920s, in addition to its continued propaganda campaign against lynching and other forms of racial violence, the NAACP stepped up its use of the courts to challenge racial injustices. The organization applied two criteria when deciding on a case: first, whether it involved injustice or discrimination related to race, and second, whether it would establish a precedent for protecting black people's rights as a whole. (These criteria were applied on the national level; local branches continued to accept nearly any case involving injustice.)

In the wake of the racial violence that closed the 1910s, the NAACP lobbied the Republican Party to introduce legislation in Congress making lynching a federal crime. Nothing came of its efforts in the election year (1920); in 1922, however, as a result of lobbying by James Weldon Johnson, who was now the association's executive secretary (1920–1930), the NAACP was successful in getting the House of Representatives to pass an antilynching bill introduced by Congressman L. C. Dyer of Missouri. However, a filibuster in the Senate, led by a coalition of northern Republicans and southern Democrats, later killed the bill. Ironically, on the same day that the Senate crushed the Dyer bill, a mob in Kirby, Texas, burned three African Americans alive, making it obvious that federal legislation was needed.

In the face of such blatant disregard for the rights and welfare of black Americans, the NAACP pressed forward. Regardless of its failure to gain the passage of federal legislation and its frustration with the lack of commitment by national political parties to issues that were critical to the African American community, many in the association did see some positive aspects of their battles on Capital Hill. As James Weldon Johnson commented, "The Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill did not become law, but it made of the floors of Congress a forum in which the facts were discussed and brought home to the American people as they had never been before."

The NAACP's antilynching campaign was central to this growing public awareness. Along with the group's lobbying activity, there were the propaganda campaign in *The Crisis* and the investigative activities of Walter White. After a mob brutally attacked the association's executive secretary, John Shillady, while he was in Texas investigating a lynching, White, an African American from Atlanta who had fair complexion, blond hair, and blue eyes, became the organization's chief investigator of lynching and mob violence.

White, often posing as a northern white journalist, penetrated white communities where racist crimes had occurred. One such incident followed events in Phillips County, Arkansas. In late 1919, African American sharecroppers' attempts to form a union precipitated a violent confrontation with armed whites that ended with a massacre of black farmers. In a hasty trial, twelve blacks were sentenced to death. The NAACP, led by a local black attorney, Scipio A. Jones, set out to reverse the convictions. The organization took the case to the Supreme Court, where Moorfield Storey argued it. The Supreme Court reversed the convictions and remanded the cases to the lower courts. On the district level, Jones retook control of the cases and secured either discharges, commutation of sentences, or short prison terms for the twelve defendants.

This victory—which came in 1923, a year after the Senate had killed the Dyer bill—demonstrated that the NAACP's legal and investigative strategy could strike a decisive blow against Jim Crow. During this period, the organization also chipped away at America's system of segregation, achieving minor successes against white Democratic primaries in the South. This long struggle began in July 1924, when Dr. Lawrence A. Nixon attempted to cast his ballot in a primary election in East El Paso, Texas. Three years later the Supreme Court ruled in a 5–4 decision that states could not lodge discriminatory practices in the party executive

committees, although it failed to determine whether conventions could bar African American members. With this modest victory, the NAACP pressed forward, continuing to strike at the all-white primaries. The fight would require three more decisions by the Supreme Court over the next three decades.

The NAACP also forged ahead, though with less success, in its legal struggle against restrictive covenants that encouraged the segregation of a growing northern urban black population into overcrowded city neighborhoods. Since its inception, the NAACP had waged a war against residential segregation, most often initiating legal action after some sort of provable intimidation or lawlessness. During the first two decades of its existence, the association initiated investigations of housing segregation in cities such as Kansas City, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Cleveland, and Minneapolis. The organization also gained favorable decisions from the Supreme Court in cases originating in Louisville, Kentucky (*Buchanan v. Warely*, 1917), and Richmond, Virginia (*City of Richmond v. Deans*, 1930).

The most celebrated case involving residential segregation, however, grew out of an incident in Detroit. On 8 September 1925, Dr. Ossian Sweet, a middle-class African American surgeon, moved his family into a hostile white neighborhood in Detroit's East Side. Some people immediately protested his presence, and on the following day the objections became much more aggressive: An angry mob surrounded the property and pounded the house with stones and gunfire. Sweet, along with his two brothers, Otis and Henry, and a few friends who had joined them in anticipation of trouble, fired on the mob and killed one of the whites in the street. Once the bullets began to come from the house, the police, who had been idly standing by, moved in and arrested Sweet and the rest of the occupants. The NAACP took on their defense; after a hung jury in the first trial, in 1927 it gained an acquittal of Sweet's brother Henry and a dismissal of all the other cases.

At the end of the 1920s, the NAACP gained a legal or lobbying victory that demonstrated its strength and influence. After the death of Justice Edward Terry Sanford of the Supreme Court, President Herbert Hoover chose Judge John J. Parker of the Fourth Circuit Court to succeed him. Parker, a North Carolinian who as a gubernatorial candidate had supported the disenfranchisement of African Americans, immediately drew objections from the NAACP. With the support of labor unions, which had their own qualms about Parker, the NAACP set into motion coalitions against him and

lobbied the Senate not to confirm his nomination. Within two months the Senate did reject the nominee—an action that at the time had rarely been seen in Washington.

Because the vote in the Senate had been close (41–39), the association moved against the recalcitrant senators. In the general elections after the confirmation hearing, the NAACP waged campaigns against incumbent senators who represented regions of the country where African American voters could unseat them. Senator Henry Allen of Kansas was one of the first to feel the effect at the polls; over the next four years, senators from California, Missouri, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Rhode Island also lost their seats. Such political action demonstrated the strength the organization had gained during the 1920s. Earlier, in 1922, the NAACP had not possessed the muscle nor the political capital to wage such campaigns against senators who voted against the Dyer antilynching bill.

The NAACP also played a central role in the evolution of the cultural movement of the decade variously known as the Harlem Renaissance or the New Negro movement. *The Crisis* had become the voice of post-war African America, and it gave space in its pages to young black writers and encouraged them to hone their craft and create work that would dismantle the negative stereotypes of African Americans appearing in much of American literature and art.

During the 1920s *The Crisis* published literary works by Gwendolyn Bennett, Anita Scott Coleman, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Fenton Johnson, Georgia Douglas Johnson, Claude McKay, and Jean Toomer, among numerous illustrious authors; it also published literary criticism by William Stanley Braithwaite and others. Furthermore, in 1924, *The Crisis*, in conjunction with the NAACP and Amy Spingarn, established annual prizes in literature and art, which became an important showcase for new talent. The review board for the prizes included Sinclair Lewis, Edward Bok, Charles W. Chesnutt, Robert Morse Lovett, Witter Bynner, Van Wyck Brooks, Carl Van Doren, Zona Gales, James Weldon Johnson, Eugene O'Neill, H. G. Wells, and Amy Spingarn. The recipients of the awards included Arna Bontemps, Frank Horne, Countee Cullen, and Langston Hughes for poetry; Rudolph Fisher and Anita Scott Coleman for short stories; Hughes for essays; and Willis Richardson for drama. In addition, in 1926, *The Crisis* published a symposium—"The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed?"—on the rising cultural movement. Contributors to the roundtable

included Sherwood Anderson, W. E. B. Du Bois, Sinclair Lewis, and Vachel Lindsay.

Although *The Crisis* had published literary works since its inception, its ability to do so was greatly enhanced during Jessie Redmon Fauset's tenure as its literary editor (1919–1926). Fauset herself wrote poetry, short stories, and novels. In early 1924, Boni and Liveright published her first novel, *There Is Confusion*; and over the next decade she would write three more novels: *Plum Bun* (1929), *The Chinaberry Tree* (1931), and *Comedy: American Style* (1933). Fauset's numerous poems, essays, and short stories appeared in a number of periodicals, including *The Crisis* and the NAACP's *Brownies' Book*—a magazine for children that Du Bois started in 1920 and that was edited by Fauset and Augustus Granville Dill.

In addition to being a central contributor to the Harlem Renaissance, Fauset was an important talent scout and mentor of the burgeoning movement. Together with Du Bois, the chief editor of *The Crisis*, Fauset set out to create a forum for young writers to publish their work and to convey a new image of African America to the community as well as to the nation as a whole. According to Langston Hughes, one of the emerging artists of the period, Fauset, along with a few others, "midwived the so-called New Negro literature into being. Kind and critical—but not too critical for the young—they nursed us along until our books were born." As literary editor, Fauset introduced writers such as Hughes, Gwendolyn Bennett, Countee Cullen, Fenton Johnson, Georgia Douglas Johnson, Claude McKay, and Jean Toomer to a national audience.

During the same year that Fauset's *There Is Confusion* was published, another active member of the NAACP became a working participant in the mushrooming literary activity of the African American community. In 1923, Walter White, the association's assistant secretary and chief investigator of lynching, tried his hand at artistic expression. He produced the manuscript of his first novel, about an African American doctor who has been trained in the North and then returns to his native small town in Georgia. After some revisions and wrangles with publishers, White's novel, *The Fire and the Flint*, appeared under the Knopf imprint, about five months after *There Is Confusion*. White received praise for his artistic vision and his realistic portrayal of southern life. Two years later, he published a second novel, *Flight* (1926); this in turn was followed a few years later by a study of the social, economic, and sexual influences of lynching, *Rope and Faggot: The Biography of Judge Lynch* (1929).

White was also an important mentor to many young writers, and he became a link between the growing black artistic community and the white world of money, publicity, and publishers. Once *Fire in the Flint* had achieved modest success, White used his new literary weight to connect with people in high places. He soon impressed many cultured benefactors and publishing heavyweights like Alfred A. Knopf, Horace Liveright, Sinclair Lewis, and Carl Van Vechten. He used his new contacts to help publish the work of young writers, such as Countee Cullen's first collection of poetry, *Color* (1924). White also commented on the growing literary and cultural movement in a number of essays published in various newspapers and journals during 1925 and 1926, including a series of literary columns in the *Pittsburgh Courier* called "The Spotlight."

The poet, novelist, essayist, and lyricist James Weldon Johnson, the NAACP's executive secretary, also contributed his share to the New Negro movement. As the poet and professor Sterling Brown remarked, by his "interpretations of Negro poetry and music, by his occasional essays on the problems of Negro writers, and by his own creative work James Weldon Johnson succeeded more than any predecessor in furthering the cause of Negro artists." Even before the Harlem Renaissance, Johnson had been one of the few African Americans to publish a novel, although anonymously. This was *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912). The novel attracted renewed interest in 1927, when Johnson announced that he was its author. During the same year he published a collection of lyrical verse, *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* (1927), in which he captured the imagery, style, and fervor of traditional black preachers and the African American church. On the eve of the renaissance, he had edited a large anthology, *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922); during the renaissance, he collaborated with his brother, the composer and singer John Rosamond Johnson, in publishing two collections of spirituals: *The Book of American Negro Spirituals* (1925) and *The Second Book of American Negro Spirituals* (1926).

Like Johnson, W. E. B. Du Bois, the association's director of research and editor of *The Crisis* (1910–1934), was an elder statesman of the renaissance. Before the era of the New Negro, Du Bois had already established himself as an intellectual and was widely acclaimed as an author and international scholar. By 1920 he had published numerous articles in a wide range of journals, including *The Crisis*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and *The Nation*. He had been a professor at Atlanta University and had

also published many books, including a sociological study, *The Philadelphia Negro* (1898); a famous collection of essays, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903); his first novel, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1911); a biography, *John Brown* (1909); and a second collection of essays and verse, *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil* (1920).

Du Bois had been urging a reawakening of black art for a number of years. Since the late nineteenth century, Du Bois had been seeking the most effective means of establishing Africa's descendants among the world's recognized peoples. According to Du Bois, one way to gain such universal recognition was through the arts—in *The Souls of Black Folk* he gave precedence to music, the "sorrow songs"—and the New Negro renaissance offered encouragement that black poets, novelists, painters, and playwrights might win this larger recognition. Du Bois argued in the early 1920s that African Americans would be regarded "as human" when their art "compels recognition." James Weldon Johnson was in agreement with this idea; he noted in the preface to *The Book of American Negro Poetry* that "the final measure of the greatness of all peoples is in the amount and standard of the literature and art they have produced." Du Bois, as the editor of *The Crisis*, played a central role in developing and encouraging young writers and promoting the movement. He also continued his high level of scholarly and literary production with the publication of numerous essays in journals and two more books, *The Gifts of Black Folk* (1924) and the novel *Dark Princess* (1928).

Despite Du Bois's initial hope that the artistic production of young black artists would bring worldwide recognition to African Americans, within a few years of the beginning of the renaissance he had become disillusioned with the movement and many of its artists. His frustration was occasioned by a continued outpouring of so-called realistic renderings of Harlem's street life and the lives of the lower classes. Two extreme examples of such writing are *Nigger Heaven* (1926), by the white author Carl Van Vechten, and Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem* (1928). In the symposium "The Negro in Art" that *The Crisis* held in 1926, Du Bois accused many of the younger writers of failing to recognize their political and social responsibilities. "All art is propaganda," he asserted, "and ever must be, despite the wailing of the purist." Two years later, Du Bois published his second novel, *Dark Princess*, to illustrate his point. The story centers on a black man who falls in love with a beautiful Indian princess, and on a plot among representatives of the darker nations of the world to rid themselves forever of white domination.

As the 1920s came to a close, the NAACP lost some of its interest in the new literary movement; as the Depression set in, the renaissance itself waned. During the next decade, the association focused its energy on its major objective—the dismantling of the Jim Crow system. During the 1930s, the NAACP would experience some setbacks with the resignations of James Weldon Johnson in 1930 and Du Bois in 1934, but the organization still pushed forward with its agenda, an agenda greatly aided in the early 1930s by the formation of its legal committee. Before this time, the association had worked with numerous—mainly white—lawyers who worked pro bono or for a nominal fee. By mid-1935, after deciding to develop its own legal staff, the group hired Charles H. Houston, dean of Howard Law School, as its full-time special counsel. Houston put together a legal team that had a considerable black presence and that included his former student Thurgood Marshall.

The NAACP's new legal staff developed a two-pronged strategy to fight discrimination in education in the South. It directly attacked the exclusion of blacks from professional and graduate programs at southern state schools, and indirectly contested segregation and discrimination at the primary and secondary levels with regard to salaries, facilities, and length of school terms. The group sought to force the South either to strengthen African American institutions or to desegregate on the basis that it was too costly to keep separate institutions open. The first step in the new legal strategy was to win victories on the local and state levels in order to create a precedent that the association could build on to dismantle the Supreme Court's decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. On this premise the NAACP, now under the leadership of Walter White, started along the road to *Brown v. Board of Education*. Or, to change the metaphor, using the foundation that it had laid during the 1920s, the association helped construct the modern civil rights movement.

SHAWN LEIGH ALEXANDER

See also *Antilynching Crusade*; *Brownies' Book*, The; *Civil Rights and Law*; *Crisis*, The; *Crisis*, The: *Literary Prizes*; *Crisis*, The: *The Negro in Art—How Shall He Be Portrayed?* A Symposium; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Johnson, James Weldon; *Niagara Movement*; *White*, Walter; *other specific individuals*

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National Association of Negro Musicians

The National Association of Negro Musicians (NAMN) is an organization dedicated to the advancement of African Americans in the field of classical music. The violinist and composer Clarence Cameron White of Boston issued the first call for such an organization by letter in March 1916; his suggestion was reiterated by the composer Robert Nathaniel Dett, then a professor at the Hampton Institute, in October 1918. In the following spring, Nora Holt invited leading musicians to her home in Chicago to honor White. Holt (1885–1974) was a composer and journalist based in Chicago; she served at two times as the music critic of the *Defender* and, after further study in Europe, moved to New York, where she wrote for the *Amsterdam News* in the 1940s. She and Henry L. Grant became the cofounders of NAMN, and for many years she was a leading figure in the association. Grant—a composer, pianist, and choir conductor—was director of the Washington Conservatory of Music, taught at the elite Paul Laurence Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C., and counted a young Duke Ellington among his students. In May 1919, Holt and Grant held an informal conference in connection with the annual festival given by the music department of Dunbar High School. Thirty-three musicians attended.

The National Association of Negro Musicians was formally founded in the wake of this meeting, under the leadership of Holt and Grant. Its first annual convention was scheduled to be held in Chicago that July.

The convention was held but was small: It coincided with a race riot in Chicago, and several delegates who learned of the bloodshed as they were arriving turned around at the Chicago train depot. Nevertheless, the organization was successfully launched. The original officers and members of the board of directors included Holt, White, the violinist Kemper Harreld, and the composer and educator Carl Rossini Diton.

The organization soon established branches throughout the United States. Branch 1, in Chicago, quickly came to the forefront of the national organization. Some branches were closely affiliated with other local and regional music organizations, such as the Chicago Music Association and the Indianapolis Music Promoters. As NANM gained in prestige, other musical luminaries served on the board or gave financial support, W. C. Handy and Harry T. Burleigh among them.

Before World War II, presidents of NANM served two- or three-year terms. The first president was Henry Grant (1919–1922); he was followed by Clarence Cameron White (1922–1924), Robert Nathaniel Dett (1924–1926), Carl Diton (1926–1928), J. Wesley Jones (1928–1930), Lillian LeMon (1930–1933), Maude Roberts George (1933–1935), Camille L. Nickerson (1935–1938), and Kemper Harreld (1938–1940). The rotating presidency allowed musicians with regional affiliations (Diton of New York, LeMon of Indianapolis, Harreld of Atlanta) to take the lead in turn.

NANM's activities centered on its national conventions, held most often in Chicago (those held in Chicago included the first one in 1919 and the convention of 1923). In alternating years the convention rotated to other cities, including New York in 1920, Nashville in 1921, Columbus in 1922, Cleveland in 1924, Indianapolis in 1925, Philadelphia in 1926, St. Louis in 1927, Detroit in 1928, and Dallas in 1929.

The promotion of African Americans in concert music, particularly opera and classical song, has been the primary focus of the organization from the outset; NANM was helpful to many singers, starting with the great contralto Marian Anderson, who won the first annual scholarship. Among the illustrious singers who benefited from NANM's sponsorship since then have been Roland Hayes, Shirley Verrett, Grace Bumbry, William Warfield, Adele Addison, Robert McFerrin, and George Shirley. Composers and arrangers assisted by NANM have included Harry T. Burleigh, William Grant Still, Florence Price, John Wesley Work, and Margaret Bonds. NANM has also sponsored work by educators and scholars such as Maud Cuney-Hare,

Alain Locke, Carl Diton, Eileen Southern, and Doris McGinty. NANM has remained focused on concert or “art” music traditions; for many years, it made no attempt to extend its mandate to the more commercially viable popular music. More recently, gospel music and jazz have gained in acceptance, and NANM has honored some gospel musicians, including stars such as James Cleveland.

In New York, the leading member of NANM for many years was George Washington Glover (1888–1993), who was a founding member in 1919 and remained active until late in his very long life. For eighteen years he was chairman of the Department of National Exhibits and Archives for the organization, and for many years he functioned as its unofficial historian. Initially, there was only one New York branch, which was named in honor of educator David I. Martin (c. 1880–1923). Closely affiliated with this, by way of Glover and his friend Blanche K. Thomas, was the Thomas Music Study Club. Other branches of NANM in New York City included those named for Carl Diton (for a time there were two of these), Lillian Dunn Perry, and Rev. A. Merrill Willis in Manhattan; Mu-Te-Or (Brooklyn); and the B Branch (Jamaica, Queens). Additional branches were established in Mount Vernon and upstate New York.

In its early decades, NANM followed an explicit policy of promoting “art” song and opera, specifically deemphasizing what its charter described as more “negroid” styles. It also went to some lengths to promote performances of selections from a particular work by one of its leading members, the opera *Ouanga* by Clarence Cameron White. More recently, its mission has included promotion of “love and appreciation of traditional and contemporary Negro music,” “use of Negro folk themes as a basis for compositions,” the promotion of higher professional standards, and resistance of the “desecration of Negro spirituals.”

ELLIOTT S. HURWITT

See also Anderson, Marian; Burleigh, Harry Thacker; Cuney-Hare, Maud; Dett, Robert Nathaniel; Handy, W. C.; Hayes, Roland; Holt, Nora; Locke, Alain; Still, William Grant; White, Clarence Cameron

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National Colored Players

The National Colored Players were a short-lived “little theater” group, active in the autumn of 1929. The group presented three productions at the West End Theater on Saint Nicholas Avenue near 125th Street. The first of these productions, *Seventh Heaven*, began a one-week run on 7 October with Ida Anderson, Vere E. Johns, and George Randol in the leading roles. It was followed by *Crime*, a drama about an underworld heist; and finally by *The Gorilla*, the lightest of the three plays. All three works were by white authors and had all been successfully produced on Broadway before their run in Harlem. *Seventh Heaven* (by Austin Strong) had run for 704 performances in 1922 (the fifth-longest Broadway run up to that time), and it was made into a successful silent film in 1927. *The Gorilla* (by Harold Lloyd’s screenwriter, Harold Spence) had run for 257 performances in 1925; a critic for *Variety* wrote at the time that it was “the shootingest, shoutingest melange of chills and thrills and yells ever concocted.” *Crime* (by Samuel Shipman and John Hymer) had run for 186 performances beginning in February 1927.

The National Colored Players should be seen primarily as a showcase for revivals in Harlem of past Broadway hits, and it was in this light that a columnist for the *Inter-State Tattler* described the company in October 1929. In addition to Anderson and her costars, the ensemble included J. Homer Tutt, one of the most prominent theater men of the Harlem Renaissance.

ELLIOTT S. HURWITT

See also Inter-State Tattler

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National Ethiopian Art Theater

The National Ethiopian Art Theater (NEAT) in New York was a short-lived “little theater” group and school that promoted playwriting and dramatic performance by blacks. Organizers and teachers of NEAT included Anne Wolter and Henry Creamer.

Theophilus Lewis, an ardent supporter of black theater who was the foremost drama critic during the Harlem Renaissance, noted the first public performance (19 June 1924) of students from NEAT’s school in his theater column for *The Messenger*. The program featured dance numbers as well as choral singing. According to Lewis, NEAT’s ultimate goal was to build a school and a theater in the Broadway district. Although Lewis supported the goal of creating an organization to feature black dramatic talent, he encouraged the group to locate its theater in Harlem, where it could benefit from the support of blacks in the community in addition to focusing on developing black dramatists and actors.

Lewis commented favorably on NEAT’s attempt to bring drama to the stage during a time when musicals were the most popular form of stage entertainment. The lack of black playwrights who focused on dramatic works (instead of musicals and comedies), however, meant that NEAT and other black little theater groups frequently performed dramas written by whites. The public’s taste for low comedy and imitations of white tastes in drama often dictated the types of works presented by black theater groups. Lewis also noted NEAT’s practice of using brown-skinned women in dance performances when the norm for most shows was light-skinned women in dance choruses.

Critics noted other performances by NEAT, including a presentation of three one-act plays at the Lafayette Theater in Harlem on 15 October 1924. The author and critic George Schuyler (1924) praised “Cooped Up” by Eloise Bibb Thompson as a “play written by one who knows life and the ingredients of real drama.” The evening’s performances also included “Being Forty” by Eulalie Spence and “Bills,” which

Schuyler dismissed as an unfunny comedy. Both Eloise Bibb Thompson and Eulalie Spence were students at the NEAT school.

The National Ethiopian Art Theater School disbanded in 1925. Other black little theater groups of the 1920s and 1930s included the Tri-Arts Club, the Inter-Collegiate Association, the Sekondi Players, the Krigwa Players, and the Aldridge Players.

HEATHER MARTIN

See also Krigwa Players; Lafayette Theater; Lewis, Theophilus; Schuyler, George S.; Tri-Arts Club

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National Negro Business League

On 23 August 1900, Booker T. Washington and his close business associates founded the National Negro Business League (NNBL) in Boston, Massachusetts. T. Thomas Fortune, editor and publisher of *New York Age*, was appointed chairman of the NNBL’s executive committee, and Andrew Carnegie provided capital for the fledgling group. The NNBL was committed to black people’s economic independence, and it promoted the “commercial, agricultural, educational, and industrial advancement” of African Americans. Washington served as president until his death in 1915.

Detractors of the NNBL said that it was simply the centerpiece of the “Tuskegee machine”; these critics took exception to Washington’s anointment by the press as the spokesman for black Americans across the nation. As head of the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama, since 1881, Washington had a history of enticing members of the

black entrepreneurial class in northern cities to join organizations he personally sponsored. Under his direction, Tuskegee became one of the leading African American educational institutions in the nation. Its programs emphasized industrial training, self-discipline, and trade-specific instruction as a means to economic independence. Washington attributed his interest in the NNBL to work and travel related to the institute.

The records of the NNBL suggest that it was more than simply an operation of Tuskegee and Washington. Numerous elite black businessmen (and women) from across the United States participated. Its ranks also included large numbers of the rising black middle class. Broad activism and aggressive recruitment defined the NNBL. The association's leaders argued that black businesses could not thrive unless their prosperity was spread throughout the community and supported by other local businesses. The annual conference proceedings for 1900–1919 show that cooperation and community linkages were championed, as were communication links among African American business owners. Black executives, publishers, scholars, and a wide range of professionals across the United States were constantly recruited. NNBL officials also produced important demographic and statistical data, including one of the most comprehensive surveys of the growth and location of black businesses in the history of the United States.

Local leagues expanded the organization and met regularly in stores and offices to plan regional activities. Presentations about the growth of black business were prevalent, as were events designed to raise money. Barbecues were popular, often well advertised, and well attended. In addition, to encouraging the growth of businesses owned by blacks, local leaders called for trade with member suppliers and mandated rules and procedures. According to August Meier (1966), the Kansas City league even established a special oversight committee to identify those members who failed to patronize black enterprises. Chapter leaders of local U.S. Chamber of Commerce offices, who followed the successes of the NNBL closely, were effective partners in these efforts. They offered their cities as possible sites for league conventions, provided the league with the names of African American businessmen, and recommended ongoing cooperative efforts and events.

While local networks inspired growth in numbers, connections with large business entities led to investment. In addition to Carnegie, the retail magnate John Wanamaker and Julius Rosenwald of Sears, Roebuck advocated the NNBL's mission. Wanamaker

was the advertised speaker at one of the NNBL's annual meetings, and Rosenwald was a member of the board of trustees of the Tuskegee Institute. Officers of the NNBL also worked with other established promoters of business development, such as the Association of National Advertisers and the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency in New York. The NNBL also maintained an informal connection with the prestigious Associated Advertising Clubs of the World, using the manager Carl Hunt as a valuable contact. The NNBL complemented other black associations formed during this period, and members developed the confidence necessary to launch similar programs. While the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) emphasized social and legal objectives, the NNBL invigorated business initiatives and black economic advancement. The NNBL's secretary, Albon L. Holsey, founded the Colored Merchants' Association (CMA) in 1930, and Richard Wright established the National Negro Bankers Association and played a vital role in financing several small enterprises, notably grocery, bakery, and cleaning firms.

Although it is difficult to credit the NNBL with the explosive growth of black business ownership in early twentieth-century America, statistics suggest that the group was a key participant during a stimulating period of African American capitalism. Between 1888 and 1934, 134 black banks were established; the number of black businesses increased from 4,000 in 1867 to 50,000 in 1917. More than 200 black newspapers were published as the twentieth century began; by 1920, almost 75,000 businesses were owned by African Americans in the United States. The majority of these firms tended to be funeral parlors, hotels, barber-shops, hair product manufacturers, grocery and drug stores, restaurants, and shoe repair shops. A survey by the NNBL in 1928 showed a general lack of surplus for many of these firms. Of 1,534 black businesses in thirty-three cities, 43.4 percent recorded profits of below \$5,000, and only 8.9 percent recorded profits of more than \$25,000. Economic conditions during the Depression created further hardship. Of the aforementioned 134 African American banks established between 1888 and 1934, only 12 remained in operation in 1938.

The NNBL grew to 40,000 members at its high point, and it supported 400 delegates representing thirty-four states at annual conventions until operations ceased in 1933. The organization's legacy has continued to shape economic fulfillment agencies. The National Student Business League (NSBL), founded in 1900

with the help of Booker T. Washington, has flourished for years and provides training for African American business students. The National Business League (NBL) credits its founding to the NNBL. The association's literature states, "Yet, it was not until 1900 that an organized federation of merchants and tradesmen was established to promote and protect the financial and commercial interests of Black entrepreneurs. Under the leadership and guidance of Dr. Booker T. Washington, a former slave who became one of the most influential leaders of his day, a few hundred men and women launched the organization that is now the National Business League." The NBL has headquarters in Washington, D.C.

R. JAKE SUDDERTH

See also Fortune, Timothy Thomas; Washington, Booker T.; Wright, Richard

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National Urban League

New York City became the logical setting for an organization designed to ease the burden of urban life for African Americans. During the late nineteenth and

the early twentieth centuries, thousands of southern rural blacks sought employment in northern industries. A need existed to ease the transition from farm to factory for men and women alike. Black people formed organizations designed to promote advancement for their race by overcoming segregation and racial discrimination. Among white people, however, the reasons for helping Negro migrants varied. Some believed that African Americans should be integrated into the larger society in order to enable white people to live more comfortably among blacks. Others contended that as long as discrimination against Negroes continued, true democracy in the United States could never be realized. And still others had pragmatic reasons for instituting reforms that could help black migrants. These progressives feared class and racial conflict, industrial unrest, and unsavory housing conditions that could result in disease epidemics—all of which would prove inimical to the urban lifestyle of the privileged elite. None had a better grasp of the problem than wealthy progressive reformers residing in New York City. These influential white men and women established chapters like the Armstrong Association and the Association for the Protection of Negro Women to handle the influx of black migrants.

At the turn of the twentieth century, several social service organizations evolved that worked to ameliorate the conditions of the black masses. By 1905, sixty-four agencies operated in New York City and Philadelphia to administer to the needs of disadvantaged blacks. Included among the service agencies were the Committee on Urban Conditions (CUC), the Committee for Improving the Industrial Condition of the Negroes in New York City (CIICN), the National League for the Protection of Colored Women (NLPCW), and eventually the National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes (NLUCAN). Although the agencies were scattered and uncoordinated and had different objectives, all were devoted to sustaining and improving the condition of African Americans.

Migrants required immediate assistance, and some relief occurred in the churches and social service missions in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Harlem. Unfortunately, short-term solutions for dependent migrants failed to resolve constant problems attributed to the evil influences of urban malaise, ranging from shyfters who shortchanged women and ran prostitution rings to industrial and housing discrimination that reduced black men and women to a subhuman existence. Equally important, migrants needed someone to act as an employment broker—an individual or organization

responsible for finding jobs and providing training necessary for gainful employment in an urban, industrial milieu.

Several men and women, black and white, endeavored to solve the burgeoning problems related to the great black migration. Included among the beneficent white people were Frances A. Kellor, general director of the Inter-Municipal Committee on House Research, and Ruth S. Baldwin, the wealthy socialite wife of the railroad tycoon William H. Baldwin Jr. Blacks possessing a similar interest in ameliorative work were Dr. Eugene P. Roberts, a physician who had graduated from Lincoln University (Pennsylvania) and New York Medical College; and William L. Bulkley, a graduate of Claflin University in South Carolina, Wesleyan, and Syracuse University, where he earned a Ph.D. in ancient and foreign literature. Later, prominent white men like L. Hollingsworth Wood, Edwin R. A. Seligman, and Oswald Garrison Villard, and blacks like Rev. Reverdy Ransom and the shoe manufacturer Samuel R. Scottron added luster to the migrant reform movement.

Despite the interest and talent of those who volunteered to mitigate the problems that migrants faced, the need to coordinate the various programs and create a full-time professional staff became increasingly evident. George E. Haynes—a graduate of Fisk University and Yale Divinity School, with a Ph.D. from Columbia—embarked on a research project and became the individual responsible for proving that the black migrant community remained underserved. Haynes's work led to the creation of another organization, the Committee on Urban Conditions Among Negroes in New York (CUCANNY). This organization enabled the participants to realize the need to coordinate all social service and philanthropic work in New York City and other industrial cities.

Therefore, on 16 October 1911, the most prominent service organizations—CUCANNY, NLPCW, and CIICN—merged, and, invoking the motto “Not alms but opportunity,” the National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes (NLUCAN) came into being. It would be officially renamed the National Urban League (NUL) on 4 February 1920. Haynes became the first chief executive officer and accepted responsibility for training black professional social workers to administer to the needs of migrants. To carry out his mission, he established a training center at Fisk and divided his time between training social workers there and carrying out his administrative responsibilities in New York. During Haynes's tenure, the league

eschewed paternalism and embarked on a mission to create prospects for black employment. Although its headquarters were in New York City, the NUL evolved to become the most prominent black social service organization in the United States.

When the board members of the league realized that Haynes's training responsibilities at Fisk prevented him from providing adequate oversight of day-to-day operations, Haynes was ousted from the directorship in favor of Eugene Kinckle Jones. Jones established organizational priorities and used the resources at his disposal to carry out his mission. Jones had been born into a highly educated family in Richmond, Virginia, and seemed destined to lead. His mother, Rosa, had graduated from Howard University and the New England Conservatory of Music and taught music at Hartshorn College in Richmond; his father, Joseph E. Jones, acquired a baccalaureate degree from Colgate University and served on the faculty at Richmond Theological Seminary (Virginia Union University) as a professor of homiletics and church history. With this background, Eugene Jones had little recourse but to further his education and thereby serve his people. After graduating from Virginia Union and earning a master's degree from Cornell in sociology, Jones eventually moved to New York City in 1911 to become the first full-time secretary of the Committee on Urban Conditions.

By 1916 Jones' star qualities enabled him to become the league's director. Under Jones's direction, the league evolved from an organization established to train black urban leaders to one that provided direct services and assistance to the black urban poor. Moreover, Jones displayed the thinking of a visionary who recognized that the league had a national responsibility to look after the social welfare of all African Americans. He promoted the separation between the national office, housed in New York City, and the New York Urban League—the latter headed by James H. Hubert. The change proved beneficial for disadvantaged blacks nationally. The national office now directed itself to upgrading the condition of Negroes in a coordinated way and on a national scale.

Jones proved himself to be the right man at the right time to lead the NUL. Of quiet demeanor, extremely industrious, and fact oriented, Jones unobtrusively but forcefully brought recognition to NUL. Indeed, Jones's temperament was ideal for the work at hand. Unlike the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which generated funds through membership dues, the NUL depended exclusively on

grants and donations from corporations and wealthy benefactors. Jones' soft-spoken, results-orientated approach made him the ideal leader for the league. Hence, under Jones's direction the league became extremely attentive to concerns and dictates of benefactors like the Rockefeller Foundation, Carnegie interests, and the Julius Rosenwald Fund.

Directly or indirectly, Jones's middle-class demeanor permeated the entire national association. Cleanliness, thrift, punctuality, proper morals, and other lessons were dispersed by NUL affiliates throughout the United States. It was the intention of Jones and other officials of the league to refute the prejudicial thinking of white employers who believed in the inferiority, indolence, and limited intelligence of the Negro.

In addition to finding employment for urban black workers, one of the primary goals Jones had in mind was the extension of the Urban League's services. During the 1920s, the national office brought seventeen new affiliates into the organization from as far South as Tampa and Atlanta and as far west as Los Angeles, and a scattering of chapters existed in cities like Baltimore, Louisville, Omaha, and Minneapolis–St. Paul. In addition to seeking employment for migrants, the centers established day nurseries, kindergartens, and clinics. The league also expanded its fellowship program to train social workers, many of whom studied at the New York School of Social Work. Jones also augmented the number of affiliates in cities including Atlanta, Baltimore, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Louisville, Minneapolis–St. Paul, Omaha, and Tampa. For children, Jones and his associates created a range of activities, organizing ball games, picnics, and stage plays and sponsoring pageants and lectures. Seeking "softer" methods to acquire access for blacks into mainstream America, Jones left it to the NAACP to agitate for equality; he himself avoided controversy and solicited the support of whites for the NUL's social service programs.

Another key to the success of the National Urban League may be observed through the calculated approach the organization took in acquiring information about the needs of African Americans. In 1920, Jones presented a proposal to the Carnegie Corporation to underwrite a research and investigations department to provide affiliate chapters with data on the "Negro question" locally and nationally. Reformers and potential benefactors alike could receive accurate information about African Americans so that proper solicitations could be made and decisions rendered to improve their condition. If the department proceeded as Jones expected, the NUL would be the most accurate repository

of information about contemporary blacks in the nation. The Carnegie Corporation underwrote the department, awarding the sum of \$8,000 annually over a three-year period. The National Urban League had taken a step toward greatness.

In order to continue making steps to help African Americans, Jones and the national board realized the necessity for collecting accurate data on the condition of the Negro. The NUL therefore needed an erudite, effective person to head the research department. One of the best decisions Jones made as executive secretary was his choice of Charles Spurgeon Johnson to head the NUL's new research arm. Johnson had been a student of the esteemed professor Robert E. Park of the University of Chicago, who had served as director of the Chicago Urban League; he profoundly believed that information could prove essential in helping African Americans acquire opportunities for advancement. With Johnson at the helm between 1922 and 1928, the research department enabled Jones to target corporations and other entities that could offer gainful employment to black urbanites. Jones used the information—facts and figures—to spearhead a "jobs for hire" program and to obtain money for other programs deemed essential to find work for African Americans. The Urban League's research department would allow New York to become the established center for information about the nuances of change in the lives of African Americans.

In addition to collecting data, the national office recognized a need to disseminate immediate information to subordinate leagues, interested parties, benefactors, and the general public. As the newly appointed head of the research department, Johnson was given an additional task. By December 1921, he would edit and produce the first edition of the "Urban League Bulletin," directed toward the larger society. Despite the early successes of the bulletin, however, a broader, more comprehensive publication had been envisioned by members within the NUL. Therefore, under Johnson's direction, on 19 January 1923, the magazine *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life* made its initial appearance. Its name was derived from the NUL's slogan, "Not alms but opportunity," and it did far more than publicize facts and statistics germane to employment and living conditions. Indeed, *Opportunity* not only provided information on black aspirations and needs but, perhaps even more important, served as an outlet for the flowering of Negro culture and contributed significantly to publicizing the talent of the new black cognoscenti and intellectuals who made up the Harlem Renaissance. By 1924 *Opportunity* had won such acclaim that the

league felt obliged to create a literary contest in which awards were offered for poetry, short stories, essays, plays, and personal sketches on life. Later contests incorporated awards for musical composition and constructive journalism. Winners of the various prizes included writers like Countee Cullen, E. Franklin Frazier, Zora Neale Houston, Langston Hughes, and Eric Waldron.

The national office also interceded on behalf of Arthur Schomburg to secure a repository for his vast collection of memorabilia—pamphlets, artifacts, letters, newspapers, manuscripts, and books—that chronicled the black diaspora. When the collection was offered to the NUL in 1926, Eugene Kinckle Jones, Charles S. Johnson, and a prominent white man, Hollingsworth Wood, encouraged the Carnegie Corporation to purchase the collection for \$10,000. Although the donation proved far less than the value of Schomburg's collection, permanent housing was established, so that the material would be accessible to the general public, in a Harlem branch of the New York Public Library; the branch was eventually named for Schomburg.

Almost simultaneously with Jones's vision for establishing a means for disseminating information about the league through the "Bulletin," the national director recognized that the procurement of jobs for blacks required the creation of an industrial department. By November 1923 Jones had presented a proposal to the Rockefeller Foundation and received \$4,500 in matching funds to create a department of industrial relations. By 1925 the national office acquired the additional funds from Julius Rosenwald so that the department could distribute black workers to sites and cities in need of labor. Furthermore, this new department would coordinate local employment agencies with potential employees, work directly with corporations to prepare opportunities for black workers, encourage black employees to perform their duties efficiently and effectively, and endeavor to gain admission of blacks into trade unions.

After Jones acquired funding, he had the task of finding a suitable industrial secretary. As it happened, T. Arnold Hill, executive director of the Chicago Urban League, became available to head the new department. Hill proved ideal for the job. His experience in Chicago had enabled him to acquire fund-raising skills, acumen as a leader, and a profound understanding of what was needed to be a successful director of the Department of Industrial Relations. Hill knew that he must gain insight about the needs of corporate America, understand the industrial training given to black

workers, and function as a liaison between corporations and potential Negro employees. Additionally, to be effective, Hill realized the need to place good workers in jobs commensurate with their talent. This would prove the best way to ensure promotion for individual employees and to protect future hiring possibilities for the entire race. Hill had also prepared to work closely with labor unions to enhance blacks' prospects for work with the trade union movement. Therefore, when Hill arrived in New York on 8 April 1925 to carry out his outlined mandate, he was prepared for the task at hand.

Jones endeavored to encourage white employers to hire black help by publicizing black people's aptitudes for work. Simultaneously, the NUL made overtures to labor with the intention of lowering racial barriers that precluded African Americans from entering unions and finding work as artisans. If the Department of Industrial Relations was to succeed, the league had to be respected by both the business elite and the forces of labor and work aggressively to achieve cooperation between industrialists and union leaders.

Fortunately, the location of the NUL in New York City, and the existence of Harlem and the populace that gravitated there seeking employment, proved advantageous to African American workers. For more than a decade, members of the league's board successfully solicited corporate America to acquire financial support for the organization and place blacks in jobs. The rapport established in the nation's business center enabled Hill and the NUL to support black workers' involvement in unions with relative impunity. While black newspaper editors, ministers, and the nationally renowned Black Elks supported the Pullman Company against striking black unionists, only NUL leaders like Jones and Hill, with tacit support from the NAACP, supported A. Philip Randolph in his struggle to organize and defend the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. By 1927, Hill had generated sufficient enthusiasm among African Americans to forge a bond with unions that he sponsored and helped organize a "Negro in Industry Week." The purpose of this "week" was to instill within black institutions—such as fraternal organizations, churches, lodges, the YMCA and YWCA, and the National Negro Business League—an acceptance of unionization. Only the early advent of the Great Depression, which initially affected African Americans, prevented the NUL's union movement from being extremely successful.

The leaders of the NUL realized that to bring African Americans into trade unions required effective, highly

trained social workers. In 1919, Jones hired Alexander L. Jackson, who had graduated from Harvard with honors, to serve as the league's educational secretary. In keeping with Booker T. Washington's philosophy of advancement of the Negro through industrial education, the need for trained social workers who could act as instructors became urgent. Furthermore, since the NUL no longer used the services of its previous educational director, George Haynes at Fisk, something had to be done. Jackson used his Ivy League training to solicit blacks attending prestigious colleges and recruited them to pursue careers in social work. The league's fellowship program, which had begun earlier in the century, received enormous stimulation and experienced great success under Jackson's direction. Scores of African Americans attending prestigious colleges and universities applied for and received grants from the league.

Although many organizations in Harlem flourished during the 1920s, the National Urban League, to some extent, found itself in difficulties. Although the NUL dedicated itself to finding work for blacks and to elevating the standard of living for those who were indigent, Jones and members of the NUL's hierarchy received criticism for the league's inability to acquire support from African Americans. Critics specifically pointed to the example of Marcus Garvey, who had raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Universal Negro Improvement Association from enthusiastic black followers. Jones, according to Parris and Brooks (1971), raised only \$68,000 from wealthy white donors, corporations, and African Americans combined. Confidence in Jones's leadership eroded further when the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC), led by Dr. Will Alexander, acquired a significant following in the South and gained acclaim, through its Atlanta headquarters, by servicing regions beyond the purview of the NUL. Further difficulties arose when George Haynes's Department of Race Relations of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America achieved national visibility and recognition. Both of these agencies recognized that the NUL was weakest in the South, the region where most blacks lived. Therefore, the CIC and the disgruntled Haynes acquired influence at the expense of the league's national office in New York. By 1925, a special conference held in Cincinnati with the theme "Toward Interracial Cooperation" operated without Eugene Kinckle Jones's influence, input, or subsequent appreciation and recognition. Only the direct involvement of Charles S. Johnson with the conference of 1928 in Washington,

D.C., righted the ship and brought recognition and respect to the NUL and Jones.

Proud and taciturn, Jones refused to sacrifice his dignity to curry favor with white benefactors. For example, the league encouraged Standard Oil and the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company to broaden employment opportunities for African Americans, but these companies remained intransigent; neither of them agreed to present information about hiring practices to Jones and the board. Jones' sense of integrity and independence prevented him from pleading with the companies to provide blacks with respectable blue- and white-collar jobs and perhaps limited the NUL's ability to conduct large-scale programs during the 1920s. Nevertheless, the organization remained strong and proved capable of withstanding challenges encountered during the Great Depression.

H. VISCOUNT NELSON

See also Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; Haynes, George Edmund; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Jones, Eugene Kinckle; Labor; 135th Street Library; Opportunity; Opportunity Literary Contests; Schomburg, Arthur A.; Villard, Oswald Garrison

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Négritude

Négritude—in English, *negritude*—is the literary and cultural movement associated with francophone writers of African descent principally during the 1930s and 1940s, most notably Léon Damas, Aimé Césaire, and Léopold Senghor. Although there have been many definitions and descriptions of the term *négritude*, the

three elements that characterized the works of these authors were valuing black and African cultures, rejecting the French policy of cultural assimilation, and promoting black and African agency.

France, like many other European states, imported large numbers of African slaves to work on sugar plantations throughout the Caribbean basin and consequently held Africans and peoples of African descent to be inferior to Europeans. Although the French First Republic abolished slavery during the French Revolution, people of African descent in these French territories did not receive citizenship until 1848, as did residents of the four communes of Senegal (Dakar, Saint Louis, Gorée, and Rufisque). The French government classified the rest of the inhabitants of Senegal and its other colonies as *indigènes*, or natives, and considered them subjects without the rights and privileges of citizens. The policy of assimilation assumed the superiority of French culture to all others. Accordingly, subjects had no political rights or rights of representation in the French national assembly. An *indigène*, however, by adopting and practicing the French language and French culture (and paying a significant fee), could be classified as *évolué*, or evolved, and could receive the rights of citizenship. Only a very small minority of Africans in French colonies achieved *évolué* status, however; the assimilated elite tended to collaborate with French rulers, while, for the vast majority of the people living under France's colonial occupation, the spirit of liberty, fraternity, and equality was little more than rhetoric. Furthermore, by the 1930s the ideas of scientific racism, which proclaimed the biological inferiority of African peoples (particularly as espoused by Gobineau), dominated French intellectual circles and broader French society as well.

Négritude, therefore, can be defined as taking pride in or promoting a positive image of African heritage individually and collectively. Given the political and cultural climate in Paris in the 1930s (the zenith of European colonialism), the assertions of black pride made by Damas, Senghor, and Césaire were very radical.

Several scholars have traced the beginnings of *négritude* to a short-lived journal, *Légitime Défense*, which was published by a group of Martinican students in Paris in 1932. Led by Etienne Léro, the group called for an end to racial discrimination against people of African descent (particularly from French territories in the Caribbean), an abolition of bourgeois hierarchical values, and a recognition of black and African racial difference as positive rather than as a deficiency. Heavily influenced by French surrealist and Marxist

ideologies, *Légitime Défense* was banned by French authorities after only one issue. Other scholars have argued that *négritude* began with the publication of *La Revue du Monde Noir*, under the leadership of the Martinican sisters Andrée, Jane, and Paulette Nardal, in 1931–1932. Both publications significantly influenced the founders of *négritude*: Léro's group raised the theme of black alienation resulting from capitalist exploitation and racial discrimination, and they called for a new form of literary expression free from French canons; the Nardal sisters held weekly salons in which young African and Afro-Caribbean students came together to discuss a variety of issues and read their poetry. It was also in these salons that the francophone writers met Harlemite literati, including Langston Hughes and Claude McKay.

Another significant influence on the incipient movement were developments in ethnology, or cultural anthropology, most notably works by Leo Frobenius and Maurice Delafosse that argued for the historicity and positive contributions of West African cultures and states, contrary to the racist ideology of Gobineau. Similarly, René Maran's historical novel, *Batouala*, which exposed French exploitation of the people in its African colonies, had an effect on the young poets' critique of French colonial society. In 1934, Damas, Senghor, and Césaire published another short-lived journal, *L'Étudiant Noir* (*The Black Student*), which built on the themes found in *Légitime Défense* and *La Revue du Monde Noir*. One of the principal themes of *négritude* that the authors of *L'Étudiant Noir* apparently stated (the journal is no longer extant) was the commonality of experiences of French colonialism on the part of Caribbean blacks and Africans. According to Césaire, the objective of the publication was "to reunite Black people who are considered French by law and nationality to their own history, traditions, and languages, to the culture which truly expresses their soul."

In 1937, Damas published the first collection of his poetry, *Pigments*. Several of the poems contain significant critiques of French assimilationist policies. "Hoquet" ("Hiccups"), for example, provides a scathing view of the rules associated with the proper conduct observed by black elite families in the Caribbean (Damas was born and raised in French Guiana and attended secondary school in Martinique, where he met Césaire). In 1939, French authorities banned the book in their African colonies because Baoulé-speakers in the Ivory Coast recited the last poem in the collection, "Et Cetera"—in which Damas exhorted Senegalese soldiers in the French army to leave the Germans in

peace and liberate Senegal instead—while resisting the military draft. Damas published a collection of essays, *Retour de Guyane (Return from Guiana)*, in 1938, and edited the first anthology of poets from the French colonies, *Poètes d'expression française d'outre mer (Poets of Overseas France)* in 1947. Damas served one term as Guiana's representative to the French national assembly following World War II, and he taught in the United States at the University of the District of Columbia and Howard University. He died in 1978.

Aimé Césaire wrote his monumental poem *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal (Notebook of a return to the native land)* in 1938. Although the journal *Volontés* published significant portions of the work in 1939, it did not receive critical acclaim until it was published in its entirety with an introduction by surrealist philosopher André Breton in 1947. It was in *Cahier* that Césaire coined and first used the term *négritude*. Surrealist in its structure, syntax, and imagery, *Cahier* is as much a psychological journey toward the young Césaire's interior self-realization as a poet and a person of African descent as a critique of French exploitation and testament to African agency in the Caribbean and on the continent. Kennedy (1975) described *Cahier* as "the only possible introduction to Césaire's work." Similarly, Kesteloot (1991) proclaimed it "the national anthem of blacks the world over." During World War II, Césaire returned to Martinique to teach and, with his wife, Suzanne, edited the surrealist journal *Tropiques*. After the war, he served as Martinique's representative in the French assembly and as mayor of Fort-de-France. At the time of this writing, he continued to serve as mayor. Césaire's most important later works include his famous essay *Discourse on Colonialism* and the plays *La tempête (The Tempest)*, based on Shakespeare's play), *La tragédie du roi Christophe* (about a king in early nineteenth-century Haiti), and *Une saison au Congo* (about the life and death of Patrice Lumumba).

Of the three founders of *négritude*, Léopold Senghor has been regarded as the champion of African contributions to the twentieth-century world, and this can be seen clearly in his essay "Ce que l'homme noir apporte" ("That Which the Black Man Carries," 1939). Senghor wrote the poems in the first two collections of his work, *Chants d'ombre (Songs of Darkness)* and *Hostes Noires (Black Hosts, Black Victims)*, between 1936 and 1945. They were published in 1945 and 1948, respectively. Also in 1948, Senghor edited and published the second anthology of francophone

African poetry, *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache (Anthology of the New Black and Malagasy Poetry)*, which included a controversial introductory essay by Jean-Paul Sartre, "Orphée Noir" ("Black Orpheus"). In addition to helping Damas and Césaire discover or rediscover African cultures, Senghor had a significant impact on a fellow Senegalese, Alioune Diop, the founder of the enormously influential journal *Présence Africaine* and the Société Africaine de Culture (African Society of Culture). Like Damas and Césaire, Senghor also served as a deputy from Senegal in the French national assembly. In 1960, he became president of an independent Senegal, an office he held until his resignation in 1980. He left Senegal and lived in France until his death in 2001.

Much of the criticism that *négritude* received as a movement stems from various definitions of the concept, particularly Senghor's and Sartre's. Césaire defined *négritude* as "the awareness of being black, the simple acknowledgment of a fact that implies the acceptance of it, a taking charge of one's destiny as a black man, of one's history and culture," whereas for Senghor it was "the cultural patrimony, the values and above all the spirit of Negro African civilization." Building on the implicit essentialist and universalist ideas in Senghor's definition, Sartre defined *négritude* as the "being-in-the-world of blacks," but further as

the upbeat of a dialectical progression; the theoretical and practical assertion of white supremacy is the thesis; the position of negritude, as an antithetical value, is the moment of negativity. But this negative moment is not sufficient in itself, and the blacks who make use of it are aware of this. They know its aim is to prepare a synthesis or realization of the human in a society without races. Thus negritude exists in order to be destroyed. It is a transition, not a result, a means and not a final ending.

In effect, Sartre made the essentialism implicit in Senghor explicit. Furthermore, to the extent that Senghor's understanding of culture as it related to a universal "spirit of Negro African civilization" is essentialist, it is understandable given that he no doubt developed his understanding of culture from the early ethnologists who reified concepts such as culture as a matter of course. Nigel Gibson characterized *négritude* as defined by Césaire as "subjective negritude," and as defined by Sartre following Senghor as "objective negritude." The revolutionary theorist (and Martinican) Frantz Fanon was more accepting of "subjective

negritude" and critical of "objective negritude" because of "the historical specificity of racism and colonialism": that is, they were not universals; rather, they were contingent on specific historical contexts. In short, Fanon was far more critical of Sartre than any of the *négritude* poets. Furthermore, Kesteloot argued that *négritude* literati were more interested in the realization of human society without racism than in its realization without race. The criticisms of anglophone African writers, such as the Nigerian Wole Soyinka and the South African Ezekiel Mphahlele, argued for the existence of and preferred separate black and African "national" literatures versus a universal black literature and spirit. Curiously, Langston Hughes noted that, had the term *négritude* been used in the 1920s, he and the Harlem literati "might have been called poets of *négritude*."

The poet-politicians of *négritude* intended their literary works to have a political impact. They saw political involvement as an extension of their ideology: All three served in the French national assembly, Senghor was president of Senegal, and Césaire was the mayor of Fort-de-France. Radicals criticized both Senghor and Césaire: Senghor voted for union with France in the referendum of 1958; Césaire received André Malraux, France's minister of information, who denied that the French army used torture during the Algerian war. Yet the success and significance of *négritude* can be measured by its impact on the generations of black and African intellectuals and nationalists who led movements against Western colonialism.

While scholars have chronicled the relationship between *négritude* and the Harlem Renaissance, its interaction with other contemporary literary movements is less well known. Manuel Ferreira wrote about the influence of *négritude* on *claridade*, a literary movement of the 1930s in Cape Verde. Damas dedicated "Il est des nuits" to the Afro-Cuban poet Alejo Carpentier. Senghor noted that the Haitian Jean Price-Mars's *Ainsi parla l'oncle* influenced his thought. Thus, *négritude* was one of several literary movements among black and African people in the Atlantic world in the early twentieth century. These movements were the intellectual forebears of later black and African movements for political and social liberation from western colonialism.

NICHOLAS M. CREARY

See also Batouala; Césaire, Aimé; Damas, Léon; Francophone Africa and the Harlem Renaissance; Francophone Caribbean and the Harlem Renaissance;

Hughes, Langston; Maran, René; McKay, Claude; Senghor, Léopold

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Negro: An Anthology

Negro: An Anthology, collected and edited by Nancy Cunard, was the largest and the most radical of the anthologies to come out of the Harlem Renaissance. It was published in 1934, nine years after Alain Locke had issued *The New Negro*, and it can be read as an updated version of Locke's anthology. Like *The New Negro*, *Negro* includes literature, essays, sociological studies, and photographs. *Negro* is much broader in focus than Locke's anthology, however, and, at 855 pages, more thorough: *Negro* includes 250 contributions by 150 writers, and it firmly sets the history and achievements of African Americans in a global context, with sections on the history, culture, and social development of the West Indies and South America, Europe, and Africa. *Negro* is also more militant than its predecessor: It includes coverage of racism and violence against African Americans, with essays on lynching, the Ku Klux Klan, and the Scottsboro trial. It also includes a number of essays attacking imperialism and capitalism and lauding the potential of communism and socialism to help fight racism and injustice.

Whereas *The New Negro* is understood as the defining volume of the Harlem Renaissance and is well known to scholars of the movement, *Negro* has never received much attention. In the 1930s, only a very few periodicals reviewed it. More recently, Chisholm (1979) and Ford (1970) have offered accounts of Cunard's

creation of the anthology, and a few essays have been devoted to it, but scholarship on *Negro* remains scant.

The obscurity of *Negro* is at least partly a result of its limited availability. The first edition was published by Wishart in London in 1934 at Cunard's expense, and she was unable to find an American publisher. Wishart printed only 1,000 copies of the volume, and the bombing of London during World War II destroyed several hundred copies that had not yet been sold. After the war, according to Chisholm, copies were "virtually unattainable," available only at very high prices on the rare book market (1979, 222). The version that Ford edited in 1970 is more widely available; however, he abridged the contents to 464 pages.

Still, the anthology offers an insightful coda to the Harlem Renaissance, particularly in its original form. First, it is an important source of work by some of the significant writers of the period. *Negro* includes, for example, poetry by Arna Bontemps, Sterling Brown, Countee Cullen, and Langston Hughes, as well as essays by Locke, W. E. B. Du Bois, Arthur Schomburg, and Walter White. A number of essays by Zora Neale Hurston, including "Characteristics of Negro Expression," were originally published in *Negro*. The anthology also includes contributions by notable white literary figures, including Theodore Dreiser, Ezra Pound, and William Carlos Williams; Samuel Beckett translated a number of essays from French writers.

Second, *Negro* demonstrates the importance of musicians and performers of the period; it includes a selection of photographs of and essays about young African American musicians, actors, and performers active during the 1920s and 1930s, including Louis Armstrong, Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington, Ethel Waters, and Bill "Bojangles" Robinson. *Negro* is a reminder that the work and the influence of these writers and artists did not end with the close of the 1920s, nor did the interest in black culture.

Negro also demonstrates that the concerns of the 1920s extended into the 1930s. Cunard's goal for the volume, as she describes it in her foreword, was to record "the struggles and achievements, the persecutions and the revolts against them, of the Negro peoples" (iii). A sense of frustration with the continuing racism against African Americans permeates the volume; it matches the frustration often found, for example, in Du Bois's editorials in *The Crisis*, the journal he edited for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The essays on black culture, in contrast, are laudatory in tone; they praise the literature, art, music, and performances by black

people in the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa, implicitly offering such work as evidence that disproves the often assumed inferiority of black people. *Negro* shares with so many works of the previous decade, then, the optimistic feeling that the arts could serve the political purpose of undermining racism.

A number of aspects of *Negro* set it apart from other work of the Harlem Renaissance and made it controversial, however. The espousal of communism in the volume is probably its most distinctive and divisive element. The arguments about the benefits of communism are heavy handed; Cunard, for example, states in her foreword, "The Communist world-order is the solution of the race problem for the Negro" (iii). Moreover, she had little patience or understanding for anyone who did not share this belief, and she was quite outspoken in her criticism of people with whom she disagreed about politics or strategies, even if they were contributors. For instance, although she included contributions from a number of members of the NAACP, including Du Bois, White, and William Pickens, she also included an essay in which she attacked Du Bois, *The Crisis*, and the NAACP as reactionary—and even placed her critique immediately ahead of Du Bois's essay.

Another controversial aspect of the anthology is the fact that its editor, Cunard, was a white British woman born into a high-class, well-off family who was not afraid of controversy in her own life. She dedicated *Negro* to Henry Crowder, an African American musician whom she had met in Italy in 1928 and with whom she had a long affair. Cunard's interest in and relationships with Crowder and other black men caused quite a scandal and received a good deal of press; as McSpadden (1997) points out, Cunard's reputation for "sexual adventurousness" and her interest "in all things African"—particularly men—made her credibility as the editor of this anthology questionable (60).

Cunard's editorial policies and organization also are debatable. North (1994), for example, argues that the anthology is indiscriminate and lacks organization, although McSpadden describes the benefits of its complexities. And, certainly, some of the texts are problematic, such as William Carlos Williams' sexist and racist essay, "The Colored Girls of Passenack." In spite of—or perhaps because of—these controversies, however, *Negro* calls for much more scholarly attention.

ANNE CARROLL

See also Cunard, Nancy; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Locke, Alain; New Negro, The; Scottsboro; White, Walter; *other specific individuals*

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Negro Art Institute

The Negro Art Institute—known formally as the American (National) Institute of Negro Letters, Music, and Art—was the first of three major attempts by the civil rights leader Walter White (1893–1955) to obtain broad-based support for artists of the Harlem Renaissance. Patterned after the American Negro Academy (ANA), which was founded in 1897, the Negro Art Institute was conceived in 1923 to train and cultivate black writers, musicians, and visual artists. It immediately found advocates in the philosopher Alain Locke (1885–1954), who was a member of the ANA, and the activist James Weldon Johnson (1871–1938), who served with White as an officer of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). According to the NAACP's records, plans for the incorporation of the Negro Art Institute and the configuration of its board were outlined in a memorandum dated 13 April 1923. Although unsigned, the document was probably written by Locke, who made suggestions as to additional supporters beyond the members of the board, and who recommended New

York or Chicago as a possible location for the institute, because both cities had an abundance of cultural and financial resources.

White, who worked tirelessly for the NAACP for nearly forty years, was not only a staunch civil rights activist but also an award-winning author. As such, he championed the NAACP's support of black artists, particularly writers, and used the NAACP's publications to highlight their works, inform the public about the state and nature of black art, and foster relationships between artists and critics. The Negro Art Institute was an outgrowth of this interest, and it was hoped that the institute would function not merely as an academy but also as a vehicle through which to raise global awareness about black genius and creativity.

An application for financial support of the institute was submitted, unsuccessfully, to the Garland Fund. Following this rejection, Locke invited the wealthy widow Charlotte Osgood Mason (1854–1946) to underwrite the project. Mason, who supported a number of African American literary and visual artists throughout the 1920s and 1930s, initially agreed but later withdrew her support. Although it is unclear why Mason abandoned the project, she seems, in any case, to have been an improbable sponsor for an institution intended to cultivate scholarly pursuits, intellectual engagement, and the notion of black erudition: Mason was a "primitivist" who coerced her beneficiaries into creating works that emphasized the visceral and childlike nature of black people as she understood them.

Unable to obtain financial backing, White and his colleagues appear to have relinquished their plans for the institute. By 1924, White's correspondence no longer refers to the project, nor is it mentioned in his biography. A second, similar endeavor, the Negro Foreign Fellowship Fund, was attempted in 1924, again by White, Locke, and Johnson, in order to finance travel and study abroad for black artists and scholars. An application for a subsidy was submitted to the American Fund for Public Service but was rejected because the proposal fell outside the scope of the fund's objectives. A third and final venture to support black art was conceived by White in 1927, when he wrote to a former director of the Harmon Foundation (which had independently begun to offer awards to black artists) for assistance, but his request was again rejected. Despite these disappointments, White continued to aid black artists on an individual basis and through his advocacy of the NAACP's literary awards.

LISA FARRINGTON

See also Garland Fund; Harmon Foundation; Johnson, James Weldon; Locke, Alain; Mason, Charlotte Osgood; White, Walter

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Negro Art Theater

The Negro Art Theater was a “little theater” group founded in the Abyssinian Baptist Church. The troupe’s efforts were spearheaded by Adam Clayton Powell Jr., son of the pastor of Abyssinian, who would take over his father’s pulpit and later was elected to Congress. Only one production is known to have been mounted by the Negro Art Theater: *Wade in the Water*, in June 1929. It starred Laura Bowman (1878–1957), a prominent stage actress during the Harlem Renaissance.

ELLIOTT S. HURWITT

See also Abyssinian Baptist Church

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Negro Experimental Theater

The Negro Experimental Theater, a “little theater” company, was active from 1929 to 1931. It used the names Negro Experimental Theater and Harlem Experimental Theater more or less interchangeably. It was founded at the Harlem branch of the New York Public Library, at 135th Street, in February 1929 by the librarian Regina Anderson Andrews (who would function as its executive secretary for much of its

existence) and the teacher Dorothy Peterson. Others who led this venture included the critic Theophilus Lewis, the playwright Jessie Redmon Fauset, and the teacher Harold Jackman. The troupe was made up largely of actors from the Lincoln Theater Company, which was already prominent in Harlem.

On 24 June 1929, the Negro Experimental Theater presented Georgia Douglas Johnson’s one-act play “Plumes,” directed by Jackman; his departure for Europe shortly thereafter apparently coincided with a period of relative inactivity for the group.

In February 1931, the Negro Experimental Theater moved its activities to the parish house of Saint Philip’s Episcopal Church. There it mounted an ambitious season that included *Little Stone House* by George Calderon, *The Rider of Dreams* by Ridgely Torrence, and *Climbing Jacob’s Ladder* by Regina Andrews (writing under the pseudonym Ursula Treling, and apparently the only black writer among the company’s playwrights). *The Rider of Dreams* had originally appeared in 1917 as one of Torrence’s *Three Plays for a Negro Theater*, presented by a pioneering company known simply as the Colored Players. On 24 April 1931, the “Harlem Experimental Theatre” produced a triple bill consisting of *A Sunny Morning* by Joaquin and Serafin Quintero (with Regina Andrews in the cast), *The Rider of Dreams*, and *Climbing Jacob’s Ladder*. Rose McClendon, a leading actress of the Harlem Renaissance, directed *The Rider of Dreams* on this occasion; the other two plays were directed by Robert Dunmore. Aaron Douglas, a leading artist of the renaissance, designed the striking cover image for the program, a copy of which is in the Schomburg Center.

ELLIOTT S. HURWITT

See also Anderson, Regina M.; Douglas, Aaron; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Jackman, Harold; Johnson, Georgia Douglas; Lewis, Theophilus; Lincoln Theater; McClendon, Rose; 135th Street Library; Peterson, Dorothy Randolph; Saint Philip’s Protestant Episcopal Church; *Three Plays for a Negro Theater*

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Negro World

Published in Harlem, *Negro World* was the weekly newspaper of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Two prominent editors of *Negro World* were William H. Ferris and W. A. Domingo, although Domingo eventually broke with Garvey.

Negro World was founded in 1919 and flourished in the 1920s, with its messages of black nationalism and racial pride. Striving to appeal to a broad audience of blacks from various backgrounds and geographical areas, Marcus Garvey made a point of including Spanish and French sections in his newspaper. This enhanced the ability of *Negro World* to reach far beyond Harlem. In fact, the wide dissemination of the newspaper disturbed authorities in some places. In particular, the British authorities considered the paper's anticolonial message so potentially subversive that they banned *Negro World* in the West Indies.

Although *Negro World* preached black capitalism and was therefore distinct from socialist papers, it nevertheless was part of a vibrant black radical press. Other contemporary periodicals that also emphasized black culture and black nationalism included *The Messenger*, *Voice*, *Crusader*, and *Emancipator*.

Indeed, all these newspapers played a critical role in spreading the Harlem Renaissance. For example, *Negro World*, like the black press as a whole, frequently sponsored poetry contests, publishing the work of previously unknown writers. Often, poems were chosen not primarily on the basis of their literary merit but on the basis of their message. By exposing the public to art with a message, *Negro World* conveyed the idea that the literary could be the political.

The political message of *Negro World* was, of course, more overt in its editorials than in the poetry it featured. Like the UNIA itself, the editorials in *Negro World* urged blacks to go back to Africa, since American society was hopelessly racist. If blacks chose to stay in the United States, they should at least develop separate social and economic institutions of their own. Many blacks heeded the call for separation within the United States and helped organize the UNIA's black businesses, such as Universal Laundries and Universal Restaurants.

In addition, *Negro World* served the purpose of fund raising. For instance, it helped raise money for Garvey's ill-fated Black Star Line. This shipping venture was intended, in part, to bring blacks from the United States to Liberia to establish an independent colony there, but the Black Star Line fell victim to mismanagement and corruption.

Negro World eventually also collapsed when Marcus Garvey was jailed and later deported. During its tumultuous lifetime, however, the newspaper served an important function in igniting a widespread interest in black art and culture.

JANICE TRAFLET

See also Black Star Line; Domingo, Wilfred Adolphus; Emancipator; Ferris, William H.; Garvey, Marcus; Messenger, The; Universal Negro Improvement Association

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Negrotarians

The writers, artists, and intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance were highly dependent on the financial assistance and social leverage of white patrons such as Carl Van Vechten (1880–1964), Joel Spingarn (1875–1939), Charlotte Osgood Mason (1854–1946), and Fannie Hurst (1889–1968), who were first nicknamed "Negrotarians" by Zora Neale Hurston. Whether motivated by what is now known as political correctness, voyeurism, vanity, or genuine compassion, the Negrotarians played a crucial role in expanding the market for the culture of black Harlem. In addition, they often developed friendships and creative partnerships with Harlemites that long outlasted the most fashionable period of the renaissance.

Many forms of white patronage existed, some more benignly intended than others. Segregated nightclubs like the Cotton Club and the Savoy catered to a white middle-class clientele that had a taste for the exotic.

Parties were thrown in Harlem and downtown Manhattan by wealthy socialites; at these parties, ambitious, talented blacks could mingle with prominent writers, book publishers, and celebrities, including Theodore Dreiser, Salvador Dalí, Paul Robeson, and Ethel Barrymore. Annual prizes for achievements by blacks in the arts and other professional fields were funded by Spingarn, Van Vechten, and the William E. Harmon Foundation. Jobs, schooling, and money for personal expenditures were provided for those individuals who showed the most promise, like Hurston and Langston Hughes.

Van Vechten was by far the most active and enthusiastic of all the Negrotarians, as his friend James Weldon Johnson and others have testified. Van Vechten was born in Iowa to a liberal middle-class family, and he took an early interest in black ragtime musicians and vaudeville performers while he was a student at the University of Chicago. He came to New York as a journalist and began writing cultural reviews for the *New York Times*. After reading Walter White's protest novel *The Fire in the Flint* (1924), Van Vechten asked the publisher Alfred A. Knopf to introduce him to the author. Through White, Van Vechten met many of Harlem's luminaries, including Johnson, Hughes, and Countee Cullen. From then on, Van Vechten was deeply involved in the social life and cultural production of black Harlem. He and his wife, the actress Fania Marinoff, became renowned for giving lavish integrated parties at their home on West Fifty-fifth Street.

Van Vechten's promotional activities on behalf of Hughes, Johnson, Hurston, and many others coincided with his own reputable career as a writer and photographer (a large collection of his photographic portraits is stored at the Library of Congress.) His novel *Nigger Heaven* (1926) caused quite a stir over its provocative title, which derives from a slang term for the upper gallery of a theater, where blacks were permitted to sit. Writing in *The Crisis*, W. E. B. Du Bois called the book a "cheap melodrama," and objected to its subtext of primitivism. Others condemned the book without reading it, although the ensuing controversy ensured its popular success. While its racial politics have certainly dated, *Nigger Heaven* is actually much less incendiary than its title would suggest, and it remains interesting for its local-color descriptions of middle-class bohemian life at the height of the Harlem Renaissance. Hughes writes about the controversy over *Nigger Heaven* in the first volume of his autobiography, *The Big Sea* (1940), taking the novel's critics to task and praising Van Vechten for writing "sympathetically

and amusingly and well about a whole rainbow of life above 110th Street that had never before been put into the color of words."

Aside from Van Vechten, the main benefactor of Hughes and Hurston was Charlotte Osgood Mason, whom they addressed as "Godmother" to her evident delight. A wealthy heiress, Mason indulged in several eccentric pastimes, including anthropology and the occult. She was especially fascinated with Native American and African American folk cultures, finding them somewhat more appealing than the decadent ways of modern society. Hurston's biographer, Robert Hemenway (1977), estimates that Mason "contributed between fifty and seventy-five thousand dollars to New Negro writers and artists," and notes that she insisted on the confidentiality of her donations.

Soon after meeting Mason in 1927, Hurston signed a contract of employment with her to fund a series of trips through the South for the purpose of collecting folklore, under the supervision of the renowned anthropologist Franz Boas at Columbia University. These trips ultimately provided Hurston with the material that appeared in her classic anthology and travel narrative *Mules and Men* (1935). For the next several years, Hurston kept Mason enticed with trickster and hoodoo tales and flattered her with ingratiating letters, all in an effort to sustain her urgently needed support. She even played on Mason's latent racism by signing her letters "your little pickaninny."

Hurston had reason to be anxious, for Mason expected her protégés to surrender control of their work in exchange for her financial backing. In a letter to Hughes, Hurston complained that Mason "ought not to exert herself to supervise every little detail [of the trips]. It destroys my self-respect and utterly demoralizes me for weeks." This was no exaggeration, for Mason demanded an itemized list of purchases and complained whenever she felt that Hurston was being "extravagant." Even more discouraging was Mason's insistence that Hurston not use her collected folklore materials for any commercial purpose, which delayed the publication of *Mules and Men* for many years. Hughes was less tolerant of Mason's intrusive demands than Hurston and ended his dealings with Mason in 1930, motivated in part by a dispute over his emerging radicalism.

Nevertheless, both Hughes and Hurston expressed their gratitude to Mason for her generosity. On the whole, Harlem embraced the Negrotarians. The painter and caricaturist Miguel Covarrubias, a beneficiary of both Mason and Van Vechten, once drew a humorous

portrait of the latter as a Negro minstrel, which he titled “Carl Van Vechten—A Prediction.” Spingarn, a Jewish literary critic at Columbia University who was one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and served on its board, and his philanthropist wife, Amy, are remembered fondly in Hughes’s *The Big Sea*. The best-selling author Fannie Hurst, also Jewish, is celebrated in Hurston’s autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942) as one of her dearest friends. When Hurston was tried on false charges of molesting a ten-year-old boy in 1948, Hurst, her former employer, became a close confidante.

A more cynical view of the Negrotarians can be found in Wallace Thurman’s roman à clef, *Infants of the Spring* (1932). Thurman’s white characters, clearly modeled on Van Vechten and other real-life acquaintances, regard Harlem either as an exotic, sexually enticing spectacle or as a cause for their own political martyrdom. Most critics today respond to the contribution of the Negrotarians to the Harlem Renaissance with considerable ambivalence. At the very least, however, these patrons should be given credit for their willingness to extend substantive gestures of goodwill across the color line, at a time when very few whites had the courage to do so.

DARYN GLASSBROOK

See also Covarrubias, Miguel; Cullen, Countee; Dreiser, Theodore; Harmon Foundation; Hurst, Fannie; Hurston, Zora Neale; *Infants of the Spring*; Johnson, James Weldon; Mason, Charlotte Osgood; Robeson, Paul; Spingarn, Joel; Thurman, Wallace; Van Vechten, Carl; White Patronage

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Nelson, Alice Dunbar

Alice Dunbar Nelson (or Dunbar-Nelson, 1875–1935) had a long and varied career as a teacher, writer, and leader in the black women’s social movement and the early civil rights movement. On completing her secondary education, she studied English literature, psychology, art, and music at Cornell, Columbia, and the University of Pennsylvania. Her academic interest in English literature culminated in a thesis focused on the influence of writing by Milton and Wordsworth. She would herself become one of the most prominent African American women poets of the Harlem Renaissance.

Nelson’s exemplary writing provided her with many opportunities to become involved in the social activism that most interested her, and her skill as a writer also affected her personal life. In 1897, she began a relationship with prominent black poet Paul Laurence Dunbar. Dunbar had read some of her poetry and had become intrigued by a photograph he saw of her in a journal published in Boston. The two began a courtship by exchanging letters in 1897, and they were married on 8 March 1898.

Accounts of the relationship suggest that the two admired each other as artists but had little in common aside from their interest in the arts. Some of the problems between them resulted from Nelson’s ambivalence about her position as a wife and woman within the constraints of the Victorian age at a time when the “new woman” of the modern era was emerging. The marriage was also strained by Nelson’s family, by the demands of Dunbar’s career, and by his alcoholism; in 1902, Nelson left Dunbar permanently (Hull 1987).

After the split with Dunbar, Nelson left Washington, D.C., and moved to Wilmington, Delaware, where she taught high school from 1902 to 1920. In 1916, she married Robert J. Nelson. By all accounts, their relationship was not as tempestuous as her marriage with Dunbar had been but was more of a partnership that developed

from a shared interest in journalism as well as social and political activism. Nelson and her new husband worked together to publish the *Wilmington Advocate*, and they also published *Masterpieces of Negro Eloquence* (1914).

During her second marriage, Nelson developed more of a sense of herself as an African American woman. This new sense of racial identity, coupled with her interest in women's rights, becomes clear in some of her essays and articles, including "Negro Women in War Work" (1919), "Politics in Delaware" (1924), "Hysteria," and "Is It Time for Negro Colleges in the South to Be Put in the Hands of Negro Teachers?" In essays such as these, she explored the role of black women in the workforce, education, and the anti-lynching movement. Nelson's journalistic writing reflects her social activism: She was a participant in the Women's Committee of the Council of National Defense, National Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, National Association of Colored Women, League of Independent Political Action, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Middle Atlantic Women's Suffrage Campaign, and League of Colored Republican Women (Hull 1984).

Nelson's writing also reflects her belief that African Americans needed to have equal access to jobs, education, and other benefits associated with being American; her belief in the equality of men and women; and her opposition to social and political practices that condoned and perpetuated the oppression of women and African Americans. She also expressed her concern about racial categorization and the ambivalence she felt as a person of mixed race (she was of Creole heritage).

Racial ambivalence plagued Nelson throughout her life, and it had affected her marriage to Dunbar. Nelson's own family was part of a socially elite group of African Americans living in New Orleans in the period after slavery ended. The family's sense of elitism was rooted in a belief, on the part of some of its members, that African Americans of "mixed race" were somehow superior to "pure" African Americans. Consequently, the family never really accepted Dunbar, who had physical characteristics they associated with "pure" African descent.

Nelson had begun her literary career at the age of twenty with the publication of *Violets and Other Tales* (1895). Although she is best known for her poetry, this first publication included short stories, sketches, reviews, and essays as well as poems. One recurring theme in *Violets and Other Tales*, as well as in Nelson's

later works, is the plight of women. Nelson examines the status of women in a male-dominated society and the effects of societal constraints, based on gender, on those who try to live up to the Victorian ideal of womanhood. Welter (1976) argues that the lives of upper-class white women in the nineteenth century were governed by four tenets: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. Nelson developed her skills as a writer at a time when women were in a precarious position, making a transition from such Victorian propriety to a new concept; this "new woman" was appearing in a number of literary works written by American women at the turn of the twentieth century and well into the early years of the new century. To illustrate this transitional situation and the constraints that still persisted, Nelson focused on both African American and white women at various socioeconomic levels.

Nelson herself experienced discrimination based on gender throughout her life, in her interactions with men in her life and in her career. For instance, before marrying Dunbar, she had started to develop a career as an educator, but she was divided between her desire to marry and her desire to work. When she first became involved with Dunbar, she was working in a school in Brooklyn where women teachers could not be married; thus, when she and Dunbar did marry, she had to hide the fact for a while.

Nelson also addressed racial themes in her writing. She expanded her analysis of the "woman question" to explore intersections of race, ethnicity, class, and gender in pieces such as "Violets," "The Woman," "At Eventide," "Tony's Wife," "Elizabeth," and "Ellen Fenton." As previously mentioned, she herself was ambivalent in matters of race because she was of mixed race (she could have passed as white if she had chosen to do so). In *The Goodness of St. Rocque and Other Stories* (1899), Nelson focused specifically on Creole culture. As she matured as a writer, she confronted racial prejudice and American racism in a more direct way in stories such as "Natalie," "The Pearl in the Oyster," "The Stones of the Village," and "Brass Ankles Speaks."

In addition to providing a study of race and gender in connection with identity formation, Nelson explores other markers of identity, such as ethnicity, religion, and class, in some of her short fiction. Hull (1988) notes that Nelson was "inclined to write about difference—for example, Catholic versus Protestant, Anglo versus Creole." In writing about difference, Nelson forces the reader to call into question societal norms that put the

white race, men, and certain religions in a privileged position.

During the Harlem Renaissance, Nelson concentrated more on developing her craft as a poet, and she also served as a role model and mentor for some younger creative artists. The poetry she had written before the renaissance was characterized by an emphasis on love and on lyrical verse about nature. But at the time of the renaissance—although she continued to develop themes of love and nature—her poems also reflected her heightened interest in politics and in using art, at least to a certain degree, to influence social change. Most of the poetry she produced during this period was published in the journals *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* between 1917 and 1928. James Weldon Johnson also included some of her poems in his *Book of American Negro Poetry* (1931). Two of her most famous protest poems are “I Sit and Sew” (1927) and “The Proletariat Speaks” (1929).

Poetry also gave Nelson a form in which to express her sexuality. Her diary includes some previously unpublished poetry that, according to Hull (1984), reveals her lesbianism. Actually, Nelson’s sexual orientation remains somewhat of a mystery; in any event, she was a passionate writer in this regard as well as when she was concerned with the social and political advancement of African Americans and women.

Nelson died of heart disease in 1935. She had lived a full and intriguing life, despite the difficulties she faced as a woman in a new era and as a social activist taking up the cause of racial equality. Current scholars consider her talented and worthy of study in her own right, not just as the wife of Paul Laurence Dunbar. She is likely to be remembered for what her fiction, essays, and poetry have added to the African American literary tradition and to the American literary canon.

Biography

Alice Dunbar Nelson (Alice Ruth More) was born 19 July 1875 in New Orleans, Louisiana. She studied English, education, and psychology at Straight College, New Orleans; Cornell; Columbia; the Pennsylvania School of Industrial Art; and the University of Pennsylvania. She worked as a teacher in New Orleans from 1892 to 1896; published *Violets and Other Tales* in 1895; married Paul Laurence Dunbar 8 March 1898; published *The Goodness of St. Rocque and Other Stories* in 1899; left Dunbar in 1902 and moved to Wilmington, Delaware; worked at Howard High School from 1902 to 1920; worked as a writer and

editor for *AME Church Review* in 1913–1914; published *Masterpieces of Negro Eloquence* in 1914; married the journalist Robert J. Nelson 20 April 1916; and published her work in a number of African American periodicals and books (including *The Crisis*, *Opportunity*, *Ebony*, *Negro Poets and Their Poems*, and *Caroling Dusk: The Book of American Negro Poetry*) between 1917 and 1931. She started writing her diary in 1921. She was a leader in the antilynching crusade in 1922. Nelson died 18 September 1935.

DEIRDRE J. RAYNOR

See also Antilynching Crusade; Crisis, The; Dunbar, Paul Laurence; Opportunity

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New Challenge

New Challenge was intended as a literary quarterly that would be a continuation of *Challenge*, an earlier magazine that had been founded by Dorothy West and edited by her from March 1934 until April 1937. The editors of *New Challenge* stated in their first editorial that their purpose was to represent change and reorganization, “not only with the idea of a change in policy, but also in terms of the best way to fulfill plans for relating it to

communities beyond New York City . . . as the organ of regional groups composed of writers opposed to fascism, war, and general reactionary policies.”

New Challenge appeared in a single issue, Fall 1937. The divisional content of the new quarterly remained similar in headings and format to that of its predecessor, except that it included sociopolitical articles, an expanded book review section, and letters to the editor. These three additions and the inclusion of more submissions in the sections devoted to stories, poetry, and articles made *New Challenge* larger than *Challenge*. The editors expected an increase in the audience for *New Challenge* and in the number of contributors: Progressive writers from across the country, both Negro and non-Negro, who could place their writings in the proper perspective with regard to the life of the Negro masses, were invited to make submissions; the editors asked, however, that the “bigot and potential fascist keep away from our door.”

The editorial appearing in *New Challenge* was jointly written by West, Marian Minus, and Richard Wright. The editors outlined the goal of *New Challenge*, which was the perfection of social consciousness among the Negroes nationwide. It aimed to “point social directives and provide a basis for the clear recognition of and solution to the problems which face the contemporary writer in the realistic portrayal of Negro life.” Wright’s “Blueprint for Negro Writing” further emphasized the new quarterly’s artistic goals.

Under Wright’s and Minus’s influence, *New Challenge* was temporarily an organ through which the new social protest literary movement of the 1930s found a voice. West did not fully agree with Wright’s literary manifesto and his new mission to further reorganize *New Challenge*; however, she endured the in-fighting and ideological differences that surfaced in the editorial backroom, until after the first and only issue of *New Challenge* was published in 1937, thereby exhibiting the early literary promise of notable writers such as Ralph Ellison, Robert Hayden, and Frank Yerby.

PEARLIE PETERS

See also *Challenge*; West, Dorothy; Wright, Richard

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New Deal

The New Deal (1933–1938) was the most radical response to a peacetime emergency in American history. The Great Depression (1929–1941) was the deepest and most extended economic downturn ever to strike the United States. Black Americans were among the worst affected.

In March 1933, a new government headed by Franklin Delano Roosevelt assumed office. At that point, 24.7 percent of the nation’s workforce was unemployed. Many more worked part time or worked for substantially reduced wages. In speeches and through the new medium of radio, President Roosevelt drew the direct analogy that, to overcome the nation’s problems, there needed to be a mobilization of the nation’s resources for a war on economic collapse.

The New Deal was an exercise in crisis management, an experiment to see what would work. As identified by the president, the task was threefold: to provide relief, recovery, and reform (so that nothing like this would happen again). Most immediately, the banking system needed resuscitation. Next, the unemployed needed relief (private, local, and state coffers simply could not cope with the demand). Finally, industry and agriculture needed urgent efforts to avoid cutthroat competition and low prices.

New Deal Agencies

In 1933, relief was offered to Americans through the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA); the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), aimed at providing work-relief for young men; the Civil Works Administration (CWA), which provided work-relief jobs in construction projects to get people through the winter; and the Public Works Administration (PWA), which used unemployed Americans to build dams, schools, lighthouses, sewer systems, bridges, and tunnels. In 1935, after the U.S. Supreme Court found much of the first New Deal to be unconstitutional, a

huge new agency, the Works Progress Administration (WPA), was created to provide work relief.

To provide succor to ailing industries, the National Recovery Administration was established in 1933. Mutually acceptable codes of conduct were set up to eliminate harmful business practices industry by industry. Most of the 541 codes followed guidelines that abolished child labor, established a norm of a forty-hour workweek, and set a minimum wage. In agriculture, the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) established an agency committed to raising farm prices. To do this, farmers were paid not to grow crops. A smaller supply would lead to higher prices and thus increase farm income. On a regional level, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) provided development in the form of dams, rural electrification, and jobs to one of the poorer sections of the nation.

In 1935, new legislation, the Wagner or National Labor Relations Act, established the right of workers to organize into labor unions of their choosing, to define and regulate “unfair practices” on the part of employers in trying to avoid unionization. In addition, the Resettlement Administration (RA), then the Farm Security Administration (FSA), tried to resettle poor rural folk on better land and to make sure sharecroppers and tenants received a fairer share of agricultural relief. Of great importance to Americans in 1935 was the passage of the Social Security Act. This provided, for the first time, a national system of accident insurance and old age benefits, as well as a system of unemployment insurance and Aid to Dependent Children. Finally, 1935 saw the establishment of the National Youth Administration (NYA) to provide work relief for young people who had left school, and work for students remaining in school to enable them to complete their education. After this burst of reform, the New Deal faded. The only other significant piece of legislation enacted under Roosevelt was the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938. This legislation, much amended, provided for a minimum wage.

The New Deal did not end the Depression, but it did contribute mightily to economic recovery by 1937. In that year, a recession undid much progress, and not until war-related orders came rolling in, particularly throughout 1940, would the worst of the Depression, with its stubbornly high unemployment levels, come to an end.

African Americans and New Deal Agencies

African Americans were hit earliest and hardest by the Depression. A survey of twenty-five cities conducted

by the Urban League in 1930 found a 34.5 percent decrease in the number of available jobs for blacks and an increase of 40 percent in demand. Similarly, only 31.9 percent of black women workers were employed full time compared with 74.7 percent of native-born white women. In 1931, the U.S. Bureau of the Census held a Special Unemployment Census. It found that in manufacturing, unemployment was 31.7 percent for native-born whites, 29.9 percent for foreign-born whites, and 52 percent for blacks. Among service and domestic workers, unemployment was 17.7 percent for native-born whites, 12.4 percent for foreign-born whites, and 30.7 percent for blacks. Blacks were unemployed sooner and longer than whites. They were added twice as frequently to the relief rolls because of loss of private employment than whites and left the rolls by finding private employment at only half the rate of whites.

Black workers were subjected to discrimination in employment, segregation into the least desirable jobs, exclusion from opportunities to gain skills or promotion, and hostility from white coworkers and employers. For black Americans, the promise of the New Deal at its inception was not that it would wipe away all the oppression, but that it would offer some hope to alleviate the worst of their suffering. Many observers of the New Deal and black America have noted that it failed to end discrimination and that its legislation even institutionalized some of the worst practices. Most also point out, though, that the Roosevelt administration gave more attention to African Americans than any previous administration since Reconstruction. A survey of the major legislation and New Deal agencies will provide a better picture.

CCC offered work relief for young men, country living, good food, and fresh air. It was the single program that blacks most lauded. Between 1933 and 1942, 200,000 black youths went through the program. As in so many of the New Deal programs, however, selection of enrollees was left to local committees or the staff. Some excluded blacks completely, and others admitted only a few. Of the first 250,000 men in the program, less than 3 percent were black. CCC camps were run by the army, and army regulations included segregation. Improvements were made after 1936, owing mainly to effective lobbying of the federal government by the National Urban League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), but this meant the establishment of all-black camps in areas where no blacks had previously been admitted and integrated camps in areas with no tradition of

segregation. In addition, there were racial quotas that limited African Americans to their numbers in the overall population. With a disproportionate need compared with numbers, this was a decided hardship.

FERA provided jobs with a specified wage rate, benefits were given on the basis of need rather than a racial quota, jobs were created for black professionals, self-help projects were funded, and federal regulations were enacted to raise relief standards in states and to discourage discrimination. As with so many New Deal programs, there was also a downside for African Americans. Nondiscrimination could not be enforced, because no mechanism was provided; eligibility for FERA programs was decided locally; and project development was also locally controlled, leading to prejudiced policies. The result was that it was easier for black Americans to get relief under FERA than to get jobs; because of the strength of local control, lobbying did little to improve matters. Nevertheless, FERA did provide some concrete help to black Americans. Around 30 percent of the appropriation for low-cost housing projects was devoted to blacks. In 1935, thanks to FERA, 20 percent of students at the all-black West Virginia State College received jobs to help them stay in school, and FERA gave \$281,000 in scholarships to black schools and colleges. As a result of other programs, in 1934, 6,000 sharecropper families in Alabama received eight months' relief in a lump sum and a four-room house for less than \$300 per farmer. The following year, FERA did the same for another 14,000.

PWA tended to help black Americans more than some New Deal programs. The reason was the chief administrator, Harold Ickes, the former head of the Chicago NAACP. Ickes was one of a handful of New Dealers supportive of equal rights for blacks. Like the others, however, during the early New Deal he was often reluctant to push his beliefs. A major problem in PWA, as in CWA and WPA later, was that projects were contracted out to local companies that negotiated with labor unions. Most of the construction trades unions excluded blacks either formally or informally. Only in the low-cost housing division did Ickes insist that, if the total amount paid to skilled workers per month did not show a set percentage paid to blacks (the proportion of blacks in the local population), this would count as *prima facie* evidence of discrimination by the contractor.

NYA was one of the brightest spots for African Americans under the New Deal. Again, it was administered by a sympathetic head—Aubrey Williams—and was heavily influenced by Mary McLeod Bethune,

whom he appointed to head the Division of Negro Affairs. Black administrators were appointed at every level of the organization, and by 1940 20 percent of NYA appropriations went to black young people. The program was relatively small and poorly administered, however.

In the largest New Deal programs—NRA, AAA, and WPA—the situation for African Americans was just as mixed. WPA gave jobs to 3.5 million Americans in the first year of its creation. It focused on labor-intensive, relatively inexpensive programs. Under its administrator, Harry Hopkins, discrimination was banned, there were no racial quotas to restrict African Americans, and aid went to the most needy. WPA was established as the economy was showing signs of recovery, however, and wages for WPA projects were set deliberately lower than wages in the private sector. In some areas of the South, black WPA workers were released at harvest time and therefore forced to work for planters at even lower wages. In addition, funds were not sufficient for everyone who needed the work, and responsibility for relief payments was returned to the states, which meant lower levels than under federal programs. As with its predecessors, projects were developed and administered locally; this arrangement allowed discriminatory practices to continue. Similarly, wages were set according to geographical calculations. Because a majority of the black population lived in the southeast region, and it set the lowest wages, blacks were disproportionately disadvantaged. By 1939, as general economic recovery continued, a rule was instituted that no one could be on WPA projects for more than eighteen months. As the last hired, blacks were most severely affected. Also by 1939, though, WPA provided basic earnings for one-seventh of all black families in America.

The National Recovery Administration (NRA) also got off to a rocky start as far as African Americans were concerned. Initially, only one black adviser was hired by the institution, and she was quickly excluded, ignored, and then fired. Throughout 1934, there was not even a black clerk in NRA's bureaucracy. Reflecting prevailing conditions and the lack of political influence from the black community, NRA's industry codes, while not acceding to requests by businesses for differential wages for black workers, discriminated against black workers by accepting complex occupational and geographical differentials that effectively gave most African Americans lower wages than whites. In industries covered under the codes that did not discriminate, employers often fired blacks in order to

hire whites, precisely so that they did not have to pay equal minimum wages. In addition, industry codes were usually drawn up by the larger firms. Minimum wages sometimes forced smaller, more marginal, particularly southern manufacturing businesses to close. Disproportionate numbers of African Americans were affected because their jobs had depended on acceptance of lower wages than those prevailing in the industry.

The segregated nature of much of black work in America was reflected by the absence of industry codes (and therefore minimum-wage requirements) in heavily black industries. In industries covered by NRA codes, if companies dealt with labor unions, blacks often suffered because of union bans on black members, discriminatory initiation practices, or local hostility to black workers. Worse, the codes allowed industries to raise prices in order to aid economic recovery, so black Americans found themselves pushed out of jobs and at the same time faced a higher cost of living. Somewhat mitigating the harmful effects of the NRA codes for blacks was the fact that the codes were widely evaded; as a result, some black workers obtained jobs under the minimum wages stipulated.

AAA was less murky in its effects on African Americans. It did not help at all, and in fact it led to the displacement of many black sharecroppers and tenants, a process accelerated by the introduction of mechanization of crop production even in cotton during the 1930s. First, the federal government payments to farmers not to grow crops were made to landowners in the South, not to tenants or sharecroppers. Whereas for most crops federal payments were split evenly between landowners and tenants, under the cotton code 90 percent went to landowners; there were no mechanisms to ensure payment by landowners of the remaining 10 percent to their tenants. All disputes under the AAA codes were adjudicated by local committees. Owing to the prevailing racial code of the region, the result was that not a single black farmer was on any AAA committee in the South. The rejection of the NAACP's attempts to get blacks hired as part of the AAA apparatus led, in 1934, to its conclusion that black Americans could find no remedy to their troubles under AAA. Successor organizations to AAA after 1935 attempted to address the problem of discrimination in agriculture against tenants and sharecroppers, but with mixed results. In 1937, the FSA declared that tenants could obtain loans to purchase land, but only 3,400 blacks were able to do so. On the other hand, new funds were provided for rural rehabilitation, relief, and resettlement. Despite the principle of local

administration of programs, 23 percent of the benefits in the South were received by blacks.

Beyond relief programs, other major New Deal legislation affected black Americans. The Wagner Act did not contain any ban on racial discrimination in labor unions. Although the NAACP lobbied hard for one, resistance was stiff from both labor unions and employers. The result was that contracts between employers and unions that provided for the closed shop tended to reinforce socially exclusive norms and thus worked to the detriment of black workers. With the rise of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) after 1937, certain industries experienced less discrimination; union leaders had realized that in those industries with significant numbers of black workers—such as automobiles, steel, packinghouses, and rubber—it would be impossible to organize effectively along industrial (as opposed to craft) lines without being all-inclusive. This did not mean that there was a cessation of discrimination against black workers, even in these more “progressive” new unions. Union leaders occasionally took severe action against racist locals; more often, however, as with the Transport Workers Union in New York and Philadelphia, they talked equality while playing a political balancing act so as not to alienate their white members.

Beyond industrial policy reforms, there was also the widely hailed effort to forge a true welfare state. Most significant was the Social Security Act of 1935. Initially, it did not positively affect many black Americans. Exemptions from coverage under the act included all household domestics and farm laborers, categories that covered two-thirds of black employment. As with much other New Deal legislation, no specific provisions in the act banned discrimination. Similarly, much of the administration of the new act was placed in the hands of state and local officials with the ability to adjust payments and eligibility standards in line with local standards. Efforts by the NAACP and the National Urban League (NUL) to have all workers covered and for the act to be administered nationally failed on the reefs of racial insensitivity and the anxiety of liberals to get at least some legislation passed in this area.

The New Deal, Harlem, and the Harlem Renaissance

Most accounts of the Harlem Renaissance end with the close of the 1920s. Indeed, the economic collapse represented by the crash on Wall Street did profoundly affect the environment within which Harlem's artists

and writers could work, although it was not the only factor in explanations for the decline of this remarkable phenomenon. Nevertheless, the blossoming of black cultural production did not end in 1929 but continued throughout the decade of the Depression, aided to some extent by New Deal programs. Its thrust did change. By February 1930, there was five times more unemployment in Harlem than in other parts of New York City. In the city as a whole, by the end of that year only 42.5 percent of black workers were in full-time employment, compared with 64.2 percent of native-born whites. By 1931, between ten and twenty families were evicted each day. More than 10,000 people lived in cellars and basements. During the summer of 1934, more than 19,000 families in Harlem were still dependent on relief. A continued influx into Harlem led to rapid deterioration. Society itself was politicized, and this had an impact on how cultural expressions were framed. While the black population of New York increased by only 1 percent during the 1930s, the number voting in presidential elections shot up by 50 percent. And whereas 60 percent of the black electorate voted Republican in 1932, by 1936, 75 percent voted Democratic (for the New Deal). Large numbers of Harlemites became even more radical as a result of the challenges of the Depression. Political protest and even revolt were manifested through the Harlem boycott of 1934 and the Harlem riot of 1935. Civil rights became a major issue both in Harlem, through the activity of black Americans, and at the national level for the first time since Reconstruction with the creation by Attorney General Frank Murphy of the Civil Liberties (subsequently Civil Rights) section of the Justice Department.

New Deal programs also gave support to black artists and writers. In Harlem, in contrast to the situation in the 1920s, thirty-four adult education centers were set up under WPA. Art classes were offered through the Federal Arts Project. The artist Aaron Douglas and the sculptor Augusta Savage were both active during the Harlem Renaissance and the New Deal years. Savage was particularly successful in getting jobs for promising black artists with the Federal Arts Project (FAP). Perhaps most notably, she was a mentor to Jacob Lawrence. A Negro Unit of the Federal Theater Project employed 700 blacks nationally by mid-1936. In Harlem, the first full-scale black Shakespearean production, known popularly as "Voodoo Macbeth," became a citywide sensation, running for ten weeks in Harlem and eight weeks in downtown Manhattan; it then toured the country under a program sponsored

by WPA. More than 200 black authors were employed by the Federal Writers' Project (FWP). Under the auspices of FWP, Ralph Ellison and Richard Wright were first published. Publications in the history and sociology of black America also owed their research funding to FWP.

Conclusion

The New Deal did not end America's recent history of institutionalized and social racial discrimination. It did not significantly move African Americans to a situation of greater equality in America. Nor did it single-handedly save the Harlem Renaissance. Its significance for black America in general and Harlem in particular was that it provided a safety net below which people could not drop. Through relief payments and work relief, the New Deal aided black Americans in ways the federal government had never before attempted and helped them survive a Depression to which they might otherwise have succumbed. For artists and writers, the New Deal sometimes meant the difference between being able to develop their art and starving. Symbolically, the New Deal gave new hope that oppression could be lifted and that there were at least some possibilities for exerting pressure for change. Despite his refusal to push for antilynching legislation, for example, President Roosevelt spoke out at least once publicly on the issue, desegregated the federal government (with the notable exception of the Federal Bureau of Investigation), graciously received foreign black diplomats at the White House, appointed the first black federal judges since Reconstruction, consulted regularly with the "black brain trust," approved of black advisers in many of the various New Deal agencies, increased the number of black federal employees from fewer than 50,000 in 1932 to more than 150,000 by 1941, and generally promoted the belief that, for the first time, government cared for all Americans. His wife, Eleanor Roosevelt, was particularly important in bringing the concerns of black Americans to the president and in pushing hard on her own account for black advancement. Though substantive change was still distant, the New Deal offered black Americans a glimpse of improvement, one that they embraced and used to its utmost. For African Americans' cultural production, the New Deal offered at least some opportunities to continue and develop new talents and initiatives.

STEPHEN BURWOOD

See also Bethune, Mary McLeod; Douglas, Aaron; Ellison, Ralph; Federal Programs; Federal Writers' Project; Lawrence, Jacob; Riots: 4—Harlem Riot, 1935; Savage, Augusta; Works Progress Administration; Wright, Richard

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New Masses

The New Masses (1926–1948) was one of several Marxist literary and political magazines of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s that exposed a culturally diverse working-class and radical audience to contemporary African American culture and politics. Developing in part out of two earlier left-wing periodicals, *The Masses* (1911–1917) and *The Liberator* (1918–1924), *New Masses* appeared monthly between May 1926 and September 1933 and weekly between January 1934 and January 1948.

In the issue of June 1926, the white novelist John Dos Passos, then a member of the magazine's executive

board, expressed his hope that *New Masses* would be a forum for distinctly American ideas. Eschewing "phrases, badges, opinions, banners imported from Russia or anywhere else," he called for a magazine that, like "a highly flexible receiving station," would "find out what's in the air in the country anyhow" (20). Although *New Masses* became increasingly affiliated with international communism throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s, the magazine maintained a keen interest in the literature, music, and political struggles of black America. In addition to publishing work by black writers, reviews of their work, and reviews of books about black history and culture, *New Masses* regularly featured articles on such varied subjects as black literary aesthetics, black "protest songs," lynching, the Scottsboro case, and the conditions of black sharecroppers.

At various times during the late 1920s and early 1930s, the magazine's long roster of contributing editors included Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, Eric Walrond, and Walter White. Hughes, McKay, and White, as well as Alain Locke and George S. Schuyler, were among the black intellectuals who published in *New Masses* during this period. Later, the magazine printed the work of Gwendolyn Bennett, Sterling Brown, Countee Cullen, Ralph Ellison, Louise Thompson Patterson, Richard Wright, and others. On 5 October 1937, for example, *New Masses* featured Wright's contentious review of Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

Among the writers conventionally associated with the Harlem Renaissance, Hughes was the figure most closely identified with *New Masses*. In its pages, he published the poem "Advertisement for the Waldorf-Astoria," the play *Scottsboro Limited*, and many other poems, plays, short stories, translations, and essays. Beginning in the early 1930s, the magazine's literary critics often portrayed Hughes as the brightest hope for a new, class-conscious black literature. According to these critics, Hughes challenged the conviction of the "talented tenth" that literary and artistic expression, not political struggle, was the surest foundation for blacks' social progress. A list of recommended books published in the issue of 2 October 1934 praised the short stories in Hughes's *The Ways of White Folks* (1934) for shattering "the illusion that through 'culture' Negro intellectuals . . . can solve their race problem" (28). Notwithstanding such attacks on the dominant ideology of the Harlem Renaissance, however, *New Masses* served as an important venue for Hughes as well as other black writers. Also, unlike many mainstream

and left-wing periodicals of this period, *New Masses* consistently acknowledged black Americans' cultural and political presence on the national scene.

MATTHEW CALIHMAN

See also Bennett, Gwendolyn; Brown, Sterling; Cullen, Countee; Eastman, Max; Ellison, Ralph; Hughes, Langston; Liberator; Locke, Alain; Lynching; McKay, Claude; Messenger, The; Modern Quarterly; Patterson, Louise Thompson; Schuyler, George S.; Scottsboro; Toomer, Jean; Walrond, Eric; White, Walter; Wright, Richard

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New Negro

The phrase “New Negro” was in use long before the Harlem Renaissance. It has been used in African American discourses at least since 1895; the concept or concepts associated with it evolved over the years to become critical to the African American scene during the first three decades of the twentieth century, receiving the most attention during what were perhaps the peak years of the Harlem Renaissance, 1917–1928. The term has a broad relevance to the period in American history known as post-Reconstruction, whose beginnings were marked symbolically by the notorious Compromise of 1877 and whose impact on black Americans culminated in 1896 with the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Plessey v. Ferguson*, which practically obliterated the gains African Americans had made through

the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments to the Constitution. Gates (1988), who has provided a comprehensive treatment of this evolution from 1895 to 1925, notes the profound irony marking post-Reconstruction, when, in conjunction with their reenslavement, “blacks regained a public voice, louder and more strident than it had been even during slavery.” In this context, it is also interesting to consider the syzygy, or lineup, of African American leaders and their personalities and styles in 1895. That year, W. E. B. Du Bois, with a Ph.D. from Harvard in hand, embarked on his long career in scholarship and civil rights; Booker T. Washington delivered his “Atlanta compromise” speech; and Frederick Douglass died. For three years previously, Douglass—having been persuaded back into the public domain by Ida Wells Barnett after a long time of silence and retreat—had been making some of the most bitter and most despairing speeches on “race.” Despite their rhetorical and ideological differences, these three leaders were speaking up during the 1890s, a decade that was described by the black historian Rayford Logan as the “nadir” of African American history and was marked by nearly 2,000 documented lynchings.

In various writings—such as an editorial in the *Cleveland Gazette* in 1895; commentaries in other black newspapers; the book *A New Negro for a New Century* (1900), edited by Booker T. Washington, Fannie Barrier Williams, and N. B. Wood; and *The New Negro: His Political, Civil, and Mental Status and Related Essays* (1916), a compilation by William Pickens—the New Negroes were seen as men and women (mostly men) of middle-class orientation who often demanded their legal rights as citizens and almost always wanted to craft new images that would subvert and challenge old stereotypes. In the anthology *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (1925)—which had grown out of a special issue of *Survey Graphic* on Harlem—the editor, Alain Locke, contrasted the “old Negro” with the “New Negro,” stressing black Americans' assertiveness and self-confidence during the years following World War I and the great migration. Racial pride had been part of African Americans' literary and political self-expression in the nineteenth century and had been reflected in the writings of Martin Delany, Bishop Henry Turner, Frances E. W. Harper, Frederick Douglass, and Pauline Hopkins; but it now found a new purpose and definition in the journalism, fiction, poetry, music, sculpture, and paintings of numerous figures associated with the Harlem Renaissance, which is also known as the New Negro movement.

During the Harlem Renaissance, the term “New Negro” inspired a wide variety of responses from the participants and promoters. According to a militant Negro editor writing in 1920, this “new line of thought, a new method of approach” included the possibility that “the intrinsic standard of Beauty and aesthetics does not rest in the white race” and that “a new racial love, respect, and consciousness may be created.” It was felt that African Americans were poised to assert their own agency in culture and politics instead of just remaining a “problem” or “formula” for others to debate about. The New Negroes of the 1920s, the “talented tenth,” included poets, novelists, and blues singers creating their art out of Negro folk heritage and history; black political leaders fighting against corruption and for expanded opportunities for African Americans; businessmen working toward the possibility of a “black metropolis”; and Garveyites dreaming of a homeland in Africa. All of them shared a desire to shed the image of servility and inferiority of the shuffling “old Negro” and achieve a new image of pride and dignity.

No one has articulated the hopes and possibilities associated with the idea and ideal of the New Negro more thoroughly than Alain Locke, who would later describe himself as the “midwife” to aspiring young black writers of the 1920s. *The New Negro*, whose publication by Albert and Charles Boni in December 1925 was the culmination of the first stage of the New Negro renaissance in literature, was put together, in Locke’s words, “to document the New Negro culturally and socially—to register the transformations of the inner and outer life of the Negro in America that have so significantly taken place in the last few years.” This anthology, as previously noted, was based on a special “Harlem issue” of *Survey Graphic* that appeared in March 1925 and sold 42,000 copies (a record that *Survey Graphic* would not surpass until World War II). Locke emphasized the national and international scope of the New Negro movement, comparing it to the “nascent movements of folk expression and self-determination . . . in India, in China, in Egypt, Ireland, Russia, Bohemia, Palestine, and Mexico.” Locke’s philosophy of cultural pluralism is analogous to the thinking of many of his white contemporaries, especially Waldo Frank, V. F. Calverton, Randolph Bourne, and Van Wyck Brooks. According to Locke, who shared the optimism of other progressive reformers, “the conditions that are molding a New Negro are [also] molding a new American attitude.” He defined the creed of his own generation as “the efficacy of collective effort, in race

co-operation.” Like some black political leaders of the period, Locke seems to have believed that the American system would ultimately work for African Americans, but he refused to recognize a disagreeable aspect of the system—the need for political leverage. Such an approach implied excessive dependence on the good intentions of influential white men. In terms of art and literature, Locke saw no conflict between being “American” and being “Negro,” but rather an opportunity for enrichment through cultural reciprocity. In a way, Locke was reinterpreting Du Bois’s concept of “double consciousness” and applying it to aesthetics and culture; there seems to have been enough room in Locke’s view for many different kinds of talents to exist and thrive together. With regard to African art, Locke believed that the most important lesson the black artist could derive from it was “not cultural inspiration or technical innovations, but the lesson of a classic background, the lesson of discipline, of style, of technical control.”

Responses to Locke’s anthology and his concept of the New Negro varied. W. E. B. Du Bois, for instance, thought that, at one level, the concept implied a rejection of the accommodationist politics and ideology represented by Booker T. Washington and his followers around the turn of the twentieth century. (Despite Washington’s access to the White House and to mainstream politicians, violence against African Americans had continued unabated, and little progress had been made in civil rights or economic opportunities.) There were also expressions of doubt and skepticism, however, such as those from Eric Walrond and Wallace Thurman.

Eric Walrond, the young West Indian author of *Tropic Death* (1926), considered all contemporary black leaders inadequate or ineffective in dealing with the cultural and political aspirations of the black masses. In 1923, in his essay “The New Negro Faces America,” Walrond declared the New Negro to be “race conscious”:

He does not want . . . to be like the white man. He is coming to realize the great possibilities within himself. . . . The New Negro, who does not want to go back to Africa, is fondly cherishing an ideal—and that is, that the time will come when America will look upon the Negro not as a savage with an inferior mentality, but as a civilized man. . . . The rank and file of Negroes are opposed to Garveyism; dissatisfied with the personal vituperation and morbid satire of Mr. Du Bois, and prone to discount Major [Robert] Moton’s Tuskegee as a monument of respectable reaction.

By 1929, Wallace Thurman—a bohemian leader of young writers associated with “Niggeratti Manor” and with journals such as *Fire!!* and *Harlem*—was talking about the New Negro as a fad of white Americans that had already come and gone. In several pieces of journalism and literary essays, Thurman castigated the white and black middle-class readers whose interest in the work of younger black writers made it harder for those writers to think and create independently. In one such essay, “The Negro Literary Renaissance,” Thurman says:

Everyone was having a grand time. The millennium was about to dawn. The second emancipation seemed inevitable. Then the excitement began to die down and Negroes as well as whites began to take stock of that in which they had reveled. The whites shrugged their shoulders and began seeking for some new fad. Negroes stood by, a little subdued, a little surprised, torn between being proud that certain of their group had achieved distinction, and being angry because a few of the arrived ones had ceased to be what the group considered “constructive,” having, in the interim, produced works that went against the grain, in that they did not wholly qualify to the adjective “respectable.”

In 1929, Thurman had begun his second novel, *Infants of the Spring* (1932), a satire in which he took himself and his peers to task as decadent and undisciplined, declaring that all his contemporaries except Jean Toomer were mere journeymen. Although Thurman admired Alain Locke for his sympathy with and support of young Negro writers, the salon scene in Chapter 21 of his novel suggests Locke’s failure to organize these highly individualistic young writers into a cohesive movement.

There was, then, no consensus on the significance of the term “New Negro” during the Harlem Renaissance. Moreover, many later commentators, such as Cruse (1967), would consider Locke’s view of the New Negro politically naïve or overly optimistic, and they would particularly take exception to his belief that, in a pluralistic American society, political and economic benefits for all African Americans might result from a wider recognition of the literary and cultural expression of the artists of the Harlem Renaissance. As late as 1938, Locke was defending his views against charges by John P. Davis and others that his emphasis was primarily on the “psychology of the masses” and not on offering any one solution to the “Negro problem.” Osofsky

(1965) argued that the New Negroes of the 1920s had actually helped to reinforce new white stereotypes of black life that were different from but no more valid or accurate than the old stereotypes. Gates (1988) dismissed the construction of the New Negro as a dubious venture in renaming, merely a “bold and audacious act of language.”

For African Americans, World War I highlighted the widening gap between the nation’s rhetoric regarding “the war to make the world safe for democracy” and the reality of disenfranchised and exploited black farmers in the South or the poor and alienated residents of northern slums. In France during the war, black soldiers experienced the kind of freedom they had never known in the United States; meanwhile, at home, southern blacks were swelling the population of existing black ghettos or creating new ones. The frustrations and disappointments of the war years—dramatized in the riots of the “red summer” of 1919—led to a new spirit of militancy that found expression, for example, in Claude McKay’s sonnets “If We Must Die” and “America.” In the 1920s, the rich and diverse contributions made by journals such as *The Crisis*, *Opportunity*, and *The Messenger* helped to interpret for their growing readership the powerful impact that World War I and the great migration had made on the African American masses.

The concept of “New Negro” has thus had a checkered history since it was first introduced in the nineteenth century, and there are varied interpretations of its long-term significance. There is no doubt that, despite the difficult issues of race and class in the 1920s, a new spirit of hope and pride marked black activity and expression in all areas. All the participants in the Harlem Renaissance, regardless of their age, ideology, aesthetics, or politics, shared this sense of possibility at least on some level. The middle-class leaders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Urban League were deeply suspicious of the flamboyant, demagogic Marcus Garvey, who in turn saw Du Bois and others as dark-skinned whites. Yet virtually all of them subscribed to some form of pan-Africanism. Locke and Charles Spurgeon Johnson, moreover, rejected cultural separatism and endorsed a hybridism derived from the black experience and Euro-American aesthetic forms.

Perhaps what is most important for latter-day culture and literature is the insistence of the New Negro on self-definition, self-expression, and self-determination in many spheres—a striving after what Locke called “spiritual emancipation.” The debates during the Harlem

Renaissance regarding art and propaganda, representation and identity, assimilation versus militancy, and parochialism versus globalism broadened the perspectives on art, culture, politics, and ideology that have developed among African Americans since the 1930s—especially the perspectives offered by Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, and Toni Morrison.

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See also Calverton; V. F.; Ellison, Ralph; Fire!!; Frank, Waldo; Infants of the Spring; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Locke, Alain; McKay, Claude; New Negro Movement; New Negro, The; Pickens, William; Riots: 2—Red Summer of 1919; Survey Graphic; Talented Tenth; Thurman, Wallace; Walrond, Eric; Washington, Booker T.; Wright, Richard

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New Negro Art Theater

The New Negro Art Theater, a "little theater" group, was active, primarily as a dance company, in 1929–1931. The troupe was founded by Hemsley Winfield (1906–1934), a native of Yonkers who did much to invent Negro concert dance in America. He first won fame in 1929 in the role of Salome (in Oscar Wilde's play of that name), which he performed in drag at the Cherry Lane Theater in Greenwich Village after the company's female lead took ill. The New Negro Art Theater Dance Company came into its own when it

staged a program of "serious," or classical, black dance at the Theater in the Clouds in the Chanin Building on 29 April 1931. The modern dance pioneer Ruth St. Denis was among the sponsors for this event, which drew an overflow crowd. The program included dances inspired by African themes and spirituals, a dance based on the Cambodian temples at Angkor Wat, and a set of specialty numbers danced by Winfield. The company performed *Salome* again in August 1931, earning Winfield a mixture of praise and ridicule in the press. The leading female dancers in his eighteen-person troupe included Ollie Burgoyne and Edna Guy.

Over the next two years, the New Negro Art Theater Dance Company performed widely in New York, at the Nicholas Roerich Museum, International House of Columbia University, the Westchester County Center in White Plains, the Roxy Theater, and other venues. Winfield went on to dance the role of the Witch Doctor in the world premiere of Louis Gruenberg's version of *The Emperor Jones* at the Metropolitan Opera in January 1933. Members of the New Negro Art Theater made up his ensemble for this event, billed as the Hemsley Winfield Ballet. Winfield was very much the leading spirit of the New Negro Art Theater's dance company, and it did not survive his early death in January 1934.

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See also Emperor Jones, The; Gruenberg, Louis

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New Negro Movement

"New Negro movement" is often used interchangeably with "Harlem Renaissance," "Negro renaissance," "New Negro renaissance," or "first Negro renaissance" (in contrast to a "second black renaissance" of the 1960s and 1970s). These terms refer generally to the artistic and sociocultural awakening among African Americans

in the 1920s and early 1930s. “New Negro movement” is sometimes used to suggest African Americans’ broad response to the political and economic implications of the great migration and World War I, with “Harlem Renaissance” or “Negro renaissance” reserved for the concomitant cultural and artistic activity. As is abundantly evident in the extensive writings from the period, however, as well as in the growing commentary since the 1970s, the social and political impulses of these years were intertwined with cultural and artistic expression.

More blacks participated in the arts than ever before, and this florescence of creativity included music, poetry, theater, drama, fiction, painting, and sculpture. The needs of the new self-expression in literature were served by many black journals, such as *The Crisis*, *Opportunity*, and *The Messenger*, as well as by other leading journals such as *American Mercury*, *Bookman*, *Independent*, *Modern Quarterly*, *The Nation*, *New Republic*, *Saturday Review*, and *Survey Graphic*. By 1924, many people had become conscious of this literary upsurge and tried to direct and influence it. Alain Locke, who described himself later as a “midwife” to the younger generation of Negro writers, propounded the concept of a Negro renaissance and tried to shape it into an artistic movement. In 1925, Locke edited *The New Negro*, an anthology of poems, stories, essays, and paintings about all strata of black life, initiating a historically significant debate on black writing. The term “New Negro,” though not original with Locke, caught on in black circles even more than his concept of cultural pluralism. New Negro societies sprang up in several large cities, and it became fashionable to declare oneself a member of the New Negro coterie.

As regards time, “Harlem Renaissance” frequently refers to a brief period: for some, only the peak six or seven years, 1923–1929; for others, about twenty to thirty years, from 1909–1910 (when the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and *The Crisis* were founded), or 1914 (when World War I began), or 1917 (the year McKay published his poem “Harlem Dancer”) until 1937 (when Zora Neale Hurston published *Their Eyes Were Watching God*). One might argue that the New Negro movement was longer, possibly extending from the late nineteenth century to, say, 1948 (when President Harry Truman integrated the armed forces); some literary scholars and historians, including Brown (1955) and Franklin (1967), see the New Negro movement as a continuing phenomenon. As Hull (1987), Stepto (1989), and Wall (1995) note, the timing of the Harlem Renaissance or

the New Negro movement depends on several factors, especially genres, artists’ gender or regional background, and scholars’ own ideological biases. In any case, the Harlem Riot of 1935 drew attention to rising crime and unemployment in Harlem and signaled the end of whites’ honeymoon period with this presumed artistic and cultural paradise; literary historians generally agree that Richard Wright’s *Native Son*, published in 1940, heralded a new phase of harsh realism in African American writing, definitively marking the end of the Harlem Renaissance in literature and the arts.

As regards terminology, “New Negro” was used long before the Harlem Renaissance. Its first use may have been in 1895 in the *Cleveland Gazette*, where it referred to a group of blacks who had just secured a civil rights law in New York. It also appeared in books like *A New Negro for a New Century* (1900), edited by Booker T. Washington, Fannie Barrier Williams, and N. B. Wood; and William Pickens’s *The New Negro* (1916). The New Negroes were seen as middle class, as demanding their legal rights, and as wanting to develop new images that would challenge old stereotypes. Alain Locke’s contribution in the 1920s was to link the sociopolitical import of “New Negro” to the artistic and cultural expression of the period. In several essays included in his anthology *The New Negro* (1925)—which grew out of a special “Harlem issue” of *Survey Graphic*—Locke contrasted the New Negro with the “old Negro,” stressing black Americans’ assertiveness and self-confidence during the years following World War I and the great migration. Racial pride had been part of African Americans’ literary and political self-expression in the nineteenth century and was reflected in the writings of Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, Frances E. W. Harper, Pauline Hopkins, and Bishop Henry Turner; but it had a new purpose and definition in the journalism, fiction, poetry, music, sculpture, and painting of the Harlem Renaissance.

Brown (1955) has questioned the use of the term “renaissance” to describe the creative activity of blacks in the 1920s. This term seems justified by the intense interest of African American writers in coming to terms with the peculiar racial situation in the United States, however, and in exploring their emotional and historical links with Africa and the American South. Their interest was prefigured in the work of many nineteenth-century black writers, and in the 1890s in the poetry, fiction, and essays of Paul Laurence Dunbar, James Weldon Johnson, Charles W. Chesnutt, Sutton E. Griggs, and W. E. B. Du Bois. The most significant link between the 1890s and the 1920s was Du Bois,

who held that “the problem of the twentieth century” was “the problem of the color line” and crystallized his concept of “double consciousness” in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)—which was read by most young black writers and of which Claude McKay said, “The book shook me like an earthquake.”

As regards place, Brown stressed that the New Negro phenomenon extended beyond Harlem in space as well as time:

The New Negro is not to me a group of writers centered in Harlem during the second half of the twenties. Most of the writers were not Harlemites; much of the best writing was not about Harlem, which was the show-window, the cashier’s till but no more Negro America than New York is America. The New Negro has temporal roots in the past and spatial roots elsewhere in America, and the term has validity, it seems to me, only when considered to be a continuing tradition.

For this reason, too, “New Negro renaissance”—which would include literary and artistic activity in African American communities throughout the United States—is arguably a better descriptive label than “Harlem Renaissance.” For instance, before he arrived in Harlem on Labor Day in 1925, Thurman had been trying to create a community of young black artists in Los Angeles that included Arna Bontemps and Fay Jackson. He published his own work and that of others in *The Outlet*, a literary journal he edited from September 1924 to March 1925; he also wrote a literary column, “Inklings,” in the black newspaper *Pacific Defender*. In Boston, the cousins Helene Johnson and Dorothy West, and many others, established a literary group and published in *The Quill*, a magazine edited by Eugene Gordon from 1928 to 1930. West edited *Challenge: A Literary Quarterly*—later *New Challenge*, whose first and only issue in 1937 included “Blueprint for Negro Writing” by its associate editor, Richard Wright. Others associated with Boston were the anthologist William Stanley Braithwaite and the poet Waring Cuney. Philadelphia contributed three distinguished “New Negroes”—Alain Locke, Jessie Redmon Fauset, and Ethel Waters—and a group in Philadelphia published *Black Opals*. Communities of writers, dramatists, and artists were located in Chicago and Indianapolis, and “little theater” groups existed in New Haven, Connecticut, and Cleveland. Literary figures gathered for food and conversation in Anne Spencer’s garden in Lynchburg, Virginia, during the first three decades

of the twentieth century. And Rubin (1971) emphasizes the importance of Washington, D.C., “for the production of both significant art and contributing artists.” New Negroes associated with Washington, D.C., included Lewis Alexander, Gwendolyn Bennett, Sterling Brown, E. Franklin Frazier, Montgomery Gregory, Alain Locke, Kelly Miller, May Miller, Richard Bruce Nugent, Willis Richardson, Jean Toomer, and Carter G. Woodson. Many of these writers met regularly at the home of Georgia Douglas Johnson, joined there frequently by her friend Angelina Weld Grimké.

Still, whatever the merits of “New Negro renaissance,” the term “Harlem Renaissance” has become firmly established for the emergence of arts not just in Harlem but also among African Americans all over the United States in the 1920s and the 1930s. For various reasons, since at least 1971 (when Huggins’s *Harlem Renaissance*, the first major study of this period, appeared), the strong presence of Harlem has shaped our evolving awareness of the New Negro movement. Many socioeconomic and cultural factors made Harlem particularly significant among the black communities that developed in northern cities as a result of the great migration. While it is important to acknowledge the other urban centers, the term “Harlem Renaissance” reflects the sociocultural complexity of the New Negro movement and gives Harlem credit for its contributions.

Harlem has indeed become a metaphor for all the factors that shaped the lives of African Americans in the urban North. World War I and the great migration were new elements in African Americans’ self-awareness relative to American democratic ideals. During the war, the experiences of black troops, especially those serving abroad, revealed discrepancies between the promise of freedom and the caste status of African Americans and raised expectations that democracy would also be won at home. Just after the war, during the “red summer” of 1919, race riots erupted in twenty-six cities across the nation; it was in reaction to these riots that Claude McKay wrote his poem “If We Must Die,” published in *Liberator*. Drawn by the promise of industrial jobs in the North in the years following the gradual cessation of immigration from Europe and Asia, southern blacks had been pouring into northern cities; perhaps 500,000 blacks migrated North between 1910 and 1920, and 800,000 in the 1920s. In addition, there were migrants from the Midwest, the West, and the West Indies. As Rudolph Fisher indicates in his story “The City of Refuge” and Wallace Thurman indicates in his play *Harlem*, despite

the poverty and overcrowding in the urban North, the migrants saw it as an escape from the violence and bigotry of the South, and they developed a new self-respect and racial consciousness. Moreover, segregation stimulated the growth of a black middle class whose main function was to provide services (such as barber shops, funeral parlors, beauty shops, and grocery stores) that did not interest white businesses.

Although Harlem symbolized the new spirit of blacks throughout the North, however, it was in some ways distinct from other black neighborhoods of the time. First, it developed from a white, upper-middle-class suburb, and not from the continued decline of a poor white area, as was usually the case. Second, it was large: The community grew from 14,000 blacks in 1914 to 175,000 by 1925 and more than 200,000 by the beginning of the Depression. Third, it was diverse. The interaction of blacks from all parts of the United States, the West Indies, and even Africa contributed to a highly sophisticated and race-conscious community—something unprecedented in American history. Because of its diversity, Harlem became a testing ground for clashing racial and political viewpoints and for artistic innovation and experimentation. In 1925, in an essay written for Locke's anthology *The New Negro*, James Weldon Johnson described Harlem as "a city within a city, the greatest Negro city in the world. . . . It has its own churches, social and civic centers, shops, theaters and other places of amusement. And it contains more Negroes to the square mile than any other spot on earth." And Locke wrote: "In Harlem, Negro life is seizing upon its first chances for group expression and self-determination."

The "Harlem Negro" had a new militancy that was expressed through civil rights organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Urban League, and the all-black Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters organized by A. Philip Randolph; and in the "back to Africa" movement of the charismatic Marcus Garvey, who came to Harlem from Jamaica in 1916. The essence of Garvey's message was that black was superior to white and that the destiny of the Negro race lay in Africa, not America; his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) provided a much-needed outlet for racial pride and self-assertion. Still, most of Garvey's followers had no desire to exchange their present lot for an unknown future in Africa; most middle-class African American leaders, including Du Bois, Randolph, James Weldon Johnson, and Walter White, considered Garvey a threat to their own

influence with both blacks and whites, and to the cause of civil rights in the United States. Whereas Garvey seemed to make a mystique of blackness, these other leaders thought of racial pride mainly as a useful tool in the fight to obtain greater opportunities for African Americans.

In many ways, the New Negro movement was a response by educated, middle-class blacks to the same changes that drew the masses to Garveyism; the Harlem Renaissance was a logical extension of the New Negroes' racial, cultural, and political thinking into art, music, theater, and literature. For example, freed from the timid conformity of earlier generations, black American painters and sculptors experimented in a variety of styles and attempted a more objective and effective self-portrayal. Among the younger artists who offered striking depictions of black life and black people were Richmond Barthé, Aaron Douglas, Palmer Hayden, Malvin Gray Johnson, Lois Mailou Jones, Archibald J. Motley Jr., James Amos Porter, Augusta Savage, and Hale Woodruff. In literature, the first stage of the renaissance culminated in Locke's anthology *The New Negro*, which was compiled, in his words, "to document the New Negro culturally and socially—to register the transformations of the inner and outer life of the Negro in America that have so significantly taken place in the last few years." By the end of the twentieth century, scholars were finding links between the race-centered "low modernism" of Harlem Renaissance writers such as Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and Jean Toomer and the despairing "high modernism" of white writers such as T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, W. B. Yeats, Gertrude Stein, and Ezra Pound.

With regard to literature, it is significant that younger writers of the period received support from many mentors, white and black, including V. F. Calverton, Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, Carl Van Vechten, Walter White, and Jessie Redmon Fauset. In particular, Fauset, as the literary editor of *The Crisis*, modulated and broadened Du Bois's genteel and propagandistic goals for literature. But if anyone matched the enthusiasm and vigor of Alain Locke in promoting the concept of a renaissance in the 1920s, it was sociologist Charles Spurgeon Johnson, who was the first editor of *Opportunity* and who later became the first black president of Fisk University. Under the influence of Robert E. Park, a sociologist associated with the renaissance in Chicago, Johnson saw the African American as a marginal person, who, although torn between two cultures, could stand apart and view each objectively. For Johnson, the transition of blacks from folk culture to industrial

culture was an inevitable and painful process. He stressed the need for African Americans to understand and absorb this change from the rural South to the urban North, and he intended *Opportunity* "to stimulate and encourage creative literary effort among Negroes . . . to encourage the reading of literature both by Negro authors and about Negro life . . . to bring these writers into contact with the general world of letters . . . to stimulate and foster a type of writing by Negroes which shakes itself free of deliberate propaganda and protest." In 1927, Johnson edited *Ebony and Topaz*, which in many ways was a companion volume to Locke's *The New Negro* and reflected black writers' increasing maturity and independence in portraying black life.

The long-standing "invisibility" of African American life and culture probably explains some of weaknesses of the Harlem Renaissance, which in turn would explain its failure to make its full impact on the literature and art of the day. One such weakness was primitivism. In this regard, Huggins (1971) argues that "the black-white relationship has been symbiotic. . . Blacks have been essential to white identity (and whites to blacks)." As a result, blacks have often served the purpose of upholding stereotypes. The "Negro fad" of the 1920s—which Wallace Thurman castigated in *Infants of the Spring* as well as in his essays and book reviews—encompassed European Americans' interest in jazz, in African art, and perhaps in returning to the values of preindustrial society. In the popular version of this fad, however, blacks were simply uninhibited primitives. White American writers such as Gertrude Stein, Eugene O'Neill, Paul Green, Vachel Lindsay, Sherwood Anderson, and e. e. cummings portrayed blacks as instinctively simple and abandoned, in contrast to fretful, mechanized whites. Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* (1926) was the most influential novel by a white writer in establishing the image of the Negro as primitive: It appealed to a widespread interest in the Negro, and it sold more than 100,000 copies in several editions—clearly indicating the commercial value of such books. Some black writers, especially Claude McKay, had different and broader uses for primitivism; but many writers of the New Negro renaissance jumped onto Van Vechten's bandwagon. Primitivism as a fad cannot be blamed entirely on Van Vechten or on other whites who wrote about the Negro during the 1920s, but it is likely that the publication of *Nigger Heaven* made many black writers keenly aware of the commercial possibilities of the primitivistic formula, and it made it more difficult for

many of them to develop their artistic potential individually or as a group with significant shared goals.

AMRITJIT SINGH

See also American Mercury; Black Opals; Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; Challenge; Crisis, The; Ebony and Topaz; Garveyism; Great Migration; Great Migration and the Harlem Renaissance; Harlem Renaissance in the United States: 1–9; Hurston, Zora Neale; Infants of the Spring; Locke, Alain; McKay, Claude; Messenger, The; Modern Quarterly; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; National Urban League; New Negro; Nigger Heaven; Opportunity; Primitivism; Riots: 2—Red Summer of 1919; Riots: 4—Harlem Riot, 1935; Saturday Evening Quill; Survey Graphic; Wright, Richard; *other specific individuals*

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New Negro, The

The New Negro is widely recognized as the defining volume of the New Negro movement. Edited by Alain Locke and published in late 1925, this anthology of more than 450 pages includes essays defining the New Negro and explaining the movement; a section of creative literature by African Americans containing short stories, poems, a play, and transcriptions of folklore; arguments about the importance of literature, music, and art by African Americans; sociological studies of African Americans' employment opportunities and migration to northern cities; and descriptions of African American communities around the United States. The final pieces are an essay by W. E. B. Du Bois on the global implications of the New Negro movement and an extensive bibliography of additional reading. The book also includes black-and-white graphic designs and drawings by Aaron Douglas and Winold Reiss and a series of portraits by Reiss. It offers, then, a complex, multimedia portrait of the New Negro.

The New Negro began as a special issue of the magazine *Survey Graphic* on "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro." This issue was also edited by Locke, and its contents became the core of his book, although many of the essays from *Survey Graphic* were expanded or edited significantly for the book. There also are significant differences in the overall emphases of the two works: The scope of *The New Negro* is national and even international rather than local, it devotes far more attention to the creative arts than *Survey Graphic* did, and the portraits of "Harlem Types" from *Survey Graphic* are replaced in the book with portraits of the leaders of the movement.

Some of these changes hint at significant thematic concerns of the Harlem Renaissance. One of Locke's first steps in the opening essay of the book is to define the New Negro in contrast to the "old Negro." Locke sets up this definition of the New Negro as a rejection of African Americans not as they had been in the past but as they had been represented; in other words, he identifies the New Negro as stunningly different from the historical fiction—the myth—of the "old Negro."

In fact, a number of essays in the book emphasize the importance of the past to the assessment of African Americans in the 1920s. At the same time, though, the book looks toward the future, emphasizing that "Negro youth" demonstrate the potential of the race.

The book also is an important assertion of race consciousness. Locke emphasizes in his foreword that a "renewed race-spirit" was growing among African Americans, and the book nurtures this positive sense of collective identity. Baker (1987) argues that the book's graphic designs establish an Africanist context for the entire volume; the connection between African Americans and Africa is also asserted in an illustrated essay on African art and in Du Bois's essay. The book, then, is an articulation of a race consciousness that unites blacks from across the United States and from throughout the African diaspora. Significantly, though, the book also clearly emphasizes African Americans' identity as American and their contributions to American culture. In his foreword, for example, Locke identifies African American culture as an integral part of American culture, an argument that is repeated by a number of the other contributors to the volume.

The book also raises questions about the significance of images of African Americans created by African Americans, rather than by nonblack artists or writers. Locke emphasizes in his foreword the importance of self-portraiture, the need for self-expression rather than portrayal by others, but the book includes contributions from black and white writers and artists. In fact, Douglas was the only African American visual artist to have his work included in the book, and his black-and-white drawings are overshadowed by the full-color portraits by Reiss, a white Bavarian artist known by the mid-1920s for his portraits of German peasants, Native Americans, and Mexicans. This ironic aspect of the original volume is hidden by the fact that Reiss's portraits have been omitted from the Macmillan edition of *The New Negro* and are reproduced in black-and-white in a few earlier reprints.

The subject of these portraits also raises the question of class as a dimension of Locke's definition of the New Negro. The portraits in *Survey Graphic* were grouped in two series, "Harlem Types" and "Four Negro Women." The people depicted were anonymous members of the folk, with the single exception of Elise Johnson McDougald, a teacher, school principal, and writer. In *The New Negro*, however, Locke replaced most of these portraits with portraits of the elite, including intellectual leaders like himself and Du Bois as well as writers like Jean Toomer and Countee

Cullen. The portraits in the book thus use the elite rather than the folk to define the New Negro. The written texts in the book do draw attention to the folk, however, from the characters portrayed in the fiction and poetry to Locke's argument in the essay "The New Negro" that the masses are in fact leading the transformation of the race, even if they are not quite articulate yet. Although some critics of the book have argued that it presents an elitist depiction of the New Negro, then, it does include both the folk and the elite in its definition.

Critics also have drawn attention to certain aspects of African Americans' lives and experiences that are left out of or deemphasized in *The New Negro*. Blues, for example, receives little attention, and the question of sexuality is never addressed. Nor is Marcus Garvey's movement, nor the radical socialism of the period. Furthermore, the New Negro is almost exclusively male, and the importance of African American women in the movement is given only minimal attention. But Locke seems to have strived for inclusiveness, to the extent that *The New Negro* includes texts with strikingly different or even contradictory assessments of the New Negro. Despite its omissions, *The New Negro* is a complicated and diverse portrait of the New Negro, one that is an important and collaborative act of self-definition and self-representation by participants in the Harlem Renaissance.

ANNE CARROLL

See also Cullen, Countee; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Douglas, Aaron; Locke, Alain; New Negro; New Negro Movement; Reiss, Winold; Survey Graphic; Toomer, Jean

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New York Age

New York Age was one of the most influential black newspapers of its time. Its first incarnation was as the *Globe* (founded in 1880). The *Globe* became the *Freeman* in 1884 and *New York Age* in 1887. The driving force behind *New York Age* and its previous incarnations was the editor Timothy Thomas Fortune, a journalist and activist.

Fortune used *New York Age* to promote his ideas for the uplift of black Americans. Unlike most other black leaders and newspapermen of the day, who were loyal to the Republican Party, he criticized the Republicans for failing to protect the rights of black citizens in the South and across the United States. Booker T. Washington was a friend, mentor, and financial backer of Fortune and of *New York Age*. Fortune's politically independent spirit often put the two at odds, however.

Fortune employed Ida B. Wells at *New York Age* after her own newspaper offices in Memphis, Tennessee, were destroyed in 1891. Wells wrote articles on lynching for Fortune and gave national exposure to the problem. Fortune also helped Wells secure lecture engagements to further her antilynching message.

In addition to emphasizing the need for blacks to express their political power, Fortune advocated the development of creativity and racial pride. *New York Age* included serialized articles about important people and events in black history.

New York Age was incorporated in 1907 with Booker T. Washington as a principal (but secret) stockholder. The plan was to extend the newspaper's distribution and influence on the national level. The New York Age Publishing Company had Fortune as its president and Jerome Peterson as the secretary-treasurer. Although the newspaper expanded, Fortune found it difficult to share responsibilities for running the enterprise. His own problems with drinking and depression intensified the pressure on him. Eventually his decline prompted him to sell his shares in *New York Age* (in 1907) and step down as editor.

Thereafter Fred R. Moore ran *New York Age*, but his tenure as editor signaled the decline of the newspaper both in appearance and in content. Booker T. Washington controlled the editorial content through

his influence on Moore and his funding of the paper: Washington had financed Moore's buyout of Fortune. Under Moore's leadership, *New York Age* became more sensational and less an arbiter of political opinion among African Americans. The paper no longer had a strong editorial view. Although Washington financed the paper, Moore often strayed from Washington's and the Republican Party's political views. Although Fortune returned to *New York Age* as associate editor in charge of the editorial page from September 1911 to September 1914, the newspaper never regained its earlier influence.

James Weldon Johnson, one of the most significant authors during the Harlem Renaissance, wrote for *New York Age* during World War I. Johnson's editorials—which included a byline, unlike editorials in other black newspapers of the time—focused on racism, especially in the South. Johnson advocated self-help and nonviolent protest among African Americans. *New York Age* urged blacks to demonstrate their loyalty to the United States, while still speaking out against the suppression of blacks' civil rights. The paper also supported the silent protest parade in New York City in 1917; this march was a mass statement against the practice of lynching in the United States.

New York Age folded in 1953. After Fortune's tenure, its circulation and influence never reached a level to compete with more popular black newspapers such as the *Chicago Defender*, *Baltimore Afro-American*, *Pittsburgh Courier*, and *Norfolk Journal and Guide*.

HEATHER MARTIN

See also Antilynching Crusade; Barnett, Ida B. Wells; Fortune, Timothy Thomas; Johnson, James Weldon; Journalists; Lynching: Silent Protest Parade; Moore, Frederick Randolph; Washington, Booker T.

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Niagara Movement

The Niagara movement was an African American political and social movement founded in 1905 by leading intellectuals, such as W. E. B. Du Bois, William Monroe Trotter, and John Hope. Those who joined the Niagara movement were generally second-generation intellectuals who represented the radical wing of the African American civil rights movement. They offered an alternative to Booker T. Washington's plan for African American social, economic, and political advancement, which emphasized thrift, cleanliness, property ownership, industrial education, manual labor, and postponement of political and civil rights. At the time, Du Bois and Trotter were two of the most vociferous critics of Washington and his program of racial accommodation. They felt that Washington, the founder and president of Tuskegee Institute, was using his power over the African American press to control the opinions and attitudes of whites regarding African Americans; in other words, he was masterfully silencing his critics so that most people would believe black Americans unreservedly supported his program of racial uplift through accommodation and patience.

Du Bois opened his public attack on Washington's program in 1903 with *The Souls of Black Folk*, which forcefully deconstructed Washington's program as an unrealistic plan for racial progress. In a brilliantly written essay entitled "Of Mr. Washington and Others," Du Bois criticized Washington's "Atlanta compromise" speech of 1895 and argued the folly of attempting to gain economic rights while abandoning the struggle for social and political rights. Du Bois argued that African Americans had to fight for all of their constitutionally guaranteed rights as the only way of ensuring their economic progress. He believed that the struggle for civil rights must be waged on a number of fronts. Du Bois's assault on Washington's program was also a response to Washington's actions after the so-called Boston riot of 1903, an incident in which William Monroe Trotter and others had heckled Washington as he attempted to deliver a speech at an African Methodist church in Boston. Trotter had established himself as one of Washington's most bitter critics when

he opened his newspaper the *Boston Guardian* in 1902 to challenge Washington's leadership. In a series of brutal editorials, Trotter said that Washington's program was a surrender to white racism and an abandonment of the fight for social equality.

The attacks by Du Bois and Trotter symbolized a changing of the guard and can be seen as ushering in the "New Negro" movement, which in turn can be seen as a precursor of the Harlem Renaissance. The "Boston riot" and the publication of *The Souls of Black Folk*—both in 1903—precipitated the movement to formulate a program that would rival Washington's. Trotter and Du Bois met in 1905 to discuss organizing a concerted approach to countering Washington's perceived monopoly over the mainstream press. Du Bois then sent letters to sixty known critics of Washington, inviting them to meet in Niagara Falls, New York. (Actually, the group received accommodations on the Canadian side of the border, since it was difficult for them to find a hotel on the American side.)

The Niagara movement began in June 1905 when Du Bois, Trotter, John Hope, and twenty-seven others held a secret meeting in Buffalo, New York (near Niagara Falls), at the home of Mary Talbert, who was a prominent member of the Michigan Street Baptist Church in Buffalo. The group outlined an aggressive platform called the "declaration of principles," which called for freedom of speech and criticism, manhood suffrage, the abolition of all distinctions based on race, the recognition of the basic principles of human brotherhood, educational equality, and respect for the working man. In opposition to Washington's program, the group advocated direct action to protest against racial discrimination and demanded immediate, full, and equal rights. Even though the organizational charter never mentioned Washington, it was obvious that the group disapproved of his leadership and questioned his program. The Niagara plan offered an aggressive radical alternative to Washington's gradualist approach of racial uplift from the bottom up. Niagara also represented an effort by the "talented tenth" to regain control of the African American agenda and redirect the civil rights agenda.

Washington used at least two strategies against the Niagara movement: His spies infiltrated it, and he coordinated a vitriolic attack on it in the black press. The Niagara movement weathered the storm, however, and survived to meet the next year at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, where Du Bois issued a manifesto demanding full and equal rights for all citizens

of the United States. In subsequent years, the movement met in Boston and in Oberlin, Ohio. The leaders of the Niagara movement clearly wanted to recapture the fervor of the abolitionists and make the racial issue an ethical one, and they succeeded in assembling some of the most prominent African Americans of the period.

The Niagara movement spread slowly but strategically. In its heyday, there were more than 150 members representing perhaps thirty-four states. The movement was hampered by internal and external conflicts, however. Du Bois and Trotter, for instance, feuded over notions of equality and the place of women, and they disagreed on the goals and timetables for the organization. Trotter also found himself feuding with other members of the organization, further weakening the movement. The organization was chronically short of funds and never had a designated headquarters. In 1907, Trotter resigned from his leadership position. In 1908, Du Bois and Trotter both failed to attend the national convention. In 1908, also, Trotter formed a new organization called the Negro American Political League, which better fit his radical agenda. Du Bois also had begun to move away from the organization. In 1909, he encouraged the remaining members to join the newly formed National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). That year, the NAACP swallowed up the Niagara movement, incorporating some of its ideas.

The Niagara movement was important to African American racial progress because it was one of the first attempts by African American intellectuals to raise the banner of full equality—to move beyond the reactionary stage of the post-Reconstruction era to an organized, aggressive answer to racial oppression. The movement also emphasized the ability of African Americans to apply intellectual solutions to practical problems. One of its tenets was its emphasis on a liberal arts education, and so it also generated renewed interest in the academic training of black leaders.

ABEL A. BARTLEY

See also Du Bois, W. E. B.; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; New Negro Movement; Talented Tenth; Trotter, William Monroe

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Nigger

A number of works have been written with the title *Nigger*. The 1922 novel by Clement Wood (1888–1950), a white writer from Alabama, is a serious work of fiction in which Wood presents an unsentimental view of the South and African Americans. Wood's novel is realistic in tone, tracking a family from slavery to the early 1920s. W. E. B. Du Bois approved of Wood's later writing on Alabama, and Wood was highly regarded during the Harlem Renaissance: He won awards in literary competitions run by Du Bois's journal *The Crisis* and by *Opportunity* and himself served as a judge for such contests, in various categories.

Still, *Nigger* received mixed reviews when it appeared in 1922. Black reviewers had a number of reservations. They admitted that Wood's characters were a decided improvement over the typical works of most white southern authors, such as Thomas Nelson Page, Thomas Dixon, and Octavus Roy Cohen. Wood had humanized his characters and presented dignified portrayals of African Americans. However, Benjamin Brawley, James Weldon Johnson, and other black literati of the Harlem Renaissance held that these characters were just sanitized images of old stereotypes. In spite of Wood's sympathetic views of African Americans, the novel contained too many one-dimensional figures, patronizing views, and perpetuations of old myths. The critic for the *New York Times* gave a generally favorable review but noted that the characters were mainly types, with each one representing a particular kind of Negro. For instance, Jake, who had grown up in slavery, was symbolic of the "old southern Negro." Two of his sons were well educated and were well suited to "office work," but the only jobs they could get were in Birmingham's mills. A third son was an example of the "overdressed vicious Negro" who is destined to wind up on a chain gang. One of Jake's daughters is so light skinned that she attempts to pass as white; another daughter becomes a street prostitute. Other characters also represent similar types of African Americans and even periods of history.

Some readers, on the other hand, loved the book. Most reviewers noted that Wood knew his Alabama—his scenes there generally rang true—and that he was on the correct side of the racial issue, sparing no pity

for vicious white racists. The reviewer for the *Boston Transcript* described the book as "the epic of emancipation"; the reviewer for *Dial* said that it was almost great; the reviewer for the *Greensboro* (North Carolina) *Daily News* said that it had brilliance and power. Unlike others, however, this last reviewer was unimpressed by Wood's grasp of Alabama, remarking that Wood had seemed to fill in his background by throwing "India ink" at it.

The *Springfield Republican*, perhaps, had the most perceptive review. After praising Wood for his knowledge of Alabama and his sympathetic approach to racial justice, the reviewer found fault with the book for being "sketchy" and—most tellingly—suggested that, despite the sympathetic content, the title would repel black readers.

In fact, the title was evidently so offensive that this novel is never mentioned in *Twentieth Century Authors* (Kunitz and Haycroft 1942) or in its first supplement (1955)—despite an otherwise positive account of Clement Wood's work as a novelist, poet, music lyricist, educational leader, and lawyer. African American publications of the day do mention Wood's novel, though, generally in a favorable light as a sympathetic portrayal of the difficult fight for emancipation and equal rights.

FRANK SALAMONE

See also Brawley, Benjamin; Cohen, Octavus Roy; *Crisis*, The: Literary Prizes; Johnson, James Weldon; *Opportunity* Literary Contests

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Nigger Heaven

Carl Van Vechten's novel *Nigger Heaven* (1926) initially drew attention by its inflammatory title and the flamboyant reputation of its white author. The novel's significance goes far beyond those factors, however. The controversy caused by Van Vechten's book brought unprecedented attention to Harlem's social and artistic culture and helped create a market for African American literature. Whether readers viewed *Nigger Heaven* as art or exploitation, they bought, read, and discussed it widely.

The novel is peopled with a range of characters whose interactions reflect Harlem's energy. Mary Love, a prim, intellectual, race-conscious librarian, tries to shun the advances of Randolph Pettijohn, the "bolito king," who believes that marrying her will make him respectable. Instead, Mary loves and plans to marry Byron Kasson, a frustrated aspiring writer who struggles unsuccessfully to overcome deep ambivalence about his racial identity. Byron—highly educated and with coloring "the shade of coffee diluted with rich cream"—grows increasingly bitter and sensitive to racism, both real and imagined. In his pain, Byron turns to the beautiful, self-indulgent, and fabulously wealthy Lasca Sartoris, a femme fatale of the first order. This love conflict unfolds within a variety of settings: Members of the upper-class elite discuss art in well-appointed drawing rooms; rowdy and lascivious drunks spend long nights in jazz clubs and speakeasies; politically conscientious young intellectuals debate the "race problem." Virtually every character was an identifiable caricature of some noteworthy Harlemite, and many readers took special delight in trying to assign the proper identities.

Numerous conversations in the novel refer explicitly to Carl Van Vechten's own literary contemporaries (Gertrude Stein in particular is lauded here), as well as the popular musical and theatrical performers of the day. *Nigger Heaven* also embraces other fictional worlds of the Harlem Renaissance, borrowing as a character Mimi Daquin, the heroine of Walter White's novel *Flight* (1926). Gareth Johns, a fictional character who appeared in other novels by Van Vechten, also appears



Carl Van Vechten, 1925. (Library of Congress.)

here. A particularly amusing and curious feature of the novel is a series of footnotes claiming to interpret black culture for the white reader; the very first footnote points readers to "a glossary of the unusual Negro words and phrases employed in this novel." The promised explanation proves elusive, however, a joke best illustrated in the twinned entries "*boody*: see hootchie-pap" and "*hootchie-pap*: see boody." The novel generously cites the lyrics and poetry of the Harlem Renaissance, with an opening epigraph from Countee Cullen's poem "Heritage" and numerous borrowings from jazz and blues songs. An unresolved copyright dispute required Van Vechten to replace lyrics that appeared in the first six printings. He collaborated with his friend the poet Langston Hughes, who devised lyrics specifically for *Nigger Heaven* that appeared in the seventh printing and thereafter.

Nigger Heaven achieved an immediate sellout of 16,000 copies; it had nine printings in the first four months it appeared on the market. It was initially banned in Boston, and readers in Harlem had passionate responses to it. James Weldon Johnson admired and promoted the novel, arguing that Van Vechten

was “the first well-known American novelist to include in a story a cultured Negro class without making it burlesque or without implying reservations and apologies.” W. E. B. Du Bois, however, despised and condemned *Nigger Heaven*, charging that it “is a blow in the face,” and “an affront to the hospitality of black folk” (quoted in Lewis 1994). Many of Van Vechten’s black friends privately supported his endeavor and saw it as an attempt to educate white readers about black culture. The black actress Edna Thomas wrote to Van Vechten, “Fool the public if you must, darling; but you and I know that you’ve gotten a lot of propaganda off your chest, don’t we?” Alain Locke concurred, writing, “It’s art—but at the same time subcutaneous propaganda” (quoted in Pfeiffer 2000). Public support was not always so strong, however.

Even in the 1980s and 1990s, when the novel was out of print, energetic critical reaction to it continued unabated. Many critics persisted in challenging Van Vechten’s right to write such a book in the first place, and many contemporary responses to the novel continue to reflect outrage at his presumption in doing so. Arguing that Van Vechten was motivated by “a mixture of commercialism and patronizing sympathy,” Lewis (1981) charges that from “the point of view of racial uplift, *Nigger Heaven* was a colossal fraud in which the depiction of the Talented Tenth in high baroque barely muffled the throb of the tom-tom.” Although many critics acknowledge Van Vechten’s efforts to promote developing black writers, they maintain a response to the novel that is at best skeptical and at worst downright hostile. Cooley (1989), for instance, says that Van Vechten “brought writers of both races together, striving to overcome prejudice and misunderstanding” but simultaneously insists that *Nigger Heaven* “was perfectly packaged for that insatiable white appetite in the 1920s for anything black and primitive.” O’Meally (1989) goes further, charging that Van Vechten’s writings “make clear that he never gave up the cliché image of blacks as a naturally arty and primitive people whose ‘savagely’ qualities and spontaneity, zest for life, moon-times tardiness, free sex and instinctive good humor were their great gift.” The vituperative tone to which Van Vechten’s novel continues to drive such critics demonstrates its continued political resonance.

Van Vechten insisted that the title was meant to be ironic, and the novel extends this assertion with its references to the segregated balconies in theaters. Van Vechten’s biographer, Kellner (1968), has long argued that the novel must be understood in the context of its

author’s ongoing involvement in black culture, noting, for instance, that in the process of revising his manuscript, “Passages were cut that might adversely reflect on the Negro in the eyes of white readers; for example ‘We’re most of us lazy, and indirect, and careless, and if we get anywhere it’s usually luck.’” Thus *Nigger Heaven* raises a number of compelling questions about the role of the novel in society. Even as it parodies romantically simplistic depictions of artistic development, it celebrates the Harlem Renaissance through its energetic and amusing portraits.

KATHLEEN PFEIFFER

See also Cullen, Countee; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, James Weldon; Locke, Alain; Van Vechten, Carl; White, Walter

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Niggerati

“Niggerati” is a term said to have been coined by Zora Neale Hurston—from “nigger” and “literati”—during the black artistic revival known as the Harlem Renaissance. With an unprecedented circulation of

music, painting, poetry, and prose, the black experience became a highly salable commodity. Hurston was all too aware of the way black writers were unduly influenced and often exploited by the white establishment that made publication possible. Her term suggests the public's persistent view of blacks as uncomplicated stereotypes and the depictions in popular culture of educated blacks as a mere facade for a lurking primitiveness. The increase in publishing opportunities for blacks during the Harlem Renaissance was coupled with significant restrictions on their creativity, and success was often linked to censoring the political and sensationalizing the primitive. The commodification of black writers and black subjects by white patrons and white publishers who were entertained by their cultural production yet continued to deny their humanity was a persistent problem that added a new dimension to the idea of art as propaganda. Hurston's own patron, Charlotte Osgood Mason, limited her creative choices, frequently attributed childlike qualities to her, and controlled her productivity and mobility through strict spending guidelines reinforced by requests for detailed records of Hurston's expenditures.

"Niggerati" simultaneously referred to and mocked members of the black literary intelligentsia like Langston Hughes, Wallace Thurman, Alain Locke, and Hurston herself. Within the black expressive culture, where verbal agility was highly valued, Hurston had a reputation for being controversial and was known for her quick wit and her ability to capitalize on key linguistic moments. She satirized her social and intellectual peers without failing to turn the lens inward as the self-proclaimed "queen of the niggerati." In this time of unprecedented cultural production, multiple different interpretations of black life competed in the literary marketplace, and Hurston was critical of black writers who assimilated to establishment culture or valued "high" or "white" art at the expense of the folk or the "Negro farthest down." Hurston, Hughes, and Thurman chose an aesthetic response to this political conflict in 1926 with the creation of a controversial magazine called *Fire!!* that they paid for, edited, and published. Because of their limited financial resources, they were able to produce only one issue of *Fire!!*—but it stands as a compelling reaction against the institutional appropriation of art and what Hurston characterized as "the intellectual lynching we perpetuate upon ourselves."

The end of World War I was an impetus for dramatic change, and the Harlem Renaissance was a time when the Negro was in vogue. For African Americans, it reflected an unequalled period of optimism, but also a

certain naïveté about the role and power of the artist in American culture. The cultural recognition that fueled the artistic renaissance proved unsustainable and short lived. Like many artists of the time, Hurston struggled to support herself and her writing without patronage. "Niggerati" acknowledged and in some ways anticipated the limits of cultural production that was unable to move blacks beyond the status of "nigger." African American literati struggled in a society that continued to systematically repress them, and Hurston's term remains an ironic comment on the dashed hope that literary achievement would translate into social and political racial uplift.

TONI IRVING

See also *Fire!!*; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; *Infants of the Spring*; Locke, Alain; Mason, Charlotte Osgood; Thurman, Wallace

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Nightclubs

Harlem's nightclubs, also known as cabarets, were public centers of black sociability and entertainment. The rise of urban nightlife, encouraged by a postwar economic

boom, made nightclubs a primary recreational destination for New Yorkers in the 1920s. Nightclubs, and the music and performances they fostered, occupy a key place in debates about the value of “high” and “low” cultural forms with regard to the Harlem Renaissance. Because patrons sometimes indulged in, or at least tolerated, illicit drugs and alcohol, gambling, public dancing, sexual pursuit, homosexuality, and prostitution, nightclubs earned an exaggerated reputation for sexual excess, criminality, and exoticism. Many Harlemites intellectuals who advocated “lifting up” the race by translating Negro folk art into western aesthetic forms viewed nightclubs as “low” culture and approached them with ambivalence, embarrassment, or disapprobation. Other black intellectuals and artists, however, eschewed such middle-class pretensions and celebrated the community and music of nightclubs as an important expression of the black masses.

These debates helped shape the philosophy and aesthetics of the Harlem Renaissance. Many authors used nightclubs and cabarets as the setting and inspiration of their works, to much controversy. The reception of Carl Van Vechten’s novel *Nigger Heaven* (1926) and Claude McKay’s novel *Home to Harlem* (1928) illustrates the dispute over nightclubs and the proper subject matter for renaissance literature. Van Vechten’s novel celebrates Harlem’s nightclubs while portraying the black middle class as sexually and socially repressed. The white author’s sensational, primitivist account helped bring Harlem’s nightlife to the attention of white Manhattan; with some significant exceptions, however, the novel was censured by most of Harlem. *Home to Harlem* takes the viewpoint of the working-class and criminal inhabitants, providing a tour through cabarets and vice districts. McKay’s novel was denounced by much of the renaissance elite, who accused him of pandering to the basest tastes of a white readership hungry for an authentic account to follow up *Nigger Heaven*. W. E. B. Du Bois wrote of *Home to Harlem* in a review: “After the dirtier parts of its filth I feel distinctly like taking a bath.” Others, such as James Weldon Johnson and Wallace Thurman, defended the book. These debates about nightclub culture reflect a deeper conflict over concepts of sexuality, gender, criminality, class, and race.

Description

Nightclubs were a unique social space combining dining, drinking, and performances. The musical acts and other performances took place not on a stage but on

the floor among the patrons seated at tables, allowing for an untraditionally informal relationship between performer and spectator. Performers had to compete with sometimes raucous audience members more interested in their own party than the show. Nightclubs also served as a public place for patrons to dance, providing a spectacle for the rest of the club. The proximity of the patrons, the informal style of the performances, and amply flowing alcohol created public intimacy through physical and psychic contact. As a late-night venue, many cabarets would not be crowded until well after midnight. “Cabaret-hopping” was common, with people moving from one club to the next through the course of the night. Most nightclubs had a life span of no more than a few years—often considerably less—as establishments either changed hands, were renamed and reimagined, or went out of business.

History

The history of black nightclubs in New York begins in the 1860s, when a black tavern owner, Ike Hines, opened a basement saloon in Greenwich Village. Anybody who could sing, dance, or play an instrument was invited to perform for a crowd of spectators who gathered night after night to socialize and relax. Imitators proliferated, and over the next several decades, as black neighborhoods were pushed increasingly northward in Manhattan by white expansion and ever-higher real estate costs, these clubs remained centers of black social life and entertainment. From the 1890s through the 1910s, the Tenderloin district of the West Twenties to the West Sixties was known as “black Bohemia,” and its nightclubs and cabarets became popular destinations for New Yorkers seeking entertainment, camaraderie, and vice. Many of the nightclubs that later became institutions in Harlem in the 1920s and 1930s originated in the Tenderloin.

Nightclubs achieved wild popularity in the 1910s and 1920s, and white entrepreneurs began a campaign to make them more “respectable” for the middle and upper classes. The adoption of the French word *cabaret* was intended to capitalize on the reputation, if not the substance, of Parisian establishments. The designation “nightclub” developed in the 1910s when some cabarets tried to get around the city’s curfew, which did not apply to private social clubs, by drawing up bylaws and collecting dues so members could drink and socialize as late as they liked. More commonly, however, cabarets simply closed their doors when the curfew arrived at two o’clock in the morning and declared the remaining

customers members of a “club.” Nightclubs that cultivated an interracial clientele were known as “black and tans” and were widely viewed as disreputable by the middle class of both races, although they also had progressive defenders. In an article in *The Messenger* in 1925, Chandler Owen called the black and tans “America’s most democratic institution.”

When alcohol was banned under Prohibition, most cabarets became “speakeasies,” the name given to any illegal establishment that served bootleg liquor. Speakeasies were often temporary business ventures and operated very discreetly, earning a reputation by word of mouth, and sometimes requiring a secret knock, a password, or the company of a recognized patron. Some historians, such as Erenberg (1981), argue that Prohibition-era nightclub culture was a lesser derivative of the earlier “true” cabarets; others see it as simply a different phase of development.

Harlem’s Nightclubs

Harlem’s nightclubs ranged from large establishments seating several hundred to intimate cellars. Opened in 1925, Small’s Paradise at 135th Street and Seventh Avenue was one of the largest. Patrons were seated by reservation only, and it was famous for its big bands, lavish floor shows, and waiters who served drinks while dancing the Charleston. It had a high cover charge and exorbitantly priced drinks, but the owner, Ed Smalls, welcomed blacks along with the white clientele. Wallace Thurman details an evening at Small’s Paradise in his novel *The Blacker the Berry* (1929) from the viewpoint of his protagonist, Emma Lou, who is conscious of being one of the only black patrons, and the darkest. Edmond’s Cellar (at 132nd Street and Fifth Avenue), the nightclub where the blues singer Ethel Waters rose to fame, was a typical small basement cabaret. It seated between 150 and 200 patrons at small tables wedged around what Waters (1950) described as a “handkerchief-size dance floor” and a three-piece band. Its low ceiling and lack of ventilation forced it to close for the summer. The Sugar Cane Club (135th Street and Fifth Avenue) was an underworld haunt entered through a narrow underground passage. Like most cabarets, the Sugar Cane would pack in twice the number of people who could reasonably fit in the small space.

Other nightclubs included Happy Rhone’s (143rd Street and Lenox Avenue); Banks’ Club (133rd Street between Lenox and Fifth Avenues); Jerry’s Place (on 135th Street), known to have good dancing; the Alhambra (126th Street and Seventh Avenue), a cabaret

within the Alhambra Theater; the Garden of Joy (139th Street and Seventh Avenue), the blues singer Mamie Smith’s open-air cabaret, torn down in the mid-1920s to build the Abyssinian Baptist Church; the Capitol Palace (139th Street and Lenox Avenue), a basement club with a small, always crowded dance floor; the Lenox Club (143rd Street and Lenox Avenue), notorious for its risqué revues; Harry Pyle’s place (138th Street and Fifth Avenue); Connor’s (135th Street between Lenox and Fifth avenues); and the Bamboo Inn (on Seventh Avenue), which attracted Harlem’s rich and stylish.

The block of 133rd Street between Lenox and Seventh avenues was so lined with nightclubs that it was called “Jungle Alley.” Cabaret goers could eat good southern fare all night while listening to the torch singer Elmira at Tillie’s Chicken Shack. Or they could stop in at Harry Hansberry’s Clam House, which featured Gladys Bentley wearing a tuxedo and singing her own risqué lyrics to popular songs. The Clam House often drew the “pansy trade”—gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. The Catagonia Club, known informally as Pod’s and Jerry’s, featured the jazz pianist and composer Willie “the Lion” Smith (who also had a financial stake in the club) in the early 1920s and Billie Holiday in the 1930s. Harlemites could mingle with Broadway and Hollywood stars at this crowded basement speakeasy, and the piano would be buried under mink coats by the end of the night. Many musicians would end up at Mexico’s or the Rhythm Club after their own sets at other nightclubs. If patrons at these clubs were lucky, they might witness a “cutting contest” among instrumentalists to see who could outplay the other. These clubs would typically stay open well past dawn.

While lesbians and gay men were welcomed at many cabarets, several clubs developed a predominantly homosexual clientele. Female impersonators were popular at many cabarets, such as Lulu Belle’s (Lenox Avenue). The Hot Cha (132nd Street and Seventh Avenue) was another club that welcomed black gay men. Harlem’s queer culture was important for black as well as white homosexuals, who created a social network at nightclubs, drag balls, and rent parties.

Segregated Nightclubs

By the end of the 1920s, there were almost a dozen exclusively white, segregated cabarets in Harlem. Fisher (1927) describes returning to Harlem after being away for five years: “The best of Harlem’s black cabarets have changed their names and turned white”; he finds his favorite nightclubs overrun by downtown New Yorkers

who want to experience the culture of the Negro. The popularization of anthropology and psychoanalytic theories of the unconscious made the “primitive” an important fantasy in the modern European American imagination—someone free of the strictures, responsibilities, and sexual repression of modern “civilized” society. White urban sophisticates, drawing on colonialist constructions of Africa, attached this notion to black urban Americans, turning to Harlem and especially its cabarets to experience temporary unrestraint.

The novelist, patron, and socialite Carl Van Vechten probably did most to alert white Manhattan to the exoticism of Harlem. His articles in *Vanity Fair* on blues and black theater, and especially his novel *Nigger Heaven*, painted a seductive picture; many white New Yorkers ventured to Harlem as a bohemian “transgression” of their class values and mores—a practice known as slumming. While Van Vechten had a sincere interest in promoting the artists of Harlem and contributed materially to the Harlem Renaissance, most white cabaret goers in Harlem were less earnest. Although only a small percentage of Harlemites regularly patronized nightclubs, in the imagination of white Manhattan Harlem existed only as its nightlife. Whites who were slumming in Harlem were not interested in any actual material conditions that conflicted with their notion of dancing, fun-loving Negroes. By the 1920s, white nightclub owners in Harlem had carefully constructed segregated cabarets that played to white racist fantasies of the primitive, sexual Negro. Harlem’s largest and most extravagant nightclubs were whites-only establishments where, except for light-skinned patrons who could pass as white, blacks were welcomed only as employees: waiters, busboys, cooks, and, above all, entertainers.

Barron Wilkins’s Exclusive Club (134th Street and Seventh Avenue) moved to Harlem from the Tenderloin in the early 1900s. Duke Ellington and the Washingtonians played there in the early 1920s. It billed itself as a colored club but catered exclusively to white and very light-skinned patrons. Rudolph Fisher, who was turned away because he was too dark, wrote that Barron’s “wasn’t a Negro cabaret; it was a cabaret run by Negroes for whites.” Ethel Waters maintained that “the ordinary working colored people weren’t wanted there and knew better than to try and get in.” Barron Wilkins had political clout and kept up good relations with the police so that his club would not be closed for serving alcohol during Prohibition. He was murdered in 1924 not far from his club by a gangster and gambler known as Yellow Charleston, who

was rumored to be supplying Wilkins with bootleg whiskey.

Perhaps the most famous and elegant of all nightclubs was the Cotton Club (142nd Street and Lenox Avenue). Originally opened as Club Deluxe by the black former heavyweight boxing champion Jack Johnson, it was bought in 1923 by a white gangster, Owen Vincent “Owney” Madden, and reopened as the Cotton Club. Madden increased the seating capacity and redecorated the space with an antebellum theme, complete with bales of cotton and a plantation shack. Politicians, financiers, movie stars, and socialites flocked to the Cotton Club; by the mid-1920s, more than 700 people would crowd inside on weekends to dine, dance, mingle, be seen, and catch the renowned performances. The Cotton Club produced two Broadway-style revues a year. These lavish floor shows resembling the productions of Florenz Ziegfeld featured glamorous light-skinned chorus girls befeathered in revealing costumes. Duke Ellington rose to national fame when he began playing there in 1927. He and his Jungle Band (as it was dubbed shortly after debuting at the Cotton Club) supplied the music for the revues and played incidental music when the patrons themselves were dancing. When CBS radio began coast-to-coast broadcasts of Ellington’s sets, the Cotton Club became a national phenomenon. Ellington left in 1930, but the Cotton Club continued to thrive throughout the decade, finally closing its doors on 10 June 1940.

George and Connie Immerman’s club, Connie’s Inn (131st Street and Seventh Avenue), was known for its musical revues such as *Keep Shufflin’* (1928) and *Hot Chocolates* (1929). The Plantation Club (126th Street and Lenox Avenue) opened in 1929 as a competitor to the Cotton Club. The Plantation managed to lure away one of the Cotton Club’s premier acts: Cab Calloway and his orchestra. Owney Madden retaliated by having some of his men ransack the Plantation.

Among the many segregated nightclubs, Leroy’s (135th Street and Fifth Avenue), run by Barron Wilkins’s brother, Leroy Wilkins, was perhaps the only black cabaret that barred white customers.

Performances

Harlem’s clubs were an important venue for black singers and musicians, and jazz and blues predominated. Small nightclubs could accommodate a modest band and perhaps a solo vocalist who would circulate around the room throughout the evening. The relationship between performer and spectator was more

informal and relaxed in these intimate settings than in a theater or at a concert. Patrons could dance, drink, and socialize during the shows, and the performers themselves would often have a drink at the bar between sets. Bandleaders like Duke Ellington and Cab Calloway played jazz for the white audiences at the Cotton Club, and afterward they might keep playing at black cabarets until the early morning. James P. Johnson, Willie “the Lion” Smith, and Luckey Roberts were celebrated for stride piano, a style of improvisation refined in Harlem clubs that involves using the left and right hand in unison or counter rhythms.

In the 1910s and 1920s, nightclubs were a site for the emergent urban blues, typically performed by women vocalists such as Mamie Smith, Bessie Smith, and Ethel Waters. Carby (1992) and Davis (1998) note that nightclubs provided a place for the articulation of working-class black women’s experience. Blues lyrics—often about extramarital affairs, domestic disillusionment, bisexuality and lesbianism, and women’s social oppression—and the female performers’ obvious sexuality and self-determination contributed to a notion that cabarets perpetuated moral deterioration. A number of musicians and performers included descriptions of nightclubs in their autobiographies, and Langston Hughes drew on blues and the cabaret in his poetry. *The Weary Blues* (1926), his first collection, was inspired by the cadence of Harlem’s nightlife. Poems such as “Cabaret,” “Jazzonia,” “The Cat and the Saxophone (2 A.M.),” and “Harlem Night Club” capture the intensity, intoxication, and depth of the nightclub. His second collection, *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927), also depicted cabarets, performers, and cabaret goers.

Many larger cabarets featured extensive musical revues—short, fast-paced spectacles, with lively musical performances, energetic dance numbers, and scarcely any plot. On a raucous night, the dancers might “show their laundry”—lift their skirts and reveal their undergarments—to the whoops and hollers of the crowd. Successful cabaret revues frequently moved to the Broadway stage; for example, *Keep Shufflin’* (1928) and *Hot Chocolates* (1929) first appeared at Connie’s Inn. Also, patrons could take to the dance floor themselves, and whites and blacks came to nightclubs to show off or watch others practice the popular dances of the time, such as the Charleston, black bottom, and shimmy.

Policing and Regulations

Prohibition—imposed by the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution and enforced by the Volstead Act

(1919)—made it a federal offense to produce or sell intoxicating beverages. New Yorkers, like most urbanites nationwide, considered Prohibition provincial, unsophisticated, and irrelevant to their lifestyle. This attitude was exemplified by the fashionable mayor of New York, Jimmy Walker, who appeared constantly at cabarets around town, often with a different showgirl on his arm each night.

Prohibition had the paradoxical effect of multiplying the number of nightclubs. Although cabarets were routinely raided and alcohol was seized, New York City developed a thriving nightlife. The demand for alcohol under Prohibition facilitated the illegal production and distribution of bootleg liquor. Nightclubs often fell into the hands of organized criminals and gangsters, who made huge profits by selling alcohol.

The possibility of police raids led to a newer type of nightclub: smaller, less extravagant, and more easily transportable. One way cabaret operators sought to circumvent Prohibition was by providing “setups”: Nightclubs would serve ginger ale or other mixers in iced glasses into which patrons could pour their own gin or whiskey from a flask. Many clubs owners, however, loath to forgo serving profitable bootleg liquor, provided full service but claimed to investigators that they offered only setups. Even more typically, nightclub owners shared some of their profits with police investigators, who then looked the other way. In 1924, New York City voted to suspend local enforcement of Prohibition, leaving the investigation of the city’s more than 100,000 speakeasies and nightclubs to just a few federal inspectors. Raids of cabarets continued until the Twenty-first Amendment repealed Prohibition in 1933, however.

In 1926, Mayor Walker tightened the city’s regulation by requiring cabarets to be licensed. Until this time, cabarets had fallen through the cracks of city ordinances, being neither restaurants nor theaters, but now the city defined a cabaret as any space that served food or drink in combination with music or dancing. The legislation and regulation of establishments that were functionally illegal under federal law was a tacit acknowledgment of the failure to enforce Prohibition. Chevigny (1991) argues that the city ordinance “must have been largely directed at the black music and dance that was performed at the Harlem clubs, as well as the social mixing of the races.”

In 1931, the oversight of cabarets was transferred from the Department of Licenses to the police department,

which began to use the ordinance to monitor not just establishments but performers and employees. By 1940 the police department had expanded the requirements for a cabaret license to include “identity cards” for all cabaret performers. These cards, issued only after a fingerprint check, could be denied to anyone whom the police felt was not “of good character,” and was refused to any musician with a criminal record. The identity cards were not abolished until 1967.

The city’s nightclubs were also under the surveillance of vice commissions and progressive reform groups, some involving religious evangelism, that wanted to combat what they perceived as a moral decline. For instance, the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice opposed the new sexual freedom claimed by women in the 1910s and 1920s; and the Committee of Fourteen (1905–1932) was an antiprostitution organization. Such groups saw New York as a modern-day Sodom and Gomorrah, and nightclubs as places for loose women and interracial mixing where girls in particular could be tempted or exploited. According to Carby, protecting the virtue of girls was ultimately a rationale for policing the sexuality of urban black women. Despite ideological differences, these vice commissions and reform organizations had similar goals and aided in the arrests of thousands of New Yorkers.

Another source of policing was the weekly *New York Age*, under the editorship of Fred R. Moore, who took it on himself to lead an assault against Harlem’s cabarets and speakeasies (“hootch joints”). Moore gave front-page coverage to the illegal operations, applied public pressure to the city police and federal Prohibition agents to crack down on law-breaking establishments, and even published the addresses of known speakeasies and cabarets, inviting the police to shut them down. Moore often went to court to testify against nightclubs and try to prevent them from reopening. He and his paper were awarded a special citation of appreciation from the city.

SHANE VOGEL

See also Black and Tan Clubs; Blues; Cotton Club; Fine Clothes to the Jew; Harlem: 3—Entertainment; Home to Harlem; Hot Chocolates; Jazz; Johnson, John Arthur; Jungle Alley; Madden, Owen Vincent “Owney”; New York Age; Nigger Heaven; Nightlife; Primitivism; Small’s Paradise; Vanity Fair; Weary Blues, The; *specific writers, musicians, and entertainers*

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Nightlife

The Harlem Renaissance offered black and white Americans a unique experience. The expression of black culture during the 1920s and 1930s exposed white Americans to the intellectual and artistic ability of blacks. This transference of culture was evident in several ways, but none so obvious as the physical interaction that occurred in the nightclubs, salons, and parties on any given evening in Harlem. Nightlife there was more than illegal liquor served in smoky bars and crowded dance clubs. It was an opportunity for African Americans to interact in a relatively safe environment, and it also gave whites and blacks a chance to mingle socially. Harlem’s nightlife brought blacks and whites together unlike any other venue in the United States.

Life in this black neighborhood was overcrowded, overpriced, and overwhelming. Black migrants from around the country and from every socioeconomic class squeezed into any available living space. Some were educated; some were illiterate. Some were pious; some were not. Black southerners fleeing the “new South” sought better economic, political, and social opportunities; for many, northern cities became a popular destination. Harlem attracted black migrants not only from the South but also from the West, Midwest, and West Indies who were interested in the neighborhood’s growing reputation as a mecca for “New Negroes.”

Manhattan, the artistic center for white Americans, became the same for blacks. Between 1890 and 1930, the number of African American actors, artists, authors, and musicians in the United States nearly tripled. Many ventured to New York City hoping to join an evolving cultural movement: the Harlem Renaissance. Along with Harlem’s development as the center of African American culture, its nightlife became legendary, attracting not only blacks but also whites as participants and onlookers. Some whites wished to absorb black culture, while others were content to be spectators. James Weldon Johnson pointed out in *Black Manhattan* (1930) that most Harlemites did not partake of the nighttime festivities; rather, they were hardworking, law-abiding citizens who were trying to make ends meet and had neither the money nor the inclination to venture into nightclubs. However, some Harlemites and numerous black and white visitors basked in the neon lights of the world-renowned neighborhood.

The area between 125th and 135th streets and Seventh and Lenox avenues in upper Manhattan was the center of Harlem’s nightlife, with cabarets, bars, lounges, ballrooms, taverns, grills, rib joints, and theaters for residents and visitors. Initially, white “slummers” came to Harlem for illegal liquor. Although the Eighteenth Amendment prohibited the manufacture, distribution, and sale of alcohol, illegal liquor was available at numerous establishments throughout New York City. Nightclubs were operated by both blacks and whites; some were businessmen, and some were gangsters. The developing organization of white crime families ensured the availability of liquor.

Harlem’s Nightlife

Liquor was the primary draw for black and white visitors to Harlem in the early 1920s. The Eighteenth

Amendment provided a market for entrepreneurial bootleggers, small-time criminals, and ethnic gangs. In speakeasies, clubs, saloons, and ballrooms, alcohol was available or at least tolerated. A growing interest in African American culture also prompted owners and managers to provide entertainment for their customers.

Nightlife, chronicled in novels such as Carl Van Vechten’s *Nigger Heaven* and Claude McKay’s *Home to Harlem*, attracted many people who were interested in experiencing the vogue of Harlem. Huggins (1971) and some other historians believe that Harlem served as a spectator sport for many whites; for others, it satisfied vices. Besides liquor there were narcotics, gambling, and sex. Harlem’s nighttime establishments included upscale cabarets, dance halls, and theaters as well as seedy bars and cathouses. While the masses danced and drank bootleg booze at clubs, socialites and intellectuals sipped cocktails at salons and private soirees, and truck drivers, domestics, and laborers had less expensive drinks at rent parties. Those interested in games of chance, drugs, and prostitution also met their needs.

Although Harlem was a thriving black neighborhood by day, at night many of its establishments were segregated. At most places, only blacks employed as dancers, musicians, bouncers, and waiters could gain entry. It is estimated that these clubs employed more than 2,000 African Americans in the 1920s. Black customers were often excluded, however, except for famous personalities like Bill “Bojangles” Robinson. The management wanted to appeal to white patrons’ perception of black culture without offending them. Dancers, servers, and musicians were often required to wear costumes that accentuated what whites believed to be the “primitiveness” of African Americans.

Many of the nightspots, like Barron Wilkins’s Exclusive Club and the Cotton Club, did everything possible to project contemporary racial stereotypes and prevent intermingling. Although managed by African Americans, Barron’s did not allow black customers. The white gangster Owen Madden designed the interior of the Cotton Club to suggest a jungle complete with palm trees and vines, and the entertainment had the same theme, with leopard-print costumes and “jungle” dancing and music, all meant to convey eroticism. The Cotton Club’s revues had names such as “Hot Chocolate,” “The Blackberries,” and “Brown Sugar.” Advertisements for the shows were racy, depicting partially clothed black men and women in risqué poses.

Like liquor, jazz drew not only thrill seekers but also white music enthusiasts to Harlem. Jazz was crucial to the growing interest in African American culture during the Harlem Renaissance. It was uniquely American and had evolved from the black community. White musicians and aficionados helped to acculturate jazz and make it part of mainstream America. Privately, musicians played together, passing along techniques. Publicly, bandstands remained segregated until Benny Goodman invited Teddy Wilson and Lionel Hampton to join his band in 1934.

One of the most recognized jazz artists and popular attractions in Harlem was Duke Ellington. Ellington played at the Lafayette Theater, Barron Wilkins's Exclusive Club, and Connie's Inn before becoming the headliner at the Cotton Club in 1927. He composed the "Cotton Club Stomp" as its anthem. On Monday evenings, the Cotton Club broadcast Ellington and the Washingtonians nationally, enhancing the popularity of jazz and the legend of Harlem. Ellington was popular among people of all races. And although he found the Cotton Club's atmosphere degrading at times, he liked its upscale clientele. Some of his peers criticized him for playing "whites-only" music. His sound differed from the New Orleans style, and his song titles—such as "Black Beauty" and "Jungle Night in Harlem"—also drew criticism. To his credit, Ellington was aware of the restrictions placed on African Americans after dark in Harlem, and in 1928 he persuaded the management of the Cotton Club to integrate.

The few nightspots that did not discriminate were very popular with black Harlemites. The Apollo, Lincoln, and Lafayette were among their favorites, as was the Alhambra after it integrated in the mid-1920s. Both the Lybia and Edmond's provided opportunities for new talent while serving as Harlem's most fashionable meeting places. At the Oriental, only whites who were accompanied by black patrons were welcomed. These nightspots were not overrun with white slummers, but rather they served as an escape for Harlemites from the Caucasian invasion. They provided first-rate entertainment.

One very popular integrated establishment was the Savoy, an immense ballroom covering an entire city block on Lenox Avenue. Some African American patrons there carried business cards and offered dance lessons to whites. Often the black dancers performed elaborate routines for the entertainment of the white patrons. The Savoy—one of the largest clubs in Harlem—was decorated with marble staircases and thick carpeting; it had a soda fountain and two stages that allowed the



Broadside advertising appearances at the Apollo Theater by Ruth Brown, the Miles Davis Trio, Thelonious Monk, and Johnny Richards and Band, 1936. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

club to host two bands at once. Some of the biggest names of the period were headliners at the Savoy: Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, and Fletcher Henderson. Edgar Sampson led the club's house band and composed its anthem, "Stompin' at the Savoy."

Another popular form of entertainment in Harlem was concerts, known as "battles," showcasing more than one band. On Wednesday 12 December 1928, the Savoy held a "battle of jazz." Six of the most popular jazz bands in New York played in front of 2,000 spectators for an admission price of eighty-five cents. It was estimated that another 2,000 people were turned away. The participants included Duke Ellington, Ike Dixon, Lockwood Lewis, Charlie Johnson, Arthur Gibbs, and Lloyd Scott. Actually, the occasion was less a battle than a festival. Such engagements were not really competitions but rather an opportunity to bring together top names to play for the excitement and entertainment of the audience—which showed appreciation by dancing, stomping, and cheering. In later years, other venues, like the Rockland Palace, hosted similar events.

Nightclubs, bars, and cafés were not the only meeting places for Harlemites. Private parties were another source of entertainment. Cocktail parties were popular among socialites and intellectuals, and rent parties tended to draw from the working class, although guests at either type of gathering were not limited by economic or social class. Underground institutions catered to more illicit interests in drugs and sex.

Private soirees for the social set often featured cocktails, poetry readings, and discourse on current

events. These gatherings included Harlem's elite but were not exclusive to Harlem; they might be held at the homes of black and white luminaries living in other parts of the city. Young poets, writers, artists, and entertainers were invited to the homes of members of the African American avant-garde such as W. E. B. Du Bois; Jessie Redmon Fauset, the literary editor of *The Crisis*; and the activist Walter White of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). These parties were covered in the social columns of various black newspapers. They provided opportunities for young, struggling artists to mingle with their peers, elders, and potential white patrons.

In 1927, A'Lelia Walker, the heiress to her mother's cosmetics empire, established a salon for these purposes at her town house on 136th Street. It was called the "Dark Tower" after a poem by Countee Cullen and was for a time fashionable among black literati and white socialites. Walker's town house was also used for poetry readings and art exhibits, and she gave lavish parties there. Walker was a very generous hostess, and invitations to her soirees—overflowing with people, liquor, and food—were greatly sought after.

Rent parties in Harlem, held mostly by the working class, offered Harlemites an alternative to crowded dance halls and bars and an escape from white curiosity seekers. These parties, which originated in the South, were used to raise money for living expenses. The host or hostess provided food, drink, and entertainment in exchange for a small fee. Posters hung around the neighborhood announced the date, time, location, and admittance charge—usually twenty-five cents. The liquor was either bought from bootleggers or homemade. The food was popular soul food: fried fish, chitterlings, and greens. Bessie Smith, the "empress of the blues," paid homage to the parties in her song "Give Me a Beer and Another Pig's Foot." The lindy, a popular dance, is sometimes said to have started at a rent party before being immortalized at the Savoy. Few white visitors attended rent parties except as the guests of blacks; in fact, most whites who went slumming were not even aware of these local neighborhood events.

Some residences also served as fronts for illegal activities. A "buffet flat," or after-hours club, was a private home that also provided access to gambling, narcotics, and prostitution. The hosts and hostesses were pimps, madams, and drug dealers. Most of the guests were not Harlemites but out-of-towners—salesmen, truck drivers, and railroad workers passing through and looking for a good time. The entertainment

might center on erotic acts that were said to satisfy any taste. In their songs, both Count Basie and Fats Waller referred to the "Daisy Chain," also known as "101 Ranch," which was infamous for its "sex circus." The local police were usually bribed not to interfere; privately hired bouncers tried to keep the peace.

Harlem's nightlife did not discriminate by sexual orientation. Garber (1990) believes that the Harlem Renaissance marked an important period in gay history. The migration of African Americans into northern neighborhoods and the subsequent attraction of whites to black urban culture helped to delineate gay communities and create a shared consciousness. Gay Harlemites interacted with the larger community at work and church but also maintained their own institutions.

Private parties and cabarets were open to people of all sexual orientations. A'Lelia Walker always invited her gay friends to her soirees. Popular nightspots included the upscale Hot Cha and the Hansberry Clam House. The headliner at the Hot Cha was a female singer in men's clothing. Drag balls were also very popular throughout Harlem, drawing as many as 6,000 people, some of whom were straights who came to gawk. On at least one occasion, the white socialite Carl Van Vechten served as a judge of a drag contest.

Harlem's Nightlife in Literature and Art

Like nightclubs, many theaters in Manhattan remained segregated, and black playwrights had a difficult time having their work taken seriously. During the 1920s, the theme of African American life and culture appeared in only nineteen plays performed in New York City, and only four of these were by black playwrights. Black stage actors compensated by creating their own venues, "little theaters." The actress Rose McClendon also provided opportunities for African Americans. To assist struggling playwrights, she cofounded the Negro People's Theater in Harlem and appeared at the Harlem Suitcase Theater in Langston Hughes's play *Mulatto*.

Several figures of the Harlem Renaissance dealt with Harlem's nightlife in their creative works. Both Langston Hughes and Claude McKay made numerous references to the neighborhood's evening festivities in their poetry. In "Railroad Avenue," Hughes called attention to the "fish joints and pool rooms." In "Harlem Shadows," McKay wrote of women "wandering street to street."

McKay also dealt with Harlem's culture in his controversial novel *Home to Harlem* (1928). The main

character, Jake, returns to Harlem after World War I in search of work, fun, and love, not necessarily in that order. At Uncle Doc's he drinks and shoots pool with his old buddies. Later, Jake stops at Aunt Hattie's basement restaurant for home-cooked food like pork chops and coconut pie. He mentions that Barron's still caters to whites, as does Madame Suarez's buffet flat. Some of the "talented tenth" harshly criticized McKay's portrayal of Harlem's nightlife. They felt that his work exaggerated the uncouth aspects of Harlem and undermined their own attempts to uplift the race.

An earlier novel by Carl Van Vechten—his best seller *Nigger Heaven* (1926)—was similarly criticized. It was both controversial and educational, scandalizing some readers and fascinating others. The protagonist is an aspiring novelist frustrated by the increasing number of whites invading Harlem. His friends bemoan their inability to patronize segregated clubs and theaters. They are incensed by the lack of opportunities for African Americans who are denied jobs by employers more interested in hiring lighter-skinned blacks. Out of sheer frustration, one character decides to pass as white. Van Vechten sought to expose white Americans to Harlem by depicting the various types of people living, working, and partying there. In the novel, he ridiculed white slummers and black loafers while highlighting the frustration of black professionals and working-class people who suffered the consequences of Harlem's popularity.

As with *Home to Harlem*, many of the talented tenth reacted negatively to *Nigger Heaven*. W. E. B. Du Bois and others believed that Van Vechten was making a mockery of Harlem and insulting its residents. Critics cringed at the title itself and Van Vechten's description of the unseemly side of Harlem. Narcotics, gambling, bootleg liquor, and prostitution were all aspects of the neighborhood that many in the talented tenth preferred to ignore. Their hope was to establish African Americans as educated, talented, and sophisticated, and Van Vechten's portrayal did not help their cause.

Like Van Vechten and McKay, Wallace Thurman also immortalized Harlem's nightlife in his novels. In Thurman's *Infants of the Spring* (1932), most of the characters live in a rooming house on 136th Street called "Niggeratti Manor," based on the actual living arrangements of Thurman, Langston Hughes, and other black literati. The residents are modeled on actual people from the generation of the Harlem Renaissance, and the novel parodies their lifestyle. This motley crew consists of would-be artists, musicians, and writers.

Few have any talent, and most are not serious about their art. They spend their days trying to figure out the source and time of their next drink and meal. The rent parties at "Niggeratti Manor" were renowned, and Thurman depicts them in their most basic form—guests are asked to bring groceries. This "donation party" yields canned goods, packages of sugar, and bags of potatoes in return for gin. The guests represent all classes and races: black and white schoolteachers, college boys, lawyers, medical professionals, and socialites. Because many of Harlem's elite also attended rent parties, they too were included in Thurman's satire. Thurman explains that, following an evening of interracial dancing, drinking, and cuddling, guests awoke with a painful racial hangover. In *The Blacker the Berry* (1929), Thurman depicts one party where characters based on himself, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and other black literati discuss race relations with a white friend—to the mortification of the novel's black protagonist, who is astounded by the wild, drunken behavior of the partygoers in front of their white guest.

Harlem's nightlife was also shown in visual art: for example, by Archibald Motley, who painted everyday life in the neighborhood. His *Black Belt* (1934) and *Saturday Night* (1935) depict couples enjoying an evening on the town. In *Black Belt*, couples dressed in evening wear move along the street, a policeman directs traffic, and a man buys a newspaper from a boy as a driver waits in a taxi. In *Saturday Night*, patrons of a nightclub enjoy the music, dance, and smoke cigarettes. Motley's *The Liar* (1936) is set in a pool hall where men gather to hear each other's exploits. Motley was interested in the reality of black life in the city, including its nighttime forays.

Whether in life, fiction, or art, Harlem was an extraordinary place. It was the "Negro mecca" because of its attraction for people from different regions, classes, occupations, and races. It provided Harlemites with economic, social, and cultural opportunities. For visitors, it was entertaining and hip. It came to epitomize the jazz age with its cabarets, speakeasies, and clubs. In Harlem, there was something for everyone.

AMY CARREIRO

See also Cotton Club; Harlem: 3—Entertainment; Home to Harlem; Homosexuality; House-Rent Parties; Infants of the Spring; Jazz; McClendon, Rose; Motley, Archibald J. Jr.; Nigger Heaven; Nightclubs; Organized Crime; Savoy Ballroom; Talented Tenth; Walker, A'Lelia; *specific writers, musicians, and entertainers*

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Not without Laughter

Langston Hughes's novel *Not without Laughter* (1930) uses a deceptively simple coming-of-age narrative to dramatize the intellectual concerns of the Harlem Renaissance, while it also celebrates the vitality of ordinary African American life.

Set in Kansas between 1912 and 1919, the novel traces the maturation of James "Sandy" Williams from adolescence into young adulthood amid changes in black American political and cultural life. Sandy—the only child of Anjee, a domestic worker, and Jimboy, an itinerant laborer and blues singer—grows up in a matriarchal, multigenerational household, raised predominantly by his mother, his young aunt Harriett, and his grandmother Hager, while his father pursues work in other cities. The book is episodic in structure, presenting Sandy's development through a series of events that include his movement from an all-black to an integrated classroom, his sudden understanding of Jim Crow's insidious effects after not being allowed

into a carnival, and his initiation into working life when he takes his first job. As these episodes progress, Sandy becomes aware of the vicissitudes and inequities of American racial politics and the various approaches African Americans take to redress them. Throughout, Hughes dramatizes the tension between "New Negro" assertiveness and "traditional" black American strategies of accommodation, most clearly through conflict between the free-spirited and self-possessed Harriett, who resists convention to pursue a career as a blues singer, and the novel's redoubtable matriarch, Hager, who has unwavering faith in God and a commitment to Christian morality.

As Hughes himself acknowledged, Sandy is an autobiographical character. But the supporting cast and the milieu differ from Hughes's own family life and immediate experience. As Hughes recalled in *The Big Sea* (1940), he wished to create characters removed from his own storied genealogy (which included the abolitionist Charles Langston and the black congressman John Mercer Langston) and instead base his fictional family on more "typical" families he had known as a boy in the Midwest. The novel's cultural fabric, though, with its detailed representations of African American folk expression and community, was influenced by Hughes's travels through the South in the summer of 1927. Hughes had been invited to read his poems at Fisk University in June, and he decided to tour the southern states afterward. Encouraged by Zora Neale Hurston, he used this trip to explore the wealth of southern black folk material. Hurston, who was collecting material for the folklorist Franz Boas, accompanied Hughes for part of the journey as he educated himself in folk blues, backwoods church services, and the practice of "conjure." Rampersad (1986) notes that Hughes expressed amazement at the joy evinced by the presumably subjugated black southerners he encountered. Through his exposure to the "living culture" of southern blacks, Hughes was convinced of its potential for social cohesion and political reparation, both of which were to figure significantly in *Not without Laughter*.

Indeed, in its reverential attention to African American communal expressivity—men signifying in a barber shop; teenagers moving to a ragtime band at a community dance; neighbors improvising blues between their yards on a summer night—*Not without Laughter* anticipates later black American novels that celebrate community, such as Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) and Albert Murray's *Train*

Whistle Guitar (1974). Hughes's attention to blues in *Not without Laughter*, specifically through Jimboy (who improvises folk verses on his guitar) and Harriett (who becomes a successful blues singer rather like Bessie Smith), complements his use of the blues form in his early poetry collections *The Weary Blues* (1926) and *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927). For the characters in *Not without Laughter*, blues can be an outlet for social commentary. This is the expressive mode that Jimboy and Harriett use; for Harriett, who becomes a successful blues singer, there are material rewards as well.

Although the novel criticizes the injustices that result from Jim Crow and presents strategies for black resistance, it also examines class hierarchies within the African American community. Another African American novelist, George S. Schuyler, reviewing *Not without Laughter* for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, said: "More than a novel, it is a social document, an epic on the sable lowly that white American and bourgeois black American look down upon" (quoted in Dace 1997). Hughes dramatizes intraracial class tension through the character of Tempy, with whom Sandy lives for a time near the novel's conclusion. Tempy, Hager's eldest daughter, is a superior woman who has married into middle-class privilege and treats her family with veiled disdain. Tempy actively supports racial advancement through education and cultural refinement, but she is an ambiguous figure because of her contempt for the "too Negro" folk forms—blues, spirituals, ragtime—that Hughes champions. Tempy's scorn suggests Hughes's critique of the black bourgeoisie, which he considered myopic with regard to folk expression. Graham (1993) remarks that *Not without Laughter* reveals Hughes's twofold commitment to class awareness and aesthetic concerns. In dramatizing reactions to black folk culture, he is able both to support that culture and to condemn the ideology that cannot appreciate it.

Not without Laughter is also significant for having led to the formalization of Hughes's three-year relationship with his patron, Charlotte Osgood Mason. Determined to see Hughes complete a novel, Mason offered to pay him \$150 a month so that he could work on a project of that length. The offer promised security for Hughes, who had been supporting himself somewhat haphazardly at Lincoln University through royalties from his poetry collections *The Weary Blues* and *Fine Clothes to the Jew*. However, although the arrangement did relieve Hughes of some financial anxieties, it also seems to have impeded his creative vision at times. Shields (1994) has argued that Mason influenced Hughes's revisions considerably as *Not without Laughter* made its

way from manuscript to published text. Reconstructing the novelist's intentions from the manuscript and from unpublished letters, Shields suggests that Mason's benevolence entailed undue censorship, aimed at suppressing Hughes's "increasingly strong left-wing political notions in the novel." Even if the published version does not approach the socialist document that the writer seems to have planned, however, *Not without Laughter* does stand as one of the most politically intriguing novels of the Harlem Renaissance.

MICHAEL BORSHUK

See also Boas, Franz; *Fine Clothes to the Jew*; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; Mason, Charlotte Osgood; *Pittsburgh Courier*; Schuyler, George S.; *Weary Blues*, The

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Nugent, Richard Bruce

Richard Bruce Nugent is a valuable source of information about the Harlem Renaissance and also played a significant role in the movement as a writer and artist. Nugent first arrived in New York in the early 1920s, when he and his younger brother joined their widowed mother. At that point, the Harlem Renaissance

was already under way, but Nugent—who was working as a delivery boy and bellhop and entering an art apprenticeship—did not yet discover it. He did, though, explore avant-garde circles in Greenwich Village, both sexually and artistically.

In New York in 1924, at age nineteen, Nugent decided to become an artist. This decision prompted his mother to send him home to Washington, where he immediately entered other artistic circles that were indirectly connected to the Harlem Renaissance. Nugent started attending the literary salons of the African American poet Georgia Douglas Johnson; at these salons he made contact with Washington's intellectual elite. It was in Washington that Nugent first met Alain Locke, a leading figure in the Harlem Renaissance who taught at Howard University, and also one of the young stars of the renaissance, Langston Hughes. His friendship with Hughes paved Nugent's way to the core of the movement; his initiation, in 1925, was at the Krigwa Awards ceremony, where he became acquainted with other the central figures of the renaissance, including W. E. B. Du Bois and Carl Van Vechten.

Whereas most other young artists involved in the movement aimed at a career, Nugent chose a bohemian existence. He was one of the few artists of the Harlem Renaissance who established close contact with the white avant-garde, crossing Harlem's boundaries and regularly visiting Greenwich Village. He also stood out as perhaps the only figure of the renaissance who openly displayed his homosexuality. Nugent was familiar with sexologists' works on homosexuality and seems to have embraced what could be described as a positively defined queer identity. In retrospect, he accepted the term "gay" to describe his sexual orientation. Nugent was also well known for his striking dress and mannerisms—Van Vechten once described Nugent arriving at a party "with his usual open chest and uncovered ankles. I suppose soon he will be going without trousers" (1987, 96). Nugent was almost always without any financial means, and at the height of the Harlem Renaissance he lived with another enfant terrible of the movement, Wallace Thurman, whose home at 267 West 136th Street was known for wild parties and a general state of drunken chaos. Nugent's own creative process fit in with this environment. He recalled writing on paper bags and toilet paper. Characteristically, Hughes once had to retrieve Nugent's poem "Shadow" (later published in *Opportunity* in 1925) from a wastebasket where it had been discarded because it looked like trash. Nugent proceeded the same way with his art, even though he apparently

favored drawing over writing: He lost or destroyed many of his artworks or simply gave them away.

Nevertheless, Nugent managed to get his work into the major publications of the Harlem Renaissance: His short story "Sahdji" was featured in Locke's anthology *The New Negro* (1925); his poems and drawings were published in *Opportunity* and also in *Ebony and Topaz* (1927); and he famously contributed the piece "Smoke, Lilies, and Jade," the first openly homoerotic story published by an African American, to the controversial magazine *Fire!!* (1926). His work was outstanding in style and content. Whereas other writers of the renaissance frequently focused on matters of race, Nugent concentrated on beauty and aesthetics, playing with color contrasts. He often adopted a decadent style, and he also challenged his readers with formal devices such as the elliptical stream of consciousness in "Smoke, Lilies, and Jade." Nugent's drawings testify to an aesthetic heritage harking back to Aubrey Beardsley and Erté, yet with African motifs blended in. With regard to theme and content, the works he created during the renaissance include a wide variety of topics that range from the African themes in "Sahdji" to his collection of Bible stories in the late 1920s. His large body of work also includes the novel "Geisha Man" (which has a Japanese theme) and his autobiographical account of the Harlem Renaissance years, "Gentleman Jigger," appended to Wallace Thurman's *Infants of the Spring* (1932). Homosexuality is a frequent theme in Nugent's work and was a significant factor in his overall comparatively poor publishing record; it was also the reason why Nugent almost never gave his full name in his publications. His mother accepted his sexual orientation but stipulated that he was not to publicly "disgrace" the family name.

More than any other artist of the Harlem Renaissance, Nugent was active in almost all cultural areas—writing, drawing, and even acting during the period of the renaissance and afterward. He was, for instance, in the cast of the successful play *Porgy*, which had a Broadway run and traveled to England in early 1929. Much later, Nugent experienced his own renaissance: In the early 1970s he was discovered as a resource on the Harlem Renaissance, and in the early 1980s he was used as a source of information on gay history. In 1981, Thomas H. Wirth, a collector of African American literature, met and befriended Nugent—a significant event, as they not only arranged and compiled various interviews but also established a Nugent collection. (The Richard Bruce Nugent Papers are in the private collection of Wirth in Elizabeth, New Jersey.)

Biography

Richard Bruce Nugent (Richard Bruce) was born in 1906 in Washington, D.C. He attended Dunbar High School. In the early 1920s he came to New York, where he worked as a delivery boy for Youmans Hats and as a bellhop at the Martha Washington Hotel; was an apprentice at the catalog house of Stone, Van Dresser; and took art classes at the New York Evening School of Industrial Arts and at Traphagen School of Fashion. He was an actor in *Porgy*, 1927–1930; worked for the WPA Writers' Project, late 1930s; was involved in the Negro Ballet Company, late 1940s; married Grace Marr, December 1952; and was a cofounder of the Harlem Cultural Council, late 1960s. Nugent's wife died in 1969. Nugent died of congestive heart failure, 27 May 1987.

A. B. CHRISTS SCHWARTZ

See also *Ebony and Topaz*; *Fire!!*; Harlem Renaissance in the United States: 9—Washington, D.C.; Homosexuality; Hughes, Langston; *Infants of the Spring*; Johnson, Georgia Douglas; Locke, Alain; *New Negro*, The; *Opportunity*; *Porgy*: Play; Thurman, Wallace; Van Vechten, Carl

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Numbers Racket

The numbers racket is a system of "policy" gambling in which people wager on a three-digit number, with the winning number each day corresponding to a particular stock report—such as the volume of shares traded on the New York Stock Exchange—printed in a newspaper. "Policy," which refers to all games in which numbers are used to determine the winners, was a socially accepted form of gambling that united many sectors of African American and Latino communities in urban areas, particularly at the height of its popularity during the 1920s and 1930s. Numbers specifically generated a livelihood for both players and operators in areas that did not have access to legitimate commercial institutions such as banks, credit associations, and loans and realty enterprises that typically excluded minorities. Although the average player never struck it rich in the numbers, many black

policy bankers became rich enough to contribute to philanthropic enterprises that helped better the community at large, thereby sustaining the goal of self-determination that was popular during the “New Negro” movement.

Numbers (in Spanish, *la bolita*) as we know it today originated among Afro-Caribbean immigrants and took hold in Harlem, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, and other urban locales with a high concentration of African Americans. Players could place bets at any number of local establishments, including pool halls, barber shops, beauty parlors, convenience stores, newsstands, and dry cleaning stores. Neighborhood “runners” (bet collectors) would gather the bets and then turn over the number slips and money to a controller, who kept the accounts tabulated and who generally oversaw a dozen or so runners. Finally, the controller reported to a banker who paid off the winners.

This form of gambling served a number of economic and cultural purposes, especially in African American communities. Players often had long-term plans for any winnings they earned; thus, for them, policy was a form of savings and investment, albeit a somewhat illusory one. Most people bet daily with small amounts of money (as little as a penny) that they would not or could not deposit in traditional bank accounts because of institutionalized racism and lack of access to banks. Although a significant portion of a family’s income typically went into betting—usually with little or no return on the investment—numbers gambling was often the only viable economic institution for urbanites who were black, poor, or both.

In minority communities, no social stigma was attached to playing numbers; moreover, numbers was not seen as a vice of poor or immoral individuals, but was tacitly and publicly sanctioned throughout the community. Numbers and other forms of policy were managed by individuals, many of them not career criminals but middle-class professionals who owned other, legitimate businesses. Numbers was such a communal pastime that it infiltrated peoples’ dreams (literally and figuratively), had an impact on small businesses, and even overlapped with other popular activities such as sports. In order to determine lucky numbers, some players referred to dream books that listed a three-digit number for every symbol found in a dream. These books could be purchased in small shops in black neighborhoods or in *botanicas* in Spanish-speaking neighborhoods. A day’s event that was significant to minorities (e.g., a baseball star’s batting average), however, could determine the most popular number played.

Although policy was (and remains) illegal, it was played openly throughout the 1920s, especially in Harlem, and few operators feared arrest or violent repercussions. Initially, white gangsters dismissed the numbers racket as a penny game for the poor and referred to it as a “nigger pool.” Consequently, operators and bankers—who were mainly black and Latino—developed the institution freely and with no scrutiny by whites. Casper Holstein, a West Indian, is often credited with originating numbers policy in Harlem and was considered the foremost “policy king” of his day. In fact, Carl Van Vechten based a fictional character in his popular novel *Nigger Heaven* (1926) on Holstein: Randolph Pettijohn, the “bolita king.” From his earnings, Holstein provided funds to build Harlem’s first Elks Lodge. He also financially supported the literary contests in the Urban League’s *Opportunity* magazine and donated thousands of dollars to charity. In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Sonnyman Johnson, a numbers man, helped fund the Homestead Grays, an all-black baseball team, and Gus Greenlee purchased Greenlee Field, the first black-owned field, with the money he made from the numbers. Other successful bankers include Madame Stephanie St. Clair, a West Indian migrant known as the “policy queen” of Harlem; Jose Enrique Miro, a Puerto Rican; and Joseph Mathias Ison, another West Indian.

At the end of Prohibition, many whites who were former bootleggers directed their attention to the numbers racket and successfully pushed out the mostly black operators, frequently using violence. Dutch Schultz, a prominent Jewish gangster of Harlem, is perhaps the most prominent example. During the 1920s, the racket in Harlem was divided into smaller syndicates and lacked big bankers who could handle a large “hit” (win). Schultz capitalized on this fracturing and forcefully attempted to control the numbers market. His tactics temporarily sent Madame St. Clair into hiding, but most bankers succumbed to Schultz, who eventually consolidated the fragmented syndicates and made the industry even more profitable. Most black policy controllers lacked the political clout and police contacts necessary to protect their interests in the racket, and by 1935 the highest echelon of African American bankers had been driven out. Blacks in Chicago, who were better organized politically, maintained their hold until the early 1950s.

State-sanctioned lottery games have since replaced numbers gambling; however, numbers runners figure prominently in African American literature and film, such as Julian Mayfield’s *The Hit* (1957), Robert Deane

Numbers Racket

Pharr's *The Book of Numbers* (1969), Louise Meriwether's *Daddy Was a Numbers Runner* (1971), and in the collected works of Chester Himes and the playwright August Wilson. Generally speaking, these texts illuminate the communal nature of the racket, but they also indict the racist economic forces that allowed such gambling to persist. These literary representations testify to the ongoing cultural resonance of the numbers racket.

LA TONYA MILES

See also Holstein, Casper; Nigger Heaven; Opportunity Literary Contests; Organized Crime; Van Vechten, Carl

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Oliver, Joseph “King”

Joseph “King” Oliver was a pioneer of the New Orleans jazz style. After leaving New Orleans for Chicago around 1918, he was the generating force and initiator of the important King Oliver Creole Jazz Band, to which Louis Armstrong was a major contributor.

According to Allen and Rust (1987), Oliver’s musical life can be divided into several periods. The first period, 1908–1918, was in New Orleans. The most important group Oliver played with during this time was the Kid Ory Band, and it was Ory who nicknamed Oliver “King.” The second period, 1918–1921, was in Chicago. The third period, called the California period, was in 1921–1922. This was a brief venture with Ory, but Oliver did have the good fortune to play with the Jelly Roll Morton Band in California. (Incidentally, in 1921, Kid Ory’s band made the first recording by African American jazz artists.) The fourth period, again in Chicago, was 1922–1924. Fifth was a touring period from 1924 to about 1927. Oliver’s sixth period, 1927–1931, was in New York. His seventh and final period, 1931–1938, is called the touring years; this was a troublesome time with only a few bright spots.

Oliver’s heyday extended from the time of Buddy Bolden, a cornetist turned trumpeter who was legendary in New Orleans, through the time of Freddie Keppard and finally the master, Louis Armstrong. Oliver stood out as the best cornetist-trumpeter of his day and was Armstrong’s idol. When Freddie Keppard left Oliver’s band in 1922, Oliver immediately sent a telegram to Armstrong, offering him a job. At that time Oliver was in Chicago, and Armstrong later said

that he would not have left New Orleans for anyone else but Oliver. Armstrong considered Oliver his mentor, had great respect for him, and called him “Papa Joe.”

This strategic move by Oliver may be considered to have begun the flowering of the Creole Jazz Band. The ensemble became the focal point of jazz in Chicago, as a number of excellent recordings attest; it was the envy of the jazz world. Perhaps especially because of its two masterful cornetists, the group attracted many members of the jazz community of Chicago, among them Bix Beiderbecke and Paul Whiteman, who would come to hear the Creole Jazz Band night after night, following their own gigs, and try to figure out exactly what made it unique. They were particularly impressed by the improvised cornet breaks and by the idea of double improvisation between Oliver and Armstrong, who improvised without interrupting the flow of the music or disrupting the rest of the ensemble; many listeners thought that there must have been some kind of secret agreement between the two cornetists and the group. At this time, in addition to Oliver and Armstrong on cornets, the Creole Jazz Band included Johnny Dodds on clarinet and his brother Baby Dodds on drums; Honore Dutrey on trombone; and Lil Hardin, piano (and in 1923, Bill Johnson on bass). All the musicians in the ensemble knew exactly what they were expected to do; they were also able to anticipate what would happen throughout a piece, so that they could keep the perfect balance for which they were noted. Baby Dodds later said of Oliver’s band: “That outfit had more harmony and feeling of brotherly love than any I ever worked with. . . . We worked to make music,

and we played music to make people like it" (Gara 1992). The ensemble had a marvelous spirit of freedom and spontaneity but also maintained responsible, balanced control of the musical texture. It was also one of the first named groups to record the New Orleans jazz style, in a series of milestone recordings in 1923. The most memorable side was probably "Dippermouth Blues" (with King Oliver and Louis Armstrong on cornets, Johnny Dodds on clarinet, Honore Dutrey on trombone, Lil Hardin on piano, Bud Scott on banjo and vocal break, and Baby Dodds on drums). These recordings are considered an important part of the jazz tradition and legacy.

In 1924, Oliver wanted to tour with his band, but the Dodds brothers and Dutrey did not want to tour, and only Armstrong and Hardin decided to go. This split was evidently due to certain financial improprieties on Oliver's part. Baby Dodds notes that he instigated the breakup, mainly because he and the others felt that Oliver was handling income and payments unfairly and that there was no proper accountability—in other words, that they were not getting their fair share of the profits. Immediately after the breakup, Oliver restructured the group and named it the Dixie Syncopators. This new ensemble (sometimes also called the Dixielanders) toured first in the Midwest and later throughout the United States. Also around 1924, Armstrong left Oliver to join Fletcher Henderson's band. (And in February 1924, Armstrong and Hardin were married.) At this time, a movement was under way from collective improvisation (music making) to the premier art of solo playing, and Armstrong was emerging as the leading solo artist.

For Oliver's group, touring proved to be laborious and stressful. Moreover, touring led to continual changes of personnel, and as a result the ensemble became less distinctive and therefore less influential. Although Oliver still had high standards and still chose talented players, bookings became fewer and fewer. The band did have an engagement at the famous Savoy Ballroom in New York in 1927, however. During this period, Oliver was asked to lead a band at the new Cotton Club, but he refused the position, which then went to Duke Ellington. (Turning this job down was poor judgment on Oliver's part, since the Cotton Club, of course, went on to become famous.)

In 1928, although his health had been failing for some time and his day as a musical powerhouse was past, Oliver was able to get an excellent recording contract with Victor Records. But he was still hampered by mismanagement, by poor musical decisions, by his

own reluctance to extend his musical growth into the jazz revival movement, and by his worsening health, which made it difficult for him to blow into his instrument and caused him great distress. At one point Louis Armstrong—on tour in Savannah, Georgia—encountered Oliver by chance on the street; seeing the condition of his former mentor, Armstrong bought Oliver clothes and gave him money. Oliver was then a janitor in a pool hall, just barely existing. He died in Savannah, penniless and obscure, in 1938. Oliver's sister, Victoria Davis, who had been like a mother to him when he was a youngster, used her rent money to bring his body to New York for burial. She also gave up her own plot in Woodlawn Cemetery for him.

Biography

Joseph "King" Oliver was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1885. During his period in New Orleans he played with Kid Ory. Oliver worked in Chicago in 1918–1921, in California in 1921–1922, and again in Chicago in 1922–1924; during this time, the King Oliver Creole Jazz Band became the envy of the jazz world and was the first named jazz group to make historic recordings (1923–1924). Oliver toured from 1924 to about 1927, then worked in the New York area in 1927–1931 but lost a chance to play at the new Cotton Club. His final touring period was 1931–1938. Oliver, who is considered the first major solo cornetist, died in Savannah, Georgia, 10 April 1938.

MALCOLM BREDA

See also Armstrong, Louis; Jazz; Morton, Jelly Roll; Music; Musicians; Ory, Edward "Kid"; Savoy Ballroom

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On Trial

On Trial (1914), by the white playwright Elmer Rice (Elmer Leopold Reizenstein), is a courtroom melodrama incorporating flashbacks. This was Rice's first successful production; it opened at the Candler Theater in New York on 14 August 1914; was an immediate hit with audiences and critics; was hailed as the first American play to use the flashback technique; ran for 365 performances at the Candler; and, along with subsequent productions, proved a financial windfall for Rice.

On Trial opens in a courtroom as the final juror in the murder trial of Robert Strickland is being chosen. Strickland has been accused of killing a prosperous businessman, his associate Gerald Trask, and attempting to steal \$10,000 from the victim. Through flashbacks during the testimony, the jurors, others in the courtroom, and the audience attending the play learn the real circumstances behind Trask's murder. Strickland planned to move with his wife, May, and daughter, Doris, to Cleveland, in an effort to begin anew after failed business deals in New York. He settled a debt of \$10,000 with Trask but later discovered that Trask, a married philanderer, had taken advantage of May when she was a girl. Strickland shoots and kills Trask after interrupting an attempt by Stanley Glover (Trask's secretary) to steal the \$10,000 from the safe in the library at Trask's home. All this information emerges from testimony by Glover, Joan Trask (Gerald Trask's wife), Doris, and May, which is enacted onstage in flashback scenes.

Although the flashback was common in movies of the time, *On Trial* was the first recorded American stage production to use it. Rice had first read about the flashback technique in an article in the magazine *Bookman* by Clayton Hamilton, who was a drama critic and a lecturer on theater at Columbia University. Intrigued by the concept of moving a play backward in time, Rice decided that a trial would be the perfect setting for achieving flashbacks in a believable manner. He developed the story involving the specific characters in *On Trial* after concentrating on ways to do this. A "jackknife" stage—two platforms that pivoted like

knife blades—allowed the quick shifts from the courtroom to the flashbacks. Arthur Hopkins, the producer of *On Trial*, had remembered the jackknife stage from plays he had seen in Europe and worked with Rice to use it in *On Trial*.

Rice was a radical and a socialist. However, *On Trial*, as a melodrama, exemplifies the popular fare that he would continue to write and produce in order to make money. The Lafayette Players, an African American theater group in Harlem, staged a production of *On Trial*, one of a number of successful plays by white authors that the group produced from 1916 to 1923.

Elmer Rice's best-known and most critically acclaimed plays were an expressionistic work, *The Adding Machine* (1923), and a naturalist work, *Street Scene* (1929). Rice won a Pulitzer Prize for *Street Scene*, which he adapted in the 1940s into a musical with lyrics by Langston Hughes and a score by Kurt Weill.

HEATHER MARTIN

See also Hughes, Langston; Lafayette Players

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135th Street Library

During the Harlem Renaissance, the 135th Street Branch of the New York Public Library, at 103 West 135th Street, was a site of intense artistic, educational, and cultural activity and a gathering place for artists, historians, intellectuals, and writers. The library also purchased Arthur Schomburg's collection of materials

on black culture in 1926 and greatly augmented it over the years.

The 135th Street Library—a three-story neoclassical limestone building—was designed by the architect Charles F. McKim of McKim, Mead, and White; opened on 14 January 1905; and was designated a landmark in 1981. It was one of the early branches in the New York Public Library system, and it was a typical example—with the adult circulation area on the first floor, a children’s room on the second floor, and an adult reading room on the third floor.

By the 1920s, the demographics in Harlem had changed dramatically, so that 50 percent of the population consisted of people of African descent from the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa. Accordingly, Ernestine Rose, a white librarian from Bridgehampton, Long Island, was appointed head librarian at the 135th Street Library and was asked to adapt it to the new needs of the community. Rose recognized the importance of developing a collection of black literature and history, and of sponsoring art exhibitions and literary discussions. She also believed in having an integrated staff, and she hired the first black librarian in the New York Public Library system, Christine Allen Latimer, and the first Puerto Rican library assistant, Pura Belpré White (who was also black), to serve the Spanish-speaking population.

The 135th Street Library also had a group of other librarians and volunteers, including Regina M. Anderson, Roberta Bosely, Gwendolyn Bennett, Jessie Redmon Fauset, and Ethel Ray Nance, who helped organize readings of poetry and drama and discussions of books. Countee Cullen regularly gave readings of his poetry at this library; Nella Larsen was employed there; and a work area was set aside where Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Eric Walrond, and others could do research and writing. Weekly lectures on black history at the library were organized by Hubert Harrison, who also encouraged the public to borrow books on relevant topics.

The children’s floor was considered very advanced, with the best resources and with librarians and assistants whose activities included dramatic storytelling and the organization of reading clubs to introduce children to black literature. Areas of this floor were reserved for art and literature programs, in which the artists Romare Bearden and Jacob Lawrence and the writers Langston Hughes and James Baldwin were involved.

The 135th Street Library held its first large exhibition of works by black artists from 1 August to 30 September 1921. This exhibition, organized by Augustus Granville

Dill, included some 200 paintings and sculptures and was the start of a series of annual exhibitions. (W. E. B. Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, and Arthur Schomburg were on the planning committees.) Over the years, artists such as Laura Wheeler Waring, Louise Latimer, William Ernest Braxton, and Albert Smith participated in these exhibits; and Hale Woodruff and Aaron Douglas had solo shows. Exhibitions of African sculpture were organized by Alain Locke, and Schomburg assisted with exhibits of books, prints, and manuscripts.

In 1924, a citizens’ committee—whose elected officers were Schomburg, Johnson, Harrison, and John Nail—decided to remove the rarest materials from circulation and create a special “Negro” reference library. To add to this collection, donations and loans of books, journals, and prints were solicited from the private libraries of individuals such as John Bruce, Louise Latimer, Harrison, George Young, Charles D. Martin, and Schomburg. From this initial effort, a Division of Negro Literature, History, and Prints was developed; it opened on 8 May 1925. In 1926, a \$10,000 grant from Andrew Carnegie allowed the New York Public Library to augment the existing material by purchasing Schomburg’s personal collection, which consisted of more than 10,000 volumes, manuscripts, pamphlets, etchings, and other items by and about black people, in many languages. The enlarged collection opened with considerable fanfare on 14 January 1927; it was said to be the largest collection of its kind made available to the public, and it received notices in *Amsterdam News*, *Opportunity*, and the *New York Times*.

By now the 135th Street Library had become the cultural center of Harlem. Moreover, it was in close proximity to major institutions such as Harlem General Hospital, the YMCA and YWCA, a large elementary school, and two of the largest churches in Harlem. Schomburg continued to add to its collection, worked as an unpaid consultant and buyer, participated in staff meetings, taught young scholars, and in general lent his expertise. He also served as an adviser to performing groups that met in the library, such as the Krigwa Players and the Negro Little Theater—precursors of the American Negro Theater, which would be founded in the library’s basement in 1940.

During the Great Depression, the 135th Street Library faced declining budgets and the deterioration of the building, and it had to curtail its services; it continued its role as a literary and cultural center, however. In 1932, funding from the Carnegie Corporation, Andrew Carnegie, and the American Association for Adult

Education allowed the formation of a program called the Harlem Experiment in Community Adult Education and permitted the library to hire Schomburg as curator of the collection of the Division of Negro Literature, History, and Prints, a position he held until his death in 1938. The Harlem Workshop, with assistance from the 135th Street Library through the Harlem Adult Education Committee, was formed in 1933 to teach art to the public under the directorship of James Lesesne Wells, a graphic artist and art teacher from Howard University. In 1934, the library, with sponsorship from the Public Works Administration, commissioned Aaron Douglas to create four works for its walls; these murals are called *Aspects of Negro Life*. The library also encouraged additional exhibitions and public presentations.

After Schomburg's death, Lawrence Dunbar Reddick took over his curatorship. A memorial service for Schomburg was held at the library on 8 June 1939; the following year, Reddick recommended that the Division of Negro History, Literature, and Prints be renamed the Schomburg Collection of Negro History and Literature. Although continually plagued by insufficient budgets, inadequate staffing, and poor physical facilities, the Schomburg Collection continued to grow in the 1940s through donations and purchases. Finally, it outgrew its space in the library; in 1980, a large new building on Lenox Avenue between 135th and 136th streets was constructed and named the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. This structure would eventually be connected to the original landmark building. The Schomburg Center is now one of the research libraries of the New York Public Library, devoted to "collecting, preserving, and providing access to resources documenting the experiences of peoples of African descent throughout the world, with emphasis on blacks in the Western Hemisphere."

CLAUDIA HILL

See also Anderson, Regina M.; Bearden, Romare; Bennett, Gwendolyn; Cullen, Countee; Douglas, Aaron; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Harrison, Hubert; Hughes, Langston; Krigwa Players; Larsen, Nella; Lawrence, Jacob; McKay, Claude; Nance, Ethel Ray; Schomburg, Arthur A.; Walrond, Eric; Waring, Laura Wheeler; Woodruff, Hale; *other specific individuals*

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O'Neill, Eugene

Eugene O'Neill, considered one of America's great modern playwrights, played an important though controversial role in the development of African American theater by introducing black actors and new black themes to American theater during the Harlem Renaissance. O'Neill, by casting black actors in serious roles, was the first white author to break through the racial barrier in New York's theaters. Before O'Neill, black actors had appeared on Broadway mainly if not only as stock minstrel figures; the occasional serious roles for black characters were performed by white actors in blackface. Although O'Neill used an all-black cast as early as 1918, in *The Dreamy Kid*, it was *The Emperor Jones* (1920) and *All God's Chillun Got Wings* (1923) that catapulted O'Neill and his leading black actors—Charles Gilpin and Paul Robeson—into national attention.

The Emperor Jones tells the tale of Brutus Jones, a black American Pullman porter with a criminal past,

who rises to power on a West Indian island by exercising the predatory will to overpower white capitalists and by playing on the islanders' superstition. The islanders rebel, however, and when Jones hides in the jungle he encounters spectral visions not only of his own past, but of the slave auction block, the middle passage, and Africa. Over the course of the evening, Jones sheds all signs of civilization and becomes what one reviewer called a "hysterical and crouching savage" before he is killed by the islanders.

White reviewers responded almost entirely favorably, in no small part because of Gilpin's extraordinary performance. The reaction from black reviewers was mixed; many were angry at Gilpin for his willingness to participate in what they considered the play's racist theme—that all blacks are essentially primitive, despite a veneer of "white" culture. The reviewer for the militant Garveyite publication *Negro World* wrote: "To be sure it is pronounced a great play by the critics, but they are white, and will pronounce anything good that has white supremacy as its theme. . . . We imagine that if Mr. Gilpin is an intelligent and loyal Negro his heart must ache and rebel within him as he is forced to belie his race" (17 May 1921, quoted in Krasner 1995). Langston Hughes recalled in his autobiography, *The Big Sea* (1940), that when the play was staged in Harlem, the black audience "naturally . . . howled with laughter. . . . They shouted at Jones to 'come on out o' that jungle—back to Harlem where you belong'" (quoted in Cooley 1989, 16). Many prominent black intellectuals approved of the play, though, mainly because, in its attempt to deal with the "black psyche," it seemed to promise new horizons for black themes and actors. The drama critic Montgomery Gregory expressed a sentiment shared by many: "*The Emperor Jones*, written by O'Neill, interpreted by Gilpin, and produced by the Provincetown players, will tower as a beacon-light of inspiration" (quoted in Krasner).

All God's Chillun Got Wings violated a taboo: It describes an interracial marriage that is devastated by the implacable forces of racism. Jim Harris—a hard-working and studious black man who repeatedly fails the bar exam—marries Ella, a poor white woman from the slums whom he has known since childhood. Ella is emotionally unstable, and in her weaker moments her deep-seated racism surfaces in vicious attacks, emotional and physical, against her husband. The play ends with the couple sharing a hallucinatory regression to childhood, a time when they seemed innocent of racism's destructive power. The play caused a considerable scandal even before it opened. In one

scene, the white actress playing Ella—Mary Blair—was supposed to kiss the hand of Paul Robeson, the actor who played her husband. When this was reported, there were numerous threats of violence from the Ku Klux Klan and others against O'Neill, his family, and the actors. The Society for the Suppression of Vice and the mayor of New York City attempted to have the play closed; they were unsuccessful, but the city did manage, by invoking child labor laws, to ban the child actors from performing in the first scene.

Some black leaders objected to what they considered racism in *All God's Chillun Got Wings* (for example, at one point Jim expresses his desire to be Ella's "black slave") and also thought it would have an ill effect on race relations. Adam Clayton Powell Sr., for example, said that the play seemed to corroborate the white supremacists' fantasy that access to education and money would encourage black men to marry white women (Black 1999, 301). However, W. E. B. Du Bois considered this work a model for black playwrights who, in his opinion, refused to depict African Americans realistically for fear of contributing to antiblack propaganda:

Happy is the artist that breaks through any of these shells, for his is the king[dom] of eternal beauty. He will come through scarred, and perhaps a little embittered—certainly astonished at the almost universal misinterpretation of his motives and aims. Eugene O'Neill is bursting through. He has my sympathy, for his soul must be lame with the blows rained upon him. But it is work that must be done. (quoted in Musser 1998, 86–87)

Alain Locke concurred with Du Bois, declaring that "the fine collaboration of white American artists. . . has helped in the bringing of the materials of Negro life out of the shambles of conventional polemics, cheap romance and journalism into the domain of pure and unbiased art" (1925, 14).

O'Neill's plays were frequently produced by many of the best black dramatic groups, and magazines such as *The Crisis* asked O'Neill to be a judge for their literary contests (Hutchinson 1995, 160). In a letter to A. Philip Randolph that was published in *The Messenger*, O'Neill encouraged black writers to "Be yourselves! Don't reach out for *our* stuff which we call good! Make *your* stuff and *your* good! You have within your race an opportunity—and a shining goal!—for new forms, new significance. . . . There ought to be a Negro play written by a Negro that no



Eugene O'Neill, photographed c. 1920–1940. (Library of Congress.)

white could ever have conceived or executed" (quoted in Hutchinson, 17).

Although O'Neill was a pioneer, his work, like many other modernist treatments of black people, was handicapped by prevailing racial stereotypes. Cooley maintains that O'Neill "approached his black portraits with insensitivity and maladroitness, perpetuating pejorative images of black life" (15)—an assertion that may be supported by the fact that *The Emperor Jones* and *All God's Chillun Got Wings* are seldom performed today.

Biography

Eugene Gladstone O'Neill was born 16 October 1888 in New York City, the youngest son of Ella (Quinlan) O'Neill and James O'Neill Sr., an actor. He was educated at a Roman Catholic boarding school, the Academy of Mount Saint Vincent, in Riverdale, New York; De La Salle Academy, New York City; Betts Academy, Stamford, Connecticut; Princeton University (1906–1907); and Harvard

University (1914–1915). He was married first to Kathleen Jenkins (later Pitt-Smith), 1909–1912; they had one son, Eugene O'Neill Jr. His second marriage was to Agnes Boulton (later Kaufman), 1918–1929; their children were Shane Rudraighe O'Neill and Oona O'Neill Chaplin. His third marriage was to Carlotta Monterey, 1929–1953. O'Neill wrote or drafted more than sixty plays, many of which were staged by the Provincetown Players. His awards included the Nobel prize for literature in 1936, and four Pulitzer prizes (one posthumously) for *Beyond the Horizon* (1920), *Anna Christie* (1922), *Strange Interlude* (1928), and *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1957). O'Neill died in Boston on 27 November 1953, of a degenerative brain disease.

JOHN CHARLES

See also Du Bois, W. E. B.; Emperor Jones, The; Gilpin, Charles; Hughes, Langston; Locke, Alain; Messenger, The; Negro World; Powell, Adam Clayton Sr.; Provincetown Players; Randolph, A. Philip; Robeson, Paul

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Opportunity

Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life is generally recognized as one of the most important periodicals of the Harlem Renaissance. Like *The Crisis* and *The Messenger*, it served as a source for news and information about African Americans and as an outlet for the work of African American writers and artists. But there are significant differences among the three journals in terms of their attention to literature and art. Charles Spurgeon Johnson, the editor of *Opportunity* from 1923 to 1928, placed more emphasis on African American culture than did the editors of the other two journals. Scholars generally distinguish *Opportunity* from *The Crisis* and *The Messenger* because of its focus on African American culture.

There also are differences in tone and content among the three journals. Hutchinson (1995) points out that the tenor of each of the journals reflects the ideology of its parent organization and editors. *The Crisis*, published by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and edited by W. E. B. Du Bois, focused primarily on political issues, emphasized protest and propaganda, and tended to be polemical. A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen launched *The Messenger* as a socialist journal; its primary concerns were labor and economic issues, although it also included literature and art after 1922, and it often included biting editorials from iconoclasts like George Schuyler. *Opportunity*, on the other hand, was published by the National Urban League

(NUL), an organization that was founded with the goal of improving race relations, and the journal mirrored the NUL's emphasis on diplomacy and gradualism in its approach to tension between black and white Americans.

The attention to the arts in *Opportunity*, however, went well beyond the original intentions of the NUL. The organization was founded in 1911 with the mission of improving race relations, encouraging interracial cooperation, and promoting understanding between black and white Americans. Members believed that the best way to achieve these goals was through studies of employment, housing opportunities, and social services available to African Americans in northern cities; such studies, they felt, could be used by social institutions to improve social and economic conditions for African Americans. In December 1921, the NUL began publishing the results of these studies in the *Urban League Bulletin*, but in 1922, the board of directors decided to expand the bulletin into a larger format, with more popular appeal. *Opportunity* was the result.

Johnson had worked with the Urban League since 1917, and his background as a sociologist made him a logical choice for editor. Johnson had attended graduate school at the University of Chicago under Robert Park, who was a noted sociologist and the first president of the Chicago Urban League. Johnson worked as the head of the Department of Research and Investigations for the branch. In the aftermath of the riots in Chicago in 1919, he served as the associate executive secretary of the Chicago Commission on Race Relations, a group of six white and six black civic leaders, businessmen, and politicians who had been appointed by Governor Frank Lowden of Illinois to study the violence. The commission published the results of its survey as a 672-page book, *The Negro in Chicago* (1922). In part, the commission concluded that the tension between black and white residents of the city had been exacerbated by the militant rhetoric used in both black and white newspapers, and it emphasized how dangerous biased and distorted reporting could be. Those conclusions seem to have shaped Johnson's work as the editor of *Opportunity*, for the journal rarely included the kind of fiery editorials often found in *The Crisis*, especially in the 1910s. Instead, the stated goal of *Opportunity* was to spread facts about African Americans.

It is not surprising, then, that the most frequent features of the journal, particularly in its early issues, were sociological studies. These studies present a wealth of information about African Americans' lives in the 1920s. They report on housing, employment,

recreational, and educational opportunities available to African Americans. They also document the continuing discrimination African Americans faced in both the North and the South. Although *Opportunity* claimed to be objective, such reports often presented implicit—and sometimes explicit—arguments about African Americans. For example, in an essay written by Johnson and published in the issue of September 1923 about the causes of the migration of African Americans from the rural South to northern cities, Johnson argues that better opportunities in the North, rather than intimidation by the Ku Klux Klan, motivated many African Americans to migrate. He uses that information to insist that these migrants would be ambitious, industrious workers. A report on the lack of affordable housing for African Americans published in the May 1923 issue emphasizes that other ethnic minorities faced similar problems, thus defining housing difficulties as a widespread problem and preventing readers from blaming African Americans. *Opportunity* also included numerous refutations of pseudoscientific racism, exposing the flaws inherent in the many studies of the period that purported to prove African Americans' inferiority. In such cases, the apparently objective studies in *Opportunity* promote particular understandings of African Americans or dispute assumptions made about African Americans.

From its first issues, *Opportunity* complemented these studies with other texts that drew readers' attention to African Americans' achievements. These included articles about the establishment and accomplishments of African American institutions, such as a series of reports on "Our Negro Colleges," accounts of meetings of social or professional organizations, and occasional articles about the founding and activities of branches of the YMCA that were meant for African Americans. Monthly columns such as "Pot Pourri," "Bulletin Board," and "Social Progress" compiled accounts of significant accomplishments of African American business owners, employees, politicians, students, athletes, entertainers, and so on. These features usually were illustrated by photographs of the people involved; *Opportunity* thus became a source of both information about and visual images of successful African Americans.

Even in the very first issues, there also are hints that the arts would become an important focus of the journal. The inaugural issue included a review of two exhibits of work by African American painters, and the second issue included an editorial announcing that the contributors to *Opportunity* would write about and

illustrate drama, music, art, and literature by African Americans. Later issues included long and frequent reviews of novels, poetry, and plays written by or about African Americans, often illustrated by portraits of writers and performers; and discussions of African and African American art, with photographs of the artists or the works. The poets Gwendolyn Bennett and Countee Cullen each contributed regular columns during the late 1920s. Most issues also included creative work: short stories, poems, and plays, as well as visual art on the cover and inside the magazine.

Johnson believed that the arts could play an important role in improving interracial relations, and he saw the publication of work by African American writers and artists as an important aspect of *Opportunity*. He believed that many white publishers assumed that creative and scholarly work by African Americans was substandard, and he felt that they tended to dismiss it rather than considering it seriously. *Opportunity*, then, became a forum in which to prove such assumptions wrong. Johnson also promoted creative work by African Americans through the Civic Club dinner, which he hosted in March 1924. He invited a number of white editors and publishers as well as many of the most promising black writers. He hoped that the evening's events would bring the quality of the writers' work to the attention of the editors and publishers and result in increased publishing opportunities for the writers. It worked: The dinner was the catalyst for a special issue of the magazine *Survey Graphic* on Harlem and the New Negro that was published in March 1925; its contents would become the core of Alain Locke's anthology *The New Negro* (1925).

Johnson also encouraged the recognition of African American writers through *Opportunity's* annual contests for literature, the first of which he announced six months after the Civic Club dinner. The contest of 1925 was followed by contests in 1926 and 1927, and many of the prizewinning entries were published in special issues of *Opportunity*. The contests were meant, as an announcement of the first one explained, to encourage the literary efforts of African Americans, to identify talented African American writers, to promote the development of a body of literature about African Americans, and to create a market for such literature. *Opportunity's* criteria were relatively nonprescriptive: most categories were open in terms of content, stipulating only that the entries should focus on African Americans. Although *Opportunity* clearly had social goals for art by African Americans—one announcement emphasized

that African American writers could use their work to replace “outworn representations” and “make themselves better understood”—the journal also discouraged propaganda and protest in literature and art. For *Opportunity*, however, that did not require the “best foot forward” approach advocated by literary critics like Du Bois who encouraged writers to focus on the more progressive aspects of the race; *Opportunity* welcomed a thorough exploration of all aspects of African Americans’ lives.

The hope that sociological essays, news stories about African Americans’ accomplishments, and creative texts would increase understanding seems to indicate that white readers were the target audience for *Opportunity*. In fact, it is estimated that as many as 33 to 40 percent of the magazine’s readers were white (Robbins 1996). But Johnson also believed that these texts were important for African American readers. He was one of the first sociologists to emphasize the toll that discrimination and segregation took on African Americans (Pearson 1977), and he believed that African Americans needed to be convinced of the accomplishments of blacks as much as white readers did. In 1928, he wrote that he had hoped *Opportunity* would enable African Americans to see interest and beauty in their own lives, and that the journal would, in this way, help build their self-esteem.

Both creative and expository texts in *Opportunity*, finally, presented complex arguments about African Americans’ identity in relation to America and to Africa. On the one hand, the journal nurtured the growth of African Americans’ communal consciousness and pride. As Hutchinson emphasizes, however, the goal in this project was not separatism but, in fact, the development of an integrated America. Johnson was a cultural pluralist who believed that respect and opportunities for African Americans should not depend on their assimilation into white America; he conceived of American national culture as uniting diverse elements. Accordingly, contributors to *Opportunity* frequently argued, particularly in essays about folk music and poetry, that African Americans were making important and distinctive contributions to American culture. *Opportunity* also frequently turned its attention to African culture, using its coverage of African art, for example, to nurture African Americans’ pride in their African heritage. By emphasizing both the American and the African aspects of African Americans’ identity, experiences, and culture, *Opportunity* asserted the complexity of this identity and insisted that integration into American culture and

society could and should allow for the preservation of distinct aspects of African American culture.

Unlike *The Crisis*, *Opportunity* was never self-supporting. At its peak, in 1927, it had a circulation of only 11,000 readers (Johnson and Johnson 1979). The NUL received a grant in the mid-1920s that helped finance the journal, but the grant was not renewed in 1927. Perhaps the cancellation of the yearly contest in 1927 was also a sign that things were going downhill. In any case, in 1928, Johnson left New York City and the NUL for Fisk University, where he established the Department of Social Sciences and the Race Relations Institute. He became the university’s first black president in 1947. In the meantime, the NUL changed the focus of *Opportunity* to rest more squarely on the sociological and economic aspects of African Americans’ lives. The journal struggled during the Depression, became a quarterly in 1943, and ceased publication with the issue of winter 1949 (Gilpin 1972). It was revived in 1996 by the NUL, but as a general-interest magazine with little focus on the arts.

ANNE CARROLL

See also Bennett, Gwendolyn; Civic Club Dinner, 1924; *Crisis*, The; Cullen, Countee; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; *Messenger*, The; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; National Urban League; Opportunity Awards Dinner; Opportunity Literary Contests; Owen, Chandler; Randolph, A. Philip; Schuyler, George S.; Survey Graphic

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Opportunity Awards Dinner

The *Opportunity* awards dinner was the official forum through which the winners of the literary contests held by the magazine *Opportunity* were publicly announced and honored. The first dinner was held in the spring of 1925; however, its format and mood were perhaps set one year earlier, on 21 March 1924, when approximately 100 writers, publishers, editors, and critics gathered at the Civic Club in New York for a dinner hosted by Charles Spurgeon Johnson, the editor of *Opportunity*. The Civic Club dinner had initially been conceived on a smaller scale to celebrate the publication of Jessie Redmon Fauset's first novel, *There Is Confusion*, but had developed into a major literary and social event at which prominent figures (black and white) were introduced to emerging young black writers and their works. Johnson, as the host, offered opening remarks and then turned control of the the program over to Alain Locke, the appointed master of ceremonies, who presided and also offered his interpretation of the "New Negro."

The Dinner of 1925

The first *Opportunity* awards dinner was held on 1 May 1925 in New York at the Fifth Avenue Restaurant, at the corner of Twenty-fourth Street, to announce the first, second, and third prizes in the five divisions of

the contest. The 316 guests included young hopefuls and influential figures in the world of letters, such as the master of ceremonies, John Erskine, professor of English at Columbia University and president of the Poetry Society of America; and judges, patrons, and writers: Clement Wood, Blanche Colton Williams, Montgomery Gregory, Henry Goddard Leach, L. Hollingsworth Wood, Eugene Kinckle Jones, Fannie Hurst, Paul and Arthur Kellogg, Arthur Schomburg, Paul Robeson, Rudolph Fisher, Jessie Redmon Fauset, Carl Van Vechten, Alain Locke, James Weldon Johnson, Carl Van Doren, Jean Toomer, and others. This elaborate event was, of course, covered extensively in *Opportunity*, and the account included sketches supplied by Francis Holbrook. In addition, the *New York Herald-Tribune* carried a complimentary review—under the headline "A Negro Renaissance"—in which the dinner was described as a "novel sight" with "white critics, whom 'everybody' knows, Negro writers, whom 'nobody' knew—meeting on common ground" (*Opportunity* 1925, 187).

As a result of this mingling of intellectuals, relationships and publishing opportunities that might not otherwise have materialized were developed. Perhaps the most noteworthy example was the relationship formed between Carl Van Vechten and Langston Hughes. Van Vechten was so taken with Hughes's "The Weary Blues" that he immediately began making arrangements to publish it. Less than three weeks after the awards dinner, Hughes had received a contract from Alfred A. Knopf for his first collection of poetry.

The Dinner of 1926

The second awards dinner was held on 1 May 1926, again at the Fifth Avenue Restaurant. This time, the guest list had increased to approximately 400—probably as a result of the success of the first contest. The number of entries had nearly doubled since the first competition, and public interest seems to have grown as well.

John Macy, author of *The Spirit of American Literature* and *The Story of The World's Literature*, was the chairman of this second dinner. In his opening remarks, he emphasized the universality of art, encouraging the guests to "rejoice because *good work* has been done, not that good work has been done by *Negroes*." However, he added that consideration must also be given to oneself and one's race: "All artists in the world must express intensely their race, nation, time, family, personality. . . . Every man to his own racial and

individual nature and belief and mother tongue" (1926, 185). Macy then turned control of the program over to the chairmen of the contest divisions, who announced the winners in their respective categories.

Entertainment was also provided; the Bordentown Chorus, under the direction of Frederick Work, sang Negro spirituals. Charles Johnson would later comment that the performance "served well to enliven the evening and to join, pleasantly, the maturer contributions of Negro music to the beginnings of a new contribution in letters" (1926, 186).

The Dinner of 1927

The third awards dinner—once more at the Fifth Avenue Restaurant—was held on 7 May 1927, with Professor John Dewey presiding. The guest list, as before, included an array of influential literary figures, and the program was similar in format to the two previous dinners. However, *Opportunity's* coverage of this third dinner was not as extensive. Furthermore, whereas its earlier reports had focused more on the literary and intellectual aspects of the events, the account of the third dinner consisted of a detailed description the social atmosphere through the eyes of Eugene Gordon (1927), who had won the contests twice in the short-story category.

In a whimsical essay, Gordon detailed everything from the "expansive white and gold and mirrored dining room," to the main course of "broiled spring chicken, peas, and mashed potato." He depicted individuals, such as "Mrs. Charles S. Johnson, petite, serious-faced and luminous-eyed," and described the attempts of newcomers as well as veterans to match important names with the right faces. Gordon said that he had obtained the signatures of the guests at his table and had even taken a "chunk of bread" as a souvenir. Perhaps, consciously or unconsciously, he sensed an ending; if so, he was right. Within a matter of months, it was learned that the literary contest would not be continued; this, then, had been the last *Opportunity* awards dinner. In the three years of its existence, the dinner had done much to achieve the initial purpose of the literary contests: It fostered "a market for Negro writers and for literature about Negroes," and it also brought "these writers into contact with the general world of letters" (Johnson 1924, 258).

VERONICA ADAMS YON

See also Civic Club Dinner, 1924; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; *Opportunity*; *Opportunity*

Literary Contests; Van Vechten, Carl; Weary Blues, The; *specific individuals*

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Opportunity Literary Contests

The *Opportunity* literary contests were established by *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life*, a monthly publication of the National Urban League. The first contest was officially announced in the issue of August 1924 by Charles S. Johnson, the editor of *Opportunity* and also the organizer of the contests. The September 1924 issue gave more details, including Johnson's explanation of the purpose of the competition:

It hopes to stimulate and encourage creative literary effort among Negroes; to locate and orient Negro writers of ability; to stimulate and encourage interest in the serious development of a body of literature

about Negro life, drawing deeply upon these tremendously rich sources; to encourage the reading of literature both by Negro authors and about Negro life, not merely because they are Negro authors but because what they write is literature and because the literature is interesting; to foster a market for Negro writers and for literature by and about Negroes; to bring these writers into contact with the general world of letters to which they have been for the most part timid and inarticulate strangers; to stimulate and foster a type of writing by Negroes which shakes itself free of deliberate propaganda and protest. (1924, 258)

Johnson had called for submissions relating to “some phase of Negro life, either directly or indirectly,” initiating a series of three major literary competitions that would prove effective in promoting the work of participants in the Harlem Renaissance.

The Contest of 1925

The first contest was open for entries from September to 31 December 1924, and it generated a total of 732 submissions from black writers across the country. The twenty-four judges, eighteen of whom were white, included influential figures such as Fannie Hurst, Zona Gale, Alain Locke, James Weldon Johnson, and John Macy. The prize money, \$500, was donated by Mrs. Henry G. Leach, who was a board member for the Urban League and, in Johnson’s words, a “long, thorough sympathizer with the struggles of Negroes for social as well as artistic status” (January 1925, 3).

The winners of the first, second, and third prizes and honorable mentions in each of the five divisions of the contest were announced in New York on 1 May 1925 at a special dinner, and also in *Opportunity*’s issue of May 1925. First prize went to John Matheus (short story), Langston Hughes (poetry), E. Franklin Frazier (essay), G. D. Lipscomb (play), and G. A. Steward (personal-experience sketch). Zora Neale Hurston received the most awards (four): both second prize and honorable mention in each of two divisions (short story and play). Sterling Brown and Countee Cullen also received awards.

This first contest was noted in an editorial in the *New York Herald-Tribune*, which introduced to the general public many Negro writers who were already known in black literary circles. Pleased with the success of the contest, Johnson advised participants

who were interested in “this whole developing movement to *stand by*” (May 1925, 131).

The Contest of 1926

The second annual contest was eagerly awaited. Johnson had whetted the public’s literary appetite by publishing several award-winning works from the first competition in *Opportunity* and by emphasizing the outside publishing opportunities that were being made available to the winners. Langston Hughes’s first collection of poems, *The Weary Blues*, had been contracted by Alfred A. Knopf, and John Matheus’s “Fog” had been selected for inclusion in Alain Locke’s anthology *The New Negro*.

Interest in the second contest was also heightened by the addition of a new division—musical compositions—and two special prizes: the Alexander Pushkin poetry prize and the Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs (FCWC) prizes for constructive journalism. This expansion of the competition was due in large part to a donation of \$1,000 by Casper Holstein, a West Indian entrepreneur who hoped to inspire gifted blacks “to scale the empyrean heights of art and literature” (1925, 308).

Johnson noted in the March issue of *Opportunity* that the number of entries had notably increased (to more than 1,200), and that the poetry and short-story categories were yielding a “higher level of craftsmanship.” Awards were announced on 1 May 1926 at a special dinner, and then published in a special edition of *Opportunity* in June. The recipients of prizes included some previous winners, such as John Matheus, Countee Cullen, Zora Neale Hurston, and Sterling Brown. New winners included Gwendolyn Bennett, Dorothy West, and Arna Bontemps, recipient of the Pushkin poetry prize.

The Contest of 1927

The third literary contest followed the format of the earlier competitions, and Holstein again donated \$1,000 in prize money. Nevertheless, a few differences were apparent, the first being the focus of the contest.

Pointing out that many previous manuscripts “failed to attain recognition,” Johnson announced that more emphasis would be placed on guiding “these prodigal energies to the most promising sources of power” and stimulating “a product that can in larger degree and volume stand without the need of apology;

that need not at any point rely upon sheer eroticism for its acceptance" (1926, 304).

In addition to this shift in focus, another new category—pictorial awards—was added; the first prize in this category went to Aaron Douglas. Also, five special Buckner awards were offered for "entries that showed conspicuous promise." The donor was George W. Buckner of St. Louis, Missouri, and the prize winners were Blanche Taylor Dickinson, Dorothy West, Emily May Harper, Frank Horne, and Sterling Brown. Other winners of note were Georgia Douglas Johnson, who received first prize for her play *Plumes*, and Arna Bontemps, who again received the Pushkin poetry prize.

Four months after these awards were presented, Charles Johnson announced that the contest would be suspended for a year in order to provide additional time for writers to fine-tune their works and to experiment with multiple manuscripts "in search of the most effective channels of expression" (1927, 254). In 1928, though, the contest was not reopened. The magazine did eventually sponsor some additional competitions, however, and the contests of 1925, 1926, and 1927 had proved instrumental in supplying a venue for up-and-coming black writers, introducing Negro writers to the general public, facilitating outside publishing opportunities for some of the contestants, and launching the careers of many figures of the Harlem Renaissance.

VERONICA ADAMS YON

See also Bennett, Gwendolyn; Bontemps, Arna; Brown, Sterling; Cullen, Countee; Douglas, Aaron; Frazier, E. Franklin; Holstein, Casper; Horne, Frank; Hughes, Langston; Hurst, Fannie; Hurston, Zora Neale; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Johnson, Georgia Douglas; Johnson, James Weldon; Locke, Alain; Matheus, John Frederick; National Urban League; New Negro, The; Opportunity; Opportunity Awards Dinner; Weary Blues, The; West, Dorothy

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Organized Crime

The migration of African Americans to northern cities in the early 1900s brought some of them into contact with organized crime. While many first- and second-generation Americans, mainly Italians and Irish, dominated this underworld, black Americans also participated and gained money and prestige in their neighborhoods. Although African American criminals never achieved the syndication of ethnic gangs, they contributed to the development of organized crime as an American institution. In the period after World War I, black neighborhoods like Harlem became valuable markets for illegal liquor and gambling.

Organization of criminal operations in America began during Prohibition, when the Eighteenth Amendment (1918) illegalized the manufacturing, sale, and transportation of alcohol. Unintentionally, Prohibition created economic opportunities for people regardless of race or ethnicity. Enterprising criminals, recognizing the demand for illegal alcohol, supplied urban establishments with liquor. Prohibition did not eliminate the market for alcohol; rather, it contributed to the development of organized crime, as urban gangs constructed local, state, and national syndicates.

The illegal liquor industry, or bootlegging, involved a large network of breweries, ships, trucks, storage facilities, bars, restaurants, and nightclubs. Intimidation, violence, and bribery were crucial to its success, and police and politicians received compensation for

ignoring these illegal activities. Drinking establishments, or speakeasies—some independently owned and some owned by gangsters—met the demand of thirsty Americans undeterred by the federal law. Harlem, like the South Side of Chicago and other black urban neighborhoods, became a boomtown for bootleggers.

In the early years of the twentieth century, Harlem's population increased, as did the number of its drinking establishments. Such establishments also existed in other parts of New York City, but many bars opened particularly in Harlem, hoping to capitalize on the population explosion there. Usually, these were small establishments that sometimes offered live music. In the period after World War I, the popularity of jazz drew more white and black visitors into Harlem, creating a need for even larger venues.

In many cities, white gangsters recognized the potential for profits and began supplying alcohol to illegal drinking establishments in black neighborhoods. Harlem was no exception. The white gangster Owen Madden took over Harlem's Club Deluxe from the boxer Jack Johnson in 1923 and renamed it the Cotton Club. Madden's gang had acquired the club while he was serving time in prison at Sing Sing for murdering a rival gangster.

Generally, speakeasies were supplied directly by white gangsters, such as Madden, who owned breweries; alternatively, the liquor was shipped into the city and distributed to local clubs. Gangsters easily controlled local police and politicians with bribes; however, state and national law enforcement agents and political reformers proved more troublesome. Even Madden was not immune. In 1923, he was arrested outside the city, in Westchester County, while traveling with a shipment of stolen liquor. That time, he was released after claiming that he had only caught a ride on the truck and had not been aware of the its contents. In 1925, however, Madden did not get off as easily. A federal judge closed the Cotton Club when its management was accused of violating the Eighteenth Amendment. Madden was able to plead guilty to a lesser charge and reopened the club after paying a fine.

White gangsters were not above using violence and intimidation to maintain their monopoly on bootlegging in Harlem. Barron Wilkins, the owner of a popular nightclub there, may have been the victim of gangsters in 1926; he was murdered outside his club after complaining about an order of bootleg liquor he had received. Likewise, Madden and his associates were not to be trifled with. In 1930, the Plantation

Club, a popular rival nightclub, hired Cab Calloway and his band. Calloway had filled in at the Cotton Club while its house band was out of town, and Madden's crew reportedly destroyed the Plantation Club in retaliation for hiring Calloway and siphoning off patrons from the Cotton Club. Madden's gang was also said to be responsible for murdering the owner of the Plantation Club.

Madden's dealings with Duke Ellington and the Washingtonians exemplified the pros and cons of working for gangsters. In November 1927, Ellington and his band made their first appearance at the Cotton Club. The following week, under contract, they traveled to Philadelphia to perform at the Standard Theater. Their engagement was cut short when the management of the Standard advised them to return to New York. Madden wanted the band to appear exclusively at the Cotton Club, and he had suggested that it was in the Standard's best interest to oblige. While headlining at the Cotton Club through 1930, Ellington and his band were allowed to play other venues. They were expected to keep their standing date at the Cotton Club, however, even if that meant playing a day show at Princeton University or a breakfast dance in the Bronx before taking the stage at Madden's club in the late evening. Despite these restrictions, Ellington enjoyed the "elegance" of the club and its sophisticated clientele and commented that his relationship with Madden was friendly.

In addition to supporting establishments that provided access to illegal alcohol, Harlem was the birthplace of the modern numbers game—a gambling game based on the daily closing results of the New York Stock Exchange. No one is certain of its origins. Some people speculate that it was a variation of a betting game in New England. Others give credit to Hispanic immigrants who played a similar type of lottery; still others credit Casper Holstein, a West Indian resident of Harlem. According to one popular theory, Holstein devised the idea while working as a janitor; he suggested that people place bets on the likelihood of the closing value at the New York Stock Exchange. Earlier forms of number games were based on lotteries; numbers were drawn, information was disseminated to bookies, payouts and collections were made. Under Holstein's rules, the numbers were reported daily in the newspaper, so the game could not be fixed. The winning numbers were determined by the last two digits of the "exchange's total," and a third digit was decided by the last number of the "balances' total." The winning three digits paid off at 600 to 1. In

a variation called “bolita,” bets were made on two of the three numbers, and the odds were 80 to 1. The numbers soon became immensely popular and profitable; thousands of dollars were made daily. By the early 1920s, Harlem had more than thirty independent numbers houses, or “banks,” employing as many as twenty people each.

The people who worked in Harlem’s numbers racket were loosely organized. Some acted as runners, keeping track of the bets, or as policy bankers who oversaw the money, payouts, and collections. Although Harlem’s underworld followed the ethnic model, employing family and friends, it was not as structured as a traditional syndicate. In Harlem, unlike in other parts of the city, there were no dons (bosses), capos (lieutenants), or soldiers (enforcers). The Harlem underworld would not achieve that degree of organization until after World War II, when street gangs became involved in drug trafficking.

Although many criminal organizations during the 1920s and 1930s were multiethnic, those in Harlem were equal-opportunity employers. Blacks and women were involved in the day-to-day operations. The policy houses allowed African Americans to participate in a type of financial investment scheme not available through more typical channels. Players were often working-class men and women as well as people from the middle and upper classes. They might be janitors, cooks, and washerwomen or teachers, lawyers, and physicians. The numbers game was more than gambling; it was a respectable social event. Bets were made in bars, grocery stores, beauty parlors, and barber shops. The policy banks also created employment opportunities; establishments opened to fill other needs associated with this type of gambling. Because African Americans did not have access to traditional sources of investment, capital, savings, and loans, Harlemites created lending houses.

The system was lucrative for those involved. Racketeers drove expensive cars, wore fashionable clothes, invested in local property, and supported cultural improvements. Stephanie St. Claire, “Madame Queen of policy,” claimed to have earned millions. Within a year of devising the game, Holstein had secured several income properties, a nightclub called the Turf Club located on 136th Street, and a farm in Virginia. It was estimated that he was worth more than \$500,000. He was chauffeured in a new Lincoln sedan and liked to attend horse races. Holstein also used his earnings to support cultural and educational endeavors. For example, he sponsored a literary award for

the aspiring literati of the Harlem Renaissance, and he built homes and provided educational assistance for blacks living in the South. Holstein was a popular figure and appears in Carl Van Vechten’s novel *Nigger Heaven* (1926) as a character called Randolph Pettijohn, “the bolita king.”

At the outset, the numbers racket in Harlem was neither violent nor well organized. In other northern cities, African Americans gained influence with local white politicians and police who in turn protected the interests of black racketeers. Most of this influence came from bribes. The uncoordinated efforts of black racketeers in Harlem ultimately caused their downfall, because they never established political clout. Additionally, their lack of muscle and influence left them vulnerable to more aggressive and vicious white criminals from other parts of the city. Initially, white gangsters ignored the Harlem numbers racket and saw the enterprise as a “nigger’s pool” based on penny bets. They erroneously believed that Harlemites were too poor to make the game profitable.

Eventually, though, because Harlem’s numbers operation was profitable, it attracted the attention of crime operatives in other boroughs of New York City. The first white gangster who tried to take over operations in Harlem was Hyman Kassell, a bootlegger and policy banker who operated several speakeasies in the neighborhood. In the mid-1920s, he attempted to organize the rackets by controlling legal establishments, such as restaurants and retail stores, and used them as a base of operations. Ultimately, Kassell failed to create a monopoly, but other white gangsters were not deterred.

Holstein became a victim of white gangsters in 1928 when five white men kidnapped him. He was unable to identify his captors but did tell the police that he had been bound and gagged for two days. Holstein reported that his kidnappers approached him in police uniforms and brandished pistols. After informing Holstein that they were taking him to a police station for questioning, the men forced him into an automobile and pistol-whipped him, beat him, and robbed him of his cash and jewelry, totaling more than \$2,000. An earlier demand for a ransom of \$50,000 helped the police identify Holstein’s abductors. Five men from the Bronx with ties to white organized crime were subsequently arrested.

Holstein’s kidnapping was not the only high-profile abduction in Harlem. In 1930, problems arose between Dutch Schultz (Charles Harman)—a white bootlegger from the Bronx—and one of his gang

members, Vincent “the Mick” Coll. The disagreement resulted in bloodshed, including the murder of a black child who was caught in the cross-fire on a street in Harlem. Coll, on the run and in need of money, kidnapped two men associated with Owen Madden’s gang and Connie’s Inn, a nightclub in Harlem. Coll demanded a ransom, which Madden paid, and the men were released. Coll was later murdered by Schultz’s men.

By 1931, organized crime in New York was syndicated under several crime families. Dutch Schultz, recently promoted to the position of don, became aware of the potential wealth associated with Harlem’s numbers game. Using his influence with politicians and police, as well as violence and intimidation, Schultz was able to close down the independents and take over Harlem’s racket. Only bankers willing to pay for his protection were allowed to remain in business. Not all the racketeers in Harlem accepted Schultz’s hostile takeover. Stephanie St. Claire resisted, and she was brash enough to make their feud public. She testified before a government hearing that corrupt politicians and police had forced her to lose income by unjustly targeting her business for police harassment. St. Claire attributed this to gender discrimination and the local government’s relationship with Schultz. The government’s retribution was eight months in jail on what she declared were trumped-up charges.

Investigations into the numbers racket by aggressive reformers in the 1930s challenged the position of white gangsters in Harlem. Likewise, the repeal of Prohibition in 1933 prompted white gangsters to explore other options to earn illegal profits. The Seabury investigations into New York City’s organized crime families in the mid-1930s reduced the number of policy houses in Harlem. Schultz continued his extortion racket by focusing on restaurants and club owners, but in 1935, he was murdered by other New York crime families after brazenly threatening to kill the crime fighter Thomas Dewey.

With the passing of Schultz, the Genovese family assumed control of Harlem’s numbers racket for the next fifty years. However, pressure from reformers reduced the number of operators in Harlem. Many African American policy bankers were either jailed or put out of business by Dewey’s aggressive reforms. Holstein also retired from the numbers racket because of government investigations; he was arrested in 1935, was convicted of racketeering, and spent a year in prison. Some policy bankers in Harlem were

indicted for tax fraud by the Internal Revenue Service. For example, Wilfred Adolphus Blunder (who had earned more than \$1.7 million) and Enrique Miro (who had accumulated more than \$1.2 million) had never bothered to pay federal income tax. Reformers also targeted bootleggers. In 1932, Owen Madden returned to jail for parole violations and escaped an impending investigation for tax evasion. He was released the following year, retired, and left New York. Prohibition was over.

Organized crime had a lasting and significant effect on Harlem. As the Harlem Renaissance ended, the nature of organized crime changed. In the late 1930s, the presence of organized crime in Harlem continued, and blacks remained involved in minor roles. Harlemites ran policy banks; white gangsters maintained control of the numbers and narcotics rackets. Socially and economically, organized crime contributed to the demise of Harlem in the post-renaissance period. It undermined social institutions, glorified criminals, and justified violence. As African Americans became empowered by the civil rights movement in the late 1960s, so did black gangsters. Street gangs began to fill the void left by the deteriorating ethnic syndicates and gained control of operations in their own neighborhood. As white gangsters lost power, black gangsters came to control Harlem.

AMY CARREIRO

See also Calloway, Cabell “Cab”; Cotton Club; Ellington, Duke; Holstein, Casper; Johnson, John Arthur; Madden, Owen Vincent; Nigger Heaven; Nightclubs; Nightlife; Numbers Racket

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Ory, Edward “Kid”

Edward “Kid” Ory made a significant contribution to the music of the Harlem Renaissance although he spent virtually no time in New York.

Ory began his professional career in 1894, at age eight; with neighborhood friends, he built homemade instruments, formed a band, and (charging admission) held fish fries in an empty house, where his band played ragtime. With the profits, Ory bought his first trombone. He played many instruments throughout his career—bass, banjo, clarinet, trumpet, saxophone, piano, guitar, and drums—but he excelled on the trombone. Ory became the most famous practitioner of the “tailgate” style of playing, in which the trombone is used for rhythmic effects, fills, and glissandi; in this manner, the trombone works with the bass to establish a solid foundation under the trumpet and clarinet. Ory was known as a forceful soloist, especially effective at slow blues.

Ory moved to New Orleans in 1911. After studying with private teachers and occasionally sitting in with Buddy Bolden’s band, Ory joined a combo led by Lewis Mathews. Ory took over its leadership in 1917, and it became perhaps the premier band in the region. The band’s trumpet chair was filled first by Mutt Carey, later by King Oliver, and still later by the young Louis Armstrong. The band’s clarinetists included, at various times, Jimmy Dodds, Sidney Bechet, Jimmie Noone, and George Lewis.

Tired of the crime in New Orleans, and having been advised by his doctor to move to a drier climate, Ory went to California in 1919 and established the first all-black New Orleans–style jazz group on the West Coast. In 1921, Ory’s Sunshine Orchestra recorded at least seven songs, including “Society Blues,” “Ory’s Creole Trombone,” and “When You’re Alone Blues,” for Sunshine records, a black enterprise. (Nordskog also claimed the sessions, and on its labels the band is called Spike’s Seven Pods of Pepper.) These records, the first to feature an all-black jazz band, predate recordings by King Oliver’s important Creole Jazz Band, by Jelly Roll Morton

(solo piano), and by Armstrong’s Hot Five and Hot Seven.

From 1924 to 1929, Ory worked at various venues in Chicago and recorded widely there with Oliver, Morton, Lil Armstrong, Tiny Parham, Ma Rainey, Williams’s Stompers, and Luis Russell. Ory was an original member of Louis Armstrong’s Hot Five (under Armstrong’s leadership, the Hot Five and the Hot Seven produced the most important records of early jazz). The group recorded Ory’s famous composition “Muskrat Ramble” on 26 February 1926. (Actually, Ory may simply have written down this song rather than composing it; some people, including Sidney Bechet, have identified it as a tune that Buddy Bolden used to play, “The Old Cow Died and the Old Man Cried.”)

In the midst of the Depression, and no doubt adversely affected by the increasing predominance of swing, Ory moved back to California and ran a chicken farm with his brother from 1930 to 1939. He returned to music via groups led by Barney Bigard (1942) and Bunk Johnson (1943), and in 1944, he became a regular on Orson Welles’s popular radio show. This show helped renew an interest in Dixieland jazz. In the 1940s and 1950s, Ory played regularly in Los Angeles (where he opened his own club, On the Levee, in 1954) and Europe, and recorded with Henry “Red” Allen, Papa Celestin, Leadbelly, and others. Ory also had small roles in the films *New Orleans* with Louis Armstrong (1947), *Crossfire* (1947), *Mahogany Magic* (1950), and *The Benny Goodman Story* (1956). He died in Hawaii in 1973.

Biography

Edward “Kid” Ory was born in La Place, Louisiana, on 25 December 1886. He had a public school education and also studied music privately. He sat in with Buddy Bolden’s band; led own band in New Orleans, 1917; then led Ory’s Creole Jazz Band in Los Angeles, 1919–1924; and made the first jazz records by an all-black group. Ory then worked with several bands: King Oliver’s, 1925–1927; Dave Peyton’s, 1927; Clarence Black’s, 1927–1928; the Chicago Vagabonds, 1928–1929, Leon Rene’s “Lucky Day” orchestra, 1929; and bands in Los Angeles, 1929–1930. He was a co-owner of a chicken ranch, 1930–1939; re-formed his own band, 1941; worked with Barney Bigard’s group in 1942 and with Bunk Johnson in 1943; performed regularly on Orson Welles’s radio show for Standard Oil, 1944; joined ASCAP, 1952; led his own group at the

Newport Jazz Festival of 1957 and at the Berlin Festival of 1959; owned a nightclub in Los Angeles, *On the Levee*, 1958–1961; and played at the New Orleans Jazz Festival, 1971. Ory won the *Record Changer* all-time, all-star poll in 1951. He died in Honolulu, Hawaii, on 23 January 1973.

GREGORY MILLER

See also Armstrong, Louis; Bechet, Sidney; Jazz; Music; Oliver, Joseph “King”; Rainey, Gertrude “Ma”

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Ovington, Mary White

Mary White Ovington was born in Brooklyn, New York, on 11 April 1865, just two days after General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant, ending the Civil War. The daughter of a prominent

abolitionist family, Ovington followed in the footsteps of many elite young women of her generation by dedicating herself to reform efforts. After spending two years at Radcliffe College, in 1895 Ovington helped to found the Greenpoint Settlement in Brooklyn as a model tenement for white working-class families. In her memoirs, *Black and White Sat Down Together: The Reminiscences of an NAACP Founder*, Ovington admits that she gave no thought at this early stage of her career to the plight of black people living in the North. But in 1903, when she was thirty-eight, she heard Booker T. Washington speak in Manhattan. “To my amazement,” she later recalled, “I learned that there was a Negro problem in my city.” Ovington’s encounter with Washington proved to be a decisive moment; she dedicated the remainder of her life to the fight for racial justice.

Ovington left Greenpoint later that year and quickly embarked on a study of employment and housing conditions in black Manhattan. As a fellow in social work at Mary Kingsbury Simkhovitch’s Greenwich House, Ovington pursued her research for five years. In 1908, she moved into the Tuskegee Apartments on Sixty-third Street near Eleventh Avenue, in New York’s San Juan Hill district. This was the first model tenement opened for black residents, and Ovington had been instrumental in its construction. She had approached Henry Phipps, a philanthropist committed to providing decent, affordable housing to the city’s working poor, and had convinced him of the desperate need within the black community for low-cost housing; Phipps then built the Tuskegee. Ovington was the only white tenant in the building. Living in one of the most congested regions of the city, Ovington finally had an insider’s look into black life in Manhattan.

She published the results of her study in 1911, exposing the hardships faced by the city’s black population. The book, *Half a Man: The Status of the Negro in New York*, was sharply critical of race relations in the North. Ovington blamed racial prejudice for undermining black men’s ability to find any but the most menial jobs. The low wages and frequent bouts of unemployment that these men experienced, she noted, obligated many black women to remain in the workforce until late in life, inverting traditional patterns of gender behavior. Overall, she argued in her study, black people in New York City experienced discrimination in housing, education, and the workplace. Under these conditions, Ovington stressed, they had to struggle to survive and raise their families.

Confronted with her own findings, Ovington immersed herself in efforts to improve the condition of the city's black population. Her critique of the economic situation faced by the city's poorest group led her to develop sympathy for socialism. She joined the Socialist Party in 1905, but she criticized the party for its failure to support women's rights; instead, she focused her efforts on two recently formed organizations in New York: the National League for the Protection of Colored Women, and the Committee for Improving the Industrial Condition of Negroes in New York. These groups, among the few to address the problems facing the city's blacks, merged in 1911 to become the National Urban League (NUL).

In the meantime, Ovington participated in the National Conference on the Negro in 1909. At the second National Negro Conference in 1910, the group, which included W. E. B. Du Bois and Ovington, adopted an organizational structure and a name: the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The NUL and the NAACP served parallel purposes: to improve the economic and social conditions of black people in cities nationwide and to promote blacks' rights as citizens.

Ovington served briefly as acting executive secretary of the NAACP in 1910–1911. During her tenure in that position, the NAACP began to develop its antilynching campaign. Ovington, along with two other workers in the organization, wrote antilynching pamphlets, attended meetings, and raised money. This was, however, a bleak time for the nation's black population. "Just when one thought that the public was becoming educated," Ovington wrote, "some frightful lynching would occur or some especially heinous example of legal justice would come to the NAACP office."

During World War I, with so many volunteers away at war, Ovington served as acting chairman of the NAACP's board of directors. Her appointment became permanent in 1919, when the board formally elected her to the position. She remained in that role until 1932, when she became the NAACP's treasurer. Ovington worked for the NAACP in this capacity until 1947, when she ceased her activity in the organization altogether.

In addition to her organizational activities, Ovington was a prolific writer. Among her works were two children's books, *Hazel* and *Zeke*; *Portraits in Color*, biographical sketches of prominent African Americans; a play about Phillis Wheatley; and the



Mary White Ovington, c. 1930–1940. (Library of Congress.)

story of her own involvement in the NAACP, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down*. Much of her writing focused on social critique. After the lynching of Leo Frank, a Jewish factory worker who had been convicted of murdering a girl named Mary Phagan, in 1915 Ovington published "Mary Phagan Speaks" in the *New Republic*. The story, told in the voice of the dead girl, condemned the men of Marietta, Georgia, who were passionately aroused by her death but had cared so little for her in life. Also in 1915, Ovington published "The White Brute," a story condemning the rape of black women by white men.

Ovington died in 1951, having dedicated her life to ameliorating the discrimination faced by blacks in all aspects of American society: raising money, demanding civil equality, and fighting for racial justice. Walter White, the NAACP's executive secretary, called her a "fighting saint"; and the NAACP itself declared her the "mother of the new emancipation." Nevertheless, Ovington died before she could see the realization of her long-held dream: voting rights for black Americans throughout the United States.

Biography

Mary White Ovington was born 11 April 1865 in Brooklyn, New York. She studied at Packer Collegiate Institute (graduating in 1890) and Radcliffe College (1891–1893). She was a registrar at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn; head worker at Greenpoint Settlement in Brooklyn, 1895–1903; a fellow in social work at Greenwich House in Manhattan, 1904–1905; a founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), 1909; executive secretary of the NAACP, 1910–1911; chairman of the board of directors of the NAACP, 1917–1932; and treasurer of the NAACP, 1932–1947. Ovington was also a member of the National League for the Protection of Colored Women, the Committee for Improving the Industrial Condition of Negroes, the Urban League, and the Socialist Party. She was the author of several works, and a contributor to *Charities and the Commons*, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, *The Masses*, *New Republic*, *Evening Post*, *Southern Workman*, and *the Crisis*. Ovington died in Auburndale, Massachusetts, in 1951 at the age of eighty-six.

MARCY SACKS

See also Antilynching Crusade; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; National Urban League; San Juan Hill; Washington, Booker T.

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Owen, Chandler

Little is known of the early life of Chandler Owen. He was born North Carolina, studied at Virginia Union University in Richmond, and around 1913 moved to New York City, where he undertook graduate study in social work with funding from the National Urban League. Owen met A. Philip Randolph in New York in 1915; the two would be closely allied during the years of the Harlem Renaissance and would remain lifelong friends. Through Randolph's influence—and his own study of radical social thought—Owen decided to quit the moderate Urban League for the Socialist Party in 1916. A year later, he campaigned for the socialist Morris Hillquit, who was running for mayor of New York City. Owen and Randolph operated an employment agency for black workers during World War I; in conjunction, they also edited *Hotel Messenger*, a newsletter for a local hotel workers' union. After they published an editorial that was critical of the union itself, they were fired, but they immediately reestablished the paper as *The Messenger*, which they edited from November 1917 to 1928.

The Messenger was the most prominent black socialist publication of the Harlem Renaissance, and pitched itself as "the only radical Negro magazine in America." It found its voice in World War I, when the Socialist Party of America was the only major political organization to speak out against the war, and when African Americans were deeply divided over participation in the war effort. In *The Messenger*, Owen and Randolph espoused a standard socialist critique of the war, but they also challenged the assumption of white radicals that racism would simply disappear following a socialist revolution. They endorsed African American labor union organizing, the radical interracial unionism of the Industrial Workers of the World, woman's suffrage, and socialist revolution in Russia. They were unsparing in their criticisms, taking on African American ministers and conservative black Republican disciples of the late Booker T. Washington, as well as racial liberals such as W. E. B. Du Bois. Owen coined the phrase "new crowd Negro" to distinguish black socialism from the accommodationism that he saw in Du Bois's support for the war. *The Messenger*

was suppressed after publishing an article critical of the war in the July 1918 issue, and Owen and Randolph were indicted for treason; the charges were later dismissed. During the war years, the magazine was published only sporadically (partly owing to surveillance and censorship by federal authorities); it became a monthly in 1919 and reached a peak circulation of approximately 20,000 readers in 1920.

Owen continued his socialist organizing in the immediate postwar years. In 1919, he and Randolph founded the National Association for the Promotion of Labor Unionism Among Negroes in New York, a cooperative venture of white and black socialists. The group disbanded in the early 1920s. Owen ran for the New York state assembly on the Socialist Party ticket in 1920. He also emerged as an outspoken critic of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association, arguing that African Americans must pursue political and economic gains within the American system. In May 1920, in Washington, Owen and Randolph founded the Friends of Negro Freedom, which pushed the "Garvey must go" movement. In January 1923, the group published an open letter to U.S. Attorney General Harry M. Daugherty urging him to deport Garvey as an "undesirable alien."

Owen gradually grew disillusioned with socialism, and he resigned from *The Messenger* in 1923. Thereafter the newspaper continued under a new, more moderate leadership, later becoming an official publication of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; it ceased publication in 1928. Owen relocated to Chicago in 1923. There, he worked as a managing editor of the *Chicago Bee*, a black newspaper loyal to the Republican Party, which Owen soon joined. Owen ran for the U.S. House of Representatives on the Republican ticket in 1928. During World War II, he published an important pamphlet, *Negroes and the War* (1942), on behalf of the War Department. He remained active in Republican politics for the remainder of his life. He died in Chicago in 1967.

Biography

Chandler Owen was born in Warrenton, North Carolina, 5 April 1889. He received a B.A. from Virginia Union University, Richmond, Virginia, 1913; he did further study at Columbia University and New York School of Philanthropy after 1913. He was editor, *Hotel Messenger*, 1917; editor, *The Messenger*, 1917–1928; and managing editor, *Chicago Bee*, after 1923. Owen was a candidate for the New York state assembly, 1920, and the U.S. House of Representatives, 1928. He died in Chicago, Illinois, 2 November 1967.

CHRISTOPHER CAPOZZOLA

See also Black Press; Garvey, Marcus; Journalists; Magazines and Journals; Messenger, The; Randolph, A. Philip; Universal Negro Improvement Association

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Pa Williams' Gal

Pa Williams' Gal (1923) is a play by Frank Wilson (1886–1956). Although Wilson is best remembered as a distinguished actor, he also had a career as a dramatist, which began while he was performing at the Lincoln Theater with the Anita Bush company (later the Lafayette Players). Between 1914 and 1923, Wilson produced several one-act plays for the company, but *Pa Williams' Gal* was his first full-length play, a three-act comedy-drama. It premiered at the Lafayette Theater on 10 September 1923. No extant script has been found, and plot synopses are few; however, the play revolved around the conflict between a father and daughter over whom the daughter would marry.

Theophilus Lewis reviewed *Pa Williams' Gal* for *The Messenger* (October 1923); he pronounced it “a rather dull comedy by F. H. Wilson and John J. Coincidence.” According to Lewis, the play’s saving grace was its “very good” dialogue and the performances by Richard B. Harrison as Pa Williams and Dolores Haskins as his daughter, with support from H. Lawrence Freeman, Morris McKenny, and Rosalie (Rose) McClendon. All were described as “grade A,” with two exceptions: “Mr. Wilson, who plays the part of the lad with the heart of gold, appears to suffer from stage fright, and Marie Young seems to be in doubt whether she is portraying a character that is just fidgety or afflicted with St. Vitus’ dance.” But Lewis ended his review with a note of encouragement: “Here’s hoping that the theme of Mr. Wilson’s next play will be as good as the dialogue of this one” (846).

In the *Amersterdam News* two separate columns, one with the byline of the critic Romeo Doherty, were

devoted to Wilson and *Pa Williams' Gal* on 5 September 1923, before the play opened. The unsigned column urged Harlem to support Wilson’s efforts: “We understand that ‘Pa Williams’ Gal’ has nothing sensational or spectacular about it, but just a simple little story from life—a play without preachment or propaganda. That should carry a strong appeal to our people, whose support we crave in behalf of one of the most worthy young men of color seeking name and fame on the stage today.” Doherty, in response to a statement that Wilson had made concerning his preference for writing for a black audience, urged him to “think as an *American* and not simply as a colored man,” if he wanted to produce the “great American drama.”

Lewis returned to the subject of *Pa Williams' Gal* in *The Messenger* of November 1923, noting its value despite its flaws:

If I were a committee of one, authorized to award a prize for the year’s most valuable contribution to the Negro Theatre, I would reach over “Runnin Wild” and the venture of the Ethiopian Art Theatre and pin the blue ribbon on F. H. Wilson’s “Pa Williams’ Gal.” I say this without any desire to change my opinion of the play. . . . “Pa Williams’ Gal” misses the poignancy of life and for that reason is not first-rate work . . . but it does capture a mite of the romance, reverence and humor of life and it entraps a great deal of the striving upward, snobbery and absurd posturing we see going on around us every day. That is enough to make it a respectable contribution to the nascent Negro drama. . . . “Runnin Wild” and the Ethiopian Art Theatre give only acting. Now the Negro Theatre is a national theatre, just beginning a

struggle for independence. . . . Drama is the very bones and nerves of a national theatre; acting is only the greasepaint on its cheeks. (923–924)

FREDA SCOTT GILES

See also Amsterdam News; Anita Bush Theater Company; Harrison, Richard; Lafayette Theater; Lewis, Theophilus; Lincoln Theater; McClendon, Rose; Messenger, The; Wilson, Frank

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Pace, Harry H.

By the onset of the Harlem Renaissance, Harry Pace had already established himself as a successful banker, insurance administrator, and lyricist. Pace and William Christopher Handy became partners in 1907, in Memphis, as songwriters and publishers. In 1912, Pace moved to Atlanta to become the secretary of Standard Life Insurance, leaving much of the day-to-day operation to Handy. By 1920, business had grown so much that Pace left Atlanta to join Handy in New York at the new headquarters. With Pace as president and Handy as secretary and treasurer, the company found great success with the sale of Handy's "Saint Louis Blues," which quickly became one of the most popular songs of the day. Yet the success was bittersweet, as Pace was upset that white owners of record companies bought black songs and recorded them with white rather than black artists.

In March 1921, Pace left Handy on amicable terms to set up the Pace Phonographic Corporation, with a \$30,000 investment. The company would record and distribute records on the Black Swan label. Pace

surrounded himself with extremely talented and successful individuals such as Fletcher Henderson (recording manager and pianist), William Grant Still (music director), and Ethel Waters (recording artist); his board of directors included his college professor and mentor W. E. B. Du Bois, the businessman John E. Nail, Dr. Matthew V. Boutte, and Mrs. Viola Bibb. The company recorded blues, jazz, art songs, spirituals, operatic arias, and instrumental pieces and advertised its product as "the only genuine colored record—others are only passing for colored." Business was excellent until the end of 1923, when Pace filed for bankruptcy as a result of the emerging popularity of radio, which was detrimental to the record industry and particularly to the small independent labels. Pace sold the Black Swan catalog to Paramount records in March 1924. According to the *Chicago Defender*, Pace's entrepreneurial savvy had "forced white recording companies to do three things: to recognize the vast Negro market for recordings, to release 'race catalogues,' and to advertise in Black newspapers."

Pace returned to a successful career in insurance. In 1925, he organized Northeastern Life Insurance Company in Newark, New Jersey; and in 1929, he merged Northeastern with Supreme Life Casualty of Columbus, Ohio, and Liberty Life Insurance of Chicago (one of the largest and more successful black firms) to form the new Supreme Liberty Life Insurance. Pace served as president and chief executive officer until his death in 1943.

During the renaissance Pace was an extremely vocal opponent of Marcus Garvey and Garvey's "back to Africa" movement. As a "committee of eight," Pace, Robert S. Abbott (publisher of the *Chicago Defender*), John E. Nail, and five other distinguished black leaders wrote a letter to the U.S. attorney general, Harry M. Daugherty, protesting against the numerous delays in Garvey's trial for mail fraud in 1922.

In addition to Pace's display of corporate leadership, he was a profound and influential author during this period, often commenting on blacks in insurance and the economy.

Biography

Harry Herbert Pace was born on 6 January 1884, in Covington, Georgia. He studied at Atlanta University in Georgia, receiving a B.A. (as valedictorian) in 1903; and graduated from Chicago (Illinois) Law School with a J.D. (cum laude) in 1933. Pace taught at Haines

Institute in Augusta, Georgia, 1903–1904; and was a professor of Latin and Greek at Lincoln Institute, Jefferson City, Missouri, 1906–1907. In Memphis, Tennessee, Pace managed *Moon Illustrated Weekly*, 1905–1906; was a cashier at Solvent Savings and Trust Bank, 1907–1912; and was a cofounder of Pace-Handy Music Company, 1907–1920. In Atlanta, Georgia, he was a secretary at Standard Life Insurance, 1912–1920. In New York City, Pace was president of Pace-Handy Music Company, 1920–1921; and president of Pace Phonograph Corporation, 1921–1924. In Newark, New Jersey, Pace was a cofounder and executive of the Northeastern Life Insurance Company, 1925–1929. In Chicago, he was president and chief executive officer of Supreme Liberty Life Insurance, 1929–1943. He was also a member of the National Negro Insurance Association: He was its president, 1928–1929; statistician, 1929–1930; and general counsel, 1934–1938. As a member of the Elks, he was its grand secretary, 1908; and grand exalted ruler, 1911–1913. Pace was elected to the Order of Lincoln (an honorary law school fraternity) in 1933. In 1935, he was appointed assistant counsel of the Illinois Commerce Commission and also elected a member of the diocesan council of the Protestant Episcopal Church (Chicago). He was a member of the national board of directors of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Chicago board of the National Urban League, and president of the Citizens Civic and Economic Welfare Council (Chicago). Pace died in Chicago on 26 July 1943.

EMMETT PRICE

See also Abbott, Robert Sengstacke; Black Swan Phonograph Company; Garvey, Marcus; Handy, W. C.; Henderson, Fletcher; Musicians; Nail, John E.; Pace Phonographic Corporation; Still, William Grant; Waters, Ethel

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Pace Phonographic Corporation

Harry Pace, a music publisher and musician, began his own music production and recording company in 1921 in Harlem; it was called Pace Phonographic Corporation. Pace decided that his label would be owned by black stockholders, run by black employees, and serve the black musical community. A unit of Pace Phonographic was Black Swan Records, named after Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield, a nineteenth-century concert singer known as the "black swan." Black Swan soon began releasing Pace's recordings.

Shortly after beginning his company, Pace hired the bandleader Fletcher Henderson, a rising star, to work for Black Swan Records as its recording director. Henderson worked closely with William Grant Still, who was hired as a music arranger and music director for Black Swan. In May 1921, Black Swan released its first record. The blues singer Ethel Waters was an important factor in the company's early success. Her song "Down Home Blues" was Black Swan's first hit and led to the formation of the Black Swan Troubadours, a musical group conducted by Henderson and featuring Waters; they later toured throughout the South promoting Black Swan.

In 1922, Pace bought the Olympic Disc Record Corporation in order to sell Black Swan's recordings—which were being created by both black and white artists—to both black and white communities. But when Pace decided to include white artists, many disappointed blacks protested against his acquisition of Olympic.

In 1923, the Pace Phonographic Corporation and Black Swan Records went bankrupt. Evidently, this was largely because Pace did not have a sufficient financial reserve to avoid being taken over by one of the larger recording companies, such as Paramount, which were owned and run by whites. By 1924, Paramount removed Harry Pace from the musical recording business when it bought out the Black Swan catalog of recordings.

ANNE ROTHFELD

See also Black Swan Phonograph Company; Henderson, Fletcher; Pace, Harry H.; Still, William Grant; Waters, Ethel

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Padmore, George

Malcolm Ivan Meredith Nurse, known to history as George Padmore, stands as one of the most influential figures in pan-Africanism and, paradoxically, as one of the most obscure. He was born in Trinidad—his birth date has been variously given as 1901, 1902, and 1904—and grew up in Port of Spain. He apparently came to his anti-imperialism early in life: His closest boyhood friend was C. L. R. James, another towering figure in the history of black radicalism.

Nurse completed secondary school in Trinidad and, after a hiatus of several years, continued his studies in the United States. Between 1924 and 1928, he studied at Columbia, Fisk, and Howard University Law School, but he devoted most of his energy to politics. He joined the Communist Party in about 1927, adopting Padmore, the name of a cousin, as a nom de

guerre. With Richard B. Moore, another Caribbean radical, he launched a party newspaper in Harlem, *The Negro Champion*. (In an apt irony, the budding journalist supplemented his income by working as a janitor at the Times Building.)

Padmore's career as a communist was brief but eventful. Enrolling at a moment of intense internal debate over the "Negro question," he initially rose rapidly in the party ranks. In 1929, he moved to the Soviet Union, where he became head of the Profintern's new Negro Bureau, as well as a member of the Moscow City Soviet. (Unlike Langston Hughes, W. E. B. Du Bois, Claude McKay, and other African Americans feted by the Soviet Union, Padmore traveled without an American passport or reentry visa, and so was prevented from ever returning to the United States.) He traveled widely on party business, including at least one trip to Africa, but his primary base was Hamburg, Germany, where he oversaw the newly established International Trades Union Congress of Negro Workers (ITUC-NW) and edited the union's monthly organ, *The Negro Worker*.

Padmore's chief contribution to the Harlem Renaissance came through the agency of Nancy Cunard. Cunard probably first learned of Padmore through his book *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers*, published in 1931; they met in Paris a year later. Although utterly different in background and temperament, the frugal West Indian revolutionary and the avant-garde white heiress were united by their zeal for racial justice, as well as by loyalty to the Communist Party. By Cunard's account, Padmore was one of the two most important influences on her massive anthology, *The Negro* (1934), contributing four essays and a wealth of advice and contacts.

By the time *The Negro* appeared in 1934, Padmore had experienced a dramatic reversal of fortune. The accession of the Nazis in Germany led to the banning of the Communist Party and the wholesale arrest of party activists; Padmore spent several months in jail. At the same time, the Comintern, anxious to cultivate better relations with the Western powers as security against Hitler, ordered the suspension of all agitation against European imperialism. The ITUC-NW was disbanded. Padmore, unable to abide what he regarded as a rank betrayal of colonial peoples, immediately resigned his party offices. The party responded by formally expelling him and launching a campaign of vilification, in which he was branded as a racialist and petit bourgeois nationalist.

Padmore spent the ensuing decades in London. Although he had close relations with the leadership of the Independent Labour Party, he never again joined a movement led by whites; people of color must be responsible for their own liberation, he insisted. He remained a prolific writer, producing another half-dozen books, from *How Britain Rules Africa*, an anti-colonial primer published in 1936, to *Pan-Africanism or Communism: The Coming Struggle for Africa*, published in 1956, in which he made the case for a nonaligned Pan-African movement. He also founded the International African Service Bureau, intended as a kind of nerve center for a developing global anticolonial movement. The cluttered kitchen of his apartment on Cranleigh Street became a virtual seminar room for a generation of African nationalist leaders, including Kwame Nkrumah, the first prime minister of independent Ghana; and Jomo Kenyatta, Nkrumah's Kenyan counterpart.

If Padmore is remembered at all today, it is usually in relationship to Nkrumah. The two met in mid-1945, when Nkrumah arrived in London from the United States, bearing a letter of introduction from C. L. R. James. A few months later, they jointly convened the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester. (It was a measure of both men's historical sensitivity that they bestowed the chairmanship of the meeting on W. E. B. Du Bois, who had built the congress a generation before.) Claims that Padmore orchestrated Nkrumah's rise to power are clearly exaggerated, but he was a formative influence on the future leader. One of Nkrumah's first acts after the coming of independence in 1957 was to invite Padmore to Ghana to serve as a special adviser on African affairs.

Padmore spent his last two years in Ghana. In September 1959, he flew to London to seek treatment for a diseased liver, the result of an earlier bout of hepatitis. He died a few days later. At Nkrumah's request, Padmore's ashes were returned to Ghana and interred at Christiansborg castle, a former slave fort that had become the seat of the new government. In 1992, they were reinterred on the grounds of the George Padmore Research Library, a research center in Accra devoted to Africa's struggle for independence.

Biography

Malcolm Ivan Meredith Nurse, also known as George Padmore, was born c. 1902 in Tacarigua, Trinidad. He studied at St. Mary's College of the Immaculate

Conception, Port of Spain, Trinidad; Columbia University, New York City; Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee; and Howard University Law School, Washington, D.C. Padmore joined the Communist Party c. 1927 and founded a party newspaper, *The Negro Champion*, based in Harlem. Padmore traveled to the Soviet Union in 1929, served on the Moscow City Soviet, and headed the Negro Bureau of the Red International of Labor Unions (Profintern). He moved to Hamburg, Germany, in 1930 to oversee the International Trades Union Congress of Negro Workers (ITUC-NW) and edit its monthly organ, *The Negro Worker*. Padmore collaborated with Nancy Cunard on *The Negro: An Anthology*. Padmore resigned from the Communist Party in 1934 and moved to London, where he founded the International Africa Services Bureau. He moved to Accra, Ghana, in 1957 to serve as special adviser on African affairs to Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah. Padmore died in London on 23 September 1959.

JAMES CAMPBELL

See also Cunard, Nancy; Moore, Richard B.; *Negro: An Anthology*; Pan-African Congresses; Pan-Africanism

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Palms

Published in Guadalajara, Mexico, *Palms* was a poetry magazine edited by Idella Purnell. *Palms* provided an outlet for both new and established poets. The magazine published poetry by several well-known writers of the Harlem Renaissance and is noted for a special issue of African American poets, edited by Countee Cullen, in 1926.

Idella Purnell was born in Guadalajara and raised there by her father, an American dentist. She attended high school and college in the United States, graduating from the University of California at Berkeley. She returned to Guadalajara to live with her father after graduation, and decided to publish a literary magazine as an outlet for her creativity. At Berkeley, Purnell took a class with the acclaimed poet Witter Bynner, who served as an associate and contributing editor of *Palms*. Bynner mentored Purnell in the publication and encouraged well-known poets to submit work to it.

The first number of *Palms* was published in the spring of 1923. In her inaugural editorial statement, Purnell emphasized that poetry submitted to the magazine would be judged on merit without regard to the reputation of the authors or the school or form of poetry submitted. In subsequent numbers, poems were published without the authors' names. A note explained that authors' names and works would be listed in the following issue. Issues were published six times per year.

In addition to publishing established poets such as Robinson Jeffers, Mark Van Doren, and Louis Untermeyer, Purnell published works by undergraduates, scholars, journalists, businessmen, and housewives in *Palms*. The first number announced two regular awards that would be offered in association with the magazine: a readers' choice prize for best poem published during the year and an annual prize, sponsored by Witter Bynner and the Poetry Society of America, for the best poem or group of poems by an undergraduate.

Countee Cullen won second place in the Bynner competition in 1923 and first place in 1925. He won the *Palms* readers' choice award for "Ballad of the Brown Girl" in 1924 and for "Wisdom Cometh with

the Years" in 1925. Both Witter Bynner and Idella Purnell admired Cullen's poetry, and in the January 1926 issue of *Palms* (Volume 3, Number 4), Purnell announced that Cullen would edit a "Negro Poets' Number of the magazine." In addition to the announcement, this issue included two poems by Langston Hughes and a positive review of Cullen's book *Color*.

Cullen's thirty-two-page "Negro poets" issue of *Palms* appeared in October 1926 (Volume 4, Number 1). The issue featured seventeen African American authors including Cullen, Arna Bontemps, Albert Rice, Clarissa Scott, Georgia Douglas Johnson, William Stanley Braithwaite, Waring Cuney, Anne Spencer, Lewis Alexander, Jessie Redmon Fauset, W. E. B. Du Bois, Richard Bruce Nugent, Gwendolyn Bennett, Helene Johnson, and Langston Hughes. Walter White wrote "The Negro Renaissance," an introductory essay on the development of Negro poetry, and Alain Locke contributed a positive review of Langston Hughes's *The Weary Blues*. This special issue was a great success and sold out within a month after publication. Like the "Harlem number" of *Survey Graphic* in March 1925, the "Negro poets" number of *Palms* increased the exposure of black writers during the Harlem Renaissance by putting their work before readers of traditionally white magazines.

Although the circulation of *Palms* never surpassed 2,000, and the magazine never turned a profit, poets and critics respected it. Idella Purnell dealt with political and social upheaval in Mexico as well as the effects of the stock market crash of 1929. She edited and published the magazine from 1923 through 1930. She sold it in 1930, and further issues were published from 1936 until the final issue of March–April 1940.

HEATHER MARTIN

See also *Color*; Cullen, Countee; Hughes, Langston; *Magazines and Journals*; White, Walter; *other specific writers*

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Pan-African Congresses

During the early twentieth century, a series of conferences were held on an irregular basis as Afro-American, Afro-Caribbean, and African intellectuals convened to discuss matters of common concern and racial solidarity. The first of these events, which helped conceptualize the term “pan-Africanism,” took place in London in July 1900, but it was not included in the numbering sequence of subsequent events that became known as the first through fifth Pan-African Congresses. Thus, the first Pan-African Congress took place in London on 19–21 February 1919; the second occurred between 28 August and 5 September 1921, with sessions held in London, Paris, and Brussels; the third was held in 1923 with sessions in London (7–8 November) and Lisbon (25 November); the fourth took place on 21–24 August 1927 in New York City; and the fifth took place on 15–21 October 1945, in Manchester, England. These gatherings reflect a geopolitical manifestation of many political and cultural ideologies that characterized the Harlem Renaissance.

Henry Sylvester Williams (1869–1911), a Trinidadian lawyer practicing in London, was the driving force behind the initial pan-African conference that was held in London in 1900. In 1897, Williams had established a group among the West Indians living in England that he called the African League, and this organization provided an impetus for the conference in London. Delegates of color from the British empire, the United States, and non-British colonial Africa were invited to gather to discuss how joint action defined by racial solidarity might bring greater freedom to the people of Africa. Bishop Alexander Walters (1858–1917) of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States chaired the plenary session of the London conference.

W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) was the leader of the U.S. delegation attending the meeting in London in 1900. Even though he had not yet become a true convert to pan-Africanism, Du Bois was selected to chair the “Address to the Nations of the World” Committee. It was in this role that he drafted a manifesto stating: “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem

of the color line” (Sundquist 1996, 100). He would later repeat the idea as a running theme in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903).

Following the deaths of Williams and Walters, Du Bois became the effective leader of the incipient pan-African cause, and he decided to reenergize the movement by holding more regular meetings to consider the state of affairs in Africa and determine what course of action persons of color should take to advance the cause of self-rule there. The series of congresses that followed—all of which were specifically organized under the umbrella of pan-Africanism—are the sequentially numbered events of 1919, 1921, 1923, 1927, and 1945.

Du Bois organized the First Pan-African Congress, which was held in February 1919, to coincide with the postwar diplomatic conference in Paris that negotiated the Treaty of Versailles. The organizers of the congress believed that the rhetoric of national self-determination, especially that previously articulated by Woodrow Wilson in his Fourteen Points, might move the western European nations to consider a policy of decolonization in Africa. Because African colonial troops had supported the victorious Allied cause during World War I (1914–1918), the advocates of pan-Africanism believed that their call for home rule was justifiable as a means of equitable compensation for services rendered.

Du Bois had managed to obtain permission from the French government to hold the event in Paris through the intercession of Blaise Diagne, a member of the French chamber of deputies from Senegal. In addition to the French support, the governments of Belgium and Portugal officially recognized the event and sent representatives, but the United States and Great Britain did not sanction the meeting. In the end, fifty-seven delegates from fifteen nations attended the conference.

The Second Pan-African Congress (1921) is generally recognized as being the most radical of the gatherings. This event concluded on 29 August 1921, with the promulgation of a document titled “Declaration to the World” but more commonly known as the “London manifesto.” The delegates charged that

England, with all her Pax Britannica, her courts of justice, established commerce, and a certain apparent recognition of Native laws and customs, has nevertheless systematically fostered ignorance among the Natives, has enslaved them, and is still enslaving them, has usually declined even to try to train black

and brown men in real self-government, to recognise civilised black folk as civilised, or to grant to coloured colonies those rights of self government which it freely gives to white men. (Sundquist, 642–643)

Attendance waned at both the Third Pan-African Congress (1923) and the Fourth Pan-African Congress (1927), leading, in part, to the hiatus in further meetings until the end of World War II in 1945. Plans to hold a congress in the West Indies in 1925 were tabled for lack of interest. Nonetheless, delegates attending the meetings in 1923 and 1927 continued their call for decolonization and home rule in Africa, and also extended their concerns to include alarm at the rise of vigilantism and lynching within the United States. Delegates also tried to persuade the League of Nations to pursue the goals of the pan-Africanist movement.

The Fifth Pan-African Congress (1945) in Manchester, England, would prove to be the most consequential of these events. Ninety delegates attended, including twenty-six from Africa who would come to represent a “who’s who” of postindependence African leadership. The “Manchester manifesto” that emerged from this meeting represented a passing of the torch of leadership from those pan-Africanists outside Africa to a young generation of pan-Africanist intellectuals within Africa. African delegates, including Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta, agreed that the promise of decolonization and home rule in Africa would arise only when African leaders internalized the pan-African struggle and effectively ended the colonial domination of Africa by external powers.

JUNIUS P. RODRIGUEZ

See also Du Bois, W. E. B.; Pan-Africanism

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Pan-Africanism

The ideology of pan-Africanism—one of the most significant intellectual trends of the Harlem Renaissance era—was a complex belief system that sought to unify persons of color to aspire to a calling beyond their own parochial interests. Pan-Africanists were expected to be color-conscious citizens of the world who would racially self-actualize their own experience and simultaneously deliver Africa from the hands of its colonial oppressors.

Intellectual antecedents of twentieth-century pan-Africanism can be found in the notions of black nationalism that were first articulated in the nineteenth century by leaders such as Martin R. Delany and Alexander Crummell. A strand of this self-reliant ideology would permeate the rhetoric of subsequent twentieth-century leaders such as Marcus Garvey and Malcolm X. Elements of the self-help philosophy remain popular among present-day pan-Africanists.

The essential doctrine of pan-Africanism was built on the premise that people of color shared a unique cultural and historical experience, regardless of their geographic circumstances, which bound them as kinfolk to the peoples of Africa. In such a worldview, the horrors of four centuries of transatlantic slavery, the resultant diaspora, and the subsequent yoke of colonialism that had been foisted on Africa by the hand of western Europeans were sufficient cause to unify peoples of color into a force that would work for social justice. Chief among the goals of pan-Africanists was the decolonization of Africa and the establishment of home rule—the basic idea that Africa should belong to the Africans.

Many of the strategies and tactics used by pan-Africanists borrowed heavily from the successful

methods applied by abolitionists on both sides of the Atlantic to bring an end to slavery during the nineteenth century. Adopting a policy of moral suasion that was punctuated by the twin means of education and agitation, the pan-Africanists, much like their earlier abolitionist brethren, sought to fight evil with ideas. Yet unlike the abolitionist crusade, which had biracial support throughout its long history, the pan-Africanist movement was exclusively black. Additionally, the pan-Africanists found little support for their efforts from national governments that often considered their motives suspect.

Many of the ideological origins of the concept of pan-Africanism are found in the West Indies. The phrase was first articulated by Henry Sylvester Williams (1869–1911), a Trinidadian lawyer who had studied in Canada and was practicing in London. In 1897, Williams established an organization, which he called the African League, among his fellow West Indians living in England. Williams and the African League would be the driving force behind the initial pan-African conference that was held in London in July 1900.

In addition to Williams's involvement, a literary movement known as *négritude* that had developed among writers in the French West Indies also supported the ideals of pan-Africanism. Writers such as Aimé Césaire, Léon Damas, and Léopold Senghor began to produce literary works with a decidedly anticolonial sensibility. These authors criticized Europeans for their plunder of Africa's resources and their stifling control of African peoples. The authors also wrote with a sense of pride that celebrated African cultures and peoples for glorious traditions and history.

During the twentieth century the work of two individuals became synonymous with the cause of pan-Africanism. The Trinidadian author George Padmore became known to many as the "father of pan-Africanism," and in the United States W. E. B. Du Bois became the leading advocate of the pan-African crusade. Du Bois became the chief organizer of a series of five Pan-African Congresses that were held between 1919 and 1945. Padmore and Du Bois shared both nationalist and an internationalist visions of the political and cultural transformations pan-Africanism might generate, and as a result, both men became increasingly attracted to the doctrines of socialism and communism. Padmore and Du Bois would both spend their final years living in Ghana once that west African nation received its independence during the era of decolonization.

The issue of pan-Africanism became rather complicated in the United States during the Harlem Renaissance. Two different movements, each germinated from the same ideological seed of black nationalism and pan-Africanism, competed for the minds and hearts of African Americans. Each would develop its own constituency, and for a time, the two movements seemed to operate mutually exclusively.

Marcus Garvey organized the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in 1914 and began a campaign promoting self-help for blacks and advocating racial pride. Garvey's message appealed to the black working masses whose population swelled in America's urban industrial centers as a result of the great migration. Garvey's later support of a "back to Africa" scheme attracted fewer adherents, but his strident rhetoric emphasized the cultural distinctiveness of African Americans as a nation within a nation. Du Bois's message of pan-Africanism was more appealing to middle-class intellectuals. In his view the primary objectives of the pan-African movement included the cultural regeneration of African Americans in their adopted land and an associated, concerted effort by racially conscious African Americans to become the social vanguard that would bring freedom and home rule to their colonized brethren in Africa.

The allure of Garveyism faded in the 1920s after its leader was convicted of mail fraud, imprisoned, and deported, but these events did not generate many converts to Du Bois's message of pan-Africanism. Even for those African Americans who were willing to accept an ideology of color-consciousness and advocacy, the continent of Africa was still a distant, dimly perceived place that had little real connection to their world. Pan-Africanists may have been genuinely sincere in their desired goals, but the practical dimension of how they would achieve their objectives lacked clarity. When the Fifth Pan-African Congress was held in Manchester, England, in 1945, a new generation of African-born pan-African leaders came to realize that the success or failure of their movement would rest on the sense of urgency and purpose that they brought to the cause. This cadre of pan-Africanists, including notable leaders Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta, would become the agents of change who delivered independence and home rule to much of Africa.

JUNIUS P. RODRIGUEZ

See also Césaire, Aimé; Damas, Léon; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Garvey, Marcus; *Négritude*; Padmore, George;

Pan-African Congresses; Senghor, Léopold; Universal Negro Improvement Association

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Party Politics

"I know the negroes better than they know themselves. You couldn't drive them out of the Republican Party with a sledgehammer." With this comment, Lemuel Eli Quigg, a Republican leader in New York, became an even more effective tool than the one to which he referred. A group of black politicians, led by James Carr and Edward "Chief" Lee, had approached Quigg, in late 1897, because they felt that blacks deserved more patronage—jobs—as a reward for their profound loyalty to the Republican Party. Not satisfied with Quigg's response, the black group then met with Richard Croker, leader of Tammany Hall, the Democratic political machine in Manhattan. The group left the meeting with Croker with the understanding that they would be rewarded commensurately with the number of black votes they delivered to the Democrats.

In January 1898, Carr, Lee and others formed the first black Democratic Party organization in the country, United Colored Democracy, a segregated unit of Tammany, responsible for all the black wards in the city. Croker was sufficiently satisfied with their efforts that Carr, a graduate of Rutgers and Columbia Law, was appointed to a position in the corporation counsel's office.

Lee, who was reportedly illiterate, received an appointment in the sheriff's office.

In 1905, Theodore Roosevelt appointed Charles William Anderson—a native of Oxford, Ohio, who was a supporter of Booker T. Washington and was active in the New York Republican Party—to be collector of Internal Revenue for the Second District of New York, which included the Wall Street district. T. Thomas Fortune wrote in *New York Age*, "No other president has given an appointment of that high character in the domestic service in the North to an Afro-American." Anderson served in that position until he was removed by Woodrow Wilson in 1915. In 1923, President Warren G. Harding appointed Anderson to the equivalent post in the Third District.

Between 1920 and 1930, the black population of Harlem increased by 150 percent, while the total population decreased by 4 percent. The increase was largely a result of in-migration. Between 1930 and 1940, the black population of Harlem increased by 41 percent, while the total population increased by 8 percent. In this case, natural increase was at least as important as in-migration.

The "assembly district," from which delegates were elected to the state legislature, was the basic unit of political organization in New York. During the Harlem Renaissance, "black Harlem" was divided, evenly, between two assembly districts—the Nineteenth, with a sizable Jewish population, and the Twenty-first, populated by a large Irish American community. Not until 1920 did blacks make up 50 percent of the population of any assembly district. By 1930, blacks had come to represent 70 percent of the population in each district, but "population" did not translate directly into political power. For the early decades of the twentieth century, the Afro-American community in Harlem had a choice, in national politics, between a Democratic Party seemingly dominated by plantation culture and by the Ku Klux Klan, and a Republican Party that took blacks for granted while following a "lily-white" southern strategy. At the local level, however, black people in Harlem benefited from lively two-party politics.

Although he was a card-carrying member of New York Local No. 1 of the Socialist Party, W. E. B. Du Bois considered the election of 1912 so important that black support for Eugene V. Debs, the Socialist presidential candidate, would be a waste. For Du Bois, the four years of the Taft administration had been disastrous. For the first time since the Civil War, the Republic Party platform of 1912 was silent on the Fourteenth and

Fifteenth amendments. For a few weeks, in *The Crisis*, Du Bois explored the possibility of supporting Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive or Bull Moose Party. But at the convention of the Progressive Party in Chicago, Roosevelt was more interested in gaining the support of white southerners than of African Americans. The convention denied seats to most black delegates and ignored a "civil rights" platform plank written by Du Bois and introduced by Joel Spingarn.

Despite mixed messages from the Democratic candidate, Woodrow Wilson, Du Bois and others convinced themselves that a Wilson administration would play fair with African Americans, and this was communicated to the black community in the pages of *The Crisis*. Some 100,000 African Americans voted Democratic in the presidential election of 1912, and lived to regret it.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, party politics in Harlem consisted of a few self-appointed leaders delivering black votes to the Democratic and Republican parties in exchange for patronage appointments. About 1914, John M. Royall founded the United Civic League. Royall was very successful in the real estate and insurance businesses and, following the example of Philip Payton, participated in opening Harlem's real estate market to blacks. When he and a group of associates were denied a banking charter, Royall came to the conclusion that for economic power to develop, it had to be supported by political power.

The objective of the United Civic League was to make the transition from "appointive representation" to "elective representation"—from receiving patronage to being in a position to hand it out. The first documented black candidate for political office in New York was John M. Royall, in 1913; he was an unsuccessful candidate for the board of aldermen. Although in 1912 Royall had supported Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Party, most of the individuals identified with the United Civic League, including Fred R. Moore, the editor of *New York Age*, were Republicans. It was not until 1917 that a black man, Edward Austin Johnson, was nominated for public office by a regular district political organization. Johnson, nominated by the United Civic League, was the successful Republican candidate from Harlem's Nineteenth Assembly District, defeating, among others, A. Philip Randolph, who was running on the Socialist ticket. Johnson had been active in Republican politics in his native North Carolina and had been a professor of law and a dean at Shaw University in Raleigh. African Americans in

North Carolina were disenfranchised in 1900 and pushed out of the Republican Party in 1902. Johnson moved to New York, in 1907, as part of the prewar migration of the "talented tenth."

A year after Johnson's election from the Nineteenth District, John C. Hawkins, an African American, was elected as a Republican to the state assembly from the Twenty-first District. It appears that Harlemites, like most Americans in the 1920s, became disillusioned with politics. Enjoying the relative prosperity of the war era but angry at the treatment of black soldiers during and after the war, black people in Harlem experimented with socialism, communism, black nationalism, and variations on Islam. At the very moment when the "Jazz Age" met the "New Negro" to form the Harlem Renaissance, politics in Harlem descended into corruption, venality, and gangsterism.

Walter (1989), writing in the voice of J. Raymond Jones, the first black "Tammany boss," explains that

indigenous northern Blacks had, for the most part, become disenchanted with politics by World War I. The situation worsened when large numbers of southern Blacks, who were even more disillusioned by the political process, came north. "Why should I vote," I remember them asking. "What has politics done for me?" they would ask in righteous indignation as they slammed the door in my face. The answer lay in what politics *could* do, but by this time most New York City Blacks had developed a near-contemptuous attitude toward politicians.

As a West Indian, Jones could not understand that, for southern blacks, politics was a dangerous business.

Writing in 1940, the political scientist Ralph Bunche found that in the days before black folk moved to Harlem, black politics was divided along class lines. The "better element," led by their preachers, were Republicans. The "sporting house" crowd, led by saloon keepers, hotel proprietors, and such, were often Democrats. Black support for the Republican Party is usually explained as loyalty to the party of Abraham Lincoln and post-Civil War emancipation. But in New York, the story began in 1799, when emancipation was a local issue. At the end of the eighteenth century, the Federalists were the party of New York's elite, including the leadership of the Manumission Society, who succeeded in passing a law calling for the gradual emancipation of enslaved New Yorkers.

By the early twentieth century, the political culture of the Federalists had passed down to the present-day Republicans. The opposition party, which evolved into the present-day Democrats, was the party of small tradesmen, mechanics, and workmen. These "Democrats" opposed the emancipation of the slaves, in part because they feared competition from freed black laborers who would have historical and sentimental ties to elite Federalists. Three hundred black votes provided the balance of power, in favor of the Federalists, in the election of 1813 in New York. As a consequence, the "Democrats" pushed a bill through the state legislature in 1821 that largely disenfranchised New York's black voters. The African American franchise was not restored until the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, in 1870.

After he was charged with mail fraud by the federal government, Marcus Garvey encouraged his followers to take an interest in national politics. According to Ottley and Weatherby (1967):

He encouraged his West Indian followers to become naturalized, so that they could vote. He supported Coolidge for President, and Tammany Hall locally; he backed a white Democrat, Royal H. Weller, for Congress, against a Negro Republican, Dr. E. P. Roberts [sic]. Alfred E. Smith and Mayor John F. Hylan spoke at Liberty Hall during the fall campaign of 1924.

When Weller came up for reelection in 1924, Republicans again nominated Dr. Charles Roberts to oppose him. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) rejected Roberts on the ground that he was a "reactionary," and Weller was reelected.

The "Tammany boss" J. Raymond Jones, a native of the U.S. Virgin Islands, had arrived in Harlem in 1917. In 1920, Jones joined Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and began a long association with Ulysses Simpson Poston, who was in charge of most of the UNIA's business ventures other than the Black Star Line. The decline of the UNIA coincided with the decision by Tammany Hall to drop the two-term mayor "Honest John" Francis Hylan from the mayoral ticket. The man appointed by Tammany to replace Hylan was a state senator and songwriter, James J. "Jimmy" Walker.

When he was reelected in 1921, Hylan received three-fourths of the black vote. To hold on to his job, in 1925, Hylan organized his campaign around the issue of retaining the five-cent subway fare. Ulysses Poston

and his protégé J. Raymond Jones formed the Hylan Five-Cent Fare Club of Harlem. Thus began the political career of the young West Indian immigrant who would rise to the leadership of Tammany in 1963. Hylan won Harlem but lost the primary to Walker. Through his connections to the Hylan campaign, Jones was hired as a "redcap" (porter) at Pennsylvania Station, and he and his acquaintances from the UNIA became the nucleus of a group of young, largely West Indian "new Democrats," who would work in politics in Harlem in opposition to the largely "indigenous" United Colored Democracy.

The black migration toward the Democratic Party was accelerated by the election of Jimmy Walker. During his campaign for mayor in 1925, in a speech in Harlem, Walker said: "I won't do a thing for Negroes. Nor will I do anything for Jews or Irishmen. But as mayor of this great city, I will work for the people." According to Claude McKay (1940):

Negroes in Harlem regarded that stand as an expression of an equalitarian principle which Negro leaders seemed proud to hear. As a consequence of that speech, along with other considerations shown them, a large number of Negroes went Democratic and remained Democrats ever since.

During Walker's administration, a new building was constructed for the 369th Infantry, Harlem's much-decorated National Guard unit. Fred Moore, editor of *New York Age* and a Republican leader who cooperated with Walker, took much of the credit for this building and for a new police station built on 135th Street. Bunche (1973) reports that virtually every officer of the 369th held a federal, state, or city appointment, although most of these officers were Republicans. During Walker's administration, the number of blacks on the city payrolls increased from 247 to 2,275.

In 1925, during the Walker administration, five black physicians were appointed, for the first time, to the regular staff of Harlem General Hospital, and a training school for black nurses was created there. In 1930, the Walker administration reorganized the hospital, removing all racial barriers. By 1932, there were seventy black interns and physicians working there.

Despite misgivings, Walter White of the NAACP encouraged African Americans to vote for Al Smith, former Democratic governor of New York, in the presidential election of 1928. Smith, who had close ties to

Tammany Hall, had campaigned vigorously in Harlem when running for state office, but in his campaign for the presidency, he seemed concerned about alienating potential southern support. He received 28 percent of the vote in Harlem in 1928.

In 1930, Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt of New York and the state legislature created four new judgeships for Manhattan, two of them in Harlem. The assumption in the legislature was that the two judges in Harlem would be Republicans. Aware of the trend away from the Republican Party, Jones and the “new Democrats” decided to cooperate with the United Colored Democracy to elect black Democrats instead. James S. Watson, a West Indian, the candidate of the “new Democrats”; and Charles Toney, a law partner of the United Colored Democracy’s leader Ferdinand Q. Morton, were elected. This cooperation with the United Colored Democracy strengthened the “new Democrats” and enhanced their sense of themselves as the future of Harlem politics.

In 1928, the Republican candidate for president received 66 percent of the black vote in New York. In 1932, the Republican received only 46 percent.

In 1915, the year Booker T. Washington died, Ferdinand Q. Morton, who had been educated at Harvard, assumed leadership of the United Colored Democracy. In 1919, Charles F. Murphy, who succeeded Richard Croker as boss of Tammany, appointed Morton as assistant district attorney. Morton reigned over black Democratic politics in New York until the liberal Republican Fiorello La Guardia was elected mayor in 1933. With no access to patronage under La Guardia’s American Labor Party administration, the United Colored Democracy went out of business. Morton accepted La Guardia’s offer of a position on the Civil Service Commission in exchange for breaking his ties with Tammany and the Democratic Party. Liberated from Morton’s dictatorship, the Democrats of Harlem took control of the local political organizations away from the old white bosses, who in turn had been controlled by Tammany. The Nineteenth Assembly District fell in 1935 and the Twenty-first in 1939.

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See also Crisis, The; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Fifteenth Infantry; Garvey, Marcus; Harlem General Hospital; Moore, Frederick Randolph; Morton, Ferdinand Q.; New York Age; Politics and Politicians; Spingarn, Joel; United Colored Democracy; Universal Negro Improvement Association

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Passing

“Passing,” often associated with “masquerade,” occurs when an individual assumes an identity different from what his culture understands to be his or her “real,” biologically determined identity. For instance, in “gender passing,” a woman may assume a male identity and live the sociocultural role of a man, as the jazz musician Billy (Dorothy) Tipton did. Dorothy Tipton began passing as a man when she entered the jazz scene in the 1930s; she married several times, adopted a child, and lived publicly as a man for the last fifty-four years of her life. As this example suggests, passing challenges the idea that identity markers such as gender and race are innate biological categories;

it indicates, rather, that physical appearance is unreliable and that performance is an important aspect of identity. In other words, passing suggests that categories such as gender and race are ideological, culture-specific constructions.

Although gender passing was a known phenomenon during the Harlem Renaissance, the term “passing” was more often used in the context of race. In the United States, racial classifications are traditionally made by assigning significance to specific phenotypical characteristics (such as skin color, hair texture, and facial features). Also important is an individual’s racial heritage (the legal racial classification of his or her progenitors). Racial passing can occur when a person who is legally classified as a member of a particular race does not exhibit the physical characteristics typically associated with it. For instance, in the United States a person with an African American parent or grandparent, or even a single African American great-grandparent, was historically legally classified as “black” under the notorious “one drop rule.” However, as a result of “interracial” procreation (what white supremacist pseudoscientists called “miscegenation” or “amalgamation”), legally black people can be physically white. That is, even though a person may be legally, psychologically, or socially African American, he or she may also have “white” skin and, say, blond hair and green eyes. Because the American racial system is largely based on visual clues, such a person will not be recognized as black and may function within the culture as “white” as long as his or her African American heritage is publicly unknown. Similarly, legally white people could be mistaken for, or live by choice as, African Americans. However, given the legal and socioeconomic implications for African Americans under slavery and then under Jim Crow and segregation, most recorded racial passing has been from black to white. For example, before the Civil War, notices about escaped slaves testify that some African Americans took advantage of their light skin and “white” features to free themselves by passing as white. During Reconstruction, “redemption,” and the rise and heyday of Jim Crow, some light-skinned African Americans passed in order to gain socioeconomic advantages that white cultural practices and laws prohibited them from attaining as blacks. The reasons that might motivate an individual to pass are innumerable, and because passing by its very nature obscures legal racial identity, it is impossible to know how many African Americans “crossed the color line.”

As scholars and “ex-passers” have been quick to note, however, passing could come with a high price.

Many blacks passed as white only during their work hours, but for others, passing meant ending all communication with black relatives and friends. Furthermore, passers were often haunted by the threat of exposure and suffered under a burden of necessary silence when encountering a black family member or friend. Additionally, to avoid suspicion, passers often had to remain silent on racial issues, especially when they were involved in conversations that elicited or encouraged expressions of white supremacy or racism. Such reticence sometimes led to feelings of remorse for the loss of their black community or guilt over “abandoning their race.” Still, passing was at some level satisfying because it remained a way to fool whites and to expose the myths of biologically based racial inequality.

The sacrifice, denial, tension, and subversiveness surrounding passing made excellent material for authors. Although some novels about passing were written to support ideas of innate biologically based racial inequality, most such novels debunked biological theories. Incorporating passing into a plot gave an author a way to expose the illusion of separate, biologically distinct, unequal races that “mix” through “amalgamation.” Some authors represented passing as righteous for and advantageous to a character who had been raised as white and had little or no connection to blacks; these authors scoffed at the “one-drop rule” that defined such a person as black. Other authors, though, represented passing as an act of betrayal to “the race,” regardless of how remote a character’s connection to black people might be. Given the prominence of racial uplift as an ideology at the turn of the twentieth century, it is not surprising that many authors rejected passing as a way to form one’s identity. Such an author would emphasize that to be “successful,” people—even light-skinned people—who were legally black had a responsibility to cast their lot with African Americans and apply their own abilities to improve the condition of all.

By the 1920s, passing was a well-established literary theme, entwined with the socioeconomic and political discussions of the day. Several black authors (some of whom were being supported by white patrons) were influenced by W. E. B. Du Bois’s concept of the “talented tenth” and Alain Locke’s concept of the “New Negro” and accordingly took up the idea of passing in their narratives and treated it in various ways to reflect those concepts. In their works, passing may be used to protest against the idea of innate biological inequality, to claim a positive black identity, to consider how identity and race are entangled (and try to disentangle them), to

assert the responsibility of African Americans to “the race,” to expose the effects of white racism on African Americans, or to reject “race” as a significant marker of identity—or to achieve any combination of these purposes. These authors included Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson, Jessie Redmon Fauset, Nella Larsen, George S. Schuyler, Jean Toomer, and Walter White.

Although passing to some extent reinforces the ideological categories of race and gender by invoking boundaries that passers “transgress,” passing has historically suggested that categories of identity such as gender and race are a matter of performance or social construction. By representing gender and race as performed rather than biologically determined, passing illustrates how people subjugated by and within rigid sociopolitical systems of racial and gender classification could and did manipulate those systems.

JULIE CARY NERAD

See also Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, James Weldon; Larsen, Nella; *Passing: Novel*; Schuyler, George S.; Toomer, Jean; White, Walter

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Passing: Novel

Nella Larsen’s novel *Passing* (1929) addresses a dominant theme of African American fiction in the 1920s: the experience of light-skinned blacks who crossed the color line and “passed” for white. Larsen explores, in unusual depth, the psyche of her mixed-race female protagonist—in contrast to male writers of the time, who tended to reduce such a character to an exotic, primitive stereotype. Larsen’s setting also offers a complex picture of Harlem during the Jazz Age, as a place where the black and white elite gathered for charity dances, teas, and cocktail parties.

Passing presents a series of encounters between two middle-class, light-skinned African American women, who are often seen as doubles: Irene Redfield, who occasionally passes for white but claims loyalty to her dark-skinned husband and children; and her childhood friend, Clare Kendry, who has permanently crossed the color line and married Jack Bellew, a wealthy white man who is unaware of his wife’s racial identity. Clare attempts to return to her racial roots by entering Irene’s social circle, but at the same time she wants to keep her identity a secret from her racist husband. *Passing* is both a statement on African American “double consciousness”—a phrase coined by W. E. B. Du Bois to describe the duality of black identity—and an important commentary on the social construction of race.

Although *Passing* was highly praised by reviewers for its exploration of the psychology of racial passing, it faded into obscurity—along with its author, whose writing career effectively ended when she was accused of plagiarizing a short story in 1930. Like Larsen’s only other novel, *Quicksand* (1928), *Passing* was rediscovered in the 1970s and was recognized, in particular, for its treatment of female sexuality. McDowell (1986) suggests that the novel “passes” because the narrative of racial passing disguises an equally powerful subtext: the sexual attraction between the two women. Thus *Passing* addresses not only racial identity but also gender and sexual identity, shedding light on the lesbian and gay subculture of the Harlem Renaissance.

Passing ends with the death of Clare: Her husband has discovered her identity and has intruded on a party she is attending with the Redfields; immediately afterward, she falls from the roof of an apartment building in Harlem. For this reason, *Passing* has also been read as a version of the “tragic mulatto” theme, which was popular in nineteenth-century African American literature. The “tragic mulatto” is a mixed-race character, usually a beautiful woman, who comes to an untimely end. Some black writers used this convention to appeal to white readers, who would presumably be able to identify with a nearly white protagonist, and Wall (1995) believes that Larsen adopted the theme for this reason.

However, Larsen’s unexpected and perplexing denouement has led to a “problem of interpretation” (Tate 1980). *Passing* is complex and ambiguous in part because the third-person narrator, Irene, is unreliable. One unresolved ambiguity is Clare’s death, which can be read as an accident, suicide, or murder—either by the enraged Bellew or by Irene, who suspects Clare of having an affair with her husband, Brian. *Passing* has been criticized for this unsatisfactory ending; it has also been criticized for its focus on a narrow stratum of black life, the middle class. Still, *Passing* is a significant work at least partly because of its ambiguity, which reflects the ambiguous identity of the characters. Moreover, it offers a broader picture of the Harlem Renaissance in terms of intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality. It endures as one of the most remarkable depictions of black women’s experience during this time.

LORI HARRISON-KAHAN

See also Larsen, Nella; *Passing*; Quicksand

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Patterson, Louise Thompson

The educator, political activist, cultural critic, and social worker Louise Thompson Patterson (1901–1999) was a link between the literati of the Harlem Renaissance and the left-wing politics of the Popular Front.

Patterson spent her childhood following her mother (a domestic worker) and stepfather (a chef) as they moved through a succession of predominantly white towns in the Pacific Northwest. Confronted with racism, isolation, and economic discrimination, she and her mother, who were both light-complexioned, occasionally passed for white or Mexican. The family settled in Oakland, California, in 1919, and Patterson began attending the University of California at Berkeley. There she heard a lecture by W. E. B. Du Bois that so stirred her that she was “for the first time in my life, proud to be black” (Lewis 2000, 103). In 1925, she accepted a teaching position at State College in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, but discovered that her students were barely able to read and that she was expected to teach them Spanish among other subjects. It was less than a year before she took a post teaching business administration at Hampton Institute in Virginia, which was then arguably America’s premier black institution of higher education. But students complained that Hampton’s white principal had treated them with contempt ever since Virginia had passed the Massenburg Bill, which required blacks and whites to be separated in public halls in the state; that he had appointed known members of the Ku Klux Klan to the faculty; and that even teachers from the North had referred to students as “heathens.” When the students went on strike in 1927 in protest against Hampton’s repressive paternalism, Patterson wrote to Du Bois at *The Crisis* asking him to support them. He promptly published her letter, and she was pressured by the administration to resign.

In June 1928, Patterson came to New York City to accept an Urban League Fellowship to study at the New York School of Social Work. In New York she befriended the painter Aaron Douglas and his wife, Alta.

By the end of August 1928 she had married the writer Wallace Thurman; the marriage failed within six months, however, as a result of Thurman's homosexuality, chronic alcoholism, and depression. Patterson intended to get a divorce in Nevada and then in Mexico but did not succeed, and they remained married, though estranged, until his death in 1934.

At Hampton, Patterson had met Langston Hughes, who was then touring the country giving readings of his poetry. In 1929, as she was completing her degree and was looking for employment, Hughes recommended her as a secretary to his patron, Charlotte Osgood Mason, an affluent and influential white philanthropist. Mason added Patterson to her payroll, which included Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Aaron Douglas, Claude McKay, Alain Locke, Richmond Barthé, and Hall Johnson. For the year that Patterson was employed by Mason, she worked as Hughes' stenographer, helping him with his revision of *Not Without Laughter* (1929), and with the drafts of his and Zora Neale Hurston's play *Mule Bone*. But Patterson soon began to chafe at Mason's stifling patronage and racism: "I might comment on the beauty of a flower arrangement in her apartment, and she would be greatly pleased. 'I knew you would like them, you would like red,'" Patterson later recalled (quoted in Huggins 1971, p. 130).

Patterson next took a job as assistant to the director of New York's Congregational Educational Society (CES), a liberal organization interested in problems of race relations and labor. Under its auspices she traveled throughout the South, conducting seminars on-board a Pullman car, and she attended the American Interracial Seminar in Mexico in 1930; she also edited CES's newsletter. Her experiences with CES, the Great Depression, the Scottsboro case, and the growing strength of the American Communist Party all contributed to her political radicalization. In 1932, with the help of the artist Augusta Savage, she founded Vanguard, a left-wing group that operated out of her apartment in Harlem and sponsored theater performances, dances, concerts, and discussions on Marxist theory. The group soon metamorphosed into the Harlem branch of the Friends of the Soviet Union (FOSU), and Patterson's work with the organization caught the attention of James W. Ford, the leading black American communist of the day. Ford had just returned from the Soviet Union, and on behalf of the Meshrabpom film company was recruiting a group of black actors and actresses to make a movie in the Soviet Union that would document the history of race

relations in America. Patterson was appointed principal organizer of the group, and in June 1932 she traveled to Moscow as a member of the *Black and White* film project. Although the movie was never made, Patterson returned to New York with a renewed commitment to communism as a way for African Americans to challenge racism in the United States. She said in an interview:

Russia was the only place where I was able to forget entirely that I was a Negro. . . . [The Russians] were shocked and unable to understand that we were not allowed equal accommodations with whites here in America. . . . Russia today is the only country in the world that's really fit to live in. I'd live there any time in preference to America. ("Prefers Russia" 1932)

In 1933, Patterson left the CES and joined the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners (NCDPP) as its assistant national secretary. In May 1933, she participated in a march on Washington, D.C., in which more than 3,000 demonstrators demanded the release of the Scottsboro boys, and she was among the group from the Scottsboro Action Committee with whom President Franklin Roosevelt refused to meet.

In 1934, Patterson began a fifteen-year tenure with the International Workers Order (IWO). To bridge the divide between African American popular culture and the Communist Party's Popular Front, she organized cultural and political events on behalf of the party; she also persuaded the IWO to publish a pamphlet of Langston Hughes's radical poetry (*A New Song*, 1937). In 1938, when Hughes wanted to found a theater that would put on radical black "people's" plays, Patterson again appealed to the IWO, and the Harlem Suitcase Theater was born. Its first play, Hughes's *Don't You Want to Be Free? A Poetry Play: From Slavery through the Blues to Now—and Then Some!—with Singing, Music, and Dancing*, was derived from Patterson's selections from his radical poems. (In 1942, Hughes would dedicate his poetry collection *Shakespeare in Harlem* to Patterson.)

In 1940, she married the lawyer William Lorenzo Patterson, executive secretary of International Labor Defense, which had defended the Scottsboro boys. She then moved to Chicago, where she organized fund-raisers for his Abraham Lincoln School, an experimental black college whose curriculum was heavily influenced by socialist theory. Louise Patterson's other activities included traveling to Spain during its civil war as part of a relief effort for the Spanish

Patterson, Louise Thompson

Republicans (1936); becoming a founder of the Civil Rights Congress (1946); organizing a national tour of black communities by Paul Robeson (1949); serving as secretary of a committee formed by Langston Hughes to present a gift of African American art to Ghana (1959); and helping to form Sojourners for Truth and Justice in the 1950s.

Louise Thompson Patterson died in New York in 1999. Her papers are at Emory University in Atlanta.

Biography

Louise Alone Thompson Patterson was born on 9 September 1901, in Chicago, Illinois. She received a B.S. from the University of California at Berkeley in 1923 and an M.A. from the New York School of Social Work in 1929. She taught at State College in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, 1925–1926, and at the Hampton Institute, Virginia, 1926–1928. She was a stenographer to Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston in 1930; assistant to the director, Department of Social Relations, Congregational Education Society, 1930–1932; founder, Friends of the Soviet Union, Harlem Branch, 1932; corresponding secretary, Cooperating Committee for Production of a Soviet Film on Negro Life, 1932–1933; assistant national secretary, National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners, 1933; and an organizer, national recording secretary, secretary of the English Section, and vice president, International Workers Order, 1934–1948. She was a sponsor of the Harlem Suitcase Theater, 1938; and a founder of the Civil Rights Congress in 1946, and its black woman's auxiliary, Sojourners for Truth and Justice. In 1957, she was secretary, Afro-American Committee for Gifts of Art and Literature to Ghana. She also contributed articles to *The Crisis*, *Philadelphia Tribune*, and *Freedomways*. She received an award from the Urban League Fellowship in 1928. She died in New York City on 27 August 1999.

CLAIRE NEE NELSON

See also Black and White; Communist Party; Douglas, Aaron; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Mason, Charlotte Osgood; Scottsboro; Thurman, Wallace; *other specific individuals*

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Payton, Philip A.

Philip A. Payton Jr., often considered the "father of colored Harlem," was a black entrepreneur and founder of the Afro-American Realty Company of New York City, which Booker T. Washington once called "one of the most interesting and . . . most remarkable business enterprises" undertaken by African Americans. Payton's pioneering endeavors to integrate the housing market in uptown Manhattan

eventually made it possible for tens of thousands of blacks to move to Harlem from lower Manhattan, the southern United States, the Caribbean, and Africa.

Payton was born in Massachusetts in 1876 and came to New York City in 1899. He worked as a barber until February 1900, when he found a job as a porter in a real estate agency—an experience that made him interested in pursuing real estate as a career. In October 1900, he and a business partner opened a real estate office in downtown Manhattan. That venture failed, as did some subsequent attempts by Payton to gain a foothold in real estate speculation, but then his business situation improved greatly as he began to secure more rental properties and began concentrating on properties in and around Harlem.

During the late nineteenth century, Harlem had been a wealthy white suburb, but by the start of the twentieth century, Eighth Avenue and Lenox Avenue subway lines provided quick, affordable transportation to Harlem; landlords and real estate speculators invested heavily in the area; and a building spree took place in the expectation that middle-class New Yorkers would move there from downtown. However, there was an economic crisis in 1904–1905, and the uptown housing market faltered and subsequently collapsed. Payton became successful when he promised numerous white landlords that he could fill their vacant houses and apartments with black tenants. Although the white residents were not entirely happy about this situation, they did consider African American tenants cleaner and more suitable than European immigrants. Moreover, the African Americans were willing to pay the exorbitant rents demanded by Harlem's landlords because many black New Yorkers had been displaced from their neighborhoods downtown by construction projects and race riots and were attracted to the spacious, up-scale housing available in Harlem.

Within two years, though, white property owners became alarmed by the influx of blacks into uptown Manhattan, especially when it flowed well beyond 135th Street east of Eighth Avenue. White realtors and landlords therefore formed the Hudson Realty Company, intending to purchase all property that housed black tenants and then evict them. On 15 June 1904, Payton, James C. Thomas, and nine other business associates reacted by forming the Afro-American Realty Company as an all-black real estate development corporation that would buy property and lease it to blacks who wanted to live in

Harlem. (Payton said that this idea had been inspired when he attended a meeting of the National Negro Business League in Richmond, Virginia, in 1902.) Afro-American Realty advertised heavily in the black press, in order to gain the support of the local black community against white real estate speculators.

From the outset, Afro-American Realty had problems. For one thing, although it had a lucrative period in 1904–1905, it always suffered from a lack of the capital needed to compete effectively in New York's housing market. Second, although Payton was clearly the driving force behind the company, he refused to take the post of president and general manager until 1906, after the corporation had already been damaged by divided leadership and internal reorganizations that had led to bitterness and uncertainty. Third, even under Payton's tenure as its head, the firm was harmed by bad publicity (for rent gouging), lawsuits (for shady business practices), and mounting debt (resulting from Payton's penchant for risky business decisions). Furthermore, "Phil Payton spent money faster than he made it" (Lewis 1989). Afro-American Realty folded in 1908, and Nail and Parker, a real estate company composed of former associates of Payton's, replaced it.

Payton continued to operate with modest success in Harlem as a realtor and businessman until his death in 1917.

Biography

Philip A. Payton Jr. was born on 27 February 1876, in Westfield, Massachusetts; his parents were Annie M. and Philip A. Payton Sr. His father trained him and his two brothers as barbers, and he studied at Livingstone College in Salisbury, North Carolina, in 1893 (but he did not complete his college education, largely because of a football injury that laid him up for nearly a year). Payton moved to New York City in April 1899. He married Maggie P. Lee on 28 June 1900. He opened a real estate office in New York in October 1900. Payton was the founder of the Afro-American Realty Company (1904–1908) and its president and general manager (1906–1908). Payton died on 29 August 1917, in New York City.

J. M. FLOYD-THOMAS

See also Afro-American Realty Company; Nail, John E.; National Negro Business League

Payton, Philip A.

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Perry, Lincoln

See Stepin Fetchit

Peterkin, Julia Mood

Julia Mood Peterkin was the daughter of a prominent physician in South Carolina. Her mother died shortly after Julia's birth, so she was raised by an African American nursemaid, Lavinia "Maum Vinner" or "Mauma" Berry, from whom she learned Gullah patois, customs, and folklore. Recording the culture and lives of the Gullah became the primary focus and distinction of Peterkin's literary career.

Peterkin found herself as manager of a 500-person sharecropper plantation when her husband became ill. As a respite, she began taking piano lessons from Henry Bellaman, who, struck by her storytelling ability and her familiarity with the Gullah culture, encouraged her to write. He introduced her to Carl Sandburg, who persuaded her to send her work to H. L. Mencken. Mencken began publishing Peterkin's stories in *Smart Set* and the *Reviewer*. These first sketches and stories were collected as *Green Thursday* (1924); both Sandburg and W. E. B. Du Bois publicly praised the volume.

Peterkin followed *Green Thursday* with three novels: *Black April* (1927), *Scarlet Sister Mary* (1928), and *Bright Skin* (1932). In a review of *Black April* for *Opportunity*, Sterling Brown praised Peterkin for setting a model of new realism by using the vernacular and focusing on the indigenes, and proclaimed her a worthy model for black writers. Rather than depicting relations between blacks and whites, Peterkin keeps her focus within the African American community.

However, she was sometimes criticized for her emphasis on the "folk" aspects of Gullah culture, an emphasis that might lead her to romanticize and "exoticize" her subjects.

Scarlet Sister Mary received a Pulitzer Prize in 1929, and Verdelle praises the novel's "lyric beauty" and "keen sense of concept" (1998, vii). The protagonist of *Scarlet Sister Mary* maintains her expansive spirit in the face of poverty, desertion by her husband, and her community's condemnation of her because she bears nine children out of wedlock. Starkly realistic, as are all of Peterkin's works, this novel is notable for its sympathy for and details of the lives of fieldworkers. Her novels and stories often center on folk beliefs and religion, but typically remain skeptical as to how positive a force they exert. *Scarlet Sister Mary* was dramatized in 1930 by Daniel Reed; the stage version was performed by a white cast with Ethel Barrymore in the lead, wearing blackface.

Black April and *Scarlet Sister Mary* were extremely popular choices at the branch of the New York Public Library most frequented by residents of Harlem, and the novels sold well across the North. *Bright Skin* has a mulatto heroine, a change in focus that proved less successful. An effort with the photographer Doris Ulmann, *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (1933), met with little interest.

Peterkin visited New York and met many notable Harlemites, including Langston Hughes, with whom she reportedly had several vibrant discussions. However, in 1932, on a tour of the South, Hughes was turned away from Peterkin's house by an unidentified white man; it is not clear whether Peterkin condoned this action. When Hughes was raising money for the defendants in the Scottsboro case, Peterkin at first did not answer his requests, but eventually she donated items for auction.

After 1936, Peterkin wrote little, devoting herself to caring for her grandson after his mother's suicide. She died in obscurity in 1961. Feminist criticism brought new attention to her depictions of the lives of Gullah women, particularly in *Scarlet Sister Mary* and in her short stories. This attention culminated in the late 1990s with reprint editions of most of her works by the University of Georgia Press and a full-length study by Susan Millar Williams in 1997.

Biography

Julia Mood Peterkin was born in 1880 on a plantation in Laurens County, South Carolina. She attended

Converse College in Spartansburg, South Carolina, receiving a B.A. in 1896 and an M.A. in 1897. Peterkin taught at a rural school in Fort Motte, South Carolina, in 1898. She married William Peterkin in 1903 and was responsible for the management of his plantation, Lang Syne. They had one son. She received an honorary doctorate from Converse College in 1927 and a Pulitzer Prize in 1929. She died in 1961 in South Carolina.

KATHRYN WEST

See also Brown, Sterling; Hughes, Langston; Mencken, H. L.; Scottsboro

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Peterson, Dorothy Randolph

Langston Hughes once said of Dorothy Randolph Peterson (1897–1978) that she was "a charming

colored girl who had grown up mostly in Puerto Rico, and who moved with such poise among colorful celebrities that I thought when I first met her she was a white girl of the grande monde, slightly sun-tanned."

Peterson, a teacher, was well known for her literary salons, which she held first in her family home, encouraged by her father, and later in her own apartment. She was also known for her connection to Jean Toomer. In the 1920s Peterson discovered the teachings of George Ivanovich Gurdjieff through Toomer, who was one of his converts. Gurdjieff's philosophy included Eastern thought, Russian philosophy, and long hours of "inner observation and silent concentration" to achieve cosmic consciousness. Toomer came to Harlem to share Gurdjieff's teachings, and some acquaintances thought that Peterson had become smitten with him. However, Toomer married someone else (a white woman), and Langston Hughes summed up the relationship with Peterson as follows: "The one Afro-American woman Toomer was once thought to care about [was] a sad-eyed, beautiful teacher of Spanish and aspiring actress named Dorothy Peterson, whose love for Jean Toomer was legend among their Harlem friends."

Peterson was in various ways very much engaged in the artistic scene in Harlem. During the time when she was involved with Toomer, she managed to finish a novel she had been working on, although it was never published. Also, she was one of the first patrons of the journal *Fire!!—A Quarterly Devoted to the Younger Negro Artists*, launched by Wallace Thurman. In addition, she and Regina Anderson cofounded the Negro Experimental Theater in 1929, in the basement of the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library, and she was also associated with the Harlem Suitcase Theater. During a leave of absence from teaching, she made a notable stage appearance as Cain's girlfriend in an all-black production of Marc Connelly's *Green Pastures*.

Peterson was dedicated to preserving black arts and culture. In the 1940s she founded the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of Negro Arts and Letters at Yale University and assisted Carl Van Vechten with the preservation of the work of many Puerto Rican Negroes. She also created, at Wadleigh High School in Harlem, the Jerome Bowers Peterson Collection of Photographs of Celebrated Negroes. J. B. Peterson—her father—died in 1943, and Van Vechten provided the photos for this memorial collection.

Late in her life Peterson converted to Catholicism and became extremely conservative, refusing to discuss the Harlem Renaissance and referring to it as a “frivolous, silly time” in her youth.

Biography

Dorothy Randolph Peterson was born on 21 June 1897, to Jerome Bowers Peterson, one of the founders of the publication that became *New York Age*, and Cornelia S. White, the daughter of Phillip A. White, the first black member of the board of education in Brooklyn. In 1904, J. B. Peterson was appointed the U.S. consul to Puerto Cabello, Venezuela, for two years; later he was deputy collector of the Internal Revenue Service in San Juan, Puerto Rico; thus Dorothy began her multilingualism overseas at a very young age. Her mother volunteered with several charities in New York, serving on various boards and councils throughout her life. Peterson’s brother, Jerome “Sidney” Peterson, was a medical doctor who was also active in the literary and cultural scene in Harlem. Dorothy Randolph Peterson graduated from Puerto Rico University and studied French at New York University. She taught Spanish at a public high school in Brooklyn; she also taught at Wadleigh High School for Girls in Harlem and briefly worked at the Harlem branch of the New York Public Library. In the late 1950s, seeking a warm climate to relieve her arthritis, she went to live in Spain; eventually she returned to the United States and moved to the Lathrop Nursing Home in Northampton, Massachusetts. She died on 4 November 1978, at age eighty-one.

VERONDA J. PITCHFORD

See also Anderson, Regina M.; *Fire!!*; *Green Pastures*, *The*; Hughes, Langston; *Negro Experimental Theater*; *135th Street Library*; Toomer, Jean; Van Vechten, Carl

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Philanthropy and Philanthropic Organizations

Philanthropy for black Americans reached the peak of its influence during the era of the Harlem Renaissance. Although historians have thoroughly examined earlier philanthropic ventures, including the educational crusade associated with Reconstruction and the “industrial philanthropy” championed by Booker T. Washington and his patrons, gifts from northern whites to black religious, cultural, and educational activities were more extensive in the 1920s and 1930s than ever before. During this time, key philanthropic leaders directed financial aid not only to black schools, but also to carefully selected artists and scholars. Recipients of aid from foundations included a virtual who’s who of the Harlem Renaissance: James Weldon Johnson, Arna Bontemps, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Zora Neale Hurston, and Aaron Douglas, among many others.

The most important philanthropic foundations of the period were the General Education Board, funded by the Rockefellers, and the Julius Rosenwald Fund, supported by the chief executive and primary shareholder in Sears, Roebuck, and Company. Religious philanthropies, such as the American Missionary Association (Congregationalist) and the American Church Institute for Negroes (Episcopalian), also continued to make significant donations to black education, but they tended to accept the policies and assumptions of the secular foundations.

Although scholars have vigorously debated the ultimate impact of northern philanthropic activity for Negroes, the basic facts are clear enough. On the one hand, the philanthropists—or more precisely their agents and spokesmen—tolerated many contemporary injustices by placing their confidence in gradual change or the “slow processes of evolution.” On the other hand, private giving greatly strengthened selected black colleges and universities, successfully promoted public support for black primary and secondary education, and helped create and sustain a small educational and artistic elite. “Our work is education, not agitation,” the philanthropists affirmed,

confident that indirect and “nonpolitical” methods would eventually change American race relations.

Critics of philanthropy have argued that the activities of private givers, especially the programs of the major foundations, had quite the opposite result, prolonging the life “of the system that so effectively subordinated African Americans” (J. Anderson 1988). Some scholars assert not only that northern philanthropy strengthened white control over southern blacks, but also that this consequence was deliberately planned, rather than unintended or incidental. Other scholars reject the idea that the foundations were active accomplices in “some sort of conspiracy with the white supremacy movement.” The evidence, they argue, does not support the claim that northern philanthropy was aiming at a “new slavery” for southern Negroes.

Judging from their internal correspondence and private working papers, the managers of northern philanthropies were, in fact, genuine reformers, although not entirely free from racial prejudice. They considered the South backward and believed southern racism and black ignorance threatened national stability. Whatever the limitations of their worldview, these outsiders undeniably wished to modify race relations in ways that would be unacceptable to most white southerners, as well as many people in the North. Their commitment to significant reform cannot be explained away as crude self-interest. Although they did not challenge segregation, neither did the philanthropists seek to develop a permanent caste education for African Americans. They did not have a master plan, as some researchers have claimed, to restrict black higher education, which, in any case, expanded rapidly after 1920. Nor did they use their power to minimize black contributions to American culture.

Background

From the beginning, northern philanthropists interested in the “Negro problem” gave more money for schools than to anything else. In the first half-century after the Civil War, northern philanthropy for blacks was primarily religiously motivated and distributed through Protestant denominations seeking to use education to “elevate the freedmen.” Far from “melting away” after Reconstruction, as several scholars have assumed, this sort of private giving reached new highs in the early twentieth century. As McPherson (1975) found, the major missionary societies (Congregational, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist) spent

four times as much on black education in 1906 as they had in 1876.

The work of the missionary societies was at first supplemented and then ultimately overshadowed by secular foundations. The Peabody Fund (established 1867) and the Slater Fund (created in 1881) promoted southern education as “a patriotic duty that could not well be shirked without disaster,” in the words of the millionaire merchant John F. Slater. This more secular motivation for educational philanthropy reached fuller elaboration, under more complex organization, in the early twentieth century. The establishment of the General Education Board (GEB) in 1902 marked a new phase in foundation philanthropy. Endowed with \$33 million in gifts from the Rockefellers during its first decade of operation, GEB was committed to an ideal of scientific and efficiently organized philanthropy that was significantly different from the goals and organization of earlier donors. Rejecting “sentimental” giving that responded to mere symptoms, these new philanthropists believed that they could eliminate the root causes of social problems through research and the careful application of insights.

Thanks to its focused goals, immense resources, and energetic officers—men who were both creative and well connected with business and political leaders in the North and South—GEB quickly became more influential and visible than any other philanthropic group supporting black education. Other foundations, such as the Southern Education Board (established 1901), Jeanes Fund (founded 1907), Phelps-Stokes Fund (established 1911), and Julius Rosenwald Fund (organized in 1917), worked closely with GEB, imitating its organization, responding to its initiatives, and sharing trustees in what has been called an “interlocking directorate of calculating altruism.”

Although the gifts of missionary societies and individual donors to black schools at first outstripped GEB’s contributions to black education, GEB acquired immense prestige, enabling its planners and theorists to set the philanthropic agenda. In 1910, for example, the primary missionary societies and donors to Hampton Institute and Tuskegee Institute contributed about \$2 million to black education—compared with less than \$90,000 from GEB. Yet when GEB’s officers called a conference on Negro education in 1915, they did not even invite the leaders of missionary philanthropy. By the 1920s, as GEB’s spending for black education dramatically increased, its support of particular schools or programs had

become a kind of imprimatur, a warrant of worthiness for other givers interested in black education.

Instead of challenging the new philanthropy, missionary philanthropists gradually adopted the key positions of GEB and other foundation philanthropists—including the idea that private education for Negroes should be replaced wherever possible by public schools, supported by taxation and controlled by white voters. One of the oldest missionary societies, the American Missionary Association (AMA), moved from supporting forty secondary schools in the early twentieth century to maintaining only one in 1950. Reflecting on the results of this policy, the head of AMA recognized that every decision to turn over one of its schools to the public school authorities had been received by black parents and students as a “death sentence.” The policy would never have been adopted if AMA’s leaders had based their policy on the counsel of “principals, teachers, parents, and patrons” in the South.

Students of northern philanthropy have often emphasized the power of the great foundations. Rich and influential as the northern philanthropic agencies were, however, they did not enjoy unlimited freedom. As Sealander (1997) has observed, it is possible to exaggerate the power of philanthropy both for good or ill. Foundation initiatives did not automatically become government policy, nor could philanthropists be sure that a program would be eliminated if they withdrew their support.

Early Opposition

Foundation philanthropy was highly sensitive to southern white criticism of its activities. As early as 1903, Booker T. Washington protested to Wallace Buttrick, a key officer in GEB: “We have already gone as far as decency permits in our attempt to avoid stirring up southern feeling.” But during the early twentieth century, in an atmosphere of deteriorating race relations, even the mildest program of reform met with intense opposition from many white southerners, who suspected that the reformers intended to elevate blacks at their expense. White extremists denounced both Washington and his northern friends, accusing the promoters of black schools of failing to prepare African Americans for their subordinate place in a segregated society and “training the negroes to the vain hope of social equality with whites.”

This opposition created an indelible impression on the foundation executives. “The Board was aware

from the start,” wrote Raymond B. Fosdick, an officer of GEB and author of an official history of it, “of the dangers inherent in a Northern institution working in the highly charged emotional atmosphere of a biracial South. . . . A single misstep could be disastrous” (1962). Fear of opposition from southern whites played an important role in the structuring of northern philanthropy for the South. This is especially true of GEB’s decision in 1911 to endorse the “policy of cooperating with the white people of the South in promoting Negro education,” thus making the stimulation of government spending on public education the first priority of its programs for black education—with aid for private and denominational schools a distinctly secondary emphasis. Other foundation initiatives suggested a similar strategy of countering opposition by avoiding direct confrontation as much as possible. For example, GEB’s program of appointing state supervisors of Negro rural schools minimized opposition by making these supervisors subordinate to the state superintendent of public instruction, by recommending no blacks for these positions, and by simply not making an appointment where significant opposition existed. In other cases, GEB attempted to forestall criticism by using indirect funding and euphemisms such as “county training school” in place of “high school.”

Perhaps most important of all, opposition by southern whites helped shape the decision by GEB, the Southern Education Board, and other philanthropic agencies to promote the development of a comprehensive educational system for whites, rather than focusing primarily on blacks as the abolitionists and neoabolitionists of the missionary societies had done. The secular philanthropists assumed that southern whites would not tolerate large-scale aid to blacks until whites had an adequate educational system. Although GEB began as an outgrowth of John D. Rockefeller Jr.’s vision of a “Negro Education Board,” in the end only 19 percent of GEB’s gifts went to black education.

From the start, the foundation philanthropists were much less concerned about black leaders’ criticism of their activities. They expected black leaders to be disappointed with the pace of progress and were prepared to be “greatly misunderstood” by “our colored friends” as they cautiously sought to awaken southern whites to their responsibilities. Calculating that their scientific philanthropy would “take years and perhaps even successive generations” to achieve appropriate results, the philanthropists (with few exceptions) did not share the sense of crisis felt by most

African American educators, nor did they see a need for urgent, even desperate action. Instead, they feared provocation, overextension, and unwise spending.

After 1920: A Surge in Spending

By the 1920s, foundation philanthropy was directed, for all practical purposes, by foundation staffs rather than by the original donors. Many of these philanthropic bureaucrats were primarily interested in black educators' experiments for their relevance to the overall progressive educational agenda, including the elimination of "dead languages," the introduction of "practical" vocational training, and reformation of the curriculum to promote "life adjustment." As Abraham Flexner of GEB put it, "The effort of those who think they are progressive in education is to modify the existing curriculum . . . very much in the direction of what is . . . proposed in the South as especially fitting for colored children." Educational innovation was easier to carry out in weak and underfunded black schools than in more secure white schools.

The philanthropists' early commitment to the "Hampton-Tuskegee idea" faded even before the death of Booker T. Washington. As the foundations intensified their support for black education in the late 1920s, black collegiate education increased dramatically, and small private industrial schools modeled on Tuskegee largely disappeared. Hampton and Tuskegee evolved into little more than cautious imitations of the standard American college. By the 1930, Washington's philosophy and network of influence were no longer preeminent in black educational philanthropy.

Foundations supported black causes at an unprecedented rate after 1920. For example, in an eight-year period (1924–1931) GEB appropriated nearly \$25 million for black education, or about three times the total spending of the previous two decades. The bulk of the increased aid went to private colleges and secondary schools, not public institutions. (This striking burst of philanthropy represented nearly 40 percent of GEB's entire effort for black education from 1902 to 1960.) Although the Great Depression wrought havoc with philanthropic endowments, GEB appropriated another \$15 million in the decade after 1931.

The spending surge was less an attempt to initiate progress than a response to the real advances that had already occurred in the first three decades of the twentieth century. The philanthropists could plausibly claim that much of their original program had succeeded by 1930. The notion that blacks could be essentially

excluded from education, a politically viable idea in 1902, had been thoroughly discredited. In every southern state, the makers of public policy accepted the idea that white taxpayers had some obligation to Negro schools, and these institutions were no longer seen as a special project of northern missionaries. Black education had dramatically expanded, although dominant whites still often treated black schools with high-handed inequity. Between 1900 and 1930 black literacy jumped from 50 percent to 80 percent, the proportion of black children in school reached nearly 90 percent, and, for the first time, black public high schools became common. The number of African American college students increased at a spectacular rate, rising from a mere 1,600 c. 1914 to eight times as many twelve years later. Thus by almost every measurement, including the number (and proportion) of black children in school, literacy rates, educational expenditure, and the quality of buildings and equipment, the school system for black southerners was markedly better thirty years after Robert Ogden of the Southern Education Board launched his crusade for southern education.

This educational progress continued even during the desperate Depression years, with blacks achieving parity with whites in one important category. For the first time, almost all black children attended elementary school. By the end of the decade, southern Negro children age five to fourteen went to school in the same proportions as white children in the same age group. Ninety percent or more of older potential black elementary students (age ten to fourteen) were in school in nine southern or border states, with percentages of blacks exceeding those of whites in Texas, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Kentucky. Across the South, even in states where Negrophobic demagoguery flourished, spending for black schools increased sharply in the 1930s. Measuring progress from a pathetically low baseline, Mississippi's per pupil expenditure for black education nearly doubled between 1910 and 1935, and South Carolina tripled its support (in constant dollars) for black learning. Other states, including North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Florida, and Texas, offered more substantial support to black education. In some cases the gap between white and black had narrowed by the 1930s. In North Carolina, for instance, the state spent \$32.92 per black pupil in 1935, about 64 percent of the expenditure for a white student.

There were other signs of real change during the 1930s. Black high school enrollment jumped by nearly

60 percent in sixteen southern and border states in the six academic years between 1933–1934 and 1939–1940, with dramatic, above-average increases in such improbable places as Alabama (88 percent) and Florida (105 percent). Even more striking progress can be seen in higher education. Many schools that were “colleges” in name only in 1900 had realized the hopes of their founders by the 1930s. Public higher education, virtually unknown in 1900, was rapidly growing in significance. The number of Negro college students nearly tripled during the 1930s.

Long a major focus of foundation activity, teacher training took on new urgency in the face of the rapid expansion of segregated education. Quite simply, soaring enrollments and increased public support of black education dramatically increased the demand for teachers, which, in turn, helped push philanthropic spending to new highs in the 1920s and 1930s.

New Directions

Northern philanthropies not only spent more money in the era of the Harlem Renaissance, but they also spent money for new purposes. For the first time, the foundations funded fellowships for individual academics and professionals, instead of focusing exclusively on institution-building. Another departure was the decision in 1929 to begin aiding artists and writers, as well as professors and administrators. The Great Depression led to two other innovations: (1) emergency operating expenses for selected schools (from GEB), and (2) greater cooperation between the foundations and an activist federal government.

Beginning in 1924, GEB provided fellowships for selected black college teachers and administrators to secure graduate education in the North. Individual grants were modest, but the long-term impact was dramatic. As Fosdick observed in 1962, “Hardly a college president, dean, or ranking faculty member escaped the distinction of being a Board fellow at some time in his career.” The Rosenwald Fund created a similar program in 1928. Among the scholars who received such fellowships in the 1930s were W. E. B. Du Bois, St. Clair Drake, John Hope Franklin, Abram Harris, Percy Julian, Ralph Bunche, and Frank Snowden.

In the fellowship initiatives, as in other programs, the major foundations carefully coordinated their activities. From the earliest years of the twentieth century, foundation philanthropists had sought to create a “clearinghouse” for gifts to black education, believing that indiscriminate donations, based on limited

information, led to unwise spending and even to waste. By the 1930s the goal of a clearinghouse had been achieved, at least in some critical areas. The Rosenwald Fund and GEB were able to agree on broad lines of educational policy. Edwin Embree, a veteran of the Rockefeller Foundation and president of the Rosenwald Fund from 1928 to 1948, used the language of political coalition. Speaking of the carefully selected projects to be supported by the Rosenwald Fund, he stated: “I think . . . we should work out these projects in consultation with the General Education Board. While our two boards may not always cooperate in the same enterprise, each should know what the other is doing and contemplating and thus represent a *united front*.” In addition, the two foundations agreed “that neither Board would grant a scholarship to a person who had been refused by the other board without consultation with that board.” Such collaboration reverberated throughout the world of segregated southern education, as church leaders, accreditation associations, state departments of education, and individual donors took cues from the actions of the large foundations, especially GEB.

Under Embree’s leadership the Rosenwald Fund took the lead in promoting “the Negro in the arts” by offering fellowships to “creative workers.” He had been encouraged in this experiment by James Weldon Johnson, who was a prolific writer and editor, a leader in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and a significant figure in the Harlem Renaissance. Johnson saw cultural subsidies as crucial to the long-term objectives of the fund. “Artistic effort and creative achievement among Negroes are just beginning,” he declared, “and so it is not so much a matter of the needs and opportunities of the present moment as it is the fostering and development of the potential powers of the Negro in the five, ten, fifteen, or twenty years to come.”

Embree and his associates believed that “achievement in the arts” would gain recognition “for the individual concerned and for the Negro race as whole.” They also expected black artistic accomplishments to “counteract” unfavorable impressions created by the “migration of large numbers of Negroes into Northern cities.”

The fellowships, like other gifts from the foundations, were motivated by a distinctive philosophy that focused on stimulating new gifts from other sources. Both Rosenwald and the Rockefellers sought to address current problems through their benefactions, with no desire to create perpetual organizations. Both

foundations were prepared to spend principal as well as income, and by the late 1930s began looking to their own termination. The Rosenwald Fund went out of existence in 1948, and GEB, although technically continuing until 1960, had in fact spent most of its capital by the early 1950s. (As early as 1937, Fosdick had spoken of GEB as “in liquidation,” its life “running to its close.”) “To anyone imbued with the ancient ideal [of almsgiving],” Embree observed, “ours will seem strange philanthropy. Our aim is to give as little as possible for as short a time as possible.”

This way of giving is well illustrated in the most famous philanthropy of the time—the Rosenwald program to support the building of Negro public schools. In roughly two decades before the program was phased out in the early 1930s, the Rosenwald Fund was able to promote the construction of some 5,300 school buildings. Although these schoolhouses cost roughly \$28 million, the fund contributed little more than \$4 million of the total cost, requiring matching gifts from public funds and community donations for each new building. At the height of the program’s success, moreover, Embree began phasing it out, beginning in 1930 with a decision to stop supporting the construction of one-teacher rural schools.

In the area of higher education, the foundations, especially GEB, had long been interested in promoting a few strong schools and eliminating “unnecessary duplication.” In the era of the Harlem Renaissance, this commitment took the form of creating four “university centers” in Atlanta, New Orleans, Nashville, and Washington, D.C. Using both their prestige and the promise of money, the foundations were able to accomplish a great deal. Meharry Medical School was relocated and reorganized, beginning in 1928. The following year GEB set in motion the sweeping Atlanta “affiliation plan”—a plan that was not completed until 1950 and entailed a new library, an endowment campaign, and the relocation of Atlanta University, Morris Brown College, Clark University, and four theological seminaries. The foundations prompted the creation of a single, unified university in New Orleans (Dillard University) in 1935 and encouraged the expansion of professional education at the District of Columbia’s semipublic Howard University.

The foundations did not have the luxury of making only long-term plans. GEB—its farsighted visions interrupted by the drastic deflation of the Great Depression—chose to become involved in philanthropic rescue work as well. For the first time, GEB gave money directly to the current expenses of selected

black colleges, rather than restricting gifts to long-term projects such as endowment, buildings, and faculty development. Between 1931 and 1935 twenty-seven black colleges received urgent emergency grants totaling \$400,000. Never an uncritical observer of the foundations, W. E. B. Du Bois spoke truer than he knew when he declared that, despite its early mistakes, “the General Education Board in later years has been the salvation of education among Negroes.” GEB also rescued the Rosenwald Fund, providing it with “advances” and even some outright gifts when the fund’s income from its stock holdings ceased in the spring of 1932. The Carnegie Corporation also helped the Rosenwald Fund, paying for some library appropriations out of its own funds.

Also as a result of the upheaval of the Depression, philanthropies became more closely allied with the federal government, sometimes in ways that were difficult to detect in their direct appropriations or programs. Unlike most of the capitalists whose wealth sustained the foundations, foundation executives admired Franklin D. Roosevelt, and in Washington during the New Deal they often found sympathetic officials and a respectful hearing for their ideas. Roosevelt’s famous “black cabinet” was a significant example of this collaboration, since the idea of “racial advisers” in key departments began with Embree, who first persuaded Interior Secretary Harold Ickes to accept the idea and then put forward the name of a former Rosenwald Fellow (Clark Foreman) to fill the first such position. A Rosenwald trustee, Will W. Alexander, then used his influence as head of the Farm Security Administration to help in securing the appointment of several members of the “black cabinet.”

In the eyes of many African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance era, foundation aid was a mixed blessing, a gift that elicited ambivalent responses. Grants from these well-intentioned philanthropists were at the same time liberating and constraining. For a harried scholar such as Du Bois or Howard University’s noted biology researcher E. E. Just, intermittent help and abrupt refusals and arbitrary postponements provoked both despair and intense gratitude, making possible certain real achievements while frustrating other visions. The foundations sought to create leaders and sustain institutions. To the degree that they succeeded, they also fed new demands for autonomy, more intense expectations of change.

For researchers, the extensive and well-organized papers of the General Education Board at the Rockefeller Archive Center are the indispensable starting

point. See also the papers of the Rosenwald Fund (Fisk University) and Julius Rosenwald (University of Chicago).

ERIC ANDERSON

See also Higher Education; Historically Black Colleges and Universities; Howard University; Johnson, James Weldon; Rosenwald Fellowships; *specific recipients*

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Pickens, William

William Pickens overcame childhood poverty, graduated from Yale University, taught college, and worked as a college administrator before moving to New York in 1920. During the Harlem Renaissance, he was a prominent orator, author, and civil rights activist.

Pickens was one of the most popular public speakers of the renaissance. In fact, according to Avery (1989), Pickens was the leading African American orator from 1915, when Booker T. Washington died, until Martin Luther King, Jr., gained influence in the 1950s. Pickens’s talent as an orator was first noticed during his undergraduate days at Talladega College, and after graduating from Yale he received a lucrative offer to tour America and Europe for three years as a lecturer. He declined that offer and spent the next

sixteen years as a college educator and administrator, but during his tenure as dean at Morgan State College he was Zora Neale Hurston’s oratorical coach. Hurston, who met Pickens when she attended Morgan’s high school division, wrote about his influence in her autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road*. During Pickens’s more than fifty years as an orator, he was often a featured speaker for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and for other organizations. He won praise from many of his contemporaries, including Langston Hughes, A. Philip Randolph, George Schuyler, Walter White, and Roy Wilkins.

However, Pickens reached his largest audience as a contributing editor and syndicated columnist for the Associated Negro Press, the largest black news syndicate in the United States. By the late 1920s, Pickens’s weekly articles appeared in more than 100 African American newspapers. *The New Negro: His Political, Civil, and Mental Status and Related Essays* (1916), a compilation of Pickens’s pieces focusing on the right of African Americans to full citizenship, was one of the first books to introduce concepts related to the “New Negro,” such as self-definition and self-expression, that fueled the Harlem Renaissance.

Pickens’s *Bursting Bonds* (1923), an expanded edition of *The Heir of Slaves* (1911), was the first autobiography by a literary figure of the Harlem Renaissance. It illustrates some of the ideas in his collection of essays, documenting his life before he came to Harlem—a time when he battled adversity and racism and used education as his pathway to prominence. *Bursting Bonds* is a pioneering narrative, but it has been eclipsed by the autobiographies of Hughes and Hurston and has been mainly ignored by modern-day readers and scholars.

Pickens was also one of black America’s most important civic leaders during the Harlem Renaissance. As an assistant field secretary and later field secretary of the NAACP, he had direct contact with the African American masses, enlisted members, and established new branches. Pickens facilitated communication between headquarters and the branches, generated funds, investigated lynchings, collected evidence of racial discrimination, and lobbied the U.S. Congress. As a result of his lobbying at the beginning of World War I, an African American officers’ training facility was established at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. Pickens remained an important civil rights leader until 1945.

Biography

William Pickens was born 15 January 1881, in Anderson County, South Carolina. He studied at a grammar school in Argenta, Arkansas; high school in Little Rock, Arkansas; Talladega College, Alabama (1899–1902); and Yale University (A.B., 1904). He was a professor of languages, Talladega College (1904–1914); president, Alabama Colored State Teachers' Association (1911–1914); chair of the department of Greek and sociology, Wiley University, Marshall, Texas (1914–1915); dean, Morgan State College (later Morgan State University), Baltimore, Maryland (1915–1918); and vice president, Morgan State (1918–1920). Pickens was a member of the Niagara Movement, 1905; a member of the Committee of 100 for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), 1910; assistant field secretary, NAACP, 1920–1921; and field secretary, NAACP, 1921–1942. He was a lecturer at adult education centers for the Federal Forum Project, 1937; a contributing editor and syndicated columnist of the Associated Negro Press, 1919–1940; and director of the International Section of Treasury Department Savings Bonds, 1941–1950. His honors included membership in Phi Beta Kappa; a Litt.D. from Selma University, Alabama, 1915; and an LL.D. from Wiley College, Marshall, Texas, 1918. Pickens died on board the S.S. *Mauritania*, near Kingston, Jamaica, and was buried at sea on 6 April 1954.

LINDA M. CARTER

See also Associated Negro Press; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Randolph, A. Philip; Schuyler, George S.; White, Walter

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Pigfoot Mary

See Dean, Lillian Harris

Pittsburgh Courier

The *Pittsburgh Courier*, established in 1907, was a primary vehicle for spreading the gospel of the Harlem Renaissance throughout the nation. The paper began regular publication in 1910, and Robert Lee Vann—a lawyer born in North Carolina in 1879 and educated at Wilberforce University and the University of Pittsburgh School of Law—became its editor. Under Vann's leadership, the paper, which focused on sports and other news of interest to a wide range of readers, reached a maximum circulation of nearly 200,000. The *Courier* vied with the *Chicago Defender* to be ranked as the nation's leading black newspaper.

Vann, who was a follower of Booker T. Washington, often focused on local issues of economic advancement. One column, for instance, provided business advice. In contrast to A. Philip Randolph's *Messenger* and W. E. B. Du Bois's *Crisis*, and even regional papers such as Roscoe Dunjee's *Oklahoma City Black Dispatch* and the *Baltimore Afro-American*, the *Courier* had a moderate tone. It looked inward to development of the black community, rather than to great campaigns like the crusade against lynching.

The *Courier's* emphasis on sports and sensational issues that were of interest to less militant readers distinguished it from the other leading vehicles of the

renaissance. That may have contributed to its appeal. It also allowed the *Courier* to reach different readers from those of other newspapers and periodicals. In 1920, Vann started a monthly magazine, *The Competitor*. It lasted for nearly two years and then folded because it was losing money. Like the *Courier*, *The Competitor* was moderate in tone.

Despite Vann's relatively conservative stance, on occasion the *Courier* took aggressive positions. From 1912 onward, it repeatedly urged readers to vote—and pointed out the harm they might suffer if they failed to develop political power. Like other leading black journals, the *Courier* emphasized the hypocrisy of Americans whose rhetoric during World War I was of freedom, but who denied blacks equal rights in the United States and even in the armed forces. The *Courier* was famous for its campaign against the radio show *Amos 'n' Andy* in the early 1930s. At other times, its articles brought news of particular interest to black readers. For example, in the early 1930s it ran articles written by Marcus Garvey, who was then living in exile in Jamaica.

Sometimes it seemed that Vann steered the *Courier's* coverage in the direction that would help increase its circulation. For example, he supported A. Philip Randolph's Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, a position that won him converts among porters who were essential in carrying the *Courier* to other cities. The *Courier* advocated other causes, such as limitation of discrimination in housing, public health, and education. In those instances, Vann's stance was influenced by his emphasis on self-help for African Americans.

In areas like sports, the *Courier* sought to break down barriers to achievement. Vann's coverage of Joe Louis's boxing career helped bring Louis to prominence and may possibly have "created" Louis. At the least, Vann brought attention to Louis and encouraged the development of his talents. Somewhat later, the *Courier* supported the integration of baseball and gave extensive coverage to Jackie Robinson.

Vann had a rocky relationship with W. E. B. Du Bois. In 1926, Vann ran an article accusing the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) of mismanagement of finances. The article singled out for attention Du Bois's expenditure of \$5,000 on a study of education. Such aggressive journalism—perhaps a result of Vann's overly sensitive ego—caused a lengthy battle between the NAACP's periodical *The Crisis* and the *Courier*, which was settled in 1930 when Vann printed a retraction. Following his

resignation as editor of *The Crisis*, Du Bois used the *Courier* as a vehicle for publishing his essays, just as Marcus Garvey used the paper to disseminate his ideas. The *Courier* also published other leaders of the renaissance. Zora Neale Hurston served as a correspondent, and Walter White and James Weldon Johnson contributed to the *Courier*. Its own correspondents were important leaders of the renaissance as well. For example, the historian Joel Rogers wrote a column on black history, focusing on the contributions of ancient Africa to Western civilization, and George S. Schuyler, called by some the "black H. L. Mencken," wrote editorials in the 1920s.

At times Vann entered into political conflicts. Although he was initially a strong supporter of the Republican party, Vann shifted his support to the Democrats shortly before Franklin D. Roosevelt's election in 1932. In "Patriot and the Partisan," an address to a Democratic audience in Cleveland in September 1932, Vann reported that blacks were "turning the picture of Lincoln to the wall." This address was widely reprinted and was critical in turning black support to the Democratic Party. President Roosevelt rewarded Vann by naming him special assistant to the U.S. attorney general. Vann had been optimistic about the possibilities for reform in this position, but he found that the attorney general had little interest in his counsel. In 1935, he returned to Pittsburgh and two key stories—Joe Louis and Italy's invasion of Ethiopia—which the *Courier* used to boost its circulation to a quarter million.

Vann served as editor and publisher until his death in October 1940. The managing editor, Ira Lewis, then took over. Lewis's editorials were often more strident than Vann's had been. During World War II, Lewis supervised the "double V" campaign, urging victory on two fronts: over the Axis powers abroad and over racism at home. It began in February 1942—three months after the United States entered the war—when a worker in Wichita, Kansas, wrote a letter to the *Courier* asking for victory at home and abroad. The campaign quickly spread to other leading black papers. Although the *Courier* had largely escaped criticism for radicalism under Vann's leadership, there were increasing fears that the FBI might try to censor black papers, including the *Courier*, which had an estimated circulation of about 200,000 at the time—the largest of any black newspaper in the country—and was becoming increasingly vocal in support of equal rights.

Following the war, the circulation of the *Courier* peaked at approximately 350,000 in 1948. Circulation

declined to about 100,000 by the mid-1960s, when the paper was sold to the publisher of the *Chicago Defender*. As of this writing the *Courier* was still published, under the name *New Pittsburgh Courier*, a fact that testifies to the continued vitality of one of the twentieth century's important newspapers.

ALFRED BROPHY

See also Amos 'n' Andy, Baltimore Afro-American; Black Press; Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; Crisis, The; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Garvey, Marcus; Hurston, Zora Neale; Johnson, James Weldon; Journalists; Messenger, The; Rogers, Joel Augustus; Schuyler, George S.; Vann, Robert L.; White, Walter

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Poetry: Dialect

American dialect poetry is a written genre that attempts to represent the rhythms, accents, and idioms of the speech and singing of people of a certain ethnicity, race, region, class, or even—as in the case of children's dialect—age. It is important to distinguish dialect poetry written in Creole French, Pennsylvania Dutch, or Gullah from dialect poetry meant to be suggestive of the different ways in which people in America speak

English. The former was typically written by and for speakers and students of the language. The latter, by contrast, was generally not written by poets who actually spoke this way. In addition, it was meant to be understood by all English speakers. As a result, the poetry is more of a figurative, rather than literal, dialect. As a literary genre, it quickly became beholden to its own literary conventions rather than to actual spoken language variations. Examples of dialectal literary conventions include the use of quasi-phonetic spellings of words, misspelled words that look different from standard English (even if one would not pronounce them any differently), elisions and contractions, idioms, and irregular syntax.

Beginnings

During the late nineteenth century, dialect poetry had reached its heyday. Poets wrote in approximations of various dialects including Yankee, Hoosier (Indiana), German-American "broken" English, Irish-American dialect, Chinese-English pidgin, and Negro dialect. Negro dialect poetry, initially written by white poets, became the most popular. At the turn of the twentieth century the Negro, as he or she would be again during the Harlem Renaissance, was in vogue.

Dialect Poetry and the Harlem Renaissance

James Weldon Johnson began his career writing dialect poems, some of which are included in his first volume of poetry, *Fifty Years and Other Poems* (1917). With his brother J. Rosamond Johnson he set some of this dialect to music intended for the New York stage. However, he eventually felt limited by dialect, and he wrote in his preface to *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922) what at the time many black writers and critics considered the definitive statement on dialect poetry. Although he praises the nineteenth-century African American writer Paul Laurence Dunbar for perfecting the dialect poem, he also notes the limitations of the genre. Dialect, he famously wrote, has "but two full stops, humor and pathos" (xl). In order to express a range of emotions, poets would have to break free of the literary conventions of the past and invent a new form, one that would "express the racial spirit by symbols from within rather than by symbols from without, such as the mere mutilation of English spelling and pronunciation" (xli). (Johnson does not mention that in 1872 an African American woman poet, Frances Harper, had broken with convention in

her collection of dialect folk poetry, *Sketches of Southern Life*.) Johnson is careful to specify that dialect itself is not inherently offensive. Rather, he says, it has become hopelessly associated in readers' minds with offensive stereotypes, with representations of the Negro as either happy and lazy or pathetically down and out. Some subsequent discussions of dialect poetry by writers and critics of the Harlem Renaissance more or less repeat Johnson's argument. And given the negative associations that dialect had acquired, some "New Negro" poets understandably tended to avoid it; to them, Negro dialect carried the taint of slavery and minstrelsy.

Claude McKay, while he was still in Jamaica, published two collections of poetry written in Jamaican dialect (*Songs of Jamaica* and *Constab Ballads*, both 1912). Ironically, although Johnson liked these poems so much that he did not think McKay would ever be able to write anything else as "touching and charming" (xliv), McKay never wrote another poem in dialect. Perhaps he felt that the language of the "old Negro" did not fit with his newfound militancy. Perhaps he agreed with Countee Cullen, who wrote that "the Negro poet would be foolish indeed to turn to dialect" (1927, xiv).

Foolishly or not, however, a handful of writers did continue to experiment with dialect poetry. These included Jean Toomer, Langston Hughes, and Sterling Brown. For these poets, as noted above, the challenge was to break with traditional conventions. The result was some of the most original poetry to come out of the Harlem Renaissance. (In his anthology Johnson also includes dialect poetry by John W. Holloway. He says in his preface that Holloway "more than any Negro poet writing in the dialect to-day, summons to his work the lilt, the spontaneity and charm of which Dunbar was the supreme master." However, little else is known of this poet.)

Jean Toomer's *Cane* (1923), a combination of poetry, short stories, and a play, includes poetry written in Negro dialect. Toomer, however, manipulated language so well that no one accused him of resurrecting the minstrel tradition. One of his contributions to dialect was to form contractions without replacing the missing vowels or syllables with an apostrophe. These words were visually cleaner, and they also made the old dialect of the nineteenth century seem new and different. Toomer, though, did not continue to write in this style.

Langston Hughes, in his first volume of verse, *The Weary Blues* (1926), captures the sounds of

African American life by incorporating techniques from African American music. The stanzas of his poems use a blues form—the first line is repeated and then followed by a different line that rhymes with the first two. Hughes does not often replace *th* with *d*, a practice common in nineteenth-century Negro dialect. Instead, he alters spellings so that when the words are pronounced, vowel sounds predominate. The result is a more open, fluid sound. Although Hughes's poetry was popular, Redding concluded that the dialect form limited the range of potential expression (1939, 116). Interestingly, according to Redding, the concept of dialect became so offensive to African Americans that by the 1940s Langston Hughes had stopped reading his folksier poems to black audiences (1991, 145).

Johnson did not completely give up on dialect poetry. The verses in *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* (1927) are not, as Johnson points out in his preface, strictly dialect, but Johnson does consider them a continuation of the dialect tradition. He notes in his preface to this work that they are his attempt to create "a form that will express the racial spirit by symbols from within." Using "a fusion of Negro idioms with Bible English," he sought to re-create the feel of an African American sermon.

Of all the poets of the Harlem Renaissance who wrote in dialect, Sterling Brown was often considered the most successful. Although many of his dialect poems were published in magazines during the 1920s, his first collection, *Southern Road*, was not published until 1932. Locke (1935) considered this volume the beginning of a new era. It forced a reevaluation of the potential of literary conventions and of traditions that had been assumed to be outmoded. Gates describes Brown, triumphantly, as a "self-styled 'Old Negro'" (1989, 234). Although Locke preferred to call Brown's verses folk, rather than dialect, poetry, that was merely a matter of semantics. The important point was that Brown used dialect to express feelings that had never before expressed in poetry with dialect. His poems are often angry, bitter, and defiant. They describe lynchings, chain gangs, alcoholism, and the perils of city life. They are a long way from the traditional two stops.

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See also Authors: 5—Poets; Brown, Sterling; Dunbar, Paul Laurence; God's Trombones; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, James Weldon; Johnson, John Rosamond; Literature: 7—Poetry; McKay, Claude; Toomer, Jean; Weary Blues, The

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Politics and Politicians

Politics and the role of politicians in Harlem during the 1920s represented a unique anomaly and contradiction involving power, interpersonal discord, and black race consciousness with local irrelevance, national portent, and international significance. In nearly every political realm in which blacks were engaged, white people played an important role. In local political affairs, the interaction between white bosses and ward heelers and fledgling black politicians depended largely on the sense of selfishness versus altruism of the white leader. White people involved in black issues of national portent, however, tended to be overwhelmingly altruistic, supported efforts by

blacks to sustain the organization, and made black leadership independent of and aloof from whites who would dominate for the sole purpose of holding power. Contrasts between blacks involved in local politics and organizations of national and international significance would prove interesting.

This marked a time when several fledgling protest organizations surfaced. The Equal Rights League, the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB), the Friends of Negro Freedom, and of course the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) endeavored to find ways to ameliorate the condition of Americans with African ancestry. Products of the migrant influx from the West Indies and the South, these organizations proved to be mutually contentious and inclined to compete for followers and the available meager resources necessary to carry forth liberating programs. With local, national, and international goals in mind, the organizations might appear as fanciful escapism to skeptics. But to those involved, notwithstanding the naïveté of the leadership and difficulty in achieving concrete results, the organizations signified hope.

Blacks who voted in Harlem found themselves unable effectively to exercise power because of the inexperience of their leaders. According to Clark (1965), the pejorative psychology of the ghetto pervaded the minds of black politicians, who showed evidence of helplessness and dependence on the white power elite. Lacking a strong economic base because of the penury of constituents and devoid of social influence because of omnipresent racism, the black politico had limited jurisdiction and became satisfied with meager rewards. Black politicians in Harlem during the 1920s revealed the components of a dependent, downtrodden leadership cadre working energetically to acquire positions in minor offices.

In New York City politics, Charles W. Anderson became the first politician of major significance. He was born in Oxford, Ohio, in 1866, and migrated to New York City at age twenty to make his fortune. As a resident of Manhattan, he joined the Republican Party, stumped for it in black wards, and in 1890 became president of the Young Men's Colored Republican Club of New York County. He rose from being the private secretary of New York's state treasurer to chief clerk in the state treasury, supervisor of accounts for the New York racing commission, and collector of Internal Revenue for the Second New York District. Anderson became the leader of black Republicans from the 1890s through the 1920s.

Despite his northern birth, Anderson proved a strong, if not ruthless, supporter of Booker T. Washington. He boasted of being an unwavering loyalist to Washington and gleefully undercut, when possible, anyone who opposed the wizard of Tuskegee. Though vicious in his treatment of black opponents, Anderson fashioned himself to be a true "race man" who relished finding patronage jobs for African Americans. Anderson certainly played the role of a black political hack perfectly; influential white friends enabled him to retain power long after Washington's death.

Anderson certainly profited from the influx of blacks into the city and their concentration in Harlem. Throughout the 1920s he became a member of the mayor's committee on receptions for distinguished guests and attended every major function the city produced. When the Republican boss Samuel S. Koenig appointed him collector of Internal Revenue in 1923, Anderson reached his apogee of power. Throughout his political career, to his credit, Anderson worked to achieve political opportunities for Harlem's black population and contributed to the "political awakening of Negro New York" (Osofsky 1965). In the words of James Weldon Johnson, Charles Anderson was "the very ablest Negro politician."

Despite Anderson's early foray into politics, black Harlemites remained on the periphery of political activity. Unfortunately for ambitious black politicians, Harlem's black constituents had been conveniently divided into two separate assembly districts: the Nineteenth and Twenty-first. Gerrymandered into larger white voting districts, black Harlemites remained subjected to the capriciousness of white political bosses from the Democratic and Republican parties. Nevertheless, competition between Republicans and Democrats covetous of the black vote provided African Americans with sufficient political leverage to act somewhat independently to acquire largess. Thus, when Edward A. Johnson became the first black from New York City elected to state office as late as 1917, black Harlemites reached a significant milestone. A portion of black Harlem, the Nineteenth Assembly District, would be represented in the state assembly.

Johnson had been born in Raleigh, North Carolina, in 1860 and had gained experience as a lawyer and as a professor of law and dean at Shaw University. When blacks were systematically excluded from voting during the early twentieth century and evidence of heightened racism appeared in North Carolina, Johnson moved to New York in 1907. The steady

increase of Harlem's black population enabled Johnson to renew his legal practice and acquire property. As an assemblyman Johnson proved to be an able legislator for Harlem; he drafted and helped pass civil rights laws in the state of New York.

As the black influx into Harlem continued, blacks increased their political visibility. In 1918, John C. Hawkins won a seat in the state legislature to represent the Twenty-first Assembly District, and the following year Charles H. Roberts became the first black alderman elected in New York. By 1922 the first Democratic Party Club for blacks formed under the auspices of J. Raymond Jones and his West Indian friends who had an affiliation with the UNIA.

In 1923, Ferdinand Q. Morton, who had moved to Harlem from Mississippi, became politically prominent. He was a graduate of Phillips Exeter and Harvard, and he acquired leadership through a fledgling political club known as the United Colored Democracy. Savvy white politicians realized that Morton's education made him a formidable contender for political office and understood that his ambition must be satiated. Democratic leaders endeavored to appease Morton by offering him the position of magistrate. Morton declined the appointment but gained a seat on the Civil Service Commission. There, he established a reputation as "aggressive, egotistic, intellectual, and dedicated; stubborn and outspoken yet an organization man." Although Morton did not gain popularity with the rank and file of his political district, he did prove effective, efficient, and fair.

It would be presumptuous to assume that the elections and appointments of blacks to responsible positions were signs of racial advancement. People like the "Bookerite" Charles Anderson played a "gatekeeping" role for the Republicans, as did Ferdinand Morton for the Democrats. These men helped the white power structure retain power in Harlem as the number of black constituents and expectations increased dramatically. However, organizations like the UNIA and the cultural flowering and pride derived from the Harlem Renaissance undermined the legitimacy of the gatekeepers and provided black constituents with newfound strength to support and eventually elect true "race men" to authoritative positions.

During the 1920s black politicians in Harlem could claim responsibility for constructing playgrounds and parks and making other recreational facilities available for the poor. They could also be credited with having blacks hired as firefighters and policemen, and

for placing African Americans in supervisory roles in municipal hospitals, the boards of education and health, city courts, and public agencies. But the gains of black New Yorkers paled in comparison with the successes achieved by black politicians in Chicago. Black politicians in Harlem achieved limited results for several reasons. First, they were unable to wrest power from white leaders, who exercised control through segregated Republican and Democratic clubs that dispensed largess and patronage to constituents. Second, the political fortunes of blacks depended entirely on the whims of white politicians. A beneficent, altruistic ward heeler or boss would make provisions to assist black constituents, whereas one who was indifferent or hostile to the black community offered little of consequence. Third, competition for power among black politicians undermined prospects for progress in black Harlem. Intra-racial conflict invariably proved more debilitating than constructive in the 1920s. Fourth, leading black politicians like Charles Anderson and Ferdinand Morton shielded white bosses from demanding blacks who expected greater consideration and attention from political representatives. Finally, and with a bizarre twist, large numbers of blacks voting in Harlem contributed to a disproportionate result. Tammany Hall Democrats controlled city politics. When few blacks voted in an election, leaders of the “Colored Democracy”—the Democratic Party Club founded in 1922—rallied black Democrats and kept the membership intact. But when a substantial number of black Harlemites voted, ambitious black politicians competed for power and minimized or diffused the power of each leader.

The number of blacks appointed to responsible positions remained meager throughout the decade. In 1921, the attorney James C. Thomas became the first black selected to be an assistant U.S. district attorney, and John C. Hawkins (mentioned previously) was designated to serve as the associate counsel of the U.S. Shipping Board. Other minor appointments blacks acquired included positions in the U.S. Post Office and the Internal Revenue Service. Nevertheless, few African Americans could claim that black residents in Harlem achieved adequate representation from members of their own race.

By the late 1920s black leaders in Harlem demonstrated a nascent independence and proceeded to seek power for themselves. Encouraged by the success of black Chicago success in electing Oscar De Priest to a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, Harlemites sought greater political influence and augmented the

number of blacks running for public office. In 1929, Francis E. Rivers defeated the Republican machine boss Abraham Grenthal, to acquire a powerful seat in the state assembly. In the same election year Fred R. Moore, editor of *New York Age*, won a second term as a member of the board of aldermen. There were signs of further political advancement by blacks when a veteran of the Spanish American War and World War I, Lieutenant Colonel Charles W. Filmore, became the first black to head an assembly district and four blacks were elected to offices in the state assembly and on the board of aldermen. Although these successes represented black political ascendancy in Harlem, the Democrats who dominated New York City’s politics still refused to nominate an African American for a seat in the U.S. Congress. Therefore, no black politician represented Harlem in Congress until after districts were redrawn in 1944.

Although many prominent residents made Harlem a center for artistic expression, others perceived Harlem as a useful laboratory for developing means to help the black working class. Radical thinkers envisioned Harlem as fertile ground to advance their cause, and none demonstrated more energy, daring, and commitment to use blacks than members of the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA). Just as other fledgling organizations tested their political acumen in Harlem, so too did members of the Communist Party. In fact, the Communist Party’s endeavors to court favor among African Americans far exceeded the efforts made by Democrats and Republicans. The communists aggressively looked for black leaders who would bring the black proletariat into the party.

Before becoming communists, many black leftists had connections with the Socialist Party. The socialists, however, failed to entice blacks to join their party because of their reluctance to recognize that the plight of black workers was attributed to both class and race oppression. Two of the most prominent blacks of Harlem who would leave the Socialist Party were A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen. As early as November 1917, Randolph and Owen’s radicalism became evident when they founded their magazine, *The Messenger*. Their statements against the United States’ participation in World War I placed them at odds with the federal government and led to their incarceration. Undaunted by accusations of sedition, the pair continued using *The Messenger* as a voice demanding rights for the black laboring class. In 1922, Randolph, an American nationalist at heart, split from

his fellow socialists in Harlem, believing that doctrines for reform could not be shaped in Russia through the Communist International. After Owen left New York for Chicago, Randolph would devote time to organizing the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and staving off communist attempts to infiltrate his new union.

Like Randolph and Owen, Otto Huiswood, Richard B. Moore, and Cyril Briggs left the Socialist Party but embraced communism. As immigrants from the Caribbean, these three had less allegiance to or concerns about the welfare of African Americans than in the philosophical arguments and principles inherent in communist ideology. Therefore, West Indian radicals would have reason to be more accepting of an international doctrine that espoused concern for workers throughout the world than of a focus entirely on issues specific to African Americans.

Even before the Sixth Congress International in Moscow in July 1928—the meeting that spoke directly to the “resolution of the Negro question”—communist influence in Harlem had become evident. Some members of the Communist Party decided to infiltrate the Socialist Party, establish black organizations like the African Blood Brotherhood, “and carry on agitation among Negro workers” to forge a union with all class-conscious laborers. Recognizing that the Socialist Party viewed blacks as a deterrent to the labor movement and that their leaders had ignored the special oppression which African Americans experienced, the communists developed a unique strategy to win adherents. They believed that blacks, as the most exploited labor force in the United States, could be used to spearhead the Communist Party cause. Thus, to enlist the support of African Americans, the communists decided to focus on acquiring black disciples. First, they decided to look for leadership from blacks living in the industrial North. Next, party leaders founded recruitment cells in Harlem and other black enclaves in the United States to infiltrate black organizations, proselytize on behalf of communism, and increase the membership of CPUSA.

The communists initially became fixated on Harlem as a base of operations because of the successes demonstrated by Garvey and his UNIA. Garvey appealed to “grassroots” Negroes, people identified by communist ideologues as members of the proletariat. The CPUSA hierarchy, moreover, recognized that Garvey attacked African American leaders—the black bourgeoisie—and was meeting with considerable success, as evidenced by the soaring membership

of UNIA and by the thousands of dollars raised for its various enterprises. Furthermore, the initial successes of Garveyism demonstrated to communist leaders that blacks abhorred the treatment they received from nondemocratic forces in America and that blacks, if given proper direction and focus, could be organized into a fervent and effective phalanx to fight oppression. Garvey also enabled the communists to realize that northern blacks were politically astute, and that recent southern migrants willing to test their newly acquired freedom could be enticed to join active, progressive organizations.

But while Harlem contained the greatest safe haven for advancing the communist ideology, excluding the “Deep South,” CPUSA also met its greatest black adversaries in Harlem. Mutual antipathy developed between the communists on one hand and the NAACP, National Urban League (NUL), and Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters on the other. The communists took an overtly hostile attitude toward all moderate black organizations because of conservative black middle-class gradualism in addressing problems and rectifying wrongs. Leaders of CPUSA became incensed when the NAACP national committee of 1926 refused to endorse a trade union proposal introduced by the leftist black delegate James W. Ford. The communists also had cause for disenchantment with the NUL. Because the NUL depended on cooperation with corporate America, most leaders in the organization also opposed the union movement and the use of strikes. Automatically, the communists were at odds with black leaders of these organizations—the nonrevolutionary black bourgeoisie.

Despite modest gains made by local politicians, the most gifted black politicians who lived in Harlem belonged to organizations that addressed issues of national and international import. Even unsuccessful policies conceived and nurtured there—like the NAACP’s inability to gain the passage of a congressional antilynching bill—naturally had far greater significance than the miniscule gains that local black Democrats or Republicans achieved through elections and appointments.

While Washington, D.C., served as the hub of national politics in the United States, the political center of the African American community and blacks worldwide was in Harlem. Politics and the role of politicians in Harlem during the 1920s represented a unique blend involving power, heightened interpersonal challenges, freedom from oppression, and black race consciousness. As the myriad of issues posed by

Harlem's "race men" were sown in New York, their concerns germinated and flowered in black communities throughout the nation and extended, through the Pan-African Congresses, to reach the entire world. For example, the Pan-African Congresses held in 1919, 1921, and 1923 had been assembled by the visionary W. E. B. Du Bois. Attendees from French and English African colonies, the West Indies, and Europe participated with Harlemites such as Du Bois, Walter White, and Jessie Redmon Fauset of the NAACP. In addition, topics specifically related to activities in Harlem carried international significance. On the eve of the Second Pan-African Congress in 1919, Liberia expressed concern that Garvey's movement could jeopardize governments in Africa. Similar concerns were raised by Blaise Diagne of France, who presided over the Pan-African Congress in Brussels in 1921. Diagne voiced his distaste for Garveyism and the pejorative connotations Garvey's "back to Africa" movement had for black francophones who, like their bourgeois African American counterparts, wanted assimilation into rather than separation from their peers in white society. Moreover, as Harlemites trekked to foreign countries to share information and provide counsel regarding pan-Africanism, distinguished visitors like F. E. M. Hercules of Trinidad and Dr. J. Edmeston Barnes of Barbados ventured to Harlem for consultation.

In the realm of politics, ideas, programs, policies, and objectives external to the borders of Harlem became far more important than Harlem itself. This world of national and international politics pertaining to racial and cultural issues unique to individuals of African ancestry evolved from within the depths of multifaceted Harlem politics.

The political climate in the United States, exemplified by the scores of race riots in 1919, placed blacks in an extremely uncomfortable, precarious situation. For race-conscious blacks, the salvation of the race was at stake. Therefore, the political infighting within Harlem characterized by vicious personal attacks may be perceived more as acts of desperation than deliberate attempts to destroy political opponents. The initial and most persistent issue that sullied the political climate in Harlem involved those who sought to integrate African Americans into mainstream America versus advocates of voluntary separation of blacks from whites. Counted among the political combatants demanding assimilation were W. E. B. Du Bois, the most prominent member of the NAACP, and A. Philip Randolph, head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Their nemesis, Marcus Garvey, founder and

president of the UNIA, strongly advocated racial separation and went so far as to enlist the support of the racist Ku Klux Klan.

Harlem would provide the proper milieu for opposing ideologies to wage a unique war for black amelioration. The struggle appeared reminiscent of the earlier quarrels between Du Bois and Booker T. Washington about the best means for procuring black success in a hostile United States. After Washington's death in 1915—one year before Garvey's move from Jamaica to New York City—Du Bois's integrationist views prevailed. But after Du Bois recommended that blacks "close ranks" in support of the United States' participation in World War I and black soldiers were received with hostility on returning from the war in France, Du Bois's logic was scrutinized, questioned, and attacked. Randolph and Owen excoriated Du Bois in *The Messenger*. Garvey also chastised Du Bois, claiming that Du Bois was old and controlled by white capitalists on the NAACP's board of directors. Du Bois had initially praised Garvey for his commitment to uplifting blacks by encouraging them to join the UNIA and invest in a commercial venture known as the Black Star Line; however, when Garvey endorsed voluntary black segregation, Du Bois broke with him. Joining Du Bois in the fray were members of the NAACP's central office hierarchy—Walter White and James Weldon Johnson—who fought incessantly to integrate blacks into the larger society. To those at the NAACP, Garvey's endorsement of segregation seemed heretical, even insane.

Given the circumstances people of African ancestry experienced in America, Garvey presented a logical ideological position. Thousands of frustrated black people despaired, sincerely believing that Negro people could never attain acceptance or equality in America. These people found solace in the black nationalist message that Garvey delivered: "Up, you mighty race"; "One God, one aim, one destiny"; "Back to Africa." Such appeals to pride and unity captivated disenchanted blacks near and far, bringing acclaim to Garvey and his UNIA. Countering the hostility of white racists, Garvey assumed the mantle of a black race radical that soothed the ego of a dispirited race.

However, the dissension between Garvey and the black establishment in Harlem digressed into name-calling that involved skin color. Because many of those who opposed Garvey, such as Du Bois and Walter White, were mulattos, Garvey perceived the attacks on him as being primarily determined by color. Therefore, Garvey applied what may be referred to as

“pigmentocracy” to explain why certain African Americans opposed him and the UNIA. He also made disparaging references to the light skin of his opponents, based on the distinction between blacks and mulattos in his native Jamaica. From his newspaper *Negro World*, published out of his headquarters at 120–140 West 138th Street, Garvey called Du Bois a “half-breed” who had ingratiated himself with white folks. Garvey derisively referred to other opponents as octoroons, quadroons, and “race defamers” because they used hair straightener and face bleach. Garvey’s attacks went beyond individuals. He lashed out against the NAACP and called those who opposed him “good old darkies,” “Uncle Tom Negroes,” and “wicked maligners.” He also threatened his opponents with bodily harm if any one of them physically attacked proponents of the UNIA. Many African Americans in Harlem and elsewhere resented this characterization of an intraracial divide based on color and excoriated Garvey for his impertinence and for delving into this hidden and sensitive issue.

Name-calling began in earnest where the most insulting, derogatory terms were used by Garvey’s opponents to demean and discredit him. “Garvey-phobes” said that the UNIA stood for “Ugliest Negroes in America” and referred to Garvey as being squat, black, and fat, with “protruding jaws, . . . heavy jowls, small bright pig-like eyes and rather bull-dog like face.” Du Bois wrote that Garvey was a living embodiment of black caricatures reminiscent of a sable vaudevillian, and declared him to be the “most dangerous enemy of the Negro race in America.” Du Bois despised Garvey for pitting the privileged and exploited, educated and ignorant, rich and poor, and light and dark people of African ancestry against each other.

Though hardly inclined to join forces with Du Bois, A. Philip Randolph also attacked Garvey, for his own personal reasons. Randolph perceived Garvey as a threat to his efforts to ameliorate the condition of working-class Americans. Randolph believed that Garvey introduced class divisions and exploited class differences to enhance his position as the spokesperson for the black poor and dispossessed. Garvey’s UNIA proved eminently successful in capturing the hearts and minds of the black masses—to a far greater extent than Randolph. Garvey’s *Negro World* had a broader circulation than *The Messenger*. Sensing a profound challenge to his role as a leader of the black proletariat, Randolph saw a potential diminution of his role as a spokesman for the masses unless Garvey was controlled or eliminated.

Philosophical differences between the two men concerning the role of race in mobilizing workers also caused problems. Randolph endorsed a collectivization of black and white workers under the single banner of socialism. Garvey, conversely, believed that African Americans should operate independently of whites—a position that undercut the idealistic Randolph, who hoped to mitigate interracial differences by developing an economic bond to unify the races.

Ironically, differences between Garvey and his opponents occasionally transcended class, origin, or color. The UNIA appealed to middle- and working-class blacks as well as to native-born and Caribbean blacks. Some among the disgruntled bourgeoisie—frustrated by their inability to find work commensurate with their ability—were attracted by the opportunities of separatism. Meanwhile, the black masses derived gratification from the positive racial appeal Garvey presented. Moreover, it seems unlikely that mulattos who desired to enter the portals of Liberty Hall (Garvey’s headquarters) would have been turned away. Therefore, another important factor—the sheer embarrassment of Garvey’s persona—may be deemed responsible for the strident call for Garvey’s removal. The ostentation and arrogance that Garvey projected, combined with what the mulatto bourgeoisie would consider physical homeliness, undermined the measured, demure pride that established blacks chose to display. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Randolph thought Garvey a threat to the well-being of African Americans and called him “A Supreme Negro Jamaican Jackass.” Chandler Owen—Randolph’s fellow Socialist and close friend—also expressed his dislike of Garvey, calling him an ignoramus and a fool.

As early as 1920 native-born African Americans formed an organization called the Friends of Negro Freedom (chaired by Randolph) and initiated a “Garvey must go” campaign. While Randolph, Owen, and others believed, like Garvey, in racial pride, they adamantly opposed his penchant for baiting white liberals and calling for racial segregation. They also abhorred Garvey because of his contribution to the split between African Americans and West Indians.

Another sector of the black community at odds with Garvey evolved from an unexpected source—his fellow West Indians. Richard B. Moore, along with Wilfred Adolphus Domingo, Cyril Briggs, and other members of the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB) found considerable fault with Garvey; in fact, Domingo and Briggs agitated to have Garvey deported. The issue here involved opposing factions:

the UNIA espoused black nationalism while ABB endorsed communism.

Although some might contend that Harlem established a reputation as the most contentious black community in the world, others might add that it was also the most politically enlightened.

Some problems involving Garvey and other factions within Harlem had roots in dissension between native-born African Americans and newcomers from the West Indies. Restrictions on immigration limited the Europeans and Asians who could enter the United States, but these restrictions did not apply to people from the Caribbean, and so numerous West Indians came—particularly to New York. These migrants came from many different islands, including Jamaica, Barbados, Bermuda, the Bahamas, Saint Kitts, Nevis, and Montserrat. Although the immigrants represented different nationalities, the bonds established between neophytes in an alien nation created greater camaraderie among the newcomers than between them and American blacks. West Indians identified more with class divisions than with racial divisions; in this regard, they differed from African Americans who first and foremost felt the pain of racism. African Americans, in turn, resented the newcomers, who appeared to place radical class politics before the politics of race, and failed to join African Americans in the fight against racial discrimination.

Native-born blacks also resented the aggressiveness of the West Indians. Unlike other immigrant populations, first-generation West Indians abhorred menial labor. As soon as possible these enterprising people started businesses and turned a haughty mien toward less ambitious African Americans. A disproportionate number of small businesses in Harlem were owned by immigrants, including the *Amsterdam News*; this newspaper of black Harlem was owned by the West Indian P. M. H. Savory. Correspondingly, local black Harlemites resented the success of the black Caribbeans. Unfortunately, the lack of cohesion between native and immigrant peoples divided Harlem and limited the successes each group required for sustenance and escape from racial restrictions that limited social, economic, and political development.

Considering the stimulation evident in Harlem, which extolled “negritude” and supported organizations with racial amelioration in mind, it seems ironic that few direct correlations existed between the work and activity of national organizations and those specific to Harlem. The mediocre gains of Harlem’s black politicians during the 1920s serve as a reminder that

significant differences existed between politics at the local level and politics at the national level. Local issues involving patronage and reciprocity were petty and narrow in scope, occasionally rising to the state but seldom to the national level. Within the two black assembly districts of Harlem, local politicians like Charles Anderson and Ferdinand Morton would spend far more time following the dictates of ward bosses, maintaining the loyalty of the constituency, courting the favor of magistrates, and performing other duties that could ensure their own reelection or appointment to coveted positions or offices. Not even the many activities in Harlem that evoked race consciousness nationally caused local black Democrats or Republicans to deviate from mundane interests. The politicians appreciated the significant differences between the immediate local needs of constituents and concerns voiced at a national level that could have ramifications for the entire race.

Ironically, at the international center of black culture, local politics, local politicians, and local issues appeared irrelevant. Although people involved with the politics of the era lived and worked in proximity, Harlemites of long standing seemed passive as compared with the dynamism of black people who migrated into the city during the early decades of the twentieth century. Long-established blacks and energetic newcomers acted in isolation from each other. Blacks of Harlem made their most noteworthy political gains after the decade of the “Roaring Twenties” had passed.

H. VISCOUNT NELSON

See also African Blood Brotherhood; Anderson, Charles W. Briggs, Cyril; Communist Party; De Priest, Oscar; Ford, James William; Messenger, The; Moore, Frederick Randolph; Moore, Richard B.; Morton, Ferdinand Q.; New York Age; Owen, Chandler; Pan-African Congresses; Party Politics; Race Men; Randolph, A. Philip; United Colored Democracy; Universal Negro Improvement Association; Washington, Booker T.; *other specific individuals*

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Porgy and Bess

The opera *Porgy and Bess* began with DuBose Heyward’s novel *Porgy* (1925), which was widely read and well reviewed. One reader was the composer George Gershwin, who, riveted, stayed up late on a summer night in 1926 and finished it in one sitting. He promptly dashed off a letter to Heyward, proposing that they collaborate on a musical version of the story. However, the project was postponed because of Gershwin’s busy schedule, and meanwhile—in 1927—the Theater Guild in New York City presented a stage version by Heyward and his wife, Dorothy, on Broadway. The play was a hit, running for nearly two years in New York, on tour around the United States, and in London. The singer Al Jolson, best known for performing in blackface makeup, proposed a musical version of *Porgy* to Heyward and the Theater Guild, but the project fell through when his collaborators—the composers Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II—abandoned it.

Eventually, in 1933, when his schedule allowed, Gershwin, along with his brother Ira (who cowrote the lyrics and libretto), began a long-distance collaboration with Heyward, between South Carolina and New York City. The press eagerly anticipated this pairing of a successful southern novelist and his racial subject with one of the country’s most popular composers.

Porgy and Bess, directed by Rouben Mamoulian (who had also directed *Porgy*) and produced by the Theater Guild, opened on 10 October 1935. The reviews were generally positive (although many music critics complained that it was not the “folk opera” Gershwin intended), and *Porgy and Bess* ran for 124 performances on Broadway. However, because of the large cast and the orchestra, the running costs were so high that the production lost money. After the New York run, the Theater Guild sent the show out on tour in an effort to recoup costs. It traveled to Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Detroit, and Washington, D.C. In July 1937, George Gershwin died of a brain tumor at age thirty-nine. *Porgy and Bess* was his last major work.

Porgy and Bess is set in “Catfish Row,” a fictional African American neighborhood in Charleston, South Carolina. It tells the story of Porgy, a crippled beggar, and his love for Bess, a drug-addicted prostitute. The opera begins with a dice game, a drunken dispute, and a murder. Bess takes shelter with Porgy after her murderous boyfriend, Crown, flees. Redeemed by Porgy’s love, she shares his home and slowly becomes part of the community of Catfish Row. But when she encounters Crown during a picnic on a nearby island, she succumbs to his sexual advances. She returns to the forgiving Porgy and confesses that Crown will be



Stage set of *Porgy and Bess*, 1935. (Photofest.)

returning to get her soon. The fishermen of Catfish Row set out early one morning a few weeks later, and a hurricane develops. Crown returns from the island, having miraculously survived the storm, and Porgy kills him. The police take Porgy to identify Crown's body, and Sportin' Life, a worldly drug-dealing outsider, induces Bess to accompany him to New York City by convincing her that Porgy will be locked up forever. The opera ends when Porgy returns and, learning of Bess's departure, sets out to follow her.

In creating the story and music of *Porgy and Bess*, Heyward and Gershwin—like many other artists of the Harlem Renaissance era—drew on African American folk culture. This impulse to marry “authentic” folk sources with high culture was also exemplified in formal concerts of African American spirituals; during the 1920s, singers like Roland Hayes, Paul Robeson, and Jules Bledsoe gained renown and drew large audiences to such recitals in the United States and Europe. In its promotional materials, the Theater Guild emphasized that Charleston was the origin and setting of *Porgy and Bess*, and most white commentators readily described the opera as a true depiction of African American life in the South. Some African American critics, though, were more skeptical with regard to the topical and musical authenticity of this work. The composer Hall Johnson described *Porgy and Bess* as “not a Negro opera by Gershwin, but Gershwin's idea of what a Negro opera should be.” Nevertheless, *Porgy and Bess* provided an unprecedented opportunity for African American opera singers, since in the 1930s America's major opera companies refused to hire black singers. The original production starred Todd Duncan, a voice teacher at Howard University, as Porgy and Anne Brown, a graduate of Juilliard, as Bess. The cast also included Ruby Elzy, John Bubbles (half of the vaudeville team Buck and Bubbles), Abbie Mitchell, Georgette Harvey, Edward Matthews, Warren Coleman, J. Rosamond Johnson, and a fifty-five-member chorus.

Despite a consensus that *Porgy and Bess* had been a disappointment in 1935 (having received somewhat mixed reviews and having incurred financial losses), it went on to become a permanent fixture in the twentieth-century American cultural landscape. In 1941, Cheryl Crawford reassembled most of the original cast and streamlined the piece by drastically cutting its recitative; her version toured the United States and Canada for more than two years. In 1952, Blevins Davis and Robert Breen developed a production that toured the United States, Europe, Latin America, and North Africa for four years, generating enormous

publicity; this production was sponsored overseas by the U.S. government, which considered *Porgy and Bess* an excellent vehicle for propaganda during the cold war. In 1959, a movie version of *Porgy and Bess*, made in Hollywood, featured the major African American film stars of the day: Sidney Poitier, Dorothy Dandridge, Sammy Davis Jr., and Pearl Bailey. African Americans' criticism of the opera mounted, particularly because many considered it an inappropriate representative of American culture for international audiences. Still, a reviewer writing in 1964 could be forgiven for his estimate that revivals of *Porgy and Bess* were taking the stage “every twenty minutes or so.” In 1976, the Houston Grand Opera restored much of the music that had been cut from the opera over the years and marketed its *Porgy and Bess* as a return to Gershwin's original operatic version. Touring nationally, this production drew sell-out crowds, critical praise, and the Tony Award for best revival of a musical (1977). In 1985, fifty years after its debut, the Metropolitan Opera produced *Porgy and Bess* for the first time; it continues to be performed regularly by opera companies in the United States and around the world. A staggering number of jazz, popular, and classical recordings of songs from *Porgy and Bess* have appeared since the late 1930s. These recordings, by artists as diverse as Bing Crosby, Miles Davis, Willie Nelson, and Kiri Te Kanawa, ensure that many more people are familiar with its music than have ever seen *Porgy and Bess*.

ELLEN NOONAN

See also Bubbles, John; Gershwin, George; Heyward, DuBose; Johnson, Hall; Johnson, John Rosamond; Mitchell, Abbie; Porgy: Novel; Porgy: Play

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Porgy: Novel

The novel *Porgy* (1925), by the white Charlestonian DuBose Heyward, was the first major southern novel to portray African Americans in an honest,

straightforward way, rather than hew to the nineteenth-century stereotypes of shiftless darkies or faithful servitors. The novel caused a sensation in the South, where many readers reacted negatively to Heyward's progressive views, and was uniformly applauded in the North, especially by intellectual circles in Harlem, where Heyward was seen as a leading light in the literary depiction of African Americans.

The novel tells the story of a crippled black beggar, Porgy, and his great love, Bess. It is set in Charleston in the first decade of the twentieth century, in a tenement neighborhood called Catfish Row. Bess is a "weak" woman who is victimized first by the brutal Crown (who kills a companion named Robbins in a dispute over a crap game and then goes into hiding), then by Sportin' Life, a trickster figure who represents the "city" Negro. He seduces Bess with cocaine, or "happy dust." In Crown's absence, Porgy courts Bess, they join together in a common-law union, and they informally adopt a baby girl. Porgy then protects Bess when Crown reappears, eventually killing him. Porgy goes to jail briefly and returns to find Bess gone off to Savannah with Sportin' Life, there presumably to fall into a life of drugs and prostitution. He takes off after her in his ramshackle cart, pulled by a goat.

Heyward based the novel on a newspaper report he had read, about one Sammy Smalls, a goat-cart beggar of King Street in peninsular Charleston, and Smalls's alleged shooting of a local woman, Maggie Barnes. The crime was never proved, but Smalls took off down the street in his goat cart when the police pursued him, giving Heyward the idea for a central tragicomic event in the novel—and for two central traits of the inhabitants of Catfish Row: their ingrained distrust of the white world, and the insularity of their own community.

Porgy was perhaps the most famous of a string of novels written by white authors at the time that showed the modernist interest in cultural primitivism; examples include Sherwood Anderson's *Dark Laughter* and Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven*. However, *Porgy* was more sympathetic than these novels, and it endeared Heyward to many writers of the Harlem Renaissance and propelled him on a course that was to make him famous. The novel was successfully dramatized for the stage in 1927 as *Porgy: A Play*, cowritten by Heyward and his wife, Dorothy (who was a playwright). Later, it was transformed into the opera *Porgy and Bess* with music and libretto by George and Ira Gershwin—America's first native folk opera.

JAMES HUTCHISSON

See also Anderson, Sherwood; *Dark Laughter*; Gershwin, George; Heyward, DuBose; *Nigger Heaven*; *Porgy and Bess*; *Porgy: Play*; Van Vechten, Carl

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Porgy: Play

In 1925, DuBose Heyward, a white former insurance broker from Charleston, South Carolina, published a novel titled *Porgy*. Before then, he had established himself as a regional poet and a proponent of southern literature, but *Porgy* brought him to the attention of the New York literary world, where critics (both black and white) praised his depiction of southern black life. One reader in New York was the composer George Gershwin, who in 1926 proposed to Heyward that they collaborate on a musical version. Eventually, this collaboration did produce the opera *Porgy and Bess*, which opened in 1935.

However, before the opera *Porgy and Bess* was created, Heyward and his playwright wife, Dorothy Kuhns Heyward, adapted *Porgy* into a play. This play, also called *Porgy*, was presented by the Theater Guild, a noncommercial theatrical company in Greenwich Village in New York City. The production was directed by Rouben Mamoulian and had sets by Cleon Throckmorton. *Porgy* had its debut on 10 October 1927; ran on Broadway for 217 performances; then toured small-, medium-, and large-sized cities around the country; had a run in London; and then returned to play Broadway and tour the United States again. It ultimately had nearly two years of continuous production, generating enormous publicity and unprecedented visibility for its African American cast. That cast included Rose McClendon, Frank Wilson, Percy Verwayne, Evelyn

Ellis, Georgette Harvey, Jack Carter, the writers Dorothy West and Wallace Thurman in background roles, and thirty-nine other black actors. Many of the performers had long experience in African American theaters but were making their Broadway debuts in *Porgy*.

In Heyward's novel *Porgy*, the title character is a beggar with crippled legs, Bess is a drug-addicted prostitute, and together they experience transforming love and, finally, heartbreak. The novel also details the lives and customs of the poor black fishermen, stevedores, domestic workers, and their families who inhabit Catfish Row, a decaying grand mansion in Charleston. The central characters, in addition to Porgy and Bess, include Crown, a hot-tempered stevedore who is Bess's lover; Maria, a protective maternal figure who is the proprietor of a cookshop; Serena, a deeply religious woman; Robbins, Serena's husband, who is killed by Crown; and Peter, a grandfatherly friend to Porgy. The time seems to be an ill-defined "golden age" in the late nineteenth or very early twentieth century; the novel's main events include a dice game that ends in murder, a "saucer burial" at which residents collect money to bury their dead, a funeral, a church picnic, a raging hurricane that leaves one baby an orphan, the manipulations of a drug-dealing outsider, encounters between various residents and the white police that result in jail terms, and a final murder. The novel ends when Porgy, after being jailed for five days, returns to Catfish Row to discover that Bess is gone, lured by alcohol to accompany a group of stevedores to Savannah.

Although the play remained largely faithful to the novel, the Heywards made a few changes that significantly diminished the novel's indications of desperation and racial injustice. The play moves out of the novel's "golden age" and into the present, and the action never leaves Catfish Row—Porgy's begging on the streets of Charleston and several scenes in the jail occur offstage. In the novel, Bess is a pitiful character, and there is little room for doubt that she sells her body for drugs. In the play, by contrast, Bess is worldly and flirtatious, more glamorous than desperate. Sportin' Life, a marginal figure in the novel, becomes a prominent character in the play. His unmistakably "New York" presence contrasts with the rest of Catfish Row; and at the play's conclusion, Bess leaves with him for New York, rather than leaving for Savannah with the stevedores. Whereas the novel ends with Porgy's despair that Bess has left him, the play concludes with Porgy gamely deciding to follow her,

and setting off in his goat-drawn cart "Up Nort'—past de Custom House." This change in the plot evoked the migration of African Americans to northern cities, which was peaking in New York City and elsewhere at the time the play was produced. Yet the migration is presented disapprovingly, because Sportin' Life is clearly a malevolent figure and Porgy's journey seems quixotic, given his physical disability and naïveté about the wider world.

As one of the first Broadway dramas with an all-black cast, *Porgy* had a crucial part in establishing the critical and commercial viability of African American performers in serious roles on Broadway. During the 1920s, roles for blacks in musical revues and the occasional drama on Broadway were still rare; and shows with predominantly African American casts might reframe but still reinforce familiar stereotypes of African American characters: southern rural simplicity, superstition, religious devotion, comic urban high style, and, above all, a reflexive musicality suitable to every occasion.

The Theater Guild and the Heywards used stage directions, program notes, and publicity to bolster the idea that *Porgy* was an authentic depiction of southern black life. White commentators assumed that Heyward, as a southerner, had firsthand knowledge of his subjects, and they took *Porgy* more or less as a documentary. One critic said, for instance: "One forgot that this was a mere theater, just 'off Broadway.' It was Charleston. It was Catfish Row. It was the colored quarter, seen intimately, graphically, photographically." In contrast, African American critics, though they too praised *Porgy*, emphasized the professionalism and talent of the cast and considered the production simply the first step in the creation of vibrant African American theater on Broadway.

Porgy was a critical and popular success as a play in the 1920s, but it would be largely supplanted by the opera *Porgy and Bess* (although anthologies of American drama regularly included the play until the 1980s). *Porgy* remains a contradictory illustration of the Harlem Renaissance era, when African American intellectuals viewed artistic accomplishment as a potent form of racial uplift. *Porgy* broke new ground for African Americans in professional theater, but the way it was produced and received remained, in many significant ways, rooted in the kind of stereotypes the intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance were attempting to combat.

Porgy: Play

See also Ellis, Evelyn; Heyward, DuBose; Gershwin, George; McClendon, Rose; Porgy and Bess; Porgy: Novel; Thurman, Wallace; West, Dorothy; Wilson, Frank

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Porter, James Amos

As an important artist, art teacher, and art historian, James Amos Porter possessed a rare combination of gifts. As an African American, he created, inspired, and illuminated many of the most significant works of African American art during the Harlem Renaissance and into the 1960s.

During his college studies in the 1920s, Porter came to recognize that the contributions of African American artists had gone largely unremarked and unrecorded by the academic community. As an art instructor and art historian, he focused his research on these forgotten artists, carefully documenting the work of black potters, architects, painters, and weavers. The result was a series of pioneering scholarly articles, exhibition reviews, and presentations to the College Art Association. Porter hoped that increased knowledge about African American contributions to the arts would encourage more African Americans to study art, or at least to take pride in what others had created. In 1943, Porter published his full-length study *Modern Negro Art*. Largely because of this volume, which was the first serious study of African American art and is still considered an important reference work in the field, Porter is known today as the “father of African American art history.”

Porter’s own drawing and painting attracted attention during the 1920s and 1930s. His paintings were selected for several important exhibitions by the



James A. Porter, c. 1930s. (© Corbis.)

Harmon Foundation, the Smithsonian Institution, and the American Watercolor Society. Reportedly, Porter was frequently annoyed by the surprise critics expressed that a black artist could produce wonderful work. Porter’s early works were often emotionally powerful portraits of his own inner circle, including *Sarah* (1928), for which he won his first award. His most famous painting from the period is an oil on canvas, *Woman Holding a Jug* (1932–1933), depicting a young African American woman. Later works showed the influence of Porter’s travels in Africa, Haiti, and Cuba, both in their subjects and in their increasing expressionism.

Biography

James Amos Porter was born in Baltimore, Maryland, on 22 December 1905. He was educated at Howard University, Washington, D.C., receiving a B.S. in 1927; the Institute of Art and Archeology, University of Paris, receiving a Certificat de Présence in 1935; and

New York University, earning an M.A. in art history in 1937. He served as instructor at Howard University from 1927 to 1970 and was chair of the art department and director of Howard University Gallery of Art from 1953 to 1970. His awards included an honorable mention, Harmon Foundation Exhibition, 1929; Arthur Schomburg Portrait Prize, Harmon Foundation, 1933; and Distinguished Achievement in Art Education, National Gallery of Art, 1966. His memberships included International Congress on African Art and Culture, American Federation of Arts, and Symposium on Art and Public Education. Porter died in Washington, D.C., on 28 February 1970.

CYNTHIA BILY

See also Art Criticism and the Harlem Renaissance; Artists; Harmon Foundation; Visual Arts

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Powell, Adam Clayton Sr.

Adam Clayton Powell Sr. was one of the most renowned African American ministers of his time. His parents, Anthony Powell (a mulatto) and Sally Dunning Powell (an African-Cherokee Indian), were sharecroppers and former slaves. Because his father had been killed during the Civil War, Powell was raised by his mother and stepfather.

On 1 October 1871, Powell began his formal education. Although Powell was very poor, he possessed determination and drive. He is said to have walked five miles daily, without shoes, to a log schoolhouse. His wardrobe was limited to a shirt and a pair of trousers. Powell studied under the tutelage of Jake Bowles, a white teacher who became his best friend. Powell was considered a very promising student; therefore, Bowles worked diligently with him. Demonstrating his capabilities for learning at a young age, Powell learned the English (i.e., Roman) alphabet, which was totally unfamiliar to him, in one day. After a few months, he memorized some of his books. Once Powell learned to read, he continued reading throughout his life.

Powell's stepfather had a tremendous effect on his life, especially his ministerial career. In 1872, Powell's stepfather introduced him to the Bible by giving him a copy of the Gospel According to St. John. He read this book no fewer than twenty times before he turned ten. Powell's stepfather supplied him with reading materials whenever he could. These materials included fragments of paper and a subscription to a weekly Washington paper.

Seeking employment on the tobacco farms, Powell and his family moved to West Virginia in 1875. Despite the hardships that Powell encountered in West Virginia,

Powell, Adam Clayton Sr.

something positive came out of his stay there. When Powell was thirteen, he befriended a young girl, Mattie Fletcher Shaffer. She was seven years younger than Powell, and he often helped her across a hazardous bridge, especially during the winter, on their way to school. A very special friendship developed between them. Subsequently, she would become his wife.

Life in West Virginia also had its negative influences. During his adolescence, Powell became associated with people who were engaged in unlawful activities. In fact, Powell is said to have always had a pistol, some brass knuckles, and hard liquor in his possession. He even shot a man who was attempting to take something from the farm. Powell got into a great deal of trouble and became a juvenile delinquent.

Concerned for his own safety, Powell decided to relocate to Rendville, Ohio, in 1884. There, however, he found himself in a city where gambling was rampant. In addition to his other vices, Powell was soon possessed by gambling. He gambled all of his wages obtained from a job in the coal mines, borrowed money in order to gamble, and on one occasion even gambled away his overcoat.

On a Sunday morning in March 1885, Powell happened to go inside a Baptist church where Rev. D. B. Houston, the pastor, was conducting revival services. Powell experienced a moment of epiphany and was converted to Christianity; in 1888, he would enter the ministry. He enrolled in Wayland Seminary and College in Washington, D.C., and completed his studies within four years. Subsequently, he returned to West Virginia and married Mattie Shaffer in 1889; their marriage did not end until she died in 1945.

Powell's first pastorate was in 1892 at the Ebenezer Church in Philadelphia. Shortly, Powell and his wife moved to New Haven, Connecticut, in 1893. Several events occurred while Powell was in Connecticut: He became pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, matriculated at Yale University, and became secretary of the Baptist Ministers' Conference, and he and his wife had two children, Blanche Fletcher (b. 1898) and Adam Clayton Powell Jr. (b. 1908), who would become New York's first black Congressman in 1945.

On 31 December 1908, Powell, a stately man who stood 6 feet 3 inches and weighed 190 pounds, became pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church, at West Fortieth Street in Manhattan, New York. This church had just celebrated its hundredth anniversary, but it was located in a red-light district; and Powell was interested in moving to where the people were so that the church could meet their needs. He eventually persuaded the

congregation to buy land in Harlem—at West 138th Street, between Lenox and Seventh avenues—and build a new church, which was completed in 1923.

During the early 1920s, in the aftermath of World War I, employment and housing were major concerns. Thousands of blacks were leaving the South and heading north looking for jobs; many blacks were seeking housing in Harlem. Whites were moving out of Harlem because of the decline in real estate value, and blacks were moving in. This migration gave rise to a cultural renaissance—a period of creativity for blacks—and Powell was in an ideal position to make many significant contributions to the movement.

As pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church, Powell played several major roles in establishing Harlem's culture: (1) He built Harlem's first community recreation center. (2) He was instrumental in establishing a social-religious education program, which could help eradicate many of the social ills. In addition to Bible classes, there were literacy classes, business classes, and sex education classes, to name a few. (3) He was responsible for spearheading the building of a home for the elderly on Saint Nicholas Avenue. (4) Powell was an advocate



Adam Clayton Powell Sr., c. 1928. (Photographs and Prints Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.)

for the poor, and he stressed the need for better jobs. (5) During the Depression, Powell provided soup kitchens for the poor. (6) He emphasized racial justice. (7) Abyssinian became the largest black Protestant church in the United States, with a membership of approximately 14,000, before Powell's retirement in 1937.

When Powell retired, he was succeeded by his son, Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Even after his retirement, the elder Powell continued to fight for civil rights and equal opportunities for blacks. On his death, he was recognized as a remarkable minister and leader.

Biography

Adam Clayton Powell Sr. was born on 5 May 1865, in Soak Creek, Franklin County, Virginia. He studied at Rendville Academy in Perry, Ohio; and Wayland Seminary and College, Washington D.C., receiving a B.A. in 1892. He was a special student at Yale University Divinity School in 1895–1896. Powell was pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1892–1893; Immanuel Baptist Church, New Haven, Connecticut, 1893–1908; and Abyssinian Baptist Church, New York City, 1908–1937. He was also an editorial writer for the *Christian Review*, a vice president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and a founder of the National Urban League. His awards included an honorary D.D. from Virginia Union University in 1904, the Harmon Foundation Award in 1929, and being designated pastor emeritus from 1937 to 1953. Powell died in New York City on 12 June 1953.

NILA M. BOWDEN

See also Abyssinian Baptist Church; Harlem: Negro Metropolis

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Prather, IDA

See Cox, Ida Prather

Preer, Evelyn

The actress and singer Evelyn Preer was born in Mississippi in 1896 and was raised in Chicago, where she began her acting career c. 1916. During the early part of her career, she was active primarily in film. She worked extensively with the pioneering director Oscar Micheaux and starred in eight of his silent films: *The Homesteader* (1917), *Within Our Gates* (1919), *The Brute* (1920), *Deceit* (1921), *The Gunsaulus Mystery* (1922), *Birthright* (1924), *The Conjure Woman* (1926), and *The Spider's Web* (also 1926).

In the 1920s Preer reigned as the preeminent African American stage actress and was described as “an actress of rare ability, and intelligence” (*New York Age*, 1925). She joined the famous Lafayette Players of Harlem during their run in Chicago in 1920 and would remain a key member of this important theatrical company for the remainder of her life. She was especially active in their tours of the southern states in the mid-1920s. The Lafayette Players were by far the most esteemed of Harlem's theatrical organizations, and Preer, as their leading lady, was featured in many important theater productions of the 1920s. In 1923, these players performed a triple bill on Broadway: Oscar Wilde's *Salome*; Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*; and a new one-act comedy, Willis Richardson's *The Chip Woman's Fortune*. Preer's other notable appearances with the Lafayette Players included *Scandals*, *Why Wives Go Wrong*, *The Good Bad Girl*, and *The Warning*.

Preer, Evelyn

Her numerous additional stage credits of this period included *Anna Christie*, *Desire Under the Elms*, *Madame X*, *Bought and Paid For*, *Branded*, *Rain*, and *Over the Hill to the Poorhouse*. In the mid-1920s Preer appeared with increasing frequency on Broadway, finding success in such high-profile productions as *Lulu Belle* (1926) and *Porgy* (1927). She also appeared in musical comedies, such as Flournoy Miller and Aubrey Lyles' show *Rang Tang* in 1927.

In 1926–1927, Preer made more than a dozen jazz and pop recordings, working with such renowned jazz musicians as Duke Ellington, Clarence Williams, and Tom Morris; she also worked with leading white musicians, such as Red Nichols. Preer had a fine singing voice of the musical theater type, and these records constitute some of her best surviving work.

A final phase of Preer's career found her working in Hollywood. She went there in 1928, initially to appear in a stage production of *Rain* with fellow members of the Lafayette Players. While there, she appeared in all-black films, including two shorts in 1929: *Music Hath Harms* and *The Melancholy Dame*. These were based on the racially stereotyped stories of Octavus Roy Cohen, and their director, Al Christie, was less skilled and less ambitious than Micheaux. Although Preer was only in her mid-thirties, she was increasingly cast in matronly roles and character parts during the late 1920s. While in Hollywood she also worked in mainstream white films. The last, and most notable, of these was *Blonde Venus* (1932), a vehicle for Marlene Dietrich. Preer died in Los Angeles in 1932.

Biography

Evelyn Preer was born on 26 July 1896, in Vicksburg, Mississippi, and was raised in Chicago, where she began her acting career c. 1916. She starred in eight of Oscar Micheaux's films (1917–1926) and was also a leading stage actress (1920s). She joined the Lafayette Players in 1920. As a singer, Preer made jazz and pop recordings (1926–1927). She went to Hollywood in 1928 and appeared in all-black films and some mainstream white films. In 1932, she and her husband, the actor Edward Thompson, had their only child, a daughter. Evelyn Preer died on 18 November 1932, in Los Angeles, at age thirty-six.

ELLIOTT S. HURWITT

See also Cohen, Octavus Roy; Ellington, Duke; Lafayette Theater; *Lulu Belle*; Lyles, Aubrey; *Madame X*;

Micheaux, Oscar; Miller, Flournoy; *Porgy: Play*; Richardson, Willis; Williams, Clarence

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Pridgett, Gertrude Malissa Nix

See Rainey, Gertrude "Ma"

Primitivism

In art, literature, music, dance, and theater, primitivism denotes the adoption of motifs, subjects, and styles associated with primordial, elementary, fertile, or preindustrial qualities. Throughout the history of art, objects from various cultures have inspired primitivist exploration, including sculptures from Africa, Asia, ancient America, and Oceania, as well as paintings and drawings by children, the mentally ill, or "outsiders." Primitivism marks the borrowing of forms and artistic expressions from other cultures as a means of renewal of and rebellion against "exhausted" values of mainstream Western civilization. It functions as a cultural corrective, in which the incorporation of primitivist forms and subjects signals renewal and return to some mythic, prehistoric origin of culture.

In the context of the Harlem Renaissance, primitivism signifies a constellation of interconnected ideas, styles, and cultural histories. A multilayered and often contradictory phenomenon, primitivism changes with the movement's shifting cultural paradigms and inflected perspectives. Like their European and white American counterparts, black American

artists and writers perpetuated flawed constructions of a primitive Africa. Yet in addition to this well-aided predicament of primitivism, black artists' actual African ancestry added layers of meaning. Though generating equally flawed constructions of Africa as a site of otherness, primitivism provided black Americans with an arena in which to probe relationships between blackness and modernity. It fostered the assertion of African American identities in response to the rapid transformation of modern life.

Artists of the Harlem Renaissance were following in the wake of earlier primitivist movements, which had gravitated toward artifacts from Africa and the Pacific Islands. This occurred most notably in early twentieth-century European modernism when artists such as Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, and Maurice Vlaminck turned to African sculpture as a source of artistic inspiration. Its atypical subjects and unfamiliar compositions gave African art the allure of primitive otherness. Artists' study of works from exotic locales resulted in the incorporation of new formal strategies in modernist art. This process of appropriation was fueled by long-standing European myths of African art as unmediated, instinctive, and uncensored—properties that corresponded with artists' desire to break away from traditional concepts of creative expression.

The problems with modernist approaches to primitivism have been widely addressed. Primitivism failed to address non-European artifacts in their respective cultural environments. Stripped of contextual information about their original use in rituals or everyday activities, African and Oceanic sculptures surfaced in European and American collections around the turn of the twentieth century. African art frequently lacked documentation about its provenance, or rather the circumstances of its looting during the colonial enterprise. Thus African sculptures were lumped together in collections according to formal similarities. Disregard for the aesthetic and social origins of African sculptures allowed Picasso and other modernists to embrace these artworks on a purely formal level. Pursuing stylistic affinities between the primitive and the modern, these artists left a far-reaching legacy that reduced the aesthetic and cultural complexities of African art to purely formal matters for much of the twentieth century.

Alain Locke's advocacy of a "New Negro" identity in the arts made primitivism a central tenet in Harlem Renaissance culture. Locke encouraged artists to recognize and incorporate an imaginary African heritage,

which he positioned at the center of a new black cultural identity. Observing the influence of African art on European modernism, Locke proposed that it should have an even deeper impact on black Americans, whom he viewed as sharing an intrinsic, racial link with the "motherland." Following Locke's call for an authentic expression of their African cultural heritage, African American artists and writers modeled their approach to Africa in the same primitivist fashion as European artists. Yet African Americans were—historically and culturally—just as far removed from the original settings of African art as their white American counterparts were. Accordingly, the works of black American artists replicated the same shortcomings as the works of European modernists, for they viewed, and thus defined, African art in purely formalist ways.

Primitivism in African American art and literature gained additional momentum through Locke's backing of a white patronage system. The Harmon Foundation and philanthropists supported African Americans' pursuit of seemingly authentic black artistic expressions. Yet instead of encouraging African Americans to transcend aesthetic limitations, patronage restricted black artists to racialized themes based on flawed constructions of Africanness. The paradox of primitivism in the Harlem Renaissance becomes evident in the fact that the most conscious endeavors to embrace African-based identities returned to long-standing stereotypes. Thus the primitivist impulse in the Harlem Renaissance actually hindered the very development of cultural self-determination that it sought to encourage.

Primitivism affected all areas of culture in the Harlem Renaissance: literature, art, music, dance, and theater. Novels and poems by Claude McKay, Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larsen, and others affirmed African origins or presented the continent as a lost paradise at a time when blacks continued to experience racial discrimination and economic hardships. Primitivist constructions of Africa provided solace in an alienated, industrialized world. Correspondingly, representations of African masks and sculptures abound in the visual imagery of the Harlem Renaissance. Aaron Douglas created his signature primitivist style by incorporating African motifs and embracing an extremely flat style. Similarly, William H. Johnson's paintings combined ordinary life, religious customs, and folk art traditions into a unique primitivist style. Palmer Hayden's primitivist appropriations and exaggerations of racial stereotypes accounted for the

provocative nature of his works. Other artists who embraced primitivism include Richmond Barthé, Miguel Covarrubias, Malvin Gray Johnson, Lois Mailou Jones, and Horace Pippin, to mention only some of the better-known figures. Similarly, the employment of primitivist modes of expression translated into major stage successes for figures like Paul Robeson and Josephine Baker. The phenomenon extended to music halls and nightclubs such as the legendary Cotton Club, where primitivist decorations suggested black sensuality in exotic African settings. Primitivist experimentation during the Harlem Renaissance lasted until changing economic and political conditions yielded to social realist styles in the arts during the 1930s. Despite its contradictions and setbacks, primitivism constituted a vital aspect of renaissance culture, for it allowed artists to participate in ongoing modernist discourses. Positioning themselves in a network of cultural and historical relationships between the United States, Europe, and Africa, black artists and writers laid claim to the interconnections of the black diaspora and modern consciousness. And while much of the reality of a historically existing Africa may have eluded the primitivism of the Harlem Renaissance, the movement provided fresh perspectives for African Americans in search of their cultural identity.

JÜRGEN HEINRICH

See also Baker, Josephine; Barthé, Richmond; Cotton Club; Covarrubias, Miguel; Douglas, Aaron; Harmon Foundation; Hayden, Palmer C.; Hurston, Zora Neale; Johnson, Malvin Gray; Johnson, William H.; Jones, Lois Mailou; Larsen, Nella; Locke, Alain; McKay, Claude; Robeson, Paul

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Professional Sports and Black Athletes

The 1920s are often referred to as the "golden decade" of American sports. But whereas white athletes like Babe Ruth, Jack Dempsey, and Red Grange thrilled the nation, most black athletes found themselves on the outside looking in, barred from equal participation by economic constraint, social custom, or simply racial prejudice. As tennis legend Arthur Ashe notes:

Black athletes were shut out of major league baseball, eased out of professional football, not allowed to join a fledgling professional basketball league, barred from Forest Hills in tennis, and unlawfully kept out of contention for the heavyweight boxing crown. Most sobering of all was the complete disappearance of the black turf jockey from a sport he dominated a mere twenty years before. (1993, 3)

Female athletes were doubly constrained, struggling to overcome not only racial antipathy but also cultural proscriptions against women's participation in competitive sports. As a result, many of the most talented black athletes of this period never received much recognition.

Nonetheless, black athletes were a significant presence during the Harlem Renaissance. They were extremely popular in the black press, and sports events were highlights of the black social calendar. Moreover, black athletes who did compete against whites helped

disprove theories of racial superiority, smoothing the way for the eventual integration of most professional sports after World War II. The principal sports in which black athletes found success during the 1920s and early 1930s were boxing, baseball, basketball, football, and track.

Boxing

At the time of the Harlem Renaissance, boxing was one of the few professional sports that were not officially segregated; thus of all the major sports, it provided the greatest visibility for black athletes.

The most famous black boxer of the era was John Arthur “Jack” Johnson. He was born in Galveston, Texas, where he was known as “Lil’ Arthur,” and he became a dominant—and controversial—fighter. Johnson, who was physically imposing (more than 6 feet tall and weighing 200 pounds), became the first black heavyweight champion by defeating a Canadian, Tommy Burns, before 25,000 spectators in Australia in 1908. Burns had inherited the championship from Jim Jeffries, who had retired in 1905 rather than defend the title against a black challenger. In 1910, however, Jeffries—known as the “great white hope”—returned to the ring to face Johnson in Reno, Nevada. Johnson, who was wearing an American flag as a belt (the date was the Fourth of July), knocked Jeffries out in the fifteenth round. After the fight, rioting by angry whites around the country left thirteen blacks dead and hundreds wounded.

Johnson’s notoriety, both before and after his fight with Jeffries, stemmed partly from his relationships with white women, three of whom he married. In 1912, Johnson (then still the champion) was convicted of transporting a white woman across state lines for immoral purposes. Rather than serve time in prison, he escaped to France via Canada. In 1915, he lost his title to a white challenger, Jess Willard, in Havana, Cuba, under suspicious circumstances: Johnson was accused of losing the fight for \$30,000. He remained in exile for several more years before returning to the United States in 1920 to serve eight months of his original sentence.

After Willard lost to Jack Dempsey in 1919, white heavyweight champions again refused to face black fighters. No black contended for the title until Joe Louis in 1937. Evidently, the athlete who was most hurt by this situation was Harry Wills, the top heavyweight contender of the 1920s. There were, however, black champions in other weight classes, including the Senegalese light-heavyweight Louis “Battling

Siki” Phal (1922); the middleweight Theodore “Tiger” Flowers, the “Georgia deacon” (1926); the bantamweight “Panama Al” Brown (1929); the welterweight Cecil Lewis “Young Jack” Thompson (1930); Eligio Sardinas, “Kid Chocolate” (junior lightweight, 1931; featherweight, 1932); and William “Gorilla” Jones, who shared the middleweight title in 1932–1933. One of the best-known fighters of the era never to win a title was Sam Langford (the “Boston tar baby”), who won 224 fights and lost only 23 from 1902 to 1923. Still, Johnson’s dramatic career kindled black pride throughout the Harlem Renaissance, as evidenced by the opening lines of Sterling Brown’s poem “Strange Legacies” (1932): “One thing you left with us, Jack Johnson./One thing before they got you./You used to stand there like a man,/Taking punishment/With a golden, spacious grin.”

Baseball

Although there were more than sixty black ballplayers in white leagues before 1900, by the mid-1880s blacks had been squeezed out of professional baseball by an unofficial agreement, and the so-called national pastime would not reintegrate until well after the Harlem Renaissance. Instead, from 1900 to the 1940s, black professionals played almost exclusively in segregated leagues, occasionally appearing in exhibition games against white opponents on the barnstorming circuit. (Blacks and whites did oppose each other with perhaps surprising regularity in amateur and semiprofessional leagues, particularly in the Midwest. In 1925, for example, the all-black Wichita Monrovia defeated a local Ku Klux Klan team, 10–8, before an interracial crowd. But in the major leagues, segregation was the rule.) Despite the economic difficulties that beset black leagues, which typically turned a profit only on opening day and on Sunday—the only day of the week when most working blacks could attend games—black baseball remained vitally important to African American communities throughout the period.

The primary force behind organized black baseball was Andrew “Rube” Foster. After being a star pitcher in the early years of the century, in 1911 Foster formed his own team, the Chicago American Giants, and “won a reputation as a managerial genius equal to his friend, John McGraw” (Tygiel 2000, 116). In 1920, in order to keep control of black baseball away from white owners and booking agents, Foster created the National Association of Colored Professional Baseball Clubs, better known as the Negro National League

(NNL). The motto of the NNL was “We are the ship, all else the sea” (Ashe 1993, 27). Foster urged black fans, “It is your league. Nurse it! Help it! Keep it!”—though his long-term goal was to prepare black players for the eventual integration of major league baseball (Tygiel, 116). More leagues followed, including the Eastern Colored League (ECL), run by a powerful white booking agent, Nat Strong. In 1924, the champions of the two top leagues met in the first black World Series, won by the Kansas City Monarchs (NNL) over the Hilldale club (ECL). Another new circuit, the Negro Southern League—in which the legendary pitcher Satchel Paige launched his professional career—began in 1926.

Despite the emergence of so many leagues, scheduling games was difficult, because few black teams owned stadiums. The black teams were instead at the mercy of white agents like Strong, who controlled most of the ball fields on the East Coast. (Foster was accused of seeking similar monopolistic control in the Midwest.) By the early 1930s, the effects of the Depression, along with Foster’s departure from the sport (owing to illness), nearly ended the black leagues entirely; and in 1932, there was no black major league for the first time since 1920. The leagues revived in 1933 under the leadership of Cumberland Posey, owner of the Homestead Grays (a top independent team from Pennsylvania that had not joined any league until 1929), and W. A. “Gus” Greenlee, owner of the Pittsburgh Crawfords. One of the most successful innovations of the 1930s was an annual black all-star East–West game, first played in 1933 before 22,000 fans. By the mid-1930s, these East–West games, featuring such stars as Paige, the star batter Josh Gibson, and James “Cool Papa” Bell (noted for his speed), were major events, outdrawing the black World Series and even receiving coverage in white metropolitan dailies.

Basketball

Blacks first participated in basketball in the late 1890s and early 1900s at black Young Men’s Christian Associations (YMCAs), in the Ivy League, and in city club “fives” in the Northeast. The game soon became professionalized, but the real boost in its prominence came in 1923, when the black coach Robert L. “Bob” Douglas, who had immigrated to the United States from the West Indies in 1902, turned his Brooklyn Spartan Five (formerly the Spartan Braves) into the New York Renaissance, or Rens, the most successful all-black team of the era. At first the Rens played most of their games on Sunday nights at their home court, the black-owned

Renaissance Casino at 135th Street and Seventh Avenue, where each contest was followed by a dance. (In those days, the dance was in fact the real draw.) After two strong seasons, including a record of sixty-seven wins and only twelve losses in 1924–1925, the Rens began barnstorming against local and regional teams, including top white teams like the Original Celtics and the Philadelphia Sphas (South Philadelphia Hebrew Association). The Rens were barred from the first professional league, which started in 1925–1926, but they continued to maintain an independent schedule. The Original Celtics, perhaps in protest over the Rens’ exclusion, had also refused to join the new league and remained the Rens’ top opponent even after the founding of the Harlem Globetrotters in 1927. The Rens thrived even during the Depression, winning their first world professional championship in 1932 and remaining the top black team until they were overtaken by the Globetrotters in 1940.

Football, Track, and Other Sports

Football was one of the few sports open to blacks in the 1920s, although the gradual drawing of the color line eliminated African Americans from the professional ranks by 1933. After the formation of the American Professional Football Association (APFA) in 1919, the first successful black professionals came largely from white colleges, where many had been named to Walter Camp’s influential All-American teams. These included Frederick Douglas “Fritz” Pollard (back) from Brown University; Jaye “Inky” Williams (end), also from Brown; Paul Robeson (end) from Rutgers; and Fred “Duke” Slater (tackle) from Iowa. A total of thirteen blacks played in the APFA and its successor, the National Football League (NFL), from 1920 to 1933, although by the late 1920s there were only one or two black players in the entire league. Two of the last black professionals were Ray Kemp, of the Pittsburgh Steelers, and Joe Lillard (the “Midnight Express”), a former star of four sports in Oregon, who was a back, quarterback, and kick returner for the Chicago Cardinals.

Although track and field was largely an amateur sport during the Harlem Renaissance, it generated some of the most significant athletic achievements by blacks. At the Olympics of 1924 in Paris, blacks took gold and silver medals in the long jump and a bronze medal in the men’s 10,000 meters. In the Olympics of 1932 in Los Angeles, blacks dominated the sprint events: Thomas “Eddie” Tolan Jr. won gold medals in the 100- and 200-meter dash, and his teammate

Ralph Metcalfe won the silver and bronze medals. Edward Gordon of the University of Iowa also took a gold medal, for the high jump. Four years later, at the Olympics of 1936 in Berlin, Jesse Owens's unprecedented four gold medals would make a mockery of the Nazis' white supremacist propaganda.

In smaller numbers, and with less public fanfare, some black athletes also participated in such lower-profile professional sports as tennis and golf, both of which were firmly segregated.

Women Athletes

Opportunities for black female athletes during the 1920s and 1930s were severely limited, in part because of widespread suspicion that intense athletic competition was unfeminine. In 1923, for example, the influential National Conference on Athletics and Physical Education for Women and Girls recommended eliminating women's intercollegiate schedules in favor of intramural sports and "play days." Despite such barriers, black female athletes excelled in several sports during the Harlem Renaissance. They were important particularly in track: By the late 1930s, the Tuskegee women's team dominated events such as the AAU Nationals. Also, two black women were stars on the segregated women's tennis tour: Isadore Channels (who won four national titles between 1922 and 1926) and Ora Washington (who won eight titles from 1929 to 1937).

WILLIAM GLEASON

See also Harlem Globetrotters; Johnson, John Arthur; Renaissance Casino

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Prophet, Nancy Elizabeth

One of the leading sculptors of the New Negro movement in the 1920s and 1930s, Nancy Elizabeth Prophet produced remarkable figures, busts, and heads representative of emotional states of mind.

After Prophet graduated in 1918 from the Rhode Island College School of Design, she made portraits occasionally in Providence, then went to Paris for more opportunities and to escape a difficult marriage. There she studied with Victor Segoffin at the École des Beaux Arts, completing at least two busts in 1923, one of which was included in a salon the following year. In 1924, Prophet made and sold batik and created her first life-size statue, *Volonté*, which she subsequently smashed because she found it mediocre.

In June 1926, lonely, frustrated, and nearly penniless, Prophet moved to a tiny atelier in Montparnasse, where she would live for the next seven years. Her first work there was *Poverty* (or *Prayer*), a life-size plaster female nude in *contrapposto*, with a snake curling about her ankles. Her other untitled figures and busts from the time are reminiscent of the work of Antoine Bourdelle, a student of Auguste Rodin: androgynous, with short or covered hair, drowsy eyes, enigmatic smiles, and slim bodies. Usually ethnically ambiguous, Prophet's works may reflect her ambivalence about her mixed African American and Naragansett-Pequot heritage.

Prophet occasionally used models but more often worked from her imagination, creating portraits of types (such as *Head of a Cossack* and *Reptile Woman*), rather than individuals. She sculptured in marble and wood, bronze, alabaster, granite, terra-cotta, plaster, and clay, and lightly painted some of her bas-relief carvings, such as *Facing the Light* (c. 1928–1931).

Prophet continually endured physical and emotional discomfort, and her titles—such as *Bitter Laughter*, *Discontent*, and *Silence*—seem to reflect her self-imposed, isolated condition abroad. Yet in other pieces, like *Peace*, *Confidence*, *Poise*, and *Le pèlerin*, Prophet may have expressed her ambition to maintain what she called the “abstract qualities” of poise and courage.

Prophet produced a striking series of black heads, including *Head of a Negro*, *Buste d’homme*, *Buste ébône*, and *Negro Head* (also called *Head of Roland Hayes*), in the 1920s. Her best-known work is *Congolais* (c. 1931), a cherry-wood head of a Masai warrior. It is unclear why she called her depiction of an East African a person from the Congo region or central Africa.

Buoyed by written support from W. E. B. Du Bois and Countee Cullen, Prophet often shipped sculpture to New York, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island for exhibitions, at which she won prizes. She also earned acclaim from the French press and exhibited her work at the Salon d’Automne and the Société des Artistes Français in Paris.

After her return to the United States, Prophet taught art at Spelman College in Atlanta for ten years, then moved back to Providence, where she worked for a few years at a commercial ceramics factory in the late 1940s and early 1950s. She converted to Roman Catholicism in 1951 and died childless, in obscurity in 1960. She is remembered as a sculptor of exceptional talent. Collections of her work are at the Black Heritage Society of Rhode Island, Providence; Rhode Island School of Design; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Biography

Nancy Elizabeth Prophet was born in Warwick, Rhode Island, on 19 March 1890. She received a diploma in drawing and painting in 1918 from the Rhode Island School of Design and studied at École des Beaux Arts, Paris. She married Francis Ford in 1915; they separated in 1932. She was an art instructor at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, from 1934 to 1944. She also worked at a ceramics factory in Rhode Island from 1940 to 1950 and as a domestic after 1944. Her awards include the Harmon Prize for Best Sculpture, Harmon Foundation (1929); and the Richard Greenough Prize, Art Association of Newport (1932). Prophet died in December 1960.

TERESA LEININGER-MILLER

See also Artists; Cullen, Countee; Du Bois, W. E. B.

Selected Exhibitions

- 1924, 1925: Salon d’Automne, Paris.
- 1926: Boston Independent Exposition.
- 1927: Société des Artistes Français, Paris.
- 1928, 1932: Harmon Foundation, New York.
- 1929: Harmon Foundation, New York, Société des Artistes Français, Paris.
- 1930: Boston Independent Exposition, Société des Artistes Français, Paris.
- 1931, 1933: Whitney Sculpture Biennial, New York.
- 1934: Bannister Gallery, Rhode Island College, Providence.
- 1945: Providence Public Library. (Solo.)
- 1985: Bellevue Art Museum, Bellevue, Washington. (Traveling.)

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Provincetown Players

The Provincetown Players, founded in 1915, became a major force in experimental American drama. During the 1920s, this theater company also became controversial by staging plays about blacks by white playwrights.

Inspired by Maurice Brown’s Chicago Little Theater, four former midwesterners—George (Jig) Cram Cook, Susan Glaspell, Hutchins Hapgood, and Neith

Boyce—sought to create a theater devoted to presenting American writers without the glitter and expense of large Broadway productions. Joined by three Greenwich Village artists and bohemians—John Reed, Louise Bryant, and Mabel Dodge—they moved to Provincetown, Massachusetts, for the summer and formed a theater company after their work had been rejected by theaters in New York. In 1915, their first production, *Constancy*, a slight piece about the group's love affairs, was performed at Hutchins Hapgood's house in Provincetown and then on a wharf lent to the players by Mary Vorse O'Brien. In the fall, the group migrated back to Greenwich Village, where a permanent home was created on MacDougal Street near Washington Square. In 1916, Eugene O'Neill, then unknown, joined them in Provincetown.

The Provincetown Players were one of a number of white theater companies to produce plays about black Americans during the Harlem Renaissance. In 1917, Ridgely Torrence's *Three Plays for a Negro Theater*, produced by the Hapgood Players and Provincetown's set designer Robert Edmond Jones, marked the first time that black actors, rather than white actors in blackface, were hired for dramatic roles on Broadway. Two early one-act plays by Eugene O'Neill for the Provincetown Players, *Thirst* (1916) and *The Moon of the Caribbees* (1918), starred white actors in blackface; but in *The Dreamy Kid* (1919), his director, Ida Rauh, hired black actors instead. This one-act tragedy about Mammy Saunders, a dying grandmother awaiting her grandson Dreamy, who is wanted by the police, did not receive much attention, but it gave O'Neill the confidence to hire Charles Gilpin for his first full-length major production, *The Emperor Jones* (1920).

Gilpin, the first leading black actor on Broadway, woke up a star the morning after his debut, according to James Weldon Johnson. Although *The Emperor Jones* was a hit among white audiences, it sparked controversy among blacks, who objected to Brutus Jones's criminal past. For his powerful and memorable role, Gilpin received the Drama League Award in 1920; however, the Drama League withdrew Gilpin's invitation to the otherwise all-white dinner because that too had caused a controversy. O'Neill and the play's director, Kenneth MacGowan, leaked the problem to the press and encouraged sympathetic actors to decline their own invitations. This protest worked, and Gilpin was again invited.

Gilpin discerned a subtle racism at work in O'Neill's play. Brutus Jones, an opportunist and colonist, is the self-styled emperor of an island in the West Indies. Having escaped from America after killing a prison

guard, he embezzles from the native people and convinces them that only a silver bullet can kill him. But Smithers (a cockney trader) and Lem (the chief of the tribe) undo the emperor. Jones escapes into the jungle to the underbeat of primitivistic tom-toms and his own encroaching paranoia. In O'Neill's most innovative device, there is a flashback to Jones's own past and the collective unconscious of black life in America—as a slave at auction, on a slave ship, and finally as a witch doctor in Africa. However, Jones is so distressed by his experience that he kills himself with his last bullet.

Gilpin expressed his displeasure with elements of the play, particularly O'Neill's continued use of the word "nigger," which Gilpin changed to "black baby." O'Neill was furious that Gilpin dared to change the text; moreover, Gilpin had problems with alcohol. O'Neill fired him after the first full run of the play and hired Paul Robeson for the revival of 1924 and the film of 1934.

In 1922–1923, the Provincetown Players shut down in order to reassess their mission in American theater. Many original members, such as John Reed and Jig Cook, had left or become disillusioned with the group. O'Neill, its main playwright, also grew tired of its direction. A year later it reopened as the Provincetown Playhouse, even more committed to experimental theater, under the direction of O'Neill, Kenneth MacGowan, and Robert Edmond Jones. Its offerings in the first year included August Strindberg's *Ghost Sonata* and O'Neill's racially provocative *All God's Chillun Got Wings* (1923).

O'Neill's play, which starred Paul Robeson, depicted an interracial marriage between Jim Harris, a law student preparing for the bar exam; and his white wife, Ella Downy, who goes insane because of her stress over the marriage. In this play about internalized racism, Jim wants to please Ella so much that he says he will become her "slave"; but Ella cannot fully love her black husband and thwarts his efforts at self-improvement.

Adam Clayton Powell Sr., pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, thought that the production would play on people's fear of interracial marriage. The Ku Klux Klan threatened O'Neill, and the mayor of New York tried to close down the production before it opened. All this publicity made O'Neill and Robeson a topic of debate and actually made the play more popular. In *Opportunity*, Robeson defended his roles in O'Neill's plays: "I honestly believe that perhaps never will I portray a nobler type than 'Jim Harris' or a more heroically tragic figure than 'Brutus Jones, Emperor,' not exceeding 'Othello.'" But Robeson also looked

forward: "I am sure that there will come Negro playwrights of great power and I trust I shall have some part in interpreting that most interesting and much needed addition to the drama of America."

In 1926, the Provincetown Playhouse produced Paul Green's tragedy *In Abraham's Bosom*, a version of the "tragic mulatto" theme, which won the Pulitzer Prize. Huggins (1971) has written that it "came as close to dramatic realism as anything in the decade" but remained a flawed depiction of black life.

The Provincetown Playhouse ignited controversy among African American intellectuals and artists who objected to the depiction of blacks by white playwrights and deplored the dearth of drama by black playwrights. W. E. B. Du Bois, editor of *The Crisis*, wrote that plays "must be written by Negro authors who understand from birth and continual association just what it means to be a Negro today." In *The New Negro*, Montgomery Gregory, organizer and director of the Howard Players, called for a "National Negro theatre . . . that will merit the respect and admiration of America. Such an institution must come from the Negro himself, as he alone can truly express the soul of his people."

The Provincetown Playhouse disbanded in 1926 as O'Neill found greater fame. Though a functioning organization for only nine years, the Provincetown Playhouse changed American drama and encouraged the development of black theater in America.

MARY CHINERY

See also Emperor Jones, The; Gilpin, Charles; Green, Paul; O'Neill, Eugene; Powell, Adam Clayton Sr.; Robeson, Paul; *Three Plays for a Negro Theater*

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Publishers and Publishing Houses

A major factor in the blossoming of African American literature in the 1920s and 1930s was a historic transformation of the publishing industry, including the emergence of a new group of publishing houses that showed greater interest than their predecessors in African American culture and authorship. Before World War I, American publishers were generally conservative to moderate "Christian gentlemen" of decidedly Anglo-American tastes and prejudices. Even if they were "sympathetic to the Negro," their conception of African Americans owed much to plantation-school traditions and minstrel stereotypes conveyed by the likes of Octavus Roy Cohen and Irvin Cobb. By the same token, the established publishers before World War I resisted political radicalism, feminism, and new treatments of human sexuality in fiction as well as non-fiction. They generally deplored literary naturalism and modernism, tendencies often described as decadent and "un-American," and they failed to respond to demographic changes—especially immigration and internal migration—that produced burgeoning new audiences. Old-line publishers feared the "alien" peoples crowding the cities, filling public libraries, and reading newspapers in exotic languages.

However, little magazines and theaters just before World War I had begun proving that audiences existed for new types of fiction, poetry, and drama, including works that approached African American culture seriously as an important and unappreciated aspect of the national scene. New theories of cultural pluralism and of culture as such challenged the "melting-pot" ideology and the glorification of "100 percent Americanism" in the age of the Ku Klux Klan, while new nationally based organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) brought civil rights activism into civic institutions based in New York with which new young

publishers often became affiliated. Magazines espousing left-liberal and radical agendas had begun featuring the work of black authors as well as attacking lynching and racist imperialism. Thus a network of institutions gradually developed in which black authors and activists saw new opportunities.

Publishers of a more cosmopolitan bent than their predecessors wanted to detach American literature from its dependence on the English tradition; they both found and built an audience for Russian fiction, Irish drama, and other previously exotic literatures. Such interests transferred to African American literature as authors and critics saw in African American culture an analogue to the peasant cultures of Europe and Asia. Moreover, most of the new young publishers were Jewish and had little allegiance to the old ways of doing things in a publishing industry that had kept them in subordinate roles. In contrast, the old-line publishers—the vast majority of publishing houses of the period—showed absolutely no interest in African American literature, which they tended to class with cultural degeneracy (as they conceived it) being foisted on the public by neurotic decadents centered in Greenwich Village.

The new publishers had new attitudes in every phase of the business, from stylistic and ideological preferences to cultural and geographical range, marketing techniques, and typography and jacket design. Chief among the new firms in the 1920s were Alfred A. Knopf, Harcourt and Brace, Boni and Liveright, and Viking, joined later by a variety of houses representing a broader spectrum, from traditional houses like Harpers to radicals like International Publishers and the black-directed press based at Howard University, Associates in Negro Folk Education.

The most important black publisher of the Negro renaissance, William Stanley Braithwaite, was a poet, critic, and anthologist based in Boston and committed to late-romantic forms for the most part, somewhat isolated from the mainstream of black literary development after World War I. His publishing activity developed in part from his work as an anthologist of contemporary “magazine” poetry beginning in 1913, a role in which he had exerted some influence over the American literary scene, drawing attention to Edwin Arlington Robinson, Robert Frost, Bliss Carman, James Weldon Johnson, and others. Early in their poetic careers, black poets including Johnson, Claude McKay, and Countee Cullen particularly sought his advice and benefited from his encouragement. However, of these three only Johnson published a book

with him, *Fifty Years and Other Poems* (1917). Braithwaite’s relationship with Georgia Douglas Johnson, on the other hand, was more long-standing, and Braithwaite was responsible for the appearance of each of her books with the presses over which he sequentially served as editor-in-chief: Cornhill, B. J. Brimmer, and H. Vinal.

Braithwaite encouraged African American poets and published their work, but he did not consider poetry by black writers to form a tradition separate from that of American poets in the English tradition more generally, and his critical tastes remained essentially late-romantic, much like those of Countee Cullen, who regarded him as a sort of mentor. Most books produced by his presses were written by white authors, usually based in New England, and long forgotten today. Moreover, Braithwaite never listed African American poets among those he considered the most important of his time.

Cornhill, Brimmer, and Vinal were essentially short-lived vanity presses. Authors were expected to subsidize the publication of their own books and work up lists of friends and associates to be solicited directly for sales in advance of publication, while Braithwaite puffed their work in his anthologies. As a contributing editor to *The Crisis* in its early years, Braithwaite influenced the magazine’s publication of poetry, and in 1918–1919 Cornhill published volumes of poetry by several authors featured in the magazine’s early issues: Joseph S. Cotter’s *The Band of Gideon, and Other Lyrics*; Maud Cuney-Hare’s *The Message of the Trees*; Georgia Douglas Johnson’s *The Heart of a Woman and Other Poems* (1918); and Charles Bertram Johnson’s *Songs of My People*. Angelina Weld Grimké’s play *Rachel*, first produced by the NAACP drama committee in Washington in 1916, was also a Cornhill title. Leaving Cornhill during a restructuring of the company, Braithwaite helped found a new house, B. J. Brimmer, which brought out Georgia Douglas Johnson’s *Bronze* (1922); and when that firm folded, he helped form another with the backing of a white friend, H. Vinal, which published Johnson’s third book, *An Autumn Love Cycle* (1928). However, generational changes in American writing that explicitly reacted against the regional, aesthetic, and ideological positions with which he was affiliated left Braithwaite in a position of marginal importance to the direction of African American poetry while new firms based in New York brought out the books quickly identified with the “New Negro” movement and with black modernism.

The most important of these new firms, in terms of the quality of black writing it published, was that of Alfred A. Knopf. His entrance into the publishing industry was partly shaped by his mentor at Columbia University, Joel Spingarn, a president of the NAACP. Frustrated by the publishers he worked for after graduation, Knopf wanted to help steer American writing, particularly fiction, in new directions; and after opening his own house in 1915, he began publishing translated Russian fiction and American “modernist” authors including Carl Van Vechten, who by the mid-1920s had close connections with many African American authors or would-be authors. His most intimate friend, H. L. Mencken, edited the magazine *American Mercury* out of the Knopf offices and had a broad following among black readers and writers at the time. Knopf’s wife, Blanche, essentially the second executive, also had much to do with the quality of the firm’s list, particularly in African American literature.

In 1924, Knopf published Walter White’s first novel, which prompted a meeting between White and the critic and novelist Carl Van Vechten that would have major consequences, as White introduced Van Vechten to a broad swath of the black intelligentsia in greater New York. The Knopfs developed a strong relationship with James Weldon Johnson (whose *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* they republished in 1927) that also made them attractive to black authors. By way of White, Van Vechten, and Johnson, Knopf—by now one of New York’s most esteemed publishers—soon had recruited Langston Hughes, Nella Larsen, and Rudolph Fisher. As this list suggests, Knopf was interested in a broad range of African American writing (although, for the most part, it sold poorly in its own day), and his firm’s standards have stood the test of time. Titles included *The Fire in the Flint* (1924), *Flight* (1926), *The Weary Blues* (1926), *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927), *Not without Laughter* (1930), *The Ways of White Folks* (1934), *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1927; originally 1912), *Black Manhattan* (1930), *The Walls of Jericho* (1928), *Quicksand* (1928), and *Passing* (1929). But Knopf’s influence derived as well from his list of titles by white authors, including works in fields such as anthropology and history, that had a great impact on black writing of the 1920s and 1930s.

One of Knopf’s major competitors early on was the firm of Boni and Liveright, founded in 1917 and closely associated with the “rebellion” centered in Greenwich Village. Like Knopf, this house (owned initially by Albert and Charles Boni along with Horace Liveright) played an important role in bringing continental

European literature to the attention of American writers, and its Modern Library series reprinted titles that were key to transatlantic “modernism.” Boni and Liveright, however, was also closely affiliated with political and cultural radicalism. American authors identified with the imprint included Jack Reed, Eugene O’Neill, Sherwood Anderson, and Waldo Frank. Frank became Jean Toomer’s closest comrade and literary confidant during the writing of *Cane* (1923), Boni and Liveright’s first title by an African American author. Jessie Redmon Fauset’s first two novels also came out from this house, as did Eric Walrond’s *Tropic Death* (1926), some of which had been based on a trip the firm funded to Panama.

By this time, Horace Liveright had taken control of the company and the Bonis had gone their own way. They were also interested in black writing, however, and they commissioned *The New Negro* (1925) from Alain Locke, as well as *Blues—An Anthology* (1926) from W. C. Handy. In 1926, they offered a \$1,000 prize for the best novel by an African American, but they never awarded it because the judges’ committee found no worthy recipient. (Nella Larsen held back and sent her novel to Knopf instead because of gossip that the Bonis would accept almost anything, and she did not want to be “the best of a bad lot.”) A. and C. Boni folded at the onset of the Depression; and Horace Liveright—as a result of risky publishing, gambling on stocks, and bad business decisions—was forced out of his firm at about the same time. Nonetheless, the two houses had helped open the doors of American publishing to new styles of black writing that, if they brought in little money, managed to win considerable critical attention and remain central to the canon of modern African American writing.

A firm that played a role second only to Knopf in the literary blossoming of the 1920s was Harcourt, Brace, which was founded in 1919 by a couple of disgruntled employees of the more traditional and “puritan” firm of Henry Holt, urged on by the budding author Sinclair Lewis (an important contact for black authors in the mid- and late 1920s). From the beginning, Harcourt, Brace was closely identified with the native literary “rebellion”—authors like Lewis and Carl Sandburg, whom Harcourt brought with him from Holt. Shortly after founding the firm, Alfred Harcourt and Donald Brace brought Joel Spingarn in as their adviser on literature and then as partner and vice president. By then president of the NAACP, Spingarn connected the firm directly with the New Negro movement, and one of the first books it published was

W. E. B. Du Bois's *Darkwater* (1920). Another was Carl Sandburg's *The Chicago Race Riots, July 1919* (1920). Much like his student Alfred Knopf, Spingarn (formerly a professor of comparative literature) felt that American literature needed the stimulation of models from outside England and so founded the firm's European Library in 1920, parallel to Boni and Liveright's Modern Library. The desire to bring a more cosmopolitan spirit to American letters coincided with the firm's connections with "New Negro" concerns. It brought out titles by Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, Claude McKay, Sterling Brown, and Arna Bontemps, as well as M. T. Pritchard and Mary White Ovington's *Upward Path: A Reader for Colored Children* and the textbook *Readings from Negro Authors for Schools and Colleges* (1931).

As the new magazines and publishing houses began printing creative work by and about African Americans, older houses and journals began taking notice. Harper Brothers, more than a century old and one of the most venerable firms in New York, had been losing authors to the new firms when it decided it needed an overhaul and brought in a new book editor, Eugene Saxton, who happened to be friendly with Walter White. White soon started steering black authors to Harper, and its first list under the new leadership included Countee Cullen's first book of poetry, *Color* (1925). Cullen was particularly eager to have the Harper imprint on his work because of the long-standing prestige of the firm, and Harper's remained his publisher through the 1930s, bringing out several of his volumes in editions lavishly illustrated by a white artist he had chosen, Charles Cullen. McKay also came to Harper's after Harcourt, Brace; he published all of his fiction with Harper's as well as his autobiography. Harper's picked up Richard Wright as he emerged at the end of the Depression with *Uncle Tom's Children* (1940).

Viking Press was founded by two men, Harold K. Guinzburg and George S. Oppenheimer, who had been working for Knopf when they decided to strike out on their own in 1925. They were interested in African American literature from the beginning and had friendly ties to New Negro authors like Walter White and James Weldon Johnson. The house of Benjamin W. Huebsch, highly respected for its progressive list and the risks it had taken on "exotic" modern literatures, merged into Viking soon after the firm's founding, and helped burnish its image as a forward-looking house interested in new voices, often from "marginalized" groups. White began trying to interest black

writers in them, while Johnson began publishing with the firm immediately. His *Book of American Negro Spirituals* (1925), published with a great deal of fanfare to kick off the firm's first season, became a best-seller, and he stayed with the house after that. Nella Larsen very nearly moved from Knopf to Viking with her manuscript for *Passing* but was talked out of it by her friend Carl Van Vechten, one of Knopf's authors. As was true of Larsen, by the time Viking had gathered wind in the late 1920s, most black authors of that decade had made connections with their publishers, and although Johnson continued to work with Viking through the 1930s, the firm picked up no others. However, by then a growing number of publishing houses had begun publishing work by black authors.

Contrary to much commentary on the Harlem Renaissance, publishers did not lose interest in African American writing after the stock market crash. Not a single firm that survived into the 1930s gave up on its black authors, although for the most part the firms only lost money on these authors. Considerably more books of creative writing by African Americans came out in the 1930s than in the 1920s (and from more presses), even though book publishing as a whole shrank substantially. Moreover, important anthologies, textbooks, and critical studies also appeared in the 1930s, helping institutionalize the study of African American literature. In the 1930s, Lippincott, Covici-Friede, Macmillan, International Publishers, Doubleday Doran, and Stokes all published black writing for the first time. Zora Neale Hurston had never written a novel before an editor at Lippincott read a short story by her in 1933 and asked if she might have a novel in the works. She immediately moved to Florida to help get her creative juices flowing and produced *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934), which was accepted four months after she had started it.

Black writers, of course, were not always free of editorial interference, nor was that interference always bad. Knopf asked Nella Larsen to expand her first book, the manuscript of which was exceedingly short for a novel. Even she recognized it was too "thin" and expanded later sections of the novel, apparently, adding about a third of what we now know as *Quicksand*. Arna Bontemps's *God Sends Sunday* (1931) is considerably revised from the original novel he had written, as he was forced to reshape what had been a kind of quasi-autobiographical tale of a sensitive boy to focus more on elements fitting popular interest in the black "sporting life." Editors at Harper Brothers upset Claude McKay by editing some of the

dialogue in *Banjo* (1929), which in part showcases the richness of black vernacular speech. Because the book was already in proofs when he discovered the changes, he had to pay for restoring the original wording. A later novel manuscript by McKay entitled "Savage Loving" that featured homosexuality, among other things, was never published. At the time Harpers had been losing money on McKay hand over fist, although the firm would subsequently publish his autobiography.

Overall, although extensive evidence of editorial meddling by white publishers has yet to be demonstrated, publishing houses of the 1920s and 1930s, as in all eras, could not survive independent of market demand, and the demand for black authors' creative writing was never very large. It seems, moreover, to have been confined primarily to greater New York. Even Nella Larsen's *Passing*, which was partly set in Chicago and which Knopf marketed heavily to bookstores there and elsewhere, sold only about 3,500 copies, almost all of them in New York. Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem* (1928) and James Weldon Johnson's *Book of American Negro Spirituals* were the only "best-sellers" in the Harlem Renaissance. McKay's many black critics, probably rightly, believed that his novel succeeded commercially because it suited popular tastes for "exotic" material of lower-class black life. *Cane*, although a critical succès d'estime, sold only 500 copies. Even at the 135th Street Branch of the New York Public Library, the intellectual crossroads of black Harlem, white authors' books about blacks were usually in higher demand than black authors' books on that subject, according to reports in the local black newspapers.

In addition to Hurston, several writers associated with the 1920s did not publish their first novels until the 1930s—Langston Hughes, George Schuyler, and Countee Cullen, for example—and others joined the ranks, such as William Attaway, George Wylie Henderson, Arna Bontemps, E. Waters Turpin, and Richard Wright. Clearly, the publishers of the 1920s had demonstrated that an audience and a cultural need existed for African American writing, even if market demand was slight. Nor, after looking carefully at the titles published by the various houses, is it easy to support the common conception that publishers were interested only in the "primitive and exotic" with

regard to African American literature. Publishers open to black writing in the Harlem Renaissance represented a tiny minority of those then in business, and for the most part they had personal, cultural, or even political connections with the New Negro movement. They were generally new houses looking for new forms of American literature and seeking to help foment cultural change. Their interest in African American writing connected with many other aspects of their visions and strategies, which helped transform the publishing industry in the United States.

GEORGE HUTCHINSON

See also *Specific houses and individuals; specific writers and works*

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Quicksand

Nella Larsen's novel *Quicksand* (1928) was praised by W. E. B. Du Bois as "the best piece of fiction that Negro America has produced since . . . Charles Chesnutt" (1928), and it immediately secured Larsen's reputation among the literati of Harlem. In the year of its publication, *Quicksand* won a Harmon Foundation Bronze Award, placing second to Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem* in a vote that split the judges. The critical reception of *Quicksand* was mixed, although generally positive: It was lauded for its complex psychological portrait of the protagonist, Helga Crane. In an era when James Weldon Johnson cautioned that black writers could not afford to expose the foibles of the race, *Quicksand* was advertised by its publishers as "wholly free from the curse of propaganda," and Larsen won accolades for her portrayal of a flawed woman who fails in seeking self-realization and community. Interestingly, although not necessarily correctly, the reviewer for the *New York Times* (8 April 1928) thought that Helga Crane was a woman whose "essential tragedy has little to do with . . . being a Negro."

The novel opens at Naxos, a school (resembling the actual Tuskegee Institute) where Helga Crane is a teacher. Helga, the daughter of a Danish American woman and an African American man, is constantly at odds with her surroundings and, seeking solace, spends much of the novel in motion. After clashing with the administration at Naxos, including her fiancé, James Vayle, she leaves for Chicago, where she asks her white uncle, Peter, for money but is rebuffed. Eventually, she finds work as a companion

for a woman who is traveling to New York. In New York, Helga is supported by Anne Grey, a wealthy Harlemit widow. Yet "it didn't last for long, this happiness of Helga Crane." When a check arrives from Uncle Peter, Helga visits her mother's family in Copenhagen, a place with "no Negroes, no prejudice, no problems." In Copenhagen, Helga wears colorful dresses and delights in a newfound sensuality. Initially taken with a portraitist, Axel Olsen, who paints her image and proposes marriage, Helga is shocked by his rendering of her as a "disgusting sensual creature." She returns to Harlem, where her "deliberate lure"—such as her exotic clothing—makes her popular, but again she attracts unwanted attention. After a transgressive moment with Anne Gray's new husband, Helga wanders the rainy streets and then collapses in a storefront church. She is swept up into the congregation, experiences a conversion, and then marries Rev. Mr. Pleasant Green and moves to rural Alabama with him. The novel ends with Helga sinking into a static life of child-bearing and helpless confinement.

The dark ending of *Quicksand* continues to raise debate. Some scholars argue that Helga's passivity is inconsistent with a character who for most of the novel challenges her limitations. Others view the ending as the appropriate modernist conclusion to Helga's quest. Davis (1994, 243) notes that as a writer, Larsen was intrigued by "the mixedness of things"; and this work is characterized by suspensions and tensions that destabilize traditional notions of social "place." Through Helga, Larsen revises the stereotype of the tragic mulatto, satirizes the "talented tenth," creates a heroine dissatisfied by marriage

Quicksand

and domesticity, and suggests the inseparability of class, race, and gender.

REBECCA MEACHAM

See also Chesnutt, Charles Waddell; Home to Harlem; Johnson, James Weldon; Larsen, Nella; Literature: 4—Fiction; McKay, Claude

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Race Films

From the inception of the motion picture industry, stereotyped black characters were endemic, a holdover from the tradition of minstrelsy. Thus images of buffoonish, simpleminded, superstitious African Americans were presented to American moviegoers of all races and ethnic groups. Even before the public outcry by African Americans against D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915), black newspaper columnists had waged campaigns against the stereotyping of African Americans in films. When white filmmakers continued to portray African Americans as simpletons providing comic relief or as sexual predators bent on ravaging white virgins, a number of African Americans responded by producing their own films, which featured black actors in major roles or, more generally, had all-black casts. These productions were called race movies or race films. Most race films were intended for black audiences. Many African American filmmakers did realize that, theoretically, profits, both financial and social, were to be made by reaching the white market; but in reality, race films were often rejected by white audiences, who wanted the presentation of African Americans onscreen to stay within the bounds of the current racial ideology.

Race movies originated around 1913 and were produced until the start of World War II. During this period, the production of these movies went through highs and lows, peaking in 1921 but struggling in the late 1920s and the early 1930s, when the Depression caused economic hardships and a new, cash-intensive technology—talkies—developed.

Reacting against the disturbing depictions of African Americans by white filmmakers in *Nigger in the Woodpile* (1904), *How Rastus Got His Turkey* (1910), *C-H-I-C-K-E-N Spells Chicken* (1910), and other such movies, William Foster (who wrote under the name Juli Jones Jr.) worked to produce films with all-black casts, starting in 1913. Actually, Foster's financial backing came from whites, and his films, such as *The Railroad Porter* (1913), followed the same formula and sometimes fell into the same racial stereotypes as their counterparts by white producers. Nevertheless, his Foster Photoplay Company began a tradition of films made by African Americans and supported by African American audiences. At about the same time as Foster, Peter P. Jones, a photographer in Chicago, also began making films for African American audiences, one rather problematically entitled *The Troubles of Sambo and Dinah* (1914).

From 1915 to 1920, more than thirty black film corporations were founded, some with financial backing from whites; they included the Dunbar Film Company, Florentine Film Manufacturing Company, Norman Studios, Heart of America Film Corporation, Allmon-Hudlin Film Company, and Unique Film Company. Most of them lasted only a few years; in fact, nearly 25 percent of all companies founded to produce race movies made no films whatsoever before folding, and none of them except Oscar Micheaux's various corporations survived the Depression and the transition to sound.

Despite the protests against it, Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* was a tremendous success, and African Americans sought a cinematic answer to this spectacle

of white pride. Accordingly, Emmett J. Scott, secretary to Booker T. Washington, produced *The Birth of a Race* (1918). Scott's film was intended to celebrate African Americans, but financial mismanagement and corruption burdened the production, and the final product proved to have no relation whatsoever to his original vision. It was instead a jumble of scenes depicting biblical narratives and extolling universal brotherhood, and it was panned by both the black and white press.

In 1916–1917, Noble Johnson, who was an established bit actor for Universal Studios, and his brother George P. Johnson established the Lincoln Motion Picture Company, the first film company in the United States to be owned and financed by blacks. The Johnsons wanted to produce movies that would put African Americans in situations reflecting everyday life; they refused to highlight gambling, drunkenness, or stereotyped black characters. Noble Johnson was the president of Lincoln and also produced and starred in its first three films: *The Realization of a Negro's Ambition* (1916), *The Trooper of Troop K* (1917), and *The Law of Nature* (1918). George Johnson managed Lincoln's marketing and distribution from his home in Omaha, Nebraska. He had some useful connections, and he developed for the first time a network of black artists, theater owners, and newspaper writers through which to distribute and market African American films. His marketing tactics would become standard procedure for advertising and distributing race movies throughout the 1920s, because white theaters and their networks generally refused to carry black films. Lincoln's films were a great success among black audiences, so much so, in fact, that Universal demanded Noble Johnson's resignation from Lincoln, to avoid a conflict of interest. To ensure his future career with Universal, Johnson reluctantly agreed; after his departure, Clarence Brooks acted as Lincoln's president until 1923, when Lincoln folded. In all, Lincoln produced seven films; and the Johnson brothers' venture, which lasted longer than any other African American film company of the time, proved that a market existed for films with black casts—and that African Americans in film need not be relegated to the roles of comedians, buffoons, ne'er-do-wells, drunkards, mammies, sexual monsters, or Uncle Toms.

In 1918, Lincoln approached the African American novelist and South Dakotan homesteader Oscar Micheaux about obtaining film rights to his second book, *The Homesteader* (which he had published himself). After considerable negotiations, Lincoln dropped its attempt because Micheaux had insisted on coming

to Los Angeles and personally directing the proposed film. However, during the course of his correspondence with the Johnsons, Micheaux had gathered a great deal of information about filmmaking, and he then proceeded to make the movie himself. Micheaux's film, *The Homesteader* (1919), was the first feature-length American movie with an all-black cast, and Micheaux went on to become the best-known and most prolific director of race movies. During his career he produced more than forty films, as well as seven novels. Micheaux's films were often controversial, depicting interracial love, inequality between blacks due to skin tone, and white racism from the perspective of African Americans. Micheaux's most controversial film, *Within Our Gates* (1920), presented the hanging and burning of a sharecropper and his wife, falsely accused of murder, the random beating (and inferred lynching) of a sycophantic black tattletale by bored whites, and the attempted rape of a black woman by a white man (a reversal of the stereotype of black men as sexual predators). Micheaux's films were in some respects problematic, celebrating lighter-skinned heroes and heroines and focusing on bourgeois ideals, but they proved enormously successful with black audiences. In 1928, Micheaux declared voluntary bankruptcy, probably because of the advent of sound films, which were much more expensive to make than silent films; but he formed other corporations and continued to produce films (some of these were "presented" by A. Burton Russell, his wife). A few years later Micheaux found a financial backer—Frank Schiffman, the owner of the Apollo Theater in Harlem—and produced his first talkie, *The Exile* (1931). *The Exile*, like *The Homesteader* and Micheaux's later film *The Betrayal* (1948), was about interracial romance on the western frontier, which is also the theme of three of his novels.

By the 1930s, when talkies had become standard in movie houses, race movies had fallen on hard times. In 1929, Fox released *Hallelujah!* and MGM released *Hearts in Dixie*, both with all-black casts; thus Hollywood, with its greater technological expertise and financial resources, had invaded the territory of independent filmmakers like Micheaux and tapped into the black market. Many of the Hollywood films reinstated stereotypes that earlier black directors had tried hard to dispel; nevertheless, the advent of talkies brought a new era of race films that had all-black casts but were financed by white backers (Astor Pictures, Herald Pictures, and Million Dollar Pictures, for example) or were actually produced by white studios. Micheaux continued to make films throughout the 1930s, though

he lost much of his audience to splashier and technically superior Hollywood productions.

During the 1930s and early 1940s, race films broadened their scope to include gangster films such as *Underworld* (1936) and *Manhattan* (1937), westerns such as *Harlem on the Prairie* and *Bronze Buckaroo* (both 1938), and films with musical entertainment such as *The Duke Is Tops* (1938) and *Tall, Tan, and Terrific* (1946). Gradually, the kinds of race films that had been produced by the Johnsons or Micheaux lost their appeal to black audiences, who preferred more spectacular Hollywood productions. In fact, Micheaux's *God's Stepchildren* (1938) was considered heavy-handed and was criticized for depicting racist mulattos and for intimating that most African Americans preferred gambling to thinking (a theme that also appears in other films by Micheaux).

Throughout the 1930s, a wider range of roles for African Americans became available in Hollywood. However, certain subjects, such as miscegenation and the acquisition of significant political or social power, were still taboo. In Hollywood films, racial conflict was generally resolved on the personal, not the structural, level, so as to sidestep racial politics. Thus the distinction between race movies, whether financed by blacks or whites, and mainstream Hollywood films began to erode. At the height of the production of race movies in 1921, there had been some 300 black theaters, and by 1939 there were more than 400, some as far south as Alabama and as far west as Colorado and California. But by 1944, this number dropped to about 175. This decrease occurred partly because white theaters were opening up portions of their facilities, such as balconies or separate sections, to black audiences. Another fact was the institution of the "midnight ramble" in white theaters—this was a midnight showing of a film aimed at black audiences. Also, by the late 1940s, there had been some expansion of black roles in white films, and segregation was generally decreasing; as a result, African Americans frequented white theaters and saw mixed-race films more often, and there was less need for black-owned theaters, which white patrons had rarely frequented. In the period after World War II, race movies such as those made by the Johnsons and Micheaux no longer held the loyalty of black audiences; their place had been taken by Hollywood, and their ideology of racial uplift and self-definition had given way to Hollywood scenarios that were designed simply for profitability.

Still, black filmmakers did occasionally draw on African American fiction. Two of Paul Laurence

Dunbar's stories were made into films: *The Scapegoat* (1917) and *Sport of the Gods* (1921). James Weldon Johnson's poem "Go Down Death" inspired Spencer Williams's film of the same title in 1944. Oscar Micheaux secured the rights to two of Charles Waddell Chesnutt's works: *The House Behind the Cedars*, which he filmed in 1926 and then remade in sound as *Veiled Aristocrats* in 1932, and *The Conjure Woman*, which he produced in 1926.

Most writers associated with the Harlem Renaissance did not become much involved with film, probably because of the intrusiveness of white corporate backers for films with all-black casts in the 1930s and 1940s. Langston Hughes did try to break into Hollywood as a writer, but he found that scenarios involving black actors remained stereotypical. Hughes collaborated with the actor Clarence Muse on the screenplay for a somewhat reactionary film, *Way Down South* (1939), and was also involved with the Meshrabpom Film Company in the Soviet Union in the early 1930s. That company's first film, *Black and White*, was to deal with racial issues in Birmingham, Alabama, but Soviet leader Joseph Stalin shut down the company before any filming began.

The black press—newspapers and magazines—did involve itself with film criticism from the inception of cinema. In the 1920s, critics in publications such as *Half-Century Magazine*, *New York Age*, the *Baltimore Afro-American*, and the *Chicago Defender* all looked to race movies as a hopeful sign of African Americans' participation in this new art and entertainment medium. By the 1930s, after almost two decades of black film production and with a trend toward white control of the market, black intellectuals and writers such as Sterling Brown, Alain Locke, James Weldon Johnson, and Zora Neale Hurston took the race films of Hollywood to task. But in various publications, these writers did not maintain a unified position. For instance, Hurston criticized black leaders for accepting Warner Brothers' simplistic vision of a black heaven in *The Green Pastures* (1938); but Brown and Locke said that *Hearts in Dixie* (1929) was "the truest picturization of Negro life to date" (quoted in Everett 2001, 190). Many writers of the Harlem Renaissance gave critical analyses of race movies and of cinema in general, even if they were not involved in creating films.

In conclusion, the appearance and growth of race movies in the 1910s and 1920s coincided with a growth of African American arts and culture generally, in metropolitan centers around the United States. Race movies were not necessarily directly associated with

the Harlem Renaissance, but they were a significant part of the context of the renaissance and expanded the terms of this African American cultural moment.

DAN MOOS

See also *Birth of a Nation*, *The Birth of a Race*, *The Black and White*; Brooks, Clarence; Brown, Sterling; Chesnutt, Charles Waddell; Dunbar, Paul Laurence; *Film*; *Film: Black Filmmakers*; *Green Pastures*, *The Hallelujah*; *Hearts in Dixie*; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; Johnson, James Weldon; Johnson, Noble; Locke, Alain; Micheaux, Oscar; *Muse*, Clarence

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Race Men

Harlem had the overwhelming number of those African Americans who would be considered “race men”—those with the sense of cultural pride and élan eager to move blacks forward to achieve a positive destiny. Black migrants from the Deep South, the border states, New England, other regions of the United States, and the West Indies moved to New York City during the first and second decades of the twentieth century to realize the “American dream”; and ambitious men instilled with a sense of purpose, blessed with organizational skills, covetous of followers, and imbued with ideologies that required expression ventured to Harlem during the 1920s. The combination of Harlem as a locale, the influx of black émigrés, and the longtime residents of New York led to a combustion that forever changed the cultural, political, and social norms of America.

The ideologies of Harlem’s race men were as varied as the men themselves, and the organizations they created or represented. Staid, traditional black leaders—race men who espoused integration—could be found within the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Urban League. Black professional and undergraduate fraternal organizations had members residing in Harlem who were eager to use their talent to agitate and create opportunities for blacks in an integrated America; these organizations included Sigma Pi Phi (to which W. E. B. Du Bois belonged), Alpha Phi Alpha (Countee Cullen), Omega Phi Psi (Langston Hughes), and Sigma Pi Phi (James Weldon Johnson and A. Philip Randolph). At the opposite end of the spectrum were the cultural nationalists. The most outspoken race

men in this group had, largely, migrated from the West Indies to Harlem. In the charged atmosphere of Harlem, the West Indians joined disgruntled native blacks who deplored racism in the United States and did not want to consort with white people. Invoking an aggressive pride in the black race, the African Blood Brotherhood and the followers of Marcus Garvey proved most emblematic of those who embraced black racial pride to the exclusion of whites.

Between the extremist positions of race men who advocated integration and those who advocated separation were numerous leaders, including radical unionists like Chandler Owen and A. Philip Randolph; religious leaders, represented by Adam Clayton Powell Sr.; social workers, represented by Eugene Kinckle Jones of the Urban League; and many writers who became cultural icons and whose work evoked “negritude,” a term often associated with the race men of the Harlem Renaissance.

Perhaps the first group of race men who perceived Harlem as a “black mecca” were leaders in the NAACP. Du Bois, the first great “race man” to become prominent, ventured to New York in 1909. He became the only black charter member of the NAACP, and the founder and editor of its magazine *The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races*. By 1920, Du Bois had been living in Harlem for more than a decade, and *The Crisis*, published at 70 Fifth Avenue, provided readers with African American news, features peculiar to the race, and cultural musings that appealed to racial pride. Throughout the 1920s, Du Bois personified the integrationist race man. Erudite, proud, immaculate in demeanor and appearance, and with a distinctive Vandyke beard, he sought to mingle with white people, provided that he was treated and respected as an equal.

When Booker T. Washington, who was considered an accommodationist, died in November 1915, Du Bois’s views on prideful integration came to prevail among native-born African Americans. *The Crisis* had an unprecedentedly large circulation during the 1920s and presented the goals and objectives—democracy, justice, progress—dear to integrationist-minded African Americans. As a civil rights militant rather than a social or political revolutionary, Du Bois was in the vanguard of those who demanded full citizenship and equal rights in the United States.

James Weldon Johnson was also an integrationist race man. A native of Jacksonville, Florida, he flirted with living in New York at the turn of the century and then moved to Harlem permanently in the summer of 1914 to escape southern racism and seek his fortune as

a writer. By 1916, Johnson received endorsements to become a field secretary for the NAACP, and on 1 October 1920, he became its first African American executive director.

During his tenure as executive director, Johnson sought federal antilynching legislation, actively soliciting everyone in Congress who was likely to support an antilynching bill. The House of Representatives did pass the Dyer antilynching bill; although this bill failed in the Senate, Johnson received high praise for his efforts. Johnson, like Du Bois, was also a man of letters. He prepared an anthology of Negro poetry in 1921 that culminated in a forty-two page essay—“The Creative Genius of the Negro”—and a book eventually entitled *The Book of American Negro Poetry*. In 1925, Johnson and his brother John Rosamond Johnson published *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*. James Weldon Johnson was also the author of *God’s Trombones* (1927), a collection of seven sermons in verse. Poet extraordinaire, civil rights activist, lyricist, and host to dignitaries at his home in Harlem, James Weldon Johnson epitomized the true race man.

Walter White of the NAACP also contributed to the literature of the era. White was blond and blue-eyed but identified himself as black and worked ardently on behalf of African Americans. In 1918, he settled in Harlem to become an assistant secretary of the NAACP. In 1924, he published *The Fire in the Flint*, a novel that depicted racial violence in the South and debunked the myth of white supremacy. White’s book influenced critics and the general public with its realistic portrayal of life in a small town in Georgia where an aspiring Negro family tries to survive in the face of white southerners’ hatred. White’s methods of gathering information for this novel suggest his dedication as a race man. Passing as a white, he mingled with racist crowds and gathered pertinent and accurate facts that he also used in sequels to *The Fire in the Flint*: the novel *Flight* (1926) and the authoritative study *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch* (1929).

However, White made his greatest contribution to the African American cause primarily after succeeding James Weldon Johnson as executive secretary of the NAACP. He was devoted to achieving full integration, and a better life, for his race. During the era when Harlem was the mecca for the “New Negro,” White worked with James Weldon Johnson to attack lynching and integrate the African American into American life. White became responsible for the introduction of black physicians to Harlem General Hospital; he traveled throughout the nation to protect and defend

black victims of racial discrimination (such as Ossian Sweet in Detroit, Michigan); and he encouraged the Supreme Court to begin its attack against the “white primary” in the case of *Nixon v. Herndon* (1927).

A. Philip Randolph, a man with similar intentions of helping working people, but with a far more aggressive approach, could be called a “radical” integrationist. Randolph was born in Florida in 1889 and spent his formative years in Jacksonville before moving to New York City in 1911. While attending evening school at the City College of New York, Randolph met Chandler Owen, a graduate student at Columbia University. Randolph and Owen shared a political and economic ideology, forged a union based on socialism, and created—along with the managing editor, George Schuyler—*The Messenger*, a magazine that espoused a radical philosophy: denigrating American capitalism, speaking on behalf of silent black laboring men and women, and excoriating anyone who upheld the white power structure. Randolph and Owen’s attack on the established black leadership naturally incurred the wrath of the black bourgeoisie and contributed to conflicts among the proponents of integration.

When Owen left New York for Chicago in 1923, the ever pragmatic Randolph changed his tactics and broadened his appeal by making himself available to lead a black union. As early as 1919, *The Messenger* served as the official mouthpiece of the eventually moribund National Brotherhood Workers of America, a group designed to organize all black unions under a single banner. Therefore, when Randolph organized and founded the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), he had considerable familiarity with the problems of collectivizing black labor. During his tenure in Harlem, Randolph became recognized as an untiring advocate for black people’s rights and as a consummate street orator. As the first black union representative, Randolph faced tremendous odds fighting for recognition from an entrenched and obdurate Pullman Company. Nevertheless, from his headquarters in Harlem, he used every means at his disposal to maintain the existence of the BSCP.

Ironically, the most radical race men came from colonial island nations in the Caribbean. These men had migrated to the United States for the sake of freedom, and they chafed at the discrimination they found there. In Harlem—where they were in no danger of being attacked by a southern lynch mob—these black émigrés spoke out against racism. They identified fully with the plight of their brethren in the United

States but considered African Americans too accepting of racism and too timid in response to racial slights; the West Indians balked at conformity and demanded, in the most militant terms, to be treated as equals.

Arguably, Marcus Garvey was the most prominent and most contentious of the black West Indians who contributed to the Harlem Renaissance. Garvey moved from Jamaica to New York in 1916 and established the Universal Negro Improvement Association, with the mottoes “One God! One aim! One destiny!” and “Up, you mighty race!” His headquarters in Harlem were at 114 West 138th Street, in a cavernous expanse that became known as Liberty Hall. Garvey intended to forge a movement that would let the lowly, disadvantaged members of the race rise to become proud and self-sufficient.

In 1920, Garvey called for a black international convention, hoping to attract delegates from every state of the Union, Central and South America, the West Indies, and Africa. The convention opened on 1 August in Madison Square Garden. In addition to delegates from the United States, there were blacks from twenty-five other countries. To keep the UNIA prominent in the minds of the delegates and the people of Harlem, Garvey presented a parade with enough pomp and circumstance to rival the ceremonies of European royalty. But Garvey and his UNIA proved to be far more than simply ostentatious: The UNIA drafted a “Declaration of the Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World,” and Garvey was a devout race man who protested against the wrongs committed by whites toward blacks throughout the world. Moreover, Garvey’s pronouncements on self-sufficiency were far more than rhetoric. He believed that black people should be independent of white economic dominance or largesse; accordingly, he sold stock to blacks throughout the nation and bought three ocean-going vessels to make up the Black Star Line—the *Shadyside*, *Kanawha*, and *Yarmouth*—thus keeping his disciples mindful of the success they could attain as supporters of the UNIA.

Garvey’s newspaper, *Negro World*, which was based in Harlem, ranged between ten and sixteen pages in length and sold an estimated 2 million copies each week to black subscribers throughout the United States. *Negro World* presented Garvey’s ideas about pride in black skin and Negroid features, characteristics to be lauded rather than ridiculed; he wanted to evoke a pride in blackness that would connect the entire black diaspora. Garvey’s emphasis on African nationalism

and his demands for respect for the Negro race won him followers in black Harlem and elsewhere.

Still, despite his flamboyance, energy, aggressiveness, and chauvinism, Garvey paled in comparison with some other race men of West Indian origin. Cyril Valentine Briggs founded the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB) between 1917 and 1918; during the 1920s, he and two fellow West Indians—Wilfred A. Domingo and Richard B. Moore—developed an organization that rivaled, and occasionally exceeded, the black nationalism espoused by Garvey. Although the origins of the ABB seem complex (it was a cross between nascent West Indian nationalism and the revolutionary rhetoric and fervor of Marxism), its objectives were clear. The ABB desired the liberation of Africa and of all people in the black diaspora.

Despite its radical orientation, the leaders of the ABB conveniently found allies through other entities and media. Briggs, Domingo, Moore, and the black communist Otto Huiswoud represented the ABB at the National Equal Rights League in 1923. Members of the ABB also expressed their views as professional street orators on soapboxes along the sidewalks of Harlem. In their original homes in the Caribbean—Jamaica, Barbados, Dutch Guiana, and Nevis—they had been under colonialism and had been unable to express their feelings; but now they orated, lectured, pamphleteered, and organized, providing a prelude for the militancy that would be evoked in the later civil rights movement. In the 1920s, the race men of the ABB contributed to making Harlem “the most militant community in the black world.”

Arthur A. Schomburg, Harlem’s most senior “race man,” was born 24 January 1874 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. He migrated to the United States in 1891, settled in New York, and, for his own edification, collected books on topics related to black people. By 1920, his collection had grown significantly, comprising manuscripts, autographs, books, and prints. Although *The Crisis* made mention of Schomburg and his collection as early as 1922, his holdings did not become available to the public until after the Urban League purchased his collection in 1926 and created the Negro Division of the New York Public Library at 135th Street in Harlem, between Lenox and Seventh avenues.

In addition to his collection of Negro memorabilia, Schomburg’s primary contribution to the Harlem scene was perhaps his ability to promote accord between African, West Indian, and African American intellectuals through the Negro Society for Historical Research.

Because he documented every significant “race” movement and promoted interest in black history and culture, his collection minimized hegemony or dominance and maximized mutual interests.

Schomburg also contributed to the literary tenor of Harlem. He provided Charles S. Johnson, the editor of *Opportunity* (the periodical of the National Urban League), with facts and details that enabled Johnson to speak forcefully and accurately about black history and culture. Johnson, in turn, published Schomburg’s writings in *Opportunity*. Through *Opportunity*, Schomburg informed readers about black people of Spanish and West Indian ancestry who contributed to Harlem’s breadth as the world center of information pertaining to Africa and the black diaspora. Schomburg certainly gained recognition through *Opportunity*, and through *The Crisis*, but his major literary contribution appeared in *Survey Graphic* in March 1925. This was “The Negro Digs Up His Past,” a fourteen-page essay (later reprinted in Locke’s anthology *The New Negro*) in which Schomburg provided the essential core of the New Negro movement—bringing forth knowledge of the past to remake the future.

Other race men served as cultural icons, giving credence and substance to the Harlem Renaissance. The poets Claude McKay (for example, in *Harlem Shadows*, 1922) and Countee Cullen (for example, in *Color*, 1925) established poetry as artful expression representative of the New Negro movement. McKay, a Jamaican immigrant, became famous in 1919 with his poem “If We Must Die,” which endorsed “New Negro” militancy in response to race riots that had been erupting throughout urban America. Cullen—a native New Yorker (b. 1903), the adopted son of a Methodist Episcopal minister, a valedictorian of De Witt Clinton High School, a graduate of New York University, and (for a time) the son-in-law of Du Bois—wrote poetry that evoked pride in Africa and the black race. Cullen also contributed to the maturation of Langston Hughes, Harlem’s most literary “race man.” Hughes no doubt captured Harlem best and himself came to stand for it as the foremost center of black culture.

Hughes was born in Joplin, Missouri, in 1902; he led an itinerant life but eventually settled in New York after completing his education at Columbia University and Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. Hughes published poems in *The Crisis* that spoke glowingly of black history and culture; in 1921, for instance, he presented *The Crisis* with “The Negro Speaks of Rivers.” In 1926, he published his first book of poems, *The*

Weary Blues, which earned him great acclaim. Between 1925 and 1929 Hughes won poetry prizes from *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* and published with Alfred A. Knopf. Hughes received recognition from prominent black intellectuals like Walter White, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Jessie Redmon Fauset; and from prominent whites such as Mary Ovington (a charter member of the NAACP) and the writer and literary critic Carl Van Vechten. Hughes effectively forced blacks and whites to recognize the significance of black language, and he publicized the contribution that those of African ancestry had made and were making to American society.

The actor Paul Robeson gave the Harlemite “race man” a visual, active dimension. Robeson was a native of Princeton, New Jersey, attended Rutgers University as an undergraduate, then attended law school at Columbia University (1919), but he found himself more intrigued by the effusion of black culture than by studying for the bar. He was strongly influenced at the time by the integrationist views of James Weldon Johnson and had a number of close friends who were white, but Robeson also displayed strong sentiments of racial pride that found expression through his artistry. Robeson began acting during a period when white literati were eager to establishing an artistic bridge with blacks, and he seized on this opportunity. He represented a cadre of black intellectuals who believed that individual artistic achievement rather than political pressure or polemics would mitigate racial tension and enable black Americans to attain the full rights of citizens. Robeson first became known as an actor in the play *Taboo*, then made a breakthrough playing two leading roles: Jim Harris in *All God’s Chillun Got Wings* and Brutus Jones in *The Emperor Jones*, both in 1924. Robeson may be credited with extending the significance of Harlem’s “race man” internationally. Soon after his successes on Broadway, he traveled to Europe and introduced the public there to the “negritude” developed in Harlem. People in London, in Paris, and on the French Riviera appreciated Robeson’s charm and gained considerable insight from this “New Negro” about life in Harlem and the United States.

The adage “Behind every famous man is a woman” applies to the race men of Harlem. Jessie Redmon Fauset, for one, was a woman behind the scenes who enhanced the careers of some famous men of the Harlem Renaissance. Fauset was born in Camden County, New Jersey, in 1882 and was raised in Philadelphia; she graduated from Philadelphia High School for Girls and then from Cornell University

(Phi Beta Kappa, 1905). In 1919, W. E. B. Du Bois invited Fauset to join him in New York and become the literary editor of *The Crisis*. In this capacity she encouraged Du Bois to include the arts and literature as a means of increasing the number of subscribers. Fauset was also a mentor to, or helped cultivate the talents of, such writers as Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, Arna Bontemps, Countee Cullen, and Langston Hughes.

Another woman who contributed immensely to the ambience that fostered the race men of Harlem was the socialite A’Lelia Walker (Lelia McWilliams). She was born in 1885 in Vicksburg, Mississippi; joined her mother, Madame. C. J. Walker, in the hairdressing business; and moved from St. Louis to Denver and eventually to New York in 1914. After her mother’s death, A’Lelia Walker moved into a house at 108–110 West 136th Street in Harlem, where she fed and encouraged young black writers. By 1927, she had converted her home into a salon, called the “Dark Tower” (honoring Countee Cullen’s work), where she exhibited paintings, held readings of poetry and prose, and entertained the black and white intelligentsia at extravagant parties.

H. VISCOUNT NELSON

See also African Blood Brotherhood; Black Star Line; Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; Color; Crisis, The; Emperor Jones, The; Garveyism; Harlem Shadows; Messenger, The; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; National Urban League; Negritude; Opportunity; Social-Fraternal Organizations; Survey Graphic; Universal Negro Improvement Association; *Weary Blues*, The; *specific individuals*

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Rachel

In *Rachel* (1916), a three-act drama by Angelina Weld Grimké, a young woman—Rachel Loving—who lives in the North and is bursting with the maternal instinct learns that her stepbrother and stepfather, an editor of a black newspaper, were lynched in the South ten years earlier. Her innocence thus abruptly ended, she concludes that it would be wrong for her to bring any children into the world: Having a baby would only provide another victim for colonialism and Jim Crow. But although Rachel rejects the traditional role of childbearing, she adopts a little boy and so fulfills her obligation to the next generation.

A year before *Rachel* was produced, segregation became the policy in the nation’s capital, and the film

The Birth of a Nation opened to great fanfare around the country. *Rachel* was produced as part of an effort to counteract the negative portrayal of African Americans in *The Birth of a Nation*. Grimké had hopes that the play, which she published as a book in 1920, might be produced on Broadway, but that never happened. The year after it was produced in Washington, D.C., by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the play was put on briefly in Boston and in New York. It then languished for a while; but in the 1960s, it was taken up as a cause célèbre by feminists who saw it as a pioneering example of black feminism.

The production of *Rachel* in Washington in 1916 was important for at least three reasons. First, everyone associated with it was African American, including the director, producer, playwright, and actors. This was something new in the legitimate theater, where positions of authority were almost invariably filled by whites even if some actors were African American. Second, as part of a strategy to offset the message of *The Birth of a Nation*—which exalted the Ku Klux Klan, apparently condoned lynching, and presented blacks as villains—*Rachel* portrayed ambitious and upright African Americans. Also, by stressing maternity and the impact of lynching on black families, *Rachel* sought to establish common concerns, and an alliance, with white women, who were engaged in their own campaign for social emancipation. Thus in both the subject and the production circumstances of *Rachel*, the idea of art as weapon in the political struggle is clearly evident. Third, the fact that this play was produced in Washington reminds us that the cultural activity of the Harlem Renaissance also occurred outside Harlem. Washington was in fact a very significant site of the renaissance, and resistance was a geographically diverse phenomenon. Grimké was one of many writers, including a number of women, who were living and working in Washington at the time; another playwright, Georgia Douglas Johnson, had a famous literary salon there, which Grimké attended.

BARBARA BREWSTER LEWIS

See also Authors: 4—Playwrights; Birth of a Nation, The; Grimké, Angelina Weld; Johnson, Georgia Douglas; Literature: 3—Drama

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Racial Iconography

The term “iconography”—from the Greek *eikon* (image) and *graphia* (writing)—refers to a group of widely recognized symbols or images associated with a particular discipline or era. Since the nineteenth century, the term has applied to the study of themes and motifs in the visual arts. Racial iconography denotes the representation of race in visual culture and the analysis of its vicissitudes and implications. During the Harlem Renaissance, the concepts of iconography and race dovetailed, owing to a rise in stereotypical imagery that dehumanized blacks. During the post-Reconstruction period and later, certain icons became ubiquitous, including the Sambo and the mammy (docile, childlike servants), the Jezebel (the sexualized black woman), and the black brute (a savage villain seen as menacing white women, for example in such films as D. W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation*, 1915). These images symbolically revived former class relationships between slaves and slave masters, reinforced racial enmity, and allayed fears that the socioeconomic “superiority” of white Americans might be challenged by a free African American population.

The leaders of the Harlem Renaissance, such as the civil rights activist W. E. B. Du Bois and the philosopher Alain Locke, urged African American artists to counter racial stereotypes with positive self-images. Du Bois encouraged artists to create ennobling depictions that paid tribute to blacks as worthwhile subjects for artistic treatment and simultaneously proved the worthiness and talent of black artists. Locke, in his essay “The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts” (1925), called for a new “racially expressive art” rooted in African aesthetics. He pointed out that European art, once rendered

pedestrian from overdependence on classical Greco-Roman models, had been revitalized at the turn of the twentieth century when Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, André Derain, and the German expressionists “discovered” African sculpture. No longer considered coarse and uninspired, African art had been rescued by the attentions of the European modernists and reevaluated as “cunningly sophisticated and masterful.” Locke believed that if African art could cause so much excitement in the arena of European modernism, then surely it was not too much to expect that it would exert an equal, if not greater, influence on African American art.

Influential in the dissemination of Locke’s ideas on racial iconography was the altruistic Harmon Foundation, which, beginning in 1926, offered awards to African American artists and sponsored exhibitions of their works. As a consultant to the foundation, Locke wrote articles to accompany its exhibition catalogs and publicity brochures and, in them, put forth his agenda. He stated in the essay for the catalog of 1931 that one of the most beneficial aspects of the successive Harmon shows was the mounting emphasis placed on “racial types” and characters in the artwork that was presented to the jurors and displayed in each annual exhibit. In what he referred to as the “downfall of classic models and Caucasian idols,” he saw the early stages of African American art being supplanted by a mature period, and, with it, he perceived the dawning of a “truly racial school of art expression.” Locke’s assertions suggest that he sought two essential iconographic elements in “mature” African American art: a non-European aesthetic (in other words, the vigorous and austere abstraction of African sculpture) and “racial types” or black subjects.

The jurors and administrators for the Harmon Foundation were intent on selling the works they exhibited and therefore on attracting buyers (who were frequently white). Thus they often interpreted Locke’s preference for “racial types” as a call for modified black truisms such as physical strength, a sense of rhythm, optimism and humor, simplicity, and aplomb—characteristics that were identified in a Harmon brochure of 1935 as fundamental to black art, and which, ironically, echoed some of the same stereotypes that Harlem Renaissance artists were being asked to dispel. The artist and historian James Amos Porter observed in his book *Modern Negro Art* (1943) that the Harmon shows promoted a myopic racial perspective that inhibited individual creativity by insisting on requisite subject matter and visual treatment. Porter

believed that the Harmon rubric was disadvantageous in that it segregated black artists from the mainstream American art scene. For example, two leading lights of the Harmon shows—Albert Alexander Smith (1896–1940) and Palmer C. Hayden—created imagery that encapsulated the archetypes favored by the foundation and its Anglo-American supporters. Many of Smith’s paintings and prints depicted blithe, ingenuous black characters in humble settings; and Hayden’s motifs, at first seascapes and African sculptural still lifes, evolved into black genre scenes that bore a disturbing resemblance to popular stereotypes, replete with characters whose facial features were sometimes grotesquely exaggerated. Porter felt that Hayden’s style was misguided if not altogether offensive and reminiscent of the ignoble billboards, which were once pervasive, advertising blackface minstrels. The artist, however, maintained that his intention was not to mock or to satirize, but rather to paint, in his own vernacular style, the life and people that he knew.

More resistant to the iconographic expectations of the Harmon Foundation and white patrons in general, other artists of the Harlem Renaissance, such as the sculptors Sargent Claude Johnson and Richmond Barthé, created elegant and restrained portrayals informed by African masks and physiognomy. The painter Aaron Douglas combined the African-inspired abstraction of cubism with expansive narratives that extolled black history and culture. William H. Johnson began his career painting outdoor views in a postimpressionist and expressionist vein, but he later shifted to black genre and religious scenes composed of figures derived from African sculptural forms. Archibald Motley Jr. painted sympathetic portraits of blacks as well as stylized tableaux of black pool halls, dance halls, and street scenes. Lois Mailou Jones alternated between rendering African masks, dignified African American portraits, and French impressionist landscapes. As this sampling suggests, the artists of the Harlem Renaissance walked a fine line between the representation of their own aesthetic visions and the portrayal of three distinct forms of racial iconography: the noble Du Boisian portrait, the African-inspired aesthetics of Locke, and the clichéd black innocence and exuberance that white patrons preferred.

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See also Barthé, Richmond; Douglas, Aaron; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Harmon Foundation; Harmon Traveling Exhibition; Hayden, Palmer C.; Johnson, Sargent Claude;

Johnson, William H.; Jones, Lois Mailou; Locke, Alain; Motley, Archibald J. Jr.; Porter, James Amos

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Racial Stereotyping

A primary issue for the African American intelligentsia of the Harlem Renaissance, and for some whites who participated in the movement, was how best to counteract the negative or demeaning racial stereotypes of blacks that had proliferated since at least the mid-nineteenth century. Although not all whites had stereotyped ideas about blacks, and although not all blacks were free of such notions, most of the negative stereotypes of blacks that flourished at the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance were generally accepted as valid by white American culture; and African Americans as a group had struggled against these limiting and degrading images from their inception. Racial stereotypes appeared in a wide variety of media and discourses, including fiction, poetry, sermons, newspapers, consumer goods, advertisements, music, theater (especially minstrel shows), radio, and the new medium of film.

Many whites based such stereotypes on selective racial and racist pseudoscience of the day, constructing images of blacks to suit their own sociopolitical purposes and to justify first slavery and later segregation as necessary and legitimate institutions. By the time of the Harlem Renaissance, the figure of “Jumpin’ Jim Crow,” derived from minstrelsy, led the pack of

popular antebellum “old Negro” stereotypes such as “Uncle Tom,” “Sambo,” “Zip Dandy,” and “Mammy.” Jim Crow, the happy-go-lucky “darky” whose primary purpose was to entertain whites, had the doubtful honor of being the namesake for a system of segregation that became entrenched during the 1890s and did not officially end until the 1960s. These “old Negro” figures were generally docile, ignorant, childlike, loyal to whites, and basically harmless, even if occasionally given to pretension, petty thievery, and lying. Such stereotypes helped white America maintain the socioeconomic status quo because they implied that African Americans needed white paternalism and, more important, were anything but equal to whites. Many whites ridiculed any attempt by blacks to assume a middle-class lifestyle or achieve an institutional education; falling back again on the terminology of racialist pseudoscience, they accused such African Americans of “aping whites” or straying dangerously outside their rightful sphere of domestic and manual labor. For instance, one stereotype—the “tragic mulatto”—was an interracial individual (often a woman) who suffered from having connections with the white world. As long as blacks stayed “in their place,” so the logic went, the color line could exist unchallenged because it could be represented as maintaining the natural order of the races.

Not surprisingly, the writers and intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance were intent on rejecting the “old Negro” image as they insisted on equal rights, both social and political. Furthermore, these stereotypes had to be rejected in order to combat the social tenet that blacks did not need (or could not retain) a formal liberal arts education. The “New Negro,” who demanded the right to a formal education, was intelligent, talented, and motivated to effect social and political change. New Negroes held no romanticized notions of antebellum days and were not willing to entertain whites at the expense of human dignity and respect.

Two other, equally destructive stereotypes that black writers, artists, and intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance faced were the “black beast” (the rapist) and the immoral, licentious black woman. These stereotypes, which implied that African Americans were incapable of restraining their sexual urges, existed in conjunction with the image of the passive, harmless “old Negro” (an incongruity that seemed to trouble no one). The notion of the “black beast” suggested that black men were a threat to white women and was used as a rationale for lynching and for rioting

directed against blacks (as in the “red summer” of 1919, but extending through the civil rights era). The image of the licentious black woman implied not only that black women were sexually unrestrained but also that they were sexually accessible; this stereotype presumably justified the sexual abuse that had taken place during slavery, and later it was used to justify disrespect for black women’s sexual authority over their own bodies. The image of African Americans as sexually amoral and potentially violent, no less than the image of the “old Negro,” played a crucial role in maintaining segregation, because it implied moral inequality. Ultimately, these stereotypes implied that social “intercourse” between blacks and whites would lead to violence and the downfall of white culture.

To combat these stereotypes, many leaders of the Harlem Renaissance, as well as much of the general black public, concentrated on presenting an image of middle-class social respectability and sexual morality. Although many blacks must have given little thought to actively refuting antiblack images, the stereotypes did have real consequences in the daily lives of other African Americans. In particular, the elite—W. E. B. Du Bois’s “talented tenth”—felt impelled to distance themselves, and the mass of African Americans, from the entire range of negative stereotypes implying that blacks were appropriately content with second-class citizenship.

However, this resistance to and insistence on countering negative racial stereotypes led to a significant division among writers, artists, and intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance. For some, the fear of promoting negative images of blacks led to a mandate against representing the folk culture or dialect of lower-class, “uneducated” African Americans. Langston Hughes, for instance, encountered resistance from black leaders when he insisted on incorporating dialect and jazz rhythms into his poetry. And Zora Neale Hurston was criticized for incorporating, in her fiction and her sociological studies, African Americans who had little to no formal education but were simply educated in the ways of black culture and the black community. Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) is now praised for capturing life in the all-black rural town of Eatonville, Florida, but at the time it was dismissed by some critics as lacking any redeeming sociological or artistic merit and criticized by others for promoting the negative stereotypes that the “talented tenth” were fighting against. The philosophical difference was great enough for Hurston and Wallace Thurman to refer to these intellectuals, half-playfully, as the

“niggerati.” Actually, folk characters such as those Hurston created differed vastly from the antiblack stereotypes created and promulgated by whites; the folk characters represented a full range of humanity rather than one-dimensional images of servile incompetence or savage sexuality.

The resistance to antiblack stereotypes during the Harlem Renaissance did not erase those images. However, the movement certainly offered a new image of educated, successful, complex African Americans that celebrated, without idealizing, black creativity, culture, and expression in the age of jazz and blues.

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See also Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; Jim Crow; Niggerati; Racial Iconography; Riots: 2—Red Summer of 1919; Talented Tenth; Their Eyes Were Watching God; Thurman, Wallace

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Racial Violence: Riots and Lynching

Racial violence in the form of riots and lynchings has occurred in the United States from at least the nineteenth century to the present, and such violence had a significant impact on the Harlem Renaissance. African American artists and race leaders played an active role in and were inspired by the antilynching crusade, for example, and themes of lynching and

violence recur in a number of literary and other works produced in this period. Before discussing specific examples of riots and lynching during the Harlem Renaissance era, it is important to place these acts of violence within a historical context.

Following the end of slavery, there was a marked increase in lynchings, especially throughout the American South. Ida B. Wells Barnett, an African American who was an early leader of the antilynching movement, described lynching as a form of terror used by racist whites to maintain a caste system in the South. Her analysis of lynching suggests that whites used this form of violence to maintain control of all political, social, and economic institutions, so that African Americans would remain, at most, at the periphery of these institutions and more probably at the bottom of the American hierarchy. During Reconstruction and well into the era of the “New Negro”—a concept associated with the Harlem Renaissance—whites saw African Americans as a political, economic, and social threat. White vigilante groups such as the Ku Klux Klan relied on physical violence to prevent African Americans from challenging the status quo and demanding the rights associated with being American. A variety of methods were used to lynch African Americans in the postslavery era, including hanging, shooting, burning, maiming, tarring and feathering, and various combinations of these.

Any African American, regardless of age or gender, could fall victim to a lynch mob. Between 1880 and 1930, perhaps 3,344 African Americans were victims of lynch mobs in the United States (Madison 2001). By the end of the nineteenth century, most lynchings were occurring in southern states, and more often than not the victim was an African American man. African American women and children could also be victims of a lynch mob: They might be attacked because of their ties to an African American man who was suspected of a crime, especially if they were thought to be the man’s accomplices, or women and children might be used as scapegoats when a mob could not find the man it wanted.

Wells Barnett (1969) identified three excuses given by whites for lynching African Americans. The first excuse was that blacks instigated race riots, and the only way to prevent riots was to lynch the accused instigators. This excuse was more common during slavery, when white plantation owners feared slave insurrections. The second excuse was that whites feared what might happen if blacks exercised their rights as free persons, especially their right to vote. Accordingly,

many lynch mobs wanted to stifle African Americans' political voice, and a number of blacks were murdered for trying to vote. The third excuse was that "the Negroes had to be killed to avenge their assaults upon women"—that is, white women. In investigating 728 cases of lynching during Reconstruction, Wells Barnett found that one-third of the African Americans lynched had been accused of rape. (The rest had been accused of inciting violence, threatening whites, or being impudent in the presence of whites.) She and others note that this third excuse suggests mass hysteria on the part of some white Americans regarding black male sexuality—a reaction that seems directly related to the racist stereotype of the "black brute." Racism as a motive for lynching becomes even more apparent when one examines the disparity between the punishment of black men accused of raping white women and the lack of punishment of white men who raped black women.

In the years immediately leading up to the Harlem Renaissance, racial hatred was heightened as blacks migrated from the rural South to southern cities and to the urban North. Race riots as well as lynchings occurred around the United States following the "great migration" period, and whites justified both riots and lynchings by using the excuses identified earlier by Wells Barnett and others. A revival of the Ku Klux Klan in 1915 also contributed to the increased racial violence directed against African Americans, and for the first time the ideology and violent practices of the Klan shaped race relations not only in the South but in the North as well.

As African Americans returned from World War I, migrated to urban industrialized areas, and became actively involved in the racial uplift movement of the early twentieth century, they were seen as a threat to the economic security of whites. Following the war, many African Americans who had served in it assumed that they would therefore receive better treatment and even equal access to the freedoms associated with being an American. Instead of achieving acceptance and equality, however, African Americans found themselves the target of racial hatred and, furthermore, found that they had no legal recourse against racial violence—no way to obtain protection or to protect themselves.

During the "red summer" of 1919, racial violence increased, and African Americans refused to remain acquiescent. Hundreds of African Americans lost their lives as a result of the twenty-five race riots that occurred that summer. These riots resulted partly

from racism rooted in slavery, but also—as mentioned above—from a perception on the part of many white Americans that African Americans were an economic threat. It should be noted that during this period African Americans were organizing and joining labor unions and demanding their rights as workers.

The riots and lynchings of the "red summer" took place across the United States in places such as Charleston, South Carolina; Washington, D.C.; Longview, Texas; Ellisville, Mississippi; Chicago, Illinois; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Omaha, Nebraska; and Helena, Arkansas. To justify the hate crimes committed against African Americans by white Americans, various reasons were offered, such as rape and attempts to organize black labor; in one instance, a race riot occurred because a black boy had drifted into the white section of Lake Michigan. (The boy was hit in the head by rocks thrown by a white man, and the riot broke out when both the black and the white communities learned what had happened.)

Riots and lynchings continued beyond the summer of 1919—in fact, well into the 1930s, covering the period of the Harlem Renaissance. The two best-known examples are a riot that occurred in the Greenwood district of Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1921, and the lynching of two black men—Abe Smith and Tom Shipp—in Marion, Indiana, in 1930.

In Tulsa, on 1 June 1921, a mob of whites murdered a large number of blacks and destroyed what had become known as "Negro Wall Street of America" (Madigan 2001). The mob used a traditional excuse—protecting the virtue of a white woman—to justify the violence. A few days earlier, a teenage black boy had been accused of assaulting a white girl. When rumors of the supposed assault reached the white community in Greenwood, many whites reacted with rage, hysteria, and racism, and an angry mob devastated the black community of Greenwood. Homes and businesses were destroyed; African American families were displaced; and many African American men, women, and children suffered psychological trauma. Many witnesses concluded that the American system of law and law enforcement was unwilling to protect the rights of African Americans.

In Marion, Indiana, on 7 August 1930, a white lynch mob dragged three black male teenagers from the Grant County Jail, intending to kill all three of them. The three young men—Tom Shipp, age nineteen; Abe Smith, age eighteen; and James Cameron, age sixteen—had been accused of raping an eighteen-year-old white woman named Mary Ball and of murdering

Claude Deeter, a twenty-four-year-old white man who was said to have been trying to protect her. Ball's father and a group of angry white men and women approached the sheriff; asked for the keys to the young black men's cells; then overpowered the sheriff, took the three young men out in front of the courthouse, and lynched Shipp and Smith. Cameron's life was spared, however, when Ball's father revealed to the crowd that the young men were innocent (Madison 2001).

The lynching of Shipp and Smith provides a case study in mob hysteria, and in the complicity of the media and the law enforcement system in the oppression and violent victimization of African Americans. A photograph was taken of Shipp and Smith hanging from a tree in front of the courthouse as white men, women, and children pointed and smiled at the bodies and at each other; this became one of the most famous documents in the history of mob violence directed against African Americans.

Although the excuses offered for rioting and lynching varied, all this violence was alike in at least one way: The white perpetrators went unpunished or virtually unpunished. African American leaders such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Walter White, and James Weldon Johnson brought lynching to public attention throughout the early part of the twentieth century. In 1922, for example, James Weldon Johnson, at the suggestion of Congressman L. C. Dyer of St. Louis, went to Washington, D.C., to lobby for the passage of the Dyer Antilynching Bill. The bill passed the House but failed in the Senate; however, the introduction of this bill in Congress increased awareness in American society about racial violence directed against African Americans (Shapiro 1988). As a result of this increased awareness, more Americans, white and black, joined in efforts against riots and lynching. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, racial violence had yet to be eradicated, but the United States as a society was beginning to confront the violence of the past.

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See also Antilynching Crusade; Barnett, Ida B. Wells; Lynching; Racism; Riots: 1–4

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Racism

It is impossible to overstate the significance of racism in the history of the Harlem Renaissance. Racism shaped the renaissance from its moment of conception to its inevitable decline in the wake of the Great Depression. Indeed, the racist fears and fantasies of whites were the most significant force in the broader American context in which the renaissance was critiqued, consumed, and ultimately parodied and poorly copied.

By the middle of the 1910s, most of the gains made during the Reconstruction had been completely undone or otherwise diluted to the point of insignificance. As early as the 1870s, statewide initiatives in the Deep South had engendered a new series of social and political privileges for whites only, including vagrancy laws, intended to control the movement of the black population; and so-called grandfather clauses, aimed at restricting voting rights in statewide elections. A stunning series of decisions by the Supreme Court, concluding with *Plessy v. Ferguson*, had pronounced segregation laws to be legal under the United States Constitution. Irrational and unfounded fears of wandering “Negro rapists” encouraged the widespread lynching of black men in gruesome public spectacles known as “lynching bees.”

It was in this context that African Americans, often together with white liberal progressives, began to lobby for an end to Jim Crow and, more immediately, for aggressive antilynching legislation. The two most enduring activist organizations to emerge were the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Urban League, both of which would play pivotal roles in funding, publicizing, and otherwise orchestrating the artistic and literary movement of the 1920s.

The NAACP and the Urban League drew strength and membership not just from that very small group of white liberals committed to racial reform, but also from the ascending masses of black Americans who, before, during, and after World War I, escaped the racism of “the nadir” in the South by following the railroad tracks northward—into major cities and away from those dark, rural places where Jim Crow seemed to be most deeply entrenched. This “great migration” would have no minor role in the renaissance, as the movement of black people into the cities of the North and South resulted in segregated neighborhoods almost exclusively populated by African Americans and, in some cases, Afro-Caribbean immigrants. Those new migrants competed with white people in cities for jobs and homes, with modest success. But the arrival of black people usually caused whites, fearing a range of social ills, to flee those same neighborhoods, plunging them into instability and decline, a racist phenomenon now known as “white flight.”

Still, for the New Negro Renaissance, there was no more significant outcome of this complicated process than the transformation of Harlem from white enclave to black neighborhood over the 1910s and 1920s. Though it was racism that led the white residents of Harlem to flee, and racism that encouraged the white owners of property in Harlem to charge higher rents to black patrons, out of this abuse and mistreatment grew an urban community of tremendous cultural significance. The nearly spontaneous emergence of a black city-within-a-city in the urban North inspired Rudolph Fisher’s literary creation, King Solomon Gillis, to flee North Carolina just two steps ahead of a lynching, and, once in Harlem, to set down his bags and marvel at it all—“Slowly, spreadingly, he grinned at what he saw: Negroes at every turn; up and down Lenox Avenue, up and down One Hundred and Thirty Fifth Street.” Writers and activists imagined that from this cultural capital of black America, the supposedly natural aesthetic gifts of black folks could be harnessed to a social and political agenda of

world-shaking significance. “Harlem,” Alain Locke wrote in 1925, “has the same role to play for the New Negro as Dublin has had for the New Ireland.”

The Harlem Renaissance also grew out of the racist violence of the immediate postwar period, when, after the precious few legal successes of the 1910s, the NAACP and the Urban League—together with most black Americans—were stunned into a new direction. Cities like Chicago, home to new migrant communities from the South and returning black soldiers, exploded into rioting, leaving some African American communities in ruins or burning, leaving many people dead, scarring the sense of progress that had motivated the NAACP and the Urban League, and impelling a search for new avenues of racial advancement.

After this “red summer” of 1919, the NAACP and the Urban League were also driven to orchestrate the renaissance as a measured response to the largest mass movement of African peoples in the new world, organized under the rubric of Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Under Garvey, the UNIA emphasized racial solidarity, dogged militancy in the face of racism, and self-help. Garvey was an Afro-Jamaican; as an “outsider” in Harlem, he was generally despised by the African American leadership class for his flamboyance, for his self-education, for his success in mobilizing millions of people in the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa, and even for his darker skin and West Indian origin. But Garvey’s response to the “red summer” was so overwhelmingly powerful for so many that the NAACP and the Urban League were pushed to develop alternative strategies for public consumption even as some of the leaders of those two organizations worked behind the scenes to have Garvey indicted for mail fraud, imprisoned, and later expelled from the United States. The emphasis on arts and letters, which hit full stride at about the time Garvey was imprisoned, was one of these countermeasures.

In these confusing and multiple contexts, the leadership class of the renaissance elected to demonstrate the humanity of people of African descent through the careful production of high art, thought to be the bedrock of what was then called “civilization”—painting, poetry, literature, and sculpture. At the time, most Europeans and European Americans shared a belief that high art could be produced only by cultured men and women, who they generally assumed could be only white. Black Americans were thought to be capable only of imitation, not original, individually produced, sophisticated works. But the highest standards of

culture were also thought to be universal and unchanging, making it possible, some in the NAACP and the Urban League thought, for the art and letters of black people to be more honestly and objectively judged on their merits: that is, on the skill and ability of the creative artist. As W. E. B. Du Bois put it, “until the art of the black folk compels recognition they will not be rated as human.” James Weldon Johnson, in the introduction to his unprecedented collection *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922), hoped that this book would demonstrate “intellectual parity by the Negro through his production of literature and art.”

For their part, white liberals, radicals, and publishers were also interested in black art, or at least were interested in literature and drama that focused on black people. H. L. Mencken, Vachel Lindsay, Carl Van Vechten, Sherwood Anderson, Waldo Frank, and Max Eastman, among others, supported the early efforts of younger black writers, if only because these artists represented the wellspring of new and different art. By the late spring of 1925, *Opportunity*—the magazine of the Urban League, edited by Charles S. Johnson—was offering literary prizes at an awards ceremony packed with white and black intellectuals. The Harmon Foundation and other white philanthropic institutions were supporting “New Negro” efforts in literature, poetry, painting, sculpture, and drama. A few wealthy white patrons supported a few individual black artists, as was the case for Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and others. But this support and interest often came with strings attached; Sherwood Anderson’s desire to “get inside the niggers and write about them,” for instance, reflects a decidedly unhealthy fascination with black subjects.

More broadly, white audiences flocked to Broadway shows featuring black characters, or sometimes white actors in blackface, and ventured up to Harlem on urban safaris to seek out jazz clubs, rent parties, and gin joints. The 1920s may have been the first “modern” decade, but modernity brought with it different popular versions of Freudianism, with its emphasis on the therapeutic qualities of “primitive” cultures. To watch Josephine Baker dance, then, was to “enjoy” black culture as a representative of the unchanged past, as if black people were “nature” and white people were “modernity.” Jazz, Langston Hughes summed up in his essay “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” represented “the eternal tom-tom beating in the Negro soul—the tom-tom of revolt against weariness in a white world.” All too many white people agreed, seeing in African Americans a kind of physicality and release that should be envied. Still, there were limits to this

fascination; many of the locations frequented by white visitors to Harlem were carefully segregated, to put a limit on the sort of social “mixing” that might take place.

The end result was that by the late 1920s Harlem increasingly became an occasional amusement park for white consumers, who were treated to a Jim Crow version of the place. Returning to an old haunt in Harlem after a few years away, Rudolph Fisher found himself “wondering if this was the right place—if, indeed, this was Harlem at all. . . . Except for the waiters and members of the orchestra, I was the only Negro in the place.” “White people,” Langston Hughes recalled,

began to come to Harlem in droves. For several years they packed the expensive Cotton Club on Lenox Avenue. But I was never there, because the Cotton Club was a Jim Crow club for whites. . . . Harlem Negroes did not like the Cotton Club and never appreciated its Jim Crow policy in the very heart of their dark community. Nor did ordinary Negroes like the growing influx of whites toward Harlem after sundown, flooding the little cabarets and bars where formerly only colored people laughed and sang, and where now the strangers were given the best ringside tables to sit and stare at the Negro customers—like amusing animals in a zoo.

The long-term effects of this considerable white appetite for the most sensational representations of African American culture were detrimental to the primary mission of the renaissance that began, in the words of David Levering Lewis (1979), as a “cultural nationalism of the parlor.” Mainstream publishers eagerly searched for the next Claude McKay, hoping to find an “authentic” black voice to give life to those white fantasies of black culture that emphasized criminality, sexual adventure, and playfulness. Few searched for the next Jessie Redmon Fauset, whose novels featured prim, intellectually sophisticated, literate upper-class African Americans. For those who hoped to break free of race altogether, like Jean Toomer, there was no audience at all, and certainly no interest from publishers. When Toomer proposed that his next novel after *Cane* would tackle more psychological subjects, and that he wished to no longer be identified as a “Negro” writer, his requests seem to have been cognitively unmanageable.

If the coercive stereotyping of the white consuming public warped the idealistic intentions of the Harlem Renaissance, it is also true that the original hope of literary production—that racism could be beaten back through the careful production of high art—was never

realized. The same decade that produced Langston Hughes, Wallace Thurman, Zora Neale Hurston, and others was also the decade in which Jim Crow housing policies were implemented nationwide, in which pseudoscientific racism and eugenics surfaced in “mainstream” science, in which the Commonwealth of Virginia mandated its own “racial integrity” legislation that forbade marriage between whites and blacks, and in which sweeping federal legislation transformed immigration policy to allow the arrival of only the “best” white peoples from northern Europe.

MATTHEW PRATT GUTERL

See also Antilynching Crusade; Civil Rights and Law; Fisher, Rudolph; Garvey, Marcus; Great Migration; Great Migration and the Harlem Renaissance; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; National Urban League; Racial Stereotypes; Riots: 2—Red Summer of 1919; Universal Negro Improvement Association; *specific individuals*

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Rainey, Gertrude “Ma”

Gertrude “Ma” Rainey, known as the “mother of the blues,” made her theater debut in 1900 in a talent show called the “Bunch of Blackberries.” She took up minstrelsy in 1904 after marrying William “Pa” Rainey and quickly became the most popular “down-home” blues singer in both southern and northern cities.

After her introduction with the “Bunch of Blackberries,” Rainey became famous for her tent shows, set up in small towns in the South. Tent shows traveled from city to city, usually by train; black shows with more than twenty-five performers sometimes bought their own railroad cars because they could not ride in the same cars as whites. Rainey performed with a number of traveling companies, most notably the Rabbit Foot Minstrels, whose tent was usually 80 by 11 feet with a stage made of boards across a folding frame. In these shows Rainey performed songs such as “Florida Blues” and “Walking the Dog” without a

megaphone and could still be heard clearly outside her tent. According to Sterling Brown (1974), Rainey “wouldn’t have to sing any words; she would moan and the audience would moan with her.”

Rainey’s minstrel performances, her tent shows, and later her recordings were a form of creative expression that affirmed black culture and also offered a way for black people, particularly black working-class women, to form a community and to contest bourgeois ideals of sexuality, gender, womanhood, domesticity, marriage, and dependence. For instance, in Rainey’s performance of “Walking Blues,” one can discern themes of emancipation, independence, and strength, for the woman in the song decides consciously—and very daringly for the time—to pursue the object of her desire by her manner of walking. Rainey’s “Lost Wandering Blues” highlights the significance of travel and the individual’s right to travel; whereas traveling is physical in “Walking Blues,” here it is mainly emotional. Both compositions highlight issues of and experiences with freedom and personal and collective liberation and emancipation; and both, like many of Rainey’s other compositions, establish a connection with the reality of black life in America. Rainey’s blues, and the emergent blues in general, represented a new era in which black people’s emotional needs and desires could be expressed and emphasized, after having been publicly suppressed during enslavement.

Roxane Orgill (2001) writes that Rainey was able to relate to “ordinary people,” both as a personal gesture and as a style of performance, making her and her band instantly attractive to audiences. This quality of Rainey’s blues—the relationship between performer and audience—also tended to characterize blues as a whole, and it contributed to the growing influence of blues in popular culture, and thus to the rise of the black music and entertainment industry. However, record producers did not immediately recognize and appreciate Rainey’s compositions and performances; although Rainey had been singing blues since 1902, it was not Rainey but Mamie Smith who, in 1920, made the first vocal blues recording by an African American. Possibly this was because Rainey was based in Chicago rather than in New York, where the major producers were; in any case, she was approached and signed by Paramount Records of Chicago in 1923. Rainey was then thirty-seven.

Rainey exemplified the blues singer as a vocalist—usually a woman—accompanied by instrumental ensembles of various sizes. Her popularity increased once she began to make recordings. Her first recording was “Bad Luck Blues,” but her first recording to be



Ma Rainey. (AP/Wide World Photos.)

released was "Moonshine Blues." Other recordings included "Bo-Weevil Blues," "Weepin' Woman Blues," "Prove It on Me Blues," and "Cell Bound Blues." Most of her recordings were about love, losing a man, and being mistreated by men and expressed strong emotions such as rage. Her themes include violence, and even murder. In "Prove It on Me Blues," Rainey hints at her own sexual preferences: "They said I do it, ain't nobody caught me./Sure got to prove it on me./Went out last night with a crowd of my friends./They must've been women, 'cause I don't like no men."

In 1928, Paramount Records ended its relationship with Rainey, explaining that her material was no longer fashionable. There was also a general decline in black show business at the time, and in 1929, the stock market crashed. Rainey continued performing in southern minstrel shows until she retired in 1935. She bought a home in Columbus, Georgia, and joined a church where her brother was a deacon. She died of heart disease in 1939, at age fifty-three, and was buried quietly in Columbus. Her death certificate gives her occupation simply as "housekeeping."

Rainey was among the greatest minstrel artists and blues singer and is often discussed along with other legendary figures such as Bessie Smith, Mamie Smith, Clara Smith, and Ida Cox. Another Smith—the historian C. E. Smith (1955, 1963)—has said of Rainey that she was "the voice of the South, singing of the South, to the South."

Biography

Gertrude "Ma" Rainey (Gertrude Pridgett) was born 26 April 1886 in Columbus, Georgia. Her theater debut was in 1900; she began singing blues in 1902. She entered the minstrel show business and married William "Pa" Rainey in 1904. She performed with the Smarter Set, the Florida Cotton Blossoms, Shufflin' Sam from Alabama, and the Rabbit Foot Minstrels and worked with managers such as C. W. Parks, Al Gaines, and Silas Green. Rainey toured with Tolliver's Circus and Musical Extravaganza from 1914 to 1916. In 1917, she toured and performed with her Georgia Smart Set in Badin, North Carolina. She moved from minstrelsy to being a national recording artist after winning a contract with Paramount in 1923. Rainey appeared in an advertisement in the *Chicago Defender* on 2 February 1924, after being signed by Paramount Records. She recorded eighteen songs for Paramount in 1924, including "Jelly Bean Blues" and "Countin' the Blues." In April 1924, she performed with her Wild Cats Jazz Band at Chicago's Grand Theater. Rainey began touring in a seven-person limousine and combined tent shows with performances on the Theater Owners' Booking Association (TOBA) circuit in 1926. She was praised in *The Paramount Book of Blues* as the "true mother of the blues" in 1927. In 1928, she recorded twenty titles for Paramount and once again worked with Thomas Dorsey. After 1928, Paramount ended their working relationship. Rainey died 22 December 1939. *Jazz Information* published the first known biography of Ma Rainey on 6 September 1940.

VALERIE F. KINLOCH

See also Blues; Blues: Women Performers; Cox, Ida Prather; Singers; Smith, Bessie; Smith, Clara; Smith, Mamie

Selected Compositions and Recordings

- "Bad Luck Blues." (Lovie Austin.)
- "Big Boy Blues." (Ma Rainey.)
- "Blues, Oh Blues." (Ma Rainey.)

Rainey, Gertrude "Ma"

- "Bo-Weevil Blues." (Ma Rainey.)
"Broken-Hearted Blues." (Ma Rainey.)
"Cell Bound Blues." (Ma Rainey.)
"Daddy Good-Bye Blues." (Ma Rainey.)
"Deep Moaning Blues." (Ma Rainey.)
"Don't Fish in My Sea." (Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey.)
"Farewell Daddy Blues." (Ma Rainey.)
"Jelly Bean Blues." (Lena Arrant.)
"Lost Wandering Blues." (Ma Rainey.)
"Moonshine Blues." (Ma Rainey.)
"Prove It on Me Blues." (Ma Rainey.)
"Runaway Blues." (Ma Rainey.)
"Slave to the Blues." (Thomas Dorsey.)
"Soon This Morning." (Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith.)
"Southern Blues." (Ma Rainey.)
"Those Dogs of Mine." (Ma Rainey.)
"Walking Blues." (Ma Rainey and Lovie Austin.)
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Randolph, A. Philip

Asa (A.) Philip Randolph first made his mark as one of the "New Negro" radical leaders, became the best-known black labor leader in the United States as head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and provided personal leadership and much of the strategy for the modern civil rights movement. Randolph's unique contribution to the rise of African Americans to full citizenship was his insistence that economic rights were necessary before civil rights could be fully effective.

Randolph was born in Florida, the son of a preacher and tailor. Education was an early and deep imperative instilled by his parents. He completed high school at Cookman Institute in Jacksonville but found he could get only manual jobs in the South. After several summers in New York, he moved there permanently in 1911, at age twenty-two. In Harlem, too, Randolph could get only menial work as an elevator operator, porter, and waiter. He was convinced very early on that black workers needed to join together to improve wages and working conditions.

Even before he moved to New York, while working as a waiter on the Fall River railroad line, Randolph had been fired for talking up the need for a union. In New York he made unsuccessful efforts to establish unions until 1925. A dream for Randolph in these early years in New York City was to become an actor. He took lessons and performed, and his oratorical style in later years would be much influenced by his Shakespearean apprenticeship. At the same time, Randolph was attracted by the vision and rhetoric of a radical union federation, the Industrial Workers of the World. He was also drawn to socialist leaders. By the time of his marriage to Lucille Greene in 1914, he was a committed socialist himself. A small intellectual black socialist group that owed much to the ideas of Hubert Harrison coalesced around Randolph in Harlem.

Randolph and his fast friend Chandler Owen became activists, soapbox orators, and, in November 1917, founders of *The Messenger*. In their words, it was "the only magazine of scientific radicalism in the world published by Negroes." The monthly magazine proved to be a lively forum espousing an alliance

between black and white labor, the cause of unionism as central to the drive for social justice, socialism as the only way to secure it and eliminate racial intolerance, and the need for a new leadership for the black community.

Like all socialist ventures, *The Messenger* was hard hit by repercussions from the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. Just as the Socialist Party itself split, so did the editorial board of *The Messenger*. Several former close friends joined the new communist movement; others became black nationalists and separatists, among them Hubert Harrison and W. A. Domingo; but Randolph and Owen both remained socialists. At about this time *The Messenger* waged a vehement campaign against Marcus Garvey, with the slogan "Garvey must go!" Also at this time, Randolph developed a virulent, life-long anticommunism, as he blamed the communists for splitting black socialists.

With a declining readership, *The Messenger* needed to change in order to survive. It became second only to *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* in publishing the works of new young writers of the early Harlem Renaissance and in covering the cultural scene. *The Messenger*—which was the only one of the three magazines actually based in Harlem—published Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, E. Franklin Frazier, Roy Wilkins, Jessie Redmon Fauset, Paul Robeson, Claude McKay, and Wallace Thurman.

By 1925, Randolph was the editor of a magazine perennially in the red, spending huge amounts of his time trying to raise money as the focus of the publication shifted. With a failing magazine and a string of unsuccessful organizational efforts behind him, Randolph at age thirty-six appeared to be going nowhere fast. That year, however, Randolph was approached by Pullman car porters to help establish a union. No black union had up to that time been established on a permanent basis. Though he himself was an integrationist, Randolph took up the task of organizing a segregated workforce, in the belief that blacks needed to have their own leadership, even as they participated in the broader labor movement. It was a principle from which he never waived. Randolph became general organizer and president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP). Though he had never been a sleeping car porter, there were several good reasons for his role with the new organization. First, Randolph was well known in the black community. Second, he was a charismatic speaker. Third, after years of trying to organize black workers, he knew all about the problems involved. Fourth, he did not work

for the Pullman Palace Car Company, which had a near-monopoly in the industry as an employer, and therefore he could not be fired or otherwise intimidated. Even so, the task was daunting. The power of the company was immense. Moreover, porters were an elite group among black workers, so if any job action by the porters led to mass firings, there would be hordes of willing replacements only too eager to take their positions. The leadership of the black community, and the mass of the community itself, was very hostile to the whole idea of unions and believed that the Pullman Company was a friend to African Americans.

The success of the BSCP in its first few years was extremely heartening. By 1928, well over half the porters were members, meeting in secret despite strong efforts by the company to root out the union. An early attempt to gain a charter from the American Federation of Labor (AFL) failed, but its president, William Green, was sympathetic to the union. Randolph realized that without the full backing of the AFL, the BSCP's efforts were likely to fail.

An aborted strike in 1928 led to widespread disillusion with Randolph's leadership and to a precipitous decline in members. Only by dogged persistence and a remarkable group of regional leaders was the BSCP able to survive. As a wave of labor radicalism resulting from the Depression developed in 1933 and 1934, the BSCP was able to ride it and gain strength. New Deal legislation in those years also allowed the BSCP some legitimacy in its organizing efforts. By 1935, the BSCP had gained its international charter from the AFL, had achieved recognition as the bargaining agent for workers in its industry, and was in negotiations with the Pullman Company that led in 1937 to the first contract between the company and the union. It was a huge victory and one that propelled Randolph from a national figure of dogged determination and some renown into the leading black union leader, an icon to black workers nationwide. By then, the African American community had gone a long way toward embracing unions as a potentially liberating force for the community.

Randolph was never "just" a labor union leader. His vision was far broader. Inside the AFL, in 1935, Randolph forced the organization to investigate the racist exclusiveness of member unions and eloquently demanded serious consideration of the resulting report when the AFL's leadership tried to bury it. He fought for racial equality within the AFL until his retirement in 1968. As a race leader, Randolph cofounded the National Negro Congress and became

its president from 1936 to 1940. He resigned in 1940, convinced that the organization had been subverted by communist influence.

Late in 1940 and into 1941, Randolph pressured the Roosevelt administration to insist on equal employment and wages in industries holding federal contracts for burgeoning production in preparation for World War II. His idea of a March on Washington movement took root in the black community and grew to a point where the government became truly apprehensive. When pressure and personal flattery failed to work on Randolph, President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802, setting up a Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC). Although it was temporary and far from everything demanded, it marked for the first time a public admission from the federal government that blacks suffered discrimination in employment and that it was the government's responsibility to provide a remedy. It was the first time that the nation had gone on record against racial discrimination in employment. The campaign made Randolph's name a household word. He became one of the most respected and best-known black leaders in America.

Randolph's tactics, both for the BSCP and for the March on Washington movement, were firmly based on his belief in the efficacy of nonviolent civil disobedience. At the time, he was called an "American Gandhi"; later, his tactics would be carried on into the modern civil rights movement. Indeed, Randolph's civil rights activities were not divorced from his economic campaigns.

The 1940s and 1950s would be the apex of Randolph's influence. After the March on Washington movement, he founded the National Council for a Permanent FEPC, determined that the commission should not be jettisoned as soon as the war emergency was over. However, he refused a seat on the FEPC and declined to run for Congress. Although the campaign for a permanent FEPC failed, Randolph's next crusade, the Committee Against Jim Crow in Military Service and Training, produced a breakthrough. In 1948, badly needing the black vote, President Harry Truman bowed to Randolph's national nonviolent civil disobedience campaign to issue Executive Order 9981. The military went from the most segregated institution in American society to the most spectacular success story of integration.

In the AFL, Randolph, often alone, took the floor at annual conventions and privately to urge an end to racial barriers to union membership. In 1955, with the merger of the AFL and the Congress of Industrial

Organizations (CIO), Randolph was elected a vice president of the new organization, despite the small size of his own union. He continued to urge full equality for black workers. While officially the AFL-CIO committed itself to full integration, its leadership did very little to push the issue. Frustrated, in 1959, Randolph urged the expulsion of any union that continued to insist on the color bar. In the convention that year, Randolph and George Meany, president of the AFL-CIO, clashed angrily. Meany acknowledged Randolph's role when he shouted, "Who the hell appointed you the guardian of all the Negroes in America?" Capitalizing on his new public title, Randolph organized the Negro American Labor Council (NALC) in November 1959 to plan a moral revolution, to eliminate discrimination, and "to secure the status of first class economic citizenship in the labor movement." Randolph remained its president from 1960 to 1966. In the early 1960s, the NALC was an effective part of the civil rights movement across a very broad area, concerned to make African Americans "first-class citizens" in every aspect of their lives.

Randolph was also deeply involved in the political struggle for civil rights. He helped promote Martin Luther King Jr. as a national figure through the Prayer Pilgrimage of 1957 and subsequently organized two Youth Marches for Integrated Schools in Washington, D.C., in 1958 and 1959. His protégé, Bayard Rustin, managed the details. It was Randolph—frustrated by a lack of progress—who had the idea for what became the culmination of the black campaign for civil rights, the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963. This march, though far less militant than the original March on Washington movement of 1941, nevertheless brought together everyone, black or white, working in civil rights.

The following year, with his energy beginning to fail, and still mourning the death of his wife, Randolph established the A. Philip Randolph Institute to carry on his ideas and methods. Perhaps its grandest project was its Freedom Budget for All Americans, a kind of domestic Marshall Plan to end poverty through full employment. That same year, President Lyndon Johnson awarded Randolph the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

In his later years, as the civil rights movement fractured, Randolph—still in failing health and still maintaining the outlook of a lifetime—came under biting criticism, particularly in his support for the New York City teachers' unions in their struggle against the black community of New York in 1968, his support



Group portrait of members of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters taken at a national board meeting, c. 1925–1950. Left to right: C. L. Dellums, W. R. Daley, Bennie Smith, unidentified man, A. Philip Randolph, Thomas T. Patterson, Ashley L. Totten, Mr. Bradley. (Library of Congress.)

for the Democratic Party leadership, and what was considered favoring the interests of labor unions over those of the black community. Randolph retired in 1968. He died in 1979, at age ninety, in New York City.

More recently, A. Philip Randolph has been recognized as a direct link between the Harlem Renaissance and the civil rights movement. His talents never lay in organizational matters, in the day-to-day governance or management of anything. He was a voice articulating the hopes and aspirations of his community, a great speaker, agitator, and persuader. He inspired loyalty. In 1944, Edwin Embree (1968) concluded of Randolph: "Whatever the outcome of his present crusading, he is stating the goal of absolute justice and equality more drastically than any other colored leader. He has inspired the multitude with hopeful courage."

Biography

Asa Philip Randolph was born 15 April 1889 in Crescent City, Florida. He received a high school education at Cookman Institute in Jacksonville, Florida, and moved to Harlem in 1911. Randolph married Lucille Green in 1914. He worked as an elevator operator, porter, and railroad waiter and continued his education at City College and the Rand School of Social Sciences. From 1917 to 1928, he was coeditor of *The Messenger*. Randolph was the socialist candidate for New York

State comptroller in 1921. In 1925, he was a general organizer and president of the newly founded Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, which in 1935 received an international charter from the American Federation of Labor. Randolph was named a member of the New York City Commission on Race following the Harlem race riot of 1935. He was president of the National Negro Congress from 1936 to 1940. In 1937, he negotiated the first contract with the Pullman Palace Car Company. He organized the March on Washington movement in 1941; this movement led to Executive Order 8802 and the Fair Employment Practices Commission. He was appointed to the New York Housing Authority in 1942. Randolph was a founder of Nonviolent Civil Disobedience Against Military Segregation in 1947. He was elected a vice president and executive council member of the AFL-CIO at its merger in 1955, the first black official at the highest level of the American labor movement. He was one of the leaders of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963 and a founder and the first president (1960–1961) of the Negro American Labor Council. Randolph retired from union activities in 1968. He died 16 May 1979 in New York City.

STEPHEN BURWOOD

See also Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; Domingo, Wilfred Adolphus; Garvey, Marcus; Harrison, Hubert; Messenger, The; Owen, Chandler; *other specific individuals*

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Razaf, Andy

Andy Razaf is considered the first full-time black lyricist of American popular song and black musical theater. During the 1920s and 1930s, he wrote lyrics to some of the era's most popular and memorable songs, including "Honeysuckle Rose" (1929), "Ain't Misbehavin'" (1929), and "(What Did I Do to Be So) Black and Blue?" (1929). This last song has come to be regarded as one of the first racial protest songs in American popular music. Its central role in Ralph Ellison's novel *Invisible Man* (1952), as a motif of the tragicomic irony of black experience, attests to the song's historical resonance and Razaf's pioneering significance as a politically conscious popular songwriter.

Razaf (whose original name was Andrea Menentania Razafinkeriefu) was born in Washington, D.C., to a nephew of Queen Ranavalona of Madagascar and a daughter of the famous black politician and American consul to Madagascar, John Louis Waller. Growing up, he absorbed his grandfather's anticolonialist attitudes and oratorical abilities, his singer aunt's love of music, and his mother's affinity for poetry. Though he excelled in school, he dropped out of high school while living in New York City and pursued songwriting and poetry. During the formative years of his career, the period after World War I, Tin Pan Alley was demanding patriotic themes and closing off opportunities to many black songwriters; but Razaf contributed protest verse to radical African American magazines like *The Messenger*, *Emancipator*, *The New Negro*, and *Crusader*. In 1921, with the successes of Mamie Smith's "Crazy Blues" and the jazz musical *Shuffle Along*, Razaf saw an opportunity for his songs, with their black themes, to gain a wider audience. He soon met and collaborated with the great stride pianist James P. Johnson and wrote several blues tunes while also contributing intermittently to Tin Pan Alley.

As a collaborator, Razaf came into his own, especially with the talented pianist Thomas "Fats" Waller. With music by Waller and Johnson, Razaf and Henry Creamer wrote the lyrics to the popular Broadway show *Keep Shufflin'* in 1928. In the same year, Razaf

also had successes with "Honeysuckle Rose," in tandem with Waller, and the classic double entendre sung by Ethel Waters, "My Handy Man." He continued to write for Tin Pan Alley and the blues market while also creating lyrics to two more major musicals, *Hot Chocolates* (1929) and *Blackbirds* (1930). *Hot Chocolates* featured Waller and Razaf's hit "Ain't Misbehavin'," which has gone on to become one of the most celebrated standards in jazz history; and "Black and Blue," originally performed by Edith Wilson and made popular by Louis Armstrong. On *Blackbirds*, Razaf teamed with the great pianist-composer Eubie Blake to produce the hit "Memories of You."

For much of the 1930s, Razaf continued to write alone and collaborate with Waller, Blake, Paul Denniker, and others, enjoying success in theater and radio. Later, even though he had written the lyrics to the big band classics "Stompin' at the Savoy" (1936) and "In the Mood" (1939), Razaf was all but forgotten. But in 1978, five years after his death, his name was reinvoked in a Broadway musical celebrating Fats Waller, *Ain't Misbehavin'*.

Biography

Andrea Menentania Razafinkeriefu was born on 16 December 1895 in Washington, D.C. He sold a song to Shubert's *Passing Show* in 1917 and contributed poems and essays to *The New Negro*, *The Messenger*, *Emancipator*, and *Crusader* in 1918. He played baseball for the Cleveland Semi-Pro City League in 1920. He wrote and sold songs from 1921 to 1957 in New York and wrote for the *Herald-Dispatch*, Los Angeles, from 1953 to 1955. He was honored by the U.S. Treasury Department for songs "rendered in behalf" of the War Finances Program in 1944. Razaf was admitted to the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1972. He died in North Hollywood, California, on 3 February 1973.

DAVE JUNKER

See also Armstrong, Louis; Blackbirds; Blake, Eubie; Hot Chocolates; Johnson, James P.; Musical Theater; Waller, Thomas "Fats"; Waters, Ethel; Wilson, Edith

Selected Songs

"Anybody Here Want to See My Cabbage." 1925.
"My Special Friend Is Back in Town." 1926.
"Louisiana." 1928.

- "Dusky Stevedore." 1928.
 "Willow Tree." 1928.
 "Sweet Savannah Sue." 1929.
 "Ain't Misbehavin'." 1929.
 "(What Did I Do to Be So) Black and Blue." 1929.
 "Honeysuckle Rose." 1929.
 "My Fate Is in Your Hands." 1929.
 "Zonky." 1929.
 "Sposin'." 1929.
 "I've Got a Feelin' I'm Falling." 1929.
 "A Porter's Love Song to a Chambermaid." 1930.
 "Memories of You." 1930.
 "Stealin' Apples." 1932.
 "Ain'tcha Glad?" 1933.
 "Christopher Columbus (A Rhythm Cocktail)." 1936.
 "Stompin' at the Savoy." 1936.
 "The Joint Is Jumpin'." 1938.
 "In the Mood." 1939.
 "We Are Americans Too." 1941.
 "I'm Gonna Move to the Outskirts of Town." 1941.
 "Gee, Baby, Ain't I Good to You." 1944.

Musicals

- Keep Shufflin'*. 1928.
Hot Chocolates. 1929.
Kitchen Mechanic's Review. 1930.
Blackbirds. 1930.
Hot Harlem. 1932.
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Tan Manhattan. 1941.

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Redding, J. Saunders

J. Saunders Redding (1906–1988) was an educator, writer, social commentator, historian, and literary critic. Throughout his career, he wrote about a number of writers of the Harlem Renaissance, including Sterling Brown, Rudolph Fisher, Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larsen, George Schuyler, and Carl Van Vechten. Many of his literary judgments can be found in the weekly newspaper column he wrote for the *Afro-American* chain. This column consisted largely of book reviews and profiles of literary figures, but Redding also addressed a broad range of contemporary issues, such as the United States' foreign policy and being personally subjected to Jim Crow laws. By the end of his career, Redding had written more than 1,000 newspaper columns, but he remains best known for his debut book, *To Make a Poet Black* (1939), one of the first extensive critical works of African American literature from Phillis Wheatley to the Harlem Renaissance.

Redding came from a middle-class background: His mother was a schoolteacher and then a homemaker; his father was a postal worker. Both of his parents had graduated from Howard University and placed a great deal of importance on education. While still in his teens, Redding read W. E. B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), a book for which he reserved his highest praise; its influence can be seen in his own variation on Du Bois's concept of double-consciousness. For Redding, the double-consciousness that results from being "both a Negro and an American" was a potential affirmation, rather than a crisis, of identity—an interpretation that acknowledges that identity is never monolithic (Du Bois 1903/1961, 17; Redding 1991, 193). Nonetheless, double-consciousness created problems for African American writers. According to Redding, these artists were often overwhelmed by a dual commitment to their race and to their art.

Redding considered himself a humanist, and in his case this meant that he was more concerned with what human beings shared than with what held them apart. He resisted separating African American literature from American literature, preferring instead an integrationist approach. Although he is famous for describing African American literature as a "literature

either of purpose or necessity," he has also insisted that this description applied to all of American literature, at least until recently. Historically, he asserted, all American literature was less concerned with aesthetics and more concerned with "the practical aim of elevation and instruction" (1939, vii; 1991, 213). If he seems to have written more extensively about African American literature and history than any other, he did so in order to correct the exclusion of the African American experience from traditional scholarship.

In other ways, characterizing Redding's viewpoints proves to be no easy task. He has frequently been called a conservative, but such a label depends on the time period and one's outlook. In his first book, in 1939, he himself rejected what he called the conservatism of Booker T. Washington in favor of the liberalism of Du Bois. He criticized such writers as Angelina Weld Grimké and Leslie P. Hill, who, unlike the "New Negro" of the Harlem Renaissance, rejected black pride in favor of purportedly universal themes. Calling them bourgeois, shallow, and conservative, he pointed to Jean Toomer as their revolutionary antithesis (1939, 103–104, 128). He also found fault with Carl Van Vechten, Wallace Thurman, and Claude McKay for taking part in a "cult of primitivism." Citing portrayals of blacks as exotic and instinctive, he contended that the literature of primitivism encouraged the belief that all African Americans are essentially uncivilized (1991; see "The Negro Author: His Publisher, His Public, and His Purse"; "Absorption With Blackness Recalls Movement of 1920s"). In 1942, in an introduction to Redding's autobiographical work *No Day of Triumph*, Richard Wright praised the book and said that Redding was "the first middle-class Negro to break with the ideology of the 'Talented Tenth'"—a reference to W. E. B. Du Bois's term for an African American professional class that led the masses.

To others, however, Redding's liberalism started to sound conservative. To some degree, it was Redding's views that had shifted. By 1960, in a piece titled "The Negro Writer and His Relationship to His Roots," Redding was praising Toomer for having written about the particular experience of African Americans in a way that transcended superficial differences—an interpretation that sounds closer to that of the bourgeois conservatives he had earlier disdained. But the times themselves were also changing. Harold Cruse (1957–1958) argued that if African Americans wanted to preserve their culture and identity, they would have to resist the conservative call by the middle class for racial integration and assimilation. In 1959, Redding

responded to Cruse in an address at the First Conference of Negro Writers. He reasserted the need for full integration and disagreed with Cruse's contention that African American culture is distinct from American culture, prompting what some refer to as the "Cruse-Redding controversy" (Olaniyan 1992, 533–534).

In the 1970s, Redding became embroiled in a debate with Amiri Baraka. Baraka was part of the "black arts movement," which affirmed the existence of a uniquely black aesthetic, and he was a proponent of black studies at colleges and universities, arguing that successful integration was an unrealizable fantasy. Redding, however, denied the existence of a black aesthetic and maintained that its supporters were racial chauvinists perpetuating the idea of African Americans as inherently different. He opposed the development of black studies, reasoning that the discipline encompassed too much and that such categories should be created according to culture, not race (1970). In a rather belated published reply (1983), Baraka called Redding antiblack and bourgeois. Redding was now a part of the conservative middle class that he had, in his younger years, ridiculed.

In spite of his impatience with literary categorizations by race and with the cult of primitivism, Redding did not value supposedly "raceless" literature, that is, literature by African Americans in which the race of the characters is never made explicit. He celebrated the return to black folk life in Toomer's *Cane* and James Weldon Johnson's *God's Trombones*. He praised literature like Richard Wright's *Native Son*, a novel that depicts the lives of the urban poor. He also commended writers like Jessie Redmon Fauset who wrote about the black middle class. In these diverse representations of African American culture, Redding believed, readers would find facts about an essentially American culture as well as truths about the universal human condition. Like many writers and critics from the Harlem Renaissance, he trusted that "good" African American art and history, texts that insist on the common humanity of African Americans, would eventually destroy the color line.

Biography

James (Jay) Thomas Saunders Redding was born 13 October 1906 in Wilmington, Delaware. He attended Howard High School (1923); Lincoln University, Pennsylvania (1923–1924); Brown, Providence, Rhode Island (B.A., 1928; M.A., 1932); and Columbia University

(1932–1934). Redding taught at Morehouse College, 1928–1931; Louisville Municipal College, Kentucky, 1934–1936; Elizabeth City State Teachers College, North Carolina, 1938–1943; Hampton Institute, Virginia, 1943–1966; and George Washington University, 1968–1969. He was chairman of the English department, Southern University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1936–1938; lecturer for the State Department, India, 1952; James Weldon Johnson Professor of Creative Writing, Hampton Institute, 1954–1963; and Ernest I. White Professor Emeritus of American Studies and Humane Letters, Cornell University, 1970–1975. Redding was a columnist for the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1943, and for the *Afro-American* newspaper chain (based in Baltimore), 1944–1946. He was a book review editor for the *Afro-American* newspapers, 1946–1966, and director of the Division of Publication and Research at the National Endowment for the Humanities, 1966–1970. Among his awards were a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship, 1941; the North Carolina Historical Society's Mayflower Award for *No Day of Triumph*, 1944; Phi Beta Kappa, Brown University, 1943; and Guggenheim Fellowships in 1944 and 1959. Redding retired in 1975 and died in Ithaca, New York, on 2 March 1988.

VALARIE J. MOSES

See also Baltimore Afro-American; Brown, Sterling; Cane; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Fisher, Rudolph; God's Trombones; Grimké, Angelina Weld; Hurston, Zora Neale; Johnson, James Weldon; Larsen, Nella; McKay, Claude; Schuyler, George S.; Thurman, Wallace; Toomer, Jean; Van Vechten, Carl; Wright, Richard

Selected Works

To Make a Poet Black. 1939.

No Day of Triumph, intro. Richard Wright. 1942.

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Reiss, Winold

Winold Reiss was born in 1886 in Karlsruhe in southwestern Germany, the son of the respected Bavarian landscape painter Fritz Mahler Reiss. He studied under the direction of his father and attended the Kunstgewerbe Schule in Munich as a student of Franz von Stuck. The elder Reiss had trained at the Düsseldorf Academy, studying natural history, German landscape, and peasant portraiture, and handed these traditions down to his son. Von Stuck exposed him to two modern art movements—fauvism and cubism—and eventually encouraged him to enroll at the School of Applied Arts, where he would study commercial design and poster design under Julius Diez. Reiss painted folk groups in Sweden, the Netherlands, and Germany before his emigration to the United States in 1913. He probably became aware of cubism and African art at least by 1913, when he most likely saw an exhibition of Pablo Picasso's African-inspired cubist works in Munich. Von Stuck also introduced Reiss to Jugendstil ("youth style"), a German decorative arts

movement that was rooted in French art nouveau. Reiss had worked as a designer in Munich and would apply this experience in New York, where he worked as an illustrator for magazines, books, and advertisements, using his training in commercial and poster art. Reiss was also no doubt familiar with the German folk art technique Scherenschnitt, a cutout technique that influenced his own simple black-and-white designs, often resembling cutouts or collages.

Reiss, along with other modernists in Munich, was attracted to ethnography. He was aware of the German expressionists' *Blaue Reiter* almanac (1912), which contained numerous photographs of the art of the Cameroons, Egypt, and Japan, as well as Bavarian and Russian folk art. Reiss therefore developed an interest in both ancient and modern art, and an awareness of contemporary experiments of modern artists.

Before becoming a premier artist in Harlem, Reiss spent a great deal of time traveling in the West, Canada, and Mexico, as well as in Central America, painting Indians and aspects of Native American life. He was particularly fascinated with the Blackfeet Indians, the Pueblo people, Mexicans, and African Americans. Reiss had always been interested in documenting various racial groups, "as a means to illuminate the distinctions and integrity of different ethnic groups." Reiss showed up in communities that were undergoing dramatic social changes, including the heirs of the Aztecs in Mexico in 1921 and the last survivors of the intertribal wars of the nineteenth century in Browning, Montana. Harlem provided such opportunities for unique documentation, a community that, according to Stewart (1989, 1990), Reiss "stumbled onto," finding a place "brimming with racial consciousness and a desire for dignified self-representation."

Reiss would have a profound effect on Aaron Douglas, the leading painter of the Harlem Renaissance. In 1925, Reiss was hired to create the cover for a special "Harlem issue" of the magazine *Survey Graphic*; Douglas, who was then a teacher in Kansas City, Missouri, saw this cover—a straightforward, realistic, dignified portrait of the singer Roland Hayes—and was deeply moved by it. Reiss showed Hayes looking off to the side thoughtfully and seriously and proudly displayed Hayes's African traits, including a full nose and lips. This was the "splendid portrait of a Black man by the famous German artist Fritz Winold Reiss" that Douglas referred to when discussing the impact *Survey Graphic* had on him. Douglas would study with Reiss for two years, on a scholarship, and would find encouragement to paint things African and explore a

uniquely personal vein of artistic experience; a credo of Reiss's was the importance of using one's own life experiences and heritage as a source of inspiration for creating art. As Douglas's teacher, Reiss influenced Douglas not only regarding subject matter—Douglas's black heritage and Africanism—but also stylistically. Reiss's flat, modernist drawings in *Survey Graphic*, such as "Dawn in Harlem," showed a strong strain of cubism, Orphism, and precisionism. Douglas would use a very similar clear style in his works, including skyscrapers, smokestacks, and concentric circles, a motif he would take much further.

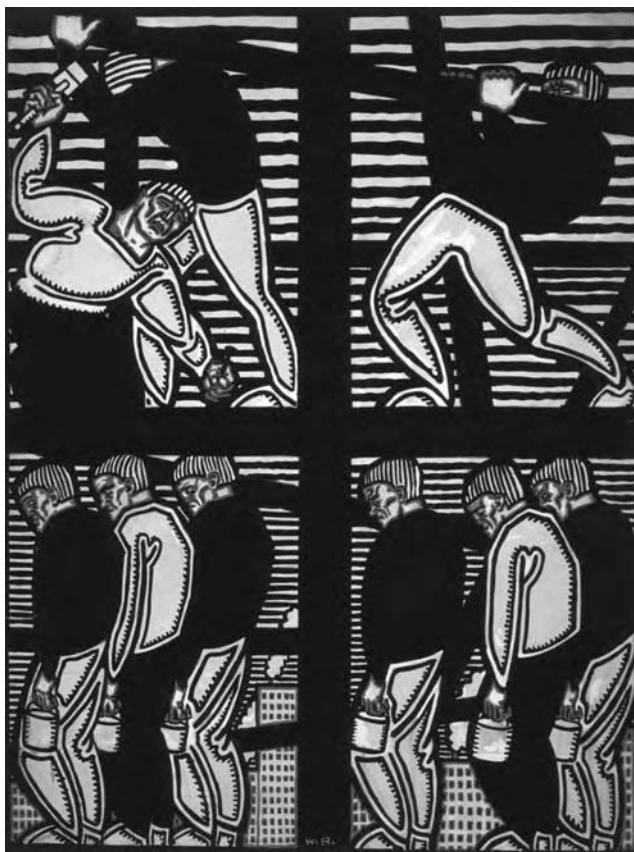
The "Harlem issue" of *Survey Graphic* also contained a brief discussion, probably written by Alain Locke, about the significance of Reiss's work. To Locke (presumably), Reiss's attention to American blacks was a particularly welcome development:

What [Paul] Gauguin and his followers have done for the Far East, and the work of Ufer and Blumenschein and the Taos school for the Pueblo and Indian, seems about to [be done] for the Negro and Africa: in short, painting, the most local of arts, in terms of its own limitations even, is achieving universality.

The drawings that surrounded this essay about Reiss consisted of a series of portraits with clear, straightforward facial features. All of Reiss's portraits are detailed in the face and hands, for which, in the originals, color pastel crayons are used. The clothing and bodies are not detailed but are almost sketchlike, in effect further emphasizing the sitters' sensitivity, seriousness, and dignity.

Reiss's work provided a source of pride and inspiration for black artists, who at this time often did not choose to paint black subject matter. For instance, his "Interpretations of Harlem Jazz" in *Survey Graphic* included a black dancer in a cabaret, dancing with a young woman, their faces accented only by thick overaccentuated lips, their bodies flat silhouettes. The piece has the stylized qualities of art deco and Egyptian art, with a touch of cubism (all of which would influence Douglas). An African mask, a bottle, and another dancer's leg appear in the background. All the black silhouette figures are accentuated by thick features, slightly slanted eyes (reminiscent of Dan sculpture of the Ivory Coast of Africa), thick lips, and black faces.

Reiss's involvement in the special Harlem issue of *Survey Graphic* and his position as Aaron Douglas's teacher established him as an important participant in the visual arts movement of the Harlem Renaissance.



Winold Reiss, *Steel Workers*, c. 1920. (Library of Congress.)

Biography

Winold Reiss was born 16 September 1886 in Karlsruhe, Germany. He studied with his father (the landscape painter Fritz Mahler Reiss) and at the Munich School of Applied Arts under Julius Diez. Reiss married Henrietta Luthy in 1912 and immigrated to the United States in 1913. In 1915, he lectured (on German posters) at the Art Students League in New York City; illustrated books and magazines; did murals; and began the Winold Reiss Art School. He traveled to Montana to draw Blackfeet Indians in 1919, to Mexico in 1920, and to Germany and Sweden in 1922 (when he also published in *Century Magazine*). He provided cover art for *Opportunity* (the magazine of the National Urban League) in 1925, and for a special "Harlem issue" of *Survey Graphic*. His work appeared in *New York World*, *Chicago Evening Post*, and *The New Negro*. During the 1920s and 1930s, he had numerous individual and group exhibitions and published illustrations. In 1929, he designed the interior of the Tavern Club, Chicago. In 1930, he was in an annual group show at the Art

Institute of Chicago. In 1932, his work appeared in *Creative Art* and *Architectural Forum*. In 1935, he held the Winold Reiss summer school at Glacier Park, Montana. In 1936, he designed interiors of several restaurants in New York City and exhibited Indian portraits in several venues. In 1940, a reissue of *Blackfeet Indians: Pictures by Winold Reiss, Story by Frank Linderman*, appeared. During the 1940s, Reiss continued to design covers for *Survey Graphic* and to design restaurants; he had exhibits and continued to sketch Blackfeet Indians. In 1951, he illustrated *The Lewis and Clark Expedition* by Richard Neuberger and donated Harlem portraits to Fisk University. That year he also suffered a stroke. Reiss died 29 August 1953 in New York City.

AMY KIRSCHKE

See also Artists; Douglas, Aaron; Hayes, Roland; Locke, Alain; *Survey Graphic*; Visual Arts

Major Exhibitions

- 1920: E. F. Hanfstaengl Galleries. (Solo.)
- 1922: Memorial Art Gallery, Rochester, New York.
- 1925: 135th Street Branch, New York Public Library. (Solo.)
- 1928: Art Institute of Chicago. (Solo.)
- 1929, 1930: Annual Group Show, Art Institute of Chicago.
- 1931: Los Angeles Museum, Hill Collection. (Solo.)
- 1935: Brooklyn Museum. (Watercolors; group show.)
- 1936: Faulkner Memorial Art Gallery, Santa Barbara, Calif. (Solo.)
- 1947: Arizona State Museum. (Solo.)

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Religion

No one disputes the significance of religion in general, and Christianity in particular, to African American



William H. Johnson (1901–1970), *Church on Lenox Avenue*, c.1939–1940. © Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C./Art Resource, N.Y.)

cultural and political history. As early as 1903, W. E. B. Du Bois described the church as the most important social institution in black life, seeing in it the clearest continuation of African cultural values and experience. If anything, the institutional power of the black church was enhanced during the Harlem Renaissance as the membership of northern churches swelled with southern migrants, creating some of the largest religious institutions in American history and propelling their leaders into positions of cultural leadership. At the same time, traditional religious institutions viewed the developments of the renaissance with some ambivalence. The diversification of social life in Harlem provided many avenues for social advancement. If the traditional churches were not moved off the center, they now competed with new religions, with new political and economic institutions, and with many new social diversions in the entertainment industry. Ironically, these many centers of social life threatened the church at the moment of its greatest strength. Similarly, the participants in the renaissance viewed

the traditions of the church with some ambivalence. Countee Cullen described his tension between a “Christian upbringing” and a “pagan inclination.” In a similarly divided manner, the intelligentsia of Harlem respected the historic significance of the churches, while feeling themselves part of a newer, more progressive, and more secular intellectual vanguard. In these respects, religion in Harlem participates in the larger dynamics of the place of religion within the discourses and practices of American modernism.

While the churches responded in various ways to the cultural and intellectual developments of the Harlem Renaissance, the context for that response was provided by the great migration. Shortly after Du Bois declared in *The Souls of Black Folk* that the black preacher was the archetype of black leadership, “a man at the center of a group of men,” such leaders found themselves chasing after congregants who pulled up stakes for the promised land of the urban North. Indeed, by the full flowering of the renaissance in the 1920s, the vast majority of Harlemite ministers, even in traditional denominations, either had migrated from the South or were the children of migrants, a development that caused some discomfort among northern traditionalists. Northern churches grew exponentially as struggling congregations became juggernauts, seemingly overnight. Salem Methodist Episcopal, led by Countee Cullen’s foster father, Frederick Asbury Cullen, grew from a small storefront mission church with three members to a 3,000-member congregation between 1902 and 1919. Crowded pews meant swelling coffers, and churches benefited from soaring property values as well. Following the immigrants to upper Manhattan, Abyssinian Baptist sold its building on Fifty-ninth Street and built one of the most imposing religious edifices in Manhattan to house its burgeoning congregation. Soon, more wealth and property were concentrated in the religious institutions of Harlem than in any other sector of African American society, so much so that how the churches used their money became a common point of criticism among other institutional leaders like Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson.

However, the great migration created much more than wealth and prestige. It also dramatically transformed the ministry and liturgy of many traditional churches. The generally conservative northern churches struggled to accommodate the more demonstrative worship styles of many southern immigrants. Cullen at Salem Methodist Episcopal, for instance, regularly invited George Wilson Becton, a flamboyant evangelist who appealed to the working classes, to share his pulpit.

Others incorporated spirituals and newly developing gospel music styles, sometimes at the expense of traditional members who could not tolerate the change. Nevertheless, many congregations did too little to make southern immigrants feel at home, and as a result innumerable storefront churches and cults sprang up to feed the spiritual needs of new arrivals. Some of these churches disappeared almost as quickly as they were organized. Others endured to become fixtures of African American religious life. The Pentecostal revivals begun on Azusa Street in Los Angeles burned fiercely across the continent in Harlem. Mother Horne's Mount Calvary Assembly Hall of the Pentecostal Faith of All Nations was a "storefront" operation that could seat up to 800 worshipers and gradually spread to several other cities. Other, less clearly Christian groups flourished as well. Perhaps most important of these, George Baker proclaimed himself Father Divine and built an interracial church on his amalgamation of Christianity and theosophy, emphasizing positive thinking, entrepreneurial self-help, and communal styles of living. The multitude of less familiar and more suspect religious movements lent some credence to the popular stereotype of Harlem as a site of religious chaos overrun with religious charlatans and fly-by-night messiahs.

This stereotype masks the many ways in which traditional and new religious movements met real social and psychic needs in Harlem. Religious groups of every stripe provided a space for social interaction and communal identity. Many religious groups sought to meet the material and political needs of their members. Father Divine is remembered less for his quirky theology than for the seemingly miraculous feasts that he provided for his followers. Many ministers in the traditional churches tended toward a version of the social gospel and sought to use their churches to serve the people of God on earth. Bishop Reverdy C. Ransom of the African Methodist Episcopal church and Adam Clayton Powell Sr. of Abyssinian Baptist both instituted a variety of ministries to the urban poor and advocated for public policies on their behalf. Even a relative theological conservative such as Frederick Asbury Cullen became president of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); helped organize the Silent Parade of 1919; visited President Woodrow Wilson in the aftermath of the riots in Brownsville, Texas; and promoted various social ministries through his church and through the YMCA. Clearly, the religious scene in Harlem experienced the same kind of dynamism that

was propelling achievement in the arts, so that we might say the Harlem Renaissance was a period not only of artistic and literary vitality but of religious vitality as well.

Direct relationships between the artistic and religious leaders are somewhat harder to trace. Langston Hughes's declaration that most of Harlem did not even realize that a renaissance had occurred seems borne out by the sermons and other writings of the religious figures of the day. Direct relationships that existed grew out of the traditional position of the black church as a social and cultural center. Adam Clayton Powell referred to Cullen and Hughes as evidence of black achievement, and Abyssinian Baptist was the site of the most famous wedding in Harlem during the 1920s, that of Countee Cullen and Yolande Du Bois, daughter of W. E. B. Du Bois. Frederick Cullen promoted his son's poetry, though his autobiography suggests he paid only the vaguest attention to the literary circles in which his son circulated. When religious figures did comment on Harlem's cultural scene, they were often most concerned with the debauchery they saw in the jazz clubs and speakeasies. Reverdy Ransom recognized the actors and musicians of New York as the sons and daughters of the church, but he was almost alone on this score and was denounced by some ministers for his efforts. Indeed, both Frederick Cullen and Adam Clayton Powell led crusades against the entertainment industry and against the bohemianism in which many of the literary figures of Harlem actively participated. In Powell's case, this crusade included specific attacks on the prevalence of homosexuality. The tension that could prevail on this score is symbolized by the minister who threatened to shut down a reading by Langston Hughes if Hughes did not stop reading blues poetry from the pulpit.

If the leaders of the churches could pay cursory attention to the literary world, the literary figures cannot be said to have given only cursory attention to the church. The literature of the period is awash with the representation of religion. Artists varied in their attitudes toward religion but can be roughly divided into three categories: those who sought, however tentatively, to embrace the traditions of black Christianity; those who rejected Christianity in favor of a more secular political activism; and those who looked to non-Christian traditions. While no particular artist held one of these positions to the absolute exclusion of any other, their prevalence suggests that attitudes toward religion in the artistic community were as dynamic as they were anywhere else in Harlem.

The best representative of the first attitude is Countee Cullen, who was adopted at age fifteen by Frederick Asbury Cullen, embraced his foster father's Methodism, and largely maintained his belief and practice throughout his life. While he admitted to tension between a Christian upbringing and a pagan inclination, a tension that animates his best poem, "Heritage," Cullen largely sought to quash his pagan longings in favor of the traditional sentiments of Christian orthodoxy. Cullen wondered in print why he had to write of blues instead of penning a hymn or a prayer. His magnum opus, "The Black Christ," has some suggestion of rebelliousness but finally endorses the traditions of Christian humility and long-suffering.

Figures like Langston Hughes and, at the tail end of the renaissance, Richard Wright had little use for such noble suffering. Although they both grew up in the church through the faith of their mothers, in adulthood they both moved toward a more overt political orientation that was openly critical of the church. Hughes's "Goodby Christ" satirically dismisses Christ as someone who has had his day in the past but now had to make room for the more politically engaged stance of the socialist worker. Wright similarly sees the Christianity of the past giving way before progressive political activism. Nevertheless, both writers try to imagine forms of Christianity that could mesh with their political activism. Indeed, Hughes spoke warmly of the ecstatic worship in the storefront churches, seeing in it something closer to the heart of the working class than the tight-laced traditions of the mainline churches. Such nuanced responses suggest that many African American writers were unwilling to abandon the church wholesale in the manner of European American writers like H. L. Mencken.

Among those who emphasized neither traditional Christianity nor political activism were Zora Neale Hurston and Jean Toomer. Toomer, in his trek into theosophy and the philosophy of the Russian mystic Gurdjieff, imagined a religious reality that transcended race. Despite Toomer's triumphant initiation of the renaissance with *Cane*, a book that succeeded in part because of its depiction of southern black religion, his decision to abandon a racial identity as a disciple of Gurdjieff also signaled the end of his literary participation in the renaissance. More common among African American artists was Zora Neale Hurston's attraction to African-derived religions such as vodun (voodoo). The child of a minister, Hurston remained involved imaginatively with Christianity throughout

her life, as evidenced in novels such as *Jonah's Gourd Vine* and *Seraph on the Sewanee*. Nevertheless, the Christianity in such novels contributes as much to the characters' struggles as to their triumphs. More powerful in Hurston's estimation were the religions of the Caribbean, and the practices of various obeah men and women throughout the southern United States. Hurston described these practices in several books (most notably *Tell My Horse*) and even went through an initiation ritual in order to become a vodun priestess. These practices reflected Hurston's belief that, at the deepest level, "the Negro is not a Christian, really."

The tremendous diversity of literary responses to religion, as well as the religious ferment in Harlem generally, suggests that there is no monolithic relationship between black religion and black culture. Indeed, as scholars of black church history and sociology have been at pains to point out, it is impossible, except in the most abstract sense, to speak of something like "the black church." Rather, the diversity of religious practice in Harlem and the multiplicity of artistic responses to that diversity suggest the dynamism and vitality that characterized all aspects of cultural life during the Harlem Renaissance.

PETER KERRY POWERS

See also Abyssinian Baptist Church; Becton, George Wilson; Cane; Cullen, Countee; Cullen, Frederick Asbury; Cullen–Du Bois Wedding; Father Divine; Great Migration; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; Powell, Adam Clayton Sr.; Religious Organizations; Toomer; Jean; Wright, Richard

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Religious Organizations

One dominant attitude toward religion in American cultural history has been suspicion of religious institutions, or, more broadly, suspicion of “organized religion.” Ralph Waldo Emerson’s dismissal of priestcraft and its attendant rituals, creeds, traditions, and offices sprang from his conviction that the machinery of religion interfered with, when it did not disable, an authentic experience of the divine. In this view of religion, the increasingly rationalized structures of churches and denominations are part and parcel of the bureaucratizing tendency of modernity, a tendency at some distance from more tender feelings for community or the dramatic desire for mystic transport associated with religious experience.

For African Americans of the early twentieth century, a different history and cultural impulse complicated this ideology concerning organized religious life. On the one hand, African American folklore is replete with jokes and stories about ineffective, naive, dishonest, or randy preachers on the make, narratives that participate in the tendency everywhere to put power and pretension in their place. Further, popular accounts of African American religion gave inordinate attention to the traditional shouting service or the frenzy of Pentecostal styles of worship. Such images of religion champion the virtues of “disorganization,” or at least the virtues of religious experience organized only by the centering force of a preacher’s charisma. W. E. B. Du Bois’s emphasis on the preacher as a man “at the center of a group of men” in *The Souls of Black Folk* evokes a black religion driven by charismatic leadership and charismatic experience. Indeed, in this book a predominant theme of the chapter “Faith of the Fathers” is that contemporary bureaucratization into cold and unfeeling church structures is divorced from the authentic spirituality of African religious forefathers, an authenticity sustained as a residue in the spirituals and the frenzy of southern worship. Similarly, the story “Esther” in Jean Toomer’s *Cane* portrays officially

organized black Christianity as hand in glove with white power structures, whereas the folk prophet-preacher King Barlo can deliver the true word of African deliverance while caught up in a mystic trance.

On the other hand, this emphasis on mystical experiences and charismatic leadership obscures the degree to which organizational life as a whole and especially the life of religious organizations played a central role in both the development of individual identity and the shape of social and cultural life during the period of the Harlem Renaissance. Moreover, it obscures the ways in which “organized religion” proliferated during this period—in terms of new churches and denominations, new quasi-religious or parachurch organizations, and the newly complex and elaborate internal structures of urban churches undergoing the process of modernization.

Historians and sociologists have pointed out the important role that social organizations such as fraternal orders, churches, and labor unions played in the development of individual identity, local community, and broad-based political action. A person treated like a nobody during the day at work could be somebody at church in the evening or on Sunday, not only because of the emotional and psychological reassurance that visions of heavenly reward provided, but also because of the role an individual could play within the organizational life of the church. As Benjamin Mays and Joseph W. Nicholson described the typical congregants in an urban church of the 1920s, “Frequently their souls are crushed and their personalities disregarded. Often they do not feel ‘at home’ in the more sophisticated Negro group. But in the church on X street, she is Mrs. Johnson, the Church clerk; and he is Mr. Jones, the chairman of the Deacon Board” (Mays and Nicholson 1933). Though restricted in some respects, the religious organization provided a genuine space of freedom for the exercise of leadership, responsibility, and initiative. This was especially true for ministers. But in their autobiographies from the late nineteenth century to the Harlem Renaissance, ministers do not reflect much on their own charisma. For example, in *Against the Tide*, Adam Clayton Powell portrays his life and energies as subsumed by and committed to the development of religious life at Abyssinian Baptist in Harlem. Similarly, in *Barefoot Town to Jerusalem*, Frederick Asbury Cullen of Salem Methodist Episcopal marks success not so much by the attention that he personally receives as by the ways in which Salem grows and develops into an elaborate and powerful

social organization under his leadership. In this way, religious organizations provided the necessary context out of which individual identity grew and individual power was exercised.

Ironically, once the floodgates of the great migration opened, this role of providing a sense of belonging and the opportunity for personal leadership and contribution helped destabilize the *de facto* religious hegemony exercised in northern cities by mainline denominations like the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, the AME Zion Church, and the National Baptists. Southern migrants, used to smaller rural churches where they were known and knew others, sometimes felt alien and unappreciated in the larger urbanized churches of the North. More, denominations centered in the North practiced a less vibrant form of religious worship than the migrants had left behind. Facing cultural alienation even in the midst of a putative racial solidarity, many southerners chose to create new churches in their own image. These churches, and in some cases new religions, were the storefront churches, cults, and sects that have been the singular focus of most commentators on the religion of the period. Churches flowered overnight (or sprang up like weeds, depending on one's ideological point of view), and there sometimes seemed to be as many churches as people in Harlem during the 1920s. Indeed, it was not unusual for Harlemites to participate to various degrees in multiple churches at different times of the week or year, much as one might attend a different theater or nightclub to get a different show. By the 1930s, it was arguable that there were more churches per square mile in Harlem than anywhere else in the country, so many that Harlemites complained there were too many churches with too many preachers. This complaint perhaps reflects a concern that the endless multiplication of such organizations threatened to fracture the coherence of community life they might otherwise have been expected to secure.

Many of these churches did indeed seem to form primarily around the force and vision of a single personality, such as Father Divine's Peace Mission or the cult surrounding Daddy Grace. However, these also quickly developed relatively elaborate bureaucratic forms or branches of the religion in cities around the country, ultimately making the structure of the church as important as the founding personality. This tendency to elaborate structure through the process of mission and evangelism was also true of the spiritual churches and the more clearly Christian holiness or Sanctified churches. These churches, often accused of

an overwhelmingly otherworldly focus in doctrine and practice, were this-worldly enough to develop significant denominational structures in response to the everyday demands of paying bills, finding places of worship, and providing for the spiritual needs of the congregation.

Another manifestation of the diversification of religious organization came in the form of otherwise secular institutions that adopted a religious ethos and used overtly religious rhetoric. To some degree, of course, the centrality of the church to African American cultural life meant that nearly every social organization in Harlem included some kind of religious flavoring. Fraternal orders such as the Masons explicitly drew on scripture in their organizational rituals, and members were often openly recognized as upstanding and important members of mainstream churches. Similarly, the black church in Harlem was sometimes referred to as "NAACP on its knees." This could not have been strictly true, since central figures of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People such as James Weldon Johnson and Du Bois had traveled some intellectual distance from the churches of their childhood, and both chafed at the overwhelming influence of the church. Nevertheless, the aphorism does suggest the degree to which the religious and the secular interpenetrated one another in much of Harlem's social life. A. Philip Randolph, though an avowed atheist, conceived of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in quasi-religious terms, depended on good relations with the church for the development of the union, and used frankly religious rhetoric in promoting the union's political ambitions. All of this suggests that the strict lines sometimes drawn between religious and secular organizations were permeable, more so in Harlem than in the dominant culture.

No organization reflected this interpenetration more than the most massive popular movement of 1920s, Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Indeed, the UNIA exemplifies a quasi-religious movement that is read too simply as an extension of a demagogic personality. Though it would be impossible to understand the appeal of the UNIA without understanding the personal appeal of Garvey's vision and of Garvey himself, this vision was elaborated through a massive bureaucratic structure that attempted to give flesh to Garvey's vision of a pan-African religious, cultural, and political movement. Ironically, Garvey's ultimate downfall may have resulted less from his own corruption or from white conspiracies than from the inefficiencies of his organization and his

inability to keep track of its far-flung enterprises and their tangled finances.

Besides underreading the organizational elements of Garvey's movement, scholars often dismiss or underestimate the religious shape of both Garvey's rhetoric and the structure of the organization as a whole. Nevertheless, Randall Burkett (1978) argues persuasively that Garvey needs to be understood as a thoroughgoing theological thinker who attempted to institutionalize a form of black civil religion. Early in the movement's history it was somewhat unclear whether or not the UNIA was on the road to becoming a religious denomination. Children of members were baptized both into the Christian religion and into membership in the association. Mass meetings were shaped around liturgies reminiscent of the high churches of the Christian faith. Even after the organization determined that it would not be a church, it maintained a hierarchy of chaplains intended to minister to the spiritual needs of the membership. Like its erstwhile rival, the NAACP, the UNIA depended extensively on sympathetic members of the Christian clergy for support, and not a few—such as Earl Little, the father of Malcolm X—managed to find a way to be both Christian ministers and UNIA organizers. Far from a peculiar institution based on the idiosyncrasies of its founder, and far from a purely secular political movement, in many respects the UNIA was characteristic of the unsettling energies and explosive growth that marked the new sects and religions in Harlem.

The unfamiliar makes the news, and this may account for the extensive attention given to new sects and cults in examinations of religions coming out of the great migration. Many had the flash and show to match anything appearing in the clubs and theaters on Lenox Avenue. Yet it is probably the case that the most enduring changes attendant on the migration took place within the institutional framework of the traditional churches. For one thing, faced with the unfamiliar demands of their new southern congregants for more exciting worship experiences, the mainline churches began integrating new forms of worship into their traditional liturgies, legitimizing cultural forms that the bourgeoisie initially considered vulgar and inappropriate. Gospel music, for instance, originated in the low-down churches but entered the cultural mainstream when mainline churches began incorporating it alongside traditional hymns, a process that eventually recast the traditional hymns themselves. Frederick Cullen welcomed the mass evangelist George Wilson Becton into the pulpit at Salem Methodist

Episcopal. Though Becton was never completely legitimated, Cullen's move at least symbolized a recognition on the part of the mainline that their southern congregants experienced the old-time religion best through fervent preaching that put more emphasis on getting congregants in touch with God emotionally than on explicating this or that point of doctrine.

To be sure, the religious establishment often cringed at the religious practices of the church general. Preachers wrote essays and conventions issued reports that lamented the state of the church, its otherworldliness, its anti-intellectualism, and its subpar clergy. And some churches did shrink from the unwashed masses of the South, deserving Du Bois's characterization of them as cold and unfeeling. Most traditional churches and denominations, however, at least sought to rise to the challenge in both program and rhetoric. In the process of rising, they changed the perception of their churches from houses devoted exclusively to holy worship into places where the doctrine and practice of the social gospel were given substantial flesh.

To some degree they had no choice. The apparently endless wave of migrants demanded some kind of change, some kind of attention, and the mainline churches were well aware that there were sirens enough willing to offer attention. Not only did the new religions threaten the religious hegemony of the mainline, the entertainments of the city and the developing intellectual class threatened to draw both the thinking and the unthinking away from the fold of the church, in some sense threatening the cultural hegemony of religion *per se*. Lacy Williams of Olivet Baptist in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, called frankly for new social, recreational, and community programs in the church as a way of counteracting the appeal of both new religious movements and the vices that city life readily offered. The AME hierarchy issued a denominational appeal for churches to use "multiplied forces and agencies, material and spiritual; with ceaseless vigilance and untiring activity" to counteract the vices of the city that threatened to attract the masses away from the church.

No doubt there is some significant self-interest in these calls for the church to find its mission in social service, but it is doubtful that programs as extensive and elaborate as those that developed could have been sustained for long simply through self-interest. The sheer number and variety of these programs testify to a significant change in the churches' self-understanding, whereby living the gospel meant providing for all the needs—this-worldly and otherworldly—of their

congregants. In a report on the work of Baptist women to the National Baptist Convention, Nannie Burroughs remarked on the typical shortcomings of the church: Men in the pulpit were too little educated and gave too much attention to otherworldly concerns; the people spent their money on frivolity. Beyond complaint, the report issued a call for a broad range of programs: training programs to help the unemployed and underemployed; thrift clubs to teach the value of savings and investments; new investment in the Young Women's Christian Association. Burroughs's most interesting proposal was for the development of suffrage clubs as an extension of the educational mission of the church, on the belief that participation by females in the political process would help make "the world safe for Christianity." Another sign of the ascendancy of this kind of work was the election of Reverdy Ransom, a staunch if controversial advocate of the social gospel, to a bishopric in the AME Church.

Not every church heeded such denominational calls for greater social action. Many resisted ministers who wanted to move their churches in such directions. Indeed, denominational efforts to improve the status of the clergy continued to fall short. As late as 1933, Mays and Nicholson were reporting that the majority of ministers in black churches were poorly trained theologically and in general (though it is unclear whether ministers with multiple degrees necessarily did a better job in the vital work of making a congregant feel that he or she was at home in the church). Still, it seems clear that the most significant and powerful churches of the North in general and Harlem in particular responded to the needs of their new parishioners in ways that permanently changed the nature of African American religion. Under Williams, Olivet Baptist developed dozens of programs to serve its several thousand congregants. These included training programs like those described above, as well as kindergartens for child care and mothers' meetings for parental support. At Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, Adam Clayton Powell developed not only a Home Relief Bureau that provided employment, but also programs in adult education, day care for children, and feeding programs for the hungry.

Ironically, the plethora of programs at the dominant churches and the bureaucracy necessary to run them may have contributed to a sense that the established churches were more like businesses than communities. The sheer numbers of people involved and the programs that had to be coordinated guaranteed that men like Powell, Cullen, and others were successful at

least in part because they were organization men, good at shaping large numbers of people to a common purpose. They were unlikely, however, to know their congregants well, and many African Americans preferred the more intimate feel of the smaller churches, even when such churches were unable to offer them much in the way of social services. Nevertheless, the changes in the dominant churches meant that social action, like gospel music and emotionally fervent preaching, was legitimated as a part of the mainline. This change set the stage for the political and social action of the churches in the middle of the twentieth century.

If the churches moved in new directions to engage social and political life, engagement with the aesthetic concerns of the Harlem Renaissance, at least engagement with any kind of complexity or depth, seems much more ambiguous. As the central cultural institution of African American life, the church was inevitably involved in the life of the Harlem Renaissance. Abyssinian Baptist Church was the site of the most famous wedding of the period, that of Countee Cullen and Yolande Du Bois. Poets and writers of the period read regularly to large crowds in the sanctuaries of the tony churches of the period. Still, it seems clear that the artistic and intellectual movement was developing along a different trajectory from that of the religious organizations. The storefront churches by and large had no interest in high culture of the kind represented by Countee Cullen. Their preaching and singing were a poetry and drama of their own, as Langston Hughes recognized and tried to represent. The established churches welcomed poets to the degree that these poets represented African American achievement, but Langston Hughes had preachers prevent him from reading his blues poetry from the pulpit. Preachers regularly railed against the bohemianism that Hughes and some others embraced, and preachers of every type spoke against the overtly erotic sound of jazz and the morally degrading effect of the clubs where jazz could be heard. In this regard, with the possible exception of gospel music, the church insisted on a profoundly conservative aesthetic.

In their attention to religion, the writers and artists did not replicate the churches' benign neglect of the aesthetic developments in Harlem. If the churches did not particularly need Rudolph Fisher or Zora Neale Hurston, it seems clear that these writers and artists could not do without the church. Any artist taking up the experience of African Americans in the 1920s could not escape noticing that the crowded churches on Sunday morning matched the crowded clubs on

Saturday night. Every major writer of the period takes up African American religious life in some significant way: Toomer, for instance, represents southern religious life in *Cane*; Hurston portrays a preacher in *Jonah's Gourd Vine*; Cullen wrote a poem called "Black Christ." However, no major writer of the period other than Cullen participated regularly in the life of any religious organization. Even Hurston, who went through an initiation ritual to become a priestess of the vodun (voodoo) religion, was apparently a participant-observer (for the sake of her anthropological studies of the religion) as much as she was a devotee.

Hurston's example may suggest the degree to which the artists primarily approached religion out of aesthetic concerns, rather than out of a desire to give any full accounting of organized religious life. Overwhelmingly, depictions of religion focus on the storefront churches or on the rural South. Save for an extremely funny account of Hughes's meeting Adam Clayton Powell (whom Hughes gently ridicules by saying he looks like God and would thus be a good candidate for a role in *The Green Pastures*), there is scant attention given to the mainline churches, and almost no attention at all to the massive service programs and other forms of modernization that the churches undertook during the period. This may simply be a matter of aesthetics. The aesthetes of the Harlem Renaissance were fulfilling a role that artists have always filled: poking and prodding at the pretensions of official power. Further, and practically speaking, a down-home preacher at full throttle is more dramatic than the dusty paper pushing of bureaucratized religion. Finally, it may be that the narrow scope of the artistic concern with religion sprang from a realization, sometimes quite explicit, that the movers and shakers in the renaissance were positing themselves as institutional rivals to the mainline churches for positions of power and social leadership.

This was a battle that the renaissance writers and artists did not win in the 1920s, if winning is a matter of numbers. Still, this general picture of religious diversification on the one hand, and on the other the development of alternative forms of institutional life, suggests something about the Harlem Renaissance. If modernity is characterized in part by the rationalization of social life into separate spheres, with institutional and bureaucratic forms responsible for administering those different spheres, then life in Harlem clearly manifests a form of African American modernity and the renaissance a kind of modernism. This is evident both in the developments internal to religious organi-

zations themselves and in the way those organizations connected to and were distinguished from the aesthetic and cultural institutions that nurtured the work of the renaissance.

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See also Abyssinian Baptist Church; Becton, George Wilson; Cane; Cullen, Countee; Cullen, Frederick Asbury; Daddy Grace; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Father Divine; Garvey, Marcus; Great Migration; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; Powell, Adam Clayton Sr.; Randolph, A. Philip; Religion; Toomer, Jean; Universal Negro Improvement Association

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Renaissance Casino

The Renaissance Casino and Ballroom was an entertainment complex housed in a two-story redbrick building at 150 West 138th Street. From about 1915

until at least the mid-1960s, dances, balls, sporting events, and socials were held there. For many years, the Renaissance Casino was operated by a Harlemit entrepreneur, Robert "Smiling Bob" Douglas.

The two spacious floors of the Renaissance Casino were suitable for a wide variety of functions and events. Initially, the Renaissance was used exclusively for dances, but it eventually faced stiff competition from other popular ballrooms such as the Savoy. In the 1930s, it became a prime meeting place for the more respectable and dignified of Harlem's social clubs, charities, and unions. The Renaissance advertised such functions in electric lights over its doorway and split the receipts with its renters. For many years the upstairs space was home to the Harlem Rens, a superb basketball team active from about 1922 to 1949. The Rens' Sunday night games were a major social and sporting event in Harlem. Meetings of clubs and similar organizations were common in the 1920s, including some of the annual awards dinners held by the magazine *The Crisis*. Such events became increasingly important to the Renaissance Casino in the course of the 1930s. Among those who met there were the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (1936), the Harlem Dukes (1938), and the Dominican Benevolent Society (1939). Some of these affairs could be quite lavish. When the Business and Professional Men's Forum held its Annual Entertainment and Dance at the Renaissance Casino in May 1936, the entertainment included Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, the Small's Paradise Revue, the Ubangi Club Revue, the Dickie Wells Club, and a Spanish revue by the Teatro Campoamor.

For all its importance as a social hall and sports arena, the Renaissance Casino was even more important in the Harlem Renaissance as a venue for music, ranging from old-fashioned dance music to the hottest jazz. For much of the 1920s and 1930s, the house band leader at the Renaissance was Vernon Andrade (1902–1966), a Panamanian bass and violin player who had moved to Harlem in the early 1920s. Andrade employed an oboist who was featured in waltzes and other polite dance music. Andrade's band also played "hot" jazz, featuring leading jazz musicians, including the trumpeter Louis Metcalf, George Washington (trombone), the reed man Happy Caldwell, Al Morgan (bass), and the drummer Zutty Singleton from New Orleans. The Andrade orchestra alternated with more famous bands that came in for one-night stands and short runs. These included the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra in September 1925, featuring Louis Armstrong on cornet. Elmer Snowden's band, with the fine young

cornetist Rex Stewart, also appeared there during this period. Another illustrious band, featured regularly during 1928, included four of the great jazz soloists: the trumpeter Roy Eldridge, Dickie Wells (trombone), the clarinetist Cecil Scott, and Leon "Chu" Berry (tenor saxophone). From late 1942 to mid-1943, the Renaissance Casino was host to a big band led by the tenor saxophonist Al Sears, a former sideman for Andrade. The stellar rhythm section included the bassist Wellman Braud of New Orleans (a longtime member of Duke Ellington's band) and the drummer Christopher Columbus; the fine saxophone section included, aside from Sears himself, Budd Johnson, Jimmie Lunceford, and Edgar Hayes. Numerous other important swing bands performed at the Renaissance Casino during this period; it remained a popular venue for dances well into the 1960s.

ELLIOTT S. HURWITT

See also Armstrong, Louis; Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; *Crisis*, The: Literary Prizes; Harlem: 3—Entertainment; Henderson, Fletcher; Professional Sports and Black Athletes; Robinson, Bill "Bojangles"; Savoy Ballroom; Small's Paradise

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Revue Nègre, La

La Revue Nègre was an African American vaudeville show that opened in Paris at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on 2 October 1925, bringing the spirit of the

Harlem Renaissance to France and introducing the singer and dancer Josephine Baker to Parisian audiences. The idea for the *Revue Nègre* emerged when an American socialite, Caroline Dudley Reagan, approached André Daven, who was the codirector of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, about putting on a black revue in Paris that would be similar to popular African American theater productions such as *Shuffle Along*, *Runnin' Wild*, and *The Chocolate Dandies*. Daven agreed to the concept because he was having difficulties coming up with new ideas for shows, and African art and culture were already in vogue in Parisian entertainment circles at that time because of the success of a number of African art exhibits at French museums. Daven sent Reagan to New York to recruit the performers for the revue in the summer of 1925. She selected twenty-five people for the production, including Josephine Baker, the blues singer Maud de Forrest, the composer Spencer Williams, the bandleader-pianist Claude Hopkins, the dancer-choreographer Louis Douglas, the artist Miguel Covarrubias (as set designer), the saxophonist Joe Hayman, the trombone player Daniel Day, the tuba player Bass Hill, the drummer Percy Johnson, and the clarinet player Sidney Bechet. Rehearsals began in New York and continued onboard the *Berengaria* during the transatlantic voyage (15–22 September). After numerous revisions, rewrites, changes in costuming and choreography, and the creation of the show's posters by the artist Paul Colin, the *Revue Nègre* was ready for its premiere.

The *Revue Nègre* played to a full house, with such artists as Darius Milhaud and Jean Cocteau in attendance. It lasted less than an hour, serving as the second act of a two-act production. The show itself consisted of an orchestral introduction and nine theatrical sketches, including "Louisiana Camp Meeting," a scene with a peanut vendor that had a memorable clarinet solo by Sidney Bechet, and a levee scene called "Mississippi Steam Boat Race" that showcased the entire ensemble. At the high point of the steamboat scene, Josephine Baker pounced onto the stage on all fours while beating time with the palms of her hands to the tune "Boodle-am Shake," then started dancing the Charleston—bowing her legs, crossing her eyes, and emitting a high-pitched noise. However, the show-stopping number of the evening was the finale, "Charleston Cabaret." Set in a nightclub, this scene featured the groundbreaking *danse sauvage*, an African-inspired mating dance between Josephine Baker and the Caribbean dancer Joe Alex. According to the writer Janet Flanner:

Josephine made her entry entirely nude except for a pink flamingo feather between her limbs; she was being carried upside down and doing the splits on the shoulder of a black giant. Mid stage he paused and, with his long fingers holding her basket-wise around the waist, swung her in a slow cartwheel to the stage floor, where she stood, in a moment of complete silence. A scream of salutation spread through the theatre.

This display of unbridled sexuality and primitivism with an African theme created a sensation in Paris, and Baker immediately became the toast of the city. The production played to Parisian audiences for two months before embarking on a tour of Europe.

ERIN STAPLETON-CORCORAN

See also Baker, Josephine; Bechet, Sidney; Chocolate Dandies, The; Covarrubias, Miguel; Europe and the Harlem Renaissance: 4—Paris; Runnin' Wild; Shuffle Along

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Richardson, Willis

Willis Richardson was the author of forty-six plays. He was most active during the Harlem Renaissance, though he spent most of his life in Washington, D.C. Only since the 1990s have Richardson's plays received much scholarly notice.

Richardson began his writing career in 1915, with a correspondence course called "Poetry and Versification"; but on seeing Angelina Weld Grimké's play *Rachel* (1916), he changed from poetry to drama. Richardson believed that plays written for African Americans should focus on problems within the black community. Whereas Grimké and other African American playwrights of the time focused on conflicts between blacks and whites, he began writing plays that concentrated on relationships between blacks.

The magazine *The Crisis* and its editor, W. E. B. Du Bois, were important in Richardson's career. Du Bois published Richardson's essay "The Hope of a Negro Drama" (1919), the first of six articles Richardson would write on African American theater. *The Crisis* published Richardson's plays *The Deacon's Awakening* (in November 1920) and *The Chip Woman's Fortune* (in 1922). Richardson also contributed plays to *The Brownies' Book*, a periodical issue by *The Crisis* for African American children: *The King's Dilemma* (December 1920), *The Gypsy's Finger-Ring* (March 1921), *The Children's Treasure* (June 1921), and *The Dragon's Tooth* (October 1921).

Richardson was the first African American to have a play produced on Broadway, when *The Chip Woman's Fortune*, a one-act folk drama, opened on 17 May 1923 at the Frazee Theater and played there for a week. Du Bois had made this possible by arranging for the Ethiopian Art Players, a group based in Chicago, to produce it. The group had written to Du Bois, asking if he knew of any plays written by African Americans; he had recommended *The Chip Woman's Fortune*, and it had opened in Chicago on 23 January 1923. Its first appearance in New York had been at the Lafayette Theater in Harlem on 7 May 1923. When it opened at the Frazee on 17 May, it was part of a triple bill with Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* and Oscar Wilde's *Salome*.

In 1925, Richardson placed first in the Krigwa Literary Contest, which was sponsored by *The Crisis*, for his play *The Broken Banjo*. He was unable to attend the awards ceremony in New York; but the next year, when he won first prize for *The Bootblack Lover*, he did go to New York. This occasion was the first time he and Du Bois actually met.

During the 1920s, Richardson's one-act plays were much in demand among African American "little theater" and community groups, school drama clubs, English departments, and churches throughout the country. In Washington, D.C., through his contacts at Howard University, Richardson began joining other artists and writers at the Saturday Nighters, an informal group that met at the home of the poet and playwright Georgia Douglas Johnson. Richardson was involved with this group from its formation in 1926 until it disbanded ten years later.

Carter G. Woodson, founder of Negro History Week and editor of Associated Publishers, a black publishing house in Washington, D.C., was also important to Richardson, who edited two collections of plays for him. The first collection, *Plays and Pageants*

From the Life of the Negro (1930), included four of Richardson's plays, and Richardson also wrote the introduction. The second collection was *Negro History in Thirteen Plays* (1935).

During the 1940s, Richardson did less writing: The death of one of his daughters led to his adoption of her two children, and World War II seems to have changed the tastes of African American playgoers. In fact, from about 1945 until he died, he had only one publication—*The King's Dilemma*, a collection of his plays for children (1956)—and his attempts to have his later plays produced were unsuccessful.

Richardson realized the power of drama to reach African American audiences at a time when theater was largely controlled by whites and the "black experience" was presented mainly in musicals, and mainly as interpreted by whites. In Harlem and on Broadway, for example, such profitable shows as *Strut*, *Miss Lizzie* (1922), *The Chocolate Dandies* (1924), and *Lucky Sambo* (1925), with their song-and-dance routines, plantation settings, and characters pining for the old South, perpetuated damaging stereotypes of African Americans. Rather than attempt to conquer the white stage, Richardson presented his plays for and in the black community, creating vignettes of African American life and incorporating topics that spoke to this minority audience.

Du Bois, among others, was also concerned about the popularity of Broadway shows featuring black song-and-dance routines; specifically, he feared that they would kill the African American folk play, and so he organized "little theater" groups for African Americans through the auspices of *The Crisis*. These theater organizations were in effect laboratories for community-based productions, a venue Du Bois advocated. Some 470 African American little theater groups were founded between 1910 and 1930. Krigwa theater groups (originally Crigwa, an acronym for Crisis Guild of Writers and Artists) were formed in Harlem, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, and other East Coast cities and were active from 1926 through 1935. Several of Richardson's plays were produced by Krigwa drama groups.

For more than one reason, Richardson is distinctive among African American playwrights up to his own time. First, in his six critical essays, he commented explicitly on the educational nature and purpose of his plays. He and Du Bois agreed that the stage should be used to educate African American audiences and should do so by portraying aspects of their actual life. Second, Richardson's plays focus on issues within the

black community, such as conflicts between African American landlords and tenants, parents and children, husbands and wives, and upper- and lower-class people. Some of his characters and situations are prototypes of those found in the work of later African American dramatists, such as Lorraine Hansberry, Amiri Baraka, and August Wilson.

Finally, three other plays by Richardson deserve mention. *Mortgaged* (1924) was presented at the theater at Howard University in Washington, D.C., the first work staged at Howard by an African American who was not matriculating there. In 1926, the Gilpin Players of Cleveland produced Richardson's play *Compromise*, the first play by an African American that this company had performed. In 1928, Richardson's play *The Broken Banjo* won the Edith Schwab Cup, an annual award given by Yale University to a promising new playwright.

Biography

Willis Richardson was born 5 November 1889 in Wilmington, North Carolina; because of race riots there in the late 1890s, his family moved to Washington, D.C., where he spent most of his life. After graduating from the M Street School in Washington (1910), he worked briefly at the Library of Congress. He was a clerk at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing from 1917 to 1954. Richardson twice won the award for best play in the literary contests held by *The Crisis* (1925 and 1926); he also won the Edith Schwab Cup at Yale for best new play (1928). He was a member of the Saturday Nighters, a literary group in Washington, D.C., and a founder of the Krigwa Players, also in Washington. He was recognized as "Outstanding Pioneer in Black Theater" by the Audience Development Committee (Audelco), New York City, 1977. Richardson died in Washington, D.C., 7 November 1977.

CHRISTINE RAUCHFUSS GRAY

See also Authors: 4—Playwrights; Brownies' Book, The; Crisis, The; Ethiopian Art Players; Grimké, Angelina Weld; Harlem Renaissance in the United States: 9—Washington, D.C.; Johnson, Georgia Douglas; Krigwa Players; Lafayette Theater; Literature: 3—Drama; Rachel

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Riots: 1—Overview, 1917–1921

East St. Louis, Illinois (1917); Houston, Texas (1917); Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (1918); Charleston, South Carolina (1919); Longview, Texas (1919); Washington, D.C. (1919); Chicago (1919); Omaha, Nebraska (1919); Knoxville, Tennessee (1919); Elaine, Arkansas (1919); Tulsa, Oklahoma (1921)—there were approximately twenty major riots from 1917 to 1921, and many other smaller episodes of organized attacks on black communities. In most instances, the riots involved white mobs (sometimes supported by the local authorities) attacking black communities.

The riots were sparked by labor unrest, when blacks served as strikebreakers; by social tension, when blacks began living or seeking recreation close to white neighborhoods; and by threatened lynchings. Although there were many proximate causes of the riots, they all drew from a common well: rising tension



Chicago race riots, 1919: an actual photo of a Negro being stoned to death by whites. (Brown Brothers.)

between blacks and whites. That tension rose because of the social upheaval caused by World War I. The war increased the economic power of blacks, increased their mobility, and gave new strength to calls for equal treatment. The United States' rhetoric of equality and freedom used in the world war led to calls in the black community for similar treatment at home. At the same time, blacks' political power was growing, as the U.S. Supreme Court forced northern and border states to recognize voting and other civil rights. Following several years of violence, the black and white communities throughout the nation reached accommodations and the violence decreased.

A key factor in most of the riots was an attempt to reestablish white supremacy, or to stop appeals to what was called "social equality." Within the black community, aspirations were rising in the years after 1910. The periodical literature of the renaissance, such as *The Crisis* and *The Messenger*, promoted the ideas that blacks should be able to live free from lynching, should be able to vote, should receive equal education, should be able to live free from ordinances imposing racial segregation, and should have an equal opportunity with whites to work. Such seemingly simple ideas were themselves radical, and whites viewed them as attempts at social equality. But these ideas had a powerful appeal in black communities,

which—throughout the nation—became increasingly insistent on receiving equal treatment. In May 1919, an editorial in *The Crisis*, entitled "Returning Soldiers," warned: "We return from fighting, We return fighting. . . . We saved [democracy] in France and by the Great Jehovah, we will save it in the United States of America, or know the reason why." Such thoughts circulated and were discussed widely in black communities and led, particularly among veterans of the war, to an increasingly militant stance.

As the self-image of blacks became stronger, and as their demands for equality became more insistent, some whites resisted and in fact took action to stop the demands. Actions by whites included efforts to deny blacks' voting rights, to pass municipal zoning ordinances to segregate housing, and in extreme cases to lynch individuals and even attack entire communities. There had been periodic attacks on communities, at least since the late 1890s, as whites engaged in "Negro drives" to run blacks out of towns and counties. And there had been other riots, such as one in Springfield, Illinois, in August 1908, in which white mobs invaded and burned black districts. But the riots became larger and more frequent beginning in 1917.

The first large-scale riots of the Progressive era took place in East St. Louis, Illinois, in May and July 1917. East St. Louis, like many cities, experienced a dramatic growth in population around the beginning of the world war. Perhaps 10,000 blacks migrated to East St. Louis between 1916 and 1918, where they competed with whites for unskilled jobs in the local manufacturing and packing plants. Racial tensions rose in 1916 after black workers took jobs during strikes at local manufacturing plants. Employers at those manufacturing plants and at packing plants began to recruit black workers from southern states, to counter all-white unions. President Woodrow Wilson, campaigning in East St. Louis in 1916, tightened the tension when he accused Republicans of "colonizing" blacks as voters in the city.

In late May 1917, following a meeting at city hall, where union members demanded action to limit black immigration, there were two days of rioting. The riot in May was sparked by a rumor, which circulated at the end of the city hall meeting, that a black man had shot a white clerk in the course of robbing a store. Throughout the evening white mobs attacked unarmed blacks on the streets. The next day, the Illinois militia disarmed blacks, but not whites. Thousands of unprotected blacks fled East St. Louis, but others smuggled weapons into the community, in preparation for further

violence. By 1 June the riot was over; no one had died, but the stage was set for further violence. Throughout June, there was sporadic racial violence in East St. Louis.

The riot in July, which claimed the lives of at least thirty-nine blacks and nine whites (actually, perhaps seventy-five or more lives), was set in motion on the evening of 1 July, when a group of whites rode through the black section of East St. Louis, shooting into homes. Several black men armed to protect the community against attackers. Later that evening an unmarked police car, carrying a newspaper reporter, drove through the community, apparently to investigate the attack and the community's response. Mistakenly thinking that the car contained people who were about to attack them, several black men fired into the car, mortally wounding two detectives. The next morning, word of the confrontation spread, and whites began attacking blacks on the streets and then attacking the black neighborhood.

Throughout the morning of 2 July, the attacks on the black community grew. The local police refused to protect the community or to arrest white rioters; and although the state militia arrived in the afternoon of 2 July, the militiamen offered no more protection against white rioters. According to numerous accounts by white eyewitnesses, the police and state militia stood idly by as mobs chased, attacked, and killed black men and women. By the afternoon of 2 July, mobs were burning buildings in the black section of East St. Louis while the Illinois militia looked on but still failed to intervene. White men casually asked one another, "Have you got your n—er yet?" By the evening, much of the black section of East St. Louis had been destroyed by fire; perhaps 6,000 people had fled to St. Louis, and the riot was over. Property losses were estimated at approximately \$400,000. Some victims and their families received compensation for their losses from the city in 1921, because a state statute allowed suits against a municipality where riots had occurred for failure to give protection from violence.

Politicians and reformers of the Progressive era sought to make scientific studies of the riots. Those studies provide important insight into the riots and also illuminate limitations to the understanding of riots. The first study was of the East St. Louis riot, made by a congressional investigating committee in the fall of 1917. The committee collected testimony from dozens of witnesses, mostly whites, in an attempt to determine the causes of the violence. The committee's report focused on racial tension, as exacerbated by conflict over scarce jobs. It also saw vice and corruption

as contributing to the problem and to the breakdown of respect for law. The report preserves important details about the origins of the riot but has to be read in light of the authors' concern with corruption and its effects on politics—a concern that led them to spend too much effort on peripheral issues. How, one is left wondering, did prostitution lead to the riot? The committee detailed the local prosecutor's lack of interest in prosecutions: He refused to even seek indictments from a grand jury against many police officers and rioters. At one point, ten police officers drew lots to decide which three of them would plead guilty to minor counts in exchange for dismissal of serious counts against the other seven. Eventually, though, nine whites and twelve blacks were sentenced to time in the state penitentiary for offenses stemming from the riot. Eleven of the blacks had been convicted of homicide in the death of the two detectives on the evening of 1 July. The conviction of Dr. Leroy Bundy, a prominent black dentist who had urged militant action in defense of the black community, attracted national attention and was eventually overturned by the supreme court of Illinois.

Whereas whites came to talk about the riot in East St. Louis as a result of crime in the black community, blacks began talking about it as a breakdown of law in the white community. East St. Louis marked the radicalization of the black community. Blacks were deciding to rely on self-help rather than on the authorities. In fact, they were concluding that the authorities often disarmed them and left them defenseless. This conclusion would be drawn again in other riots and would lead to divisions within the black community over the appropriate response to threats of lynching and riots.

Following East St. Louis, the next major riot was in Houston, Texas, on 23 August 1917. It began when more than 200 black soldiers sought the release of one of their officers who had been arrested by the white police in Houston. This officer had interfered with Houston policemen who were arresting a black woman and had then himself been arrested. The riot in Houston was different from the other riots of the era, because black soldiers took the offensive: They invaded the white section of Houston, killing fifteen whites, before they retreated to their base; two black soldiers also died. Afterward, nineteen soldiers were sentenced to hang for mutiny; sixty-three others were sentenced to military prison.

The next year, 1918, was relatively quiet. However, there was a deadly riot in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,

on 25–28 July 1918, in which three people—two whites and one black—were killed. It began when a black family moved into a white block.

At the conclusion of World War I in November 1918, race relations in the United States began to change dramatically. As black and white soldiers came home and as blacks drew on the rhetoric of freedom and democracy, there was a disjuncture between black people's aspirations and white people's expectations. That led to major riots during what became known as the "red summer" of 1919: in Washington in mid-July; in Chicago at the end of July; and in Elaine County, Arkansas, in October. There were also smaller riots in Charleston, South Carolina, in May; in Longview, Texas, in July; in Knoxville, Tennessee, in August; in Omaha, Nebraska, in September; and in some other cities.

The population of Washington, D.C., grew explosively in the months following the end of the war, as veterans returned from Europe. Perhaps as many as 120,000 veterans lived at least temporarily in Washington, which had a population of 400,000 during the war. One-quarter of Washington's population was black. Washingtonians found rampant inflation and an acute housing shortage; as a result, blacks began to move into previously white northwest Washington. At the same time, in the summer of 1919, there were numerous sensational newspaper stories about black men attacking white women. The riot in Washington started on 19 July with a rumor that a black man had assaulted (that is, raped) a white woman. Articles in the press, including the *Washington Post*, seemed to stir up feelings further by alluding to a growing mob sentiment and mentioning that sailors and soldiers were gathering to attack the black district. For four days, until 22 July, white former servicemen, along with some men in uniform, sporadically attacked blacks on streetcars and in the black district near the Capitol building. Military officials confined servicemen to their quarters, but they gave limited assistance to police officials in quelling rioting. Even more than in East St. Louis, black men responded to the attacks with force. The black community was becoming more aggressive in protecting itself and was responding in kind to random attacks on blacks. Blacks attacked and in some instances killed white bystanders, as well as white rioters and police officers. Approximately thirty-nine people were killed during this riot.

The riot in Chicago—perhaps the worst riot in terms of loss of property and one of the worst in terms of deaths—began a week later. Tension had been

mounting in the city for months, as black immigration increased and as some affluent blacks began moving into predominantly white neighborhoods bordering the black neighborhood on Chicago's South Side. What set off the riot was the drowning of a black youth, Eugene Williams, on 27 July. He had been swimming in Lake Michigan and had drifted over to a portion of the shore reserved for whites only. He was stoned as he approached shore and was unable to swim back to the black section. The police refused to arrest white youths who had thrown the stones, and angry blacks clashed with angry whites at the scene. From that afternoon until 2 August, rioting gripped the city. The riots were especially severe for the first two days; white mobs invaded the black section of south Chicago, burning many homes and killing at least twenty-three blacks. Fifteen whites were also killed. The violence was worse in the "contested territory" between the central business district known as the Loop and the black section on the South Side. Some blacks lived in predominantly white neighborhoods in that contested territory, and blacks frequently traveled through the area on the way to work. In addition, a few whites who worked in the black section were killed, as were a few blacks who worked in the central business district. Some of the whites killed in the black section were not participating in the riot; they were hapless victims of random violence, just as many black victims were. The police (and after the fourth day, the state militia) were more evenhanded in Chicago than they had been in East St. Louis. Law enforcement officers attempted to protect blacks against mob violence that they witnessed. In 1921, the Chicago City Council paid more than \$100,000 to the families of riot victims.

A blue-ribbon commission of social scientists, businessmen, and politicians investigated the Chicago riot of 1919. The 600-page report of the Chicago Commission on Race Relations, published in 1921, was called *The Negro in Chicago*. It remains one of the most comprehensive studies of race relations ever published. Like the congressional committee that investigated East St. Louis, the Chicago Commission focused on corruption. The commission discussed the factors leading up to the riot: migration, close proximity of black and white neighborhoods, racial intolerance. In its memorable first paragraph, the commission said: "Many white Americans, while technically recognizing Negroes as citizens, cannot bring themselves to feel that they should participate in government as freely as other citizens."

The commission identified a lack of faith in law enforcement as contributing to the violence. In one case, for instance, hundreds of blacks converged on an apartment building where a white person was rumored to have shot a black boy. The police searched the building but failed to find the shooter. Then someone in the crowd surrounding the building threw a brick at a police officer, and the police opened fire, killing four members of the crowd. The commission used this incident to demonstrate that lack of faith in the police led to further tension, and ultimately to violence. It also suggested that there was reason for the lack of faith and that law enforcement may have used excessive force when dealing with blacks. The commission explored ways to reduce racial tension, including increasing job opportunities, increasing the quality of housing, and improving the police. Many of the recommendations may now appear naive, and many present-day commentators think that the commission was too lenient in assigning blame on whites for the riot.

The riots of 1919 concluded with a massacre in Phillips County, Arkansas, in October. This incident (like the rioting in East St. Louis) stemmed from both labor conflict and a mistaken killing of a police officer. Leaders of a tenant farmers' union, the Progressive Farmers and Householders Union of America, composed of several hundred black workers, met in a church in a rural area outside the town of Helena, Arkansas, on the evening of 30 September. The union members were attempting to increase the price they would receive for cotton they grew and then harvested. Several police detectives were spotted near the church. The reasons they were there are unclear: Perhaps they were there to spy on the union meeting; perhaps their car had broken down. In any case, shooting broke out, and one detective was killed and the other wounded. As news of the shooting spread the next day, it was interpreted as a "Negro uprising." Whites from all over the area, along with 500 state militiamen, came to Phillips County to put down the uprising. Some blacks were chased into the cane fields and indiscriminately shot. Others who had been disarmed (or were unarmed) were also shot; scores of blacks were taken to jail. The best estimate of the death toll among blacks is 50 to 100.

Some of the blacks who were arrested were tortured into confessing their role in the "uprising," and six were sentenced to death, apparently after having been framed. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) began a nationwide campaign to raise money for the defense of those who had

been arrested and to publicize the unfair trials, which were described as legalized lynching. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes eventually overturned their convictions in 1923, in *Moore v. Dempsey*, saying that "counsel, jury, and judge were swept to the fatal end by an irresistible wave of public passion."

The riot in Tulsa, Oklahoma, of 31 May and 1 June 1921 was not only the last of the major riots but probably also the worst. It also involved the most aggressive action by the black community to protect itself. The other riots had begun because black youths had stumbled into white territory, or because black strikebreakers had been attacked, or because blacks had supposedly committed crimes in white neighborhoods. By contrast, the riot in Tulsa began when blacks deliberately went into white space for a confrontation. Black veterans crossed the railroad tracks from Greenwood (the black community) into white Tulsa, where a young black man was jailed at the courthouse on an accusation of attempted rape. The well-armed veterans were following advice that had appeared in a newspaper, the *Tulsa Star*, "to march in a body and to take life if necessary to uphold the law." They refused to be disarmed at the courthouse, and at about ten o'clock at night fighting began between them and a white lynch mob that had also assembled at the courthouse. The next morning at dawn, a well-armed mob, composed of police deputies, worked in conjunction with local units of the National Guard to systematically disarm every resident of Greenwood who could be found. Shortly after Greenwood's residents had been arrested, deputies and some members of the mob looted and then burned Greenwood. By the time units of the National Guard arrived from Oklahoma City and restored order (around noon on 1 June), more than thirty blocks had been destroyed. The riot in Tulsa marked the destruction of the Greenwood community; it also marked the end of the riots of the World War I era.

Grimshaw (1959, 1969), following the lead of the study of the Chicago riot, *The Negro in Chicago*, hypothesizes that northern riots were often precipitated by conflicts over "secular" issues like housing and jobs and had a background of rising social tension, whereas southern riots tended to be precipitated by allegations of attacks on white women. On closer inspection, however, there are many similarities between riots, wherever they occurred. In many instances, the black community, particularly after East St. Louis, armed to protect itself. In each instance, there were reports that the black community had demanded social

and political equality, and there was almost always talk afterward about vice in the black communities and the breakdown of the strict line separating black and white communities. The common denominators appear to be fear of the black community and the desire to put that community back in its place.

There were also some important patterns in the white community. In most riots, sensational newspapers inflamed white people's passions—for instance, by reporting that blacks were encroaching on white communities or that blacks had assaulted whites. Also, in most instances the authorities were to protect black communities against attack; in some cases the authorities disarmed blacks even before any rioting began. In other instances, authorities disarmed the black community after violence broke out. The similarities are so striking that one is tempted to characterize the mob violence so prevalent at the time as part of a larger cultural pattern. Communities seem to have copied previous riots. There was a national pattern of lynching and riots, designed to subordinate black communities. And while lynchings have in recent years received more attention, the riots (and associated "Negro drives") were probably more important in the attempts to reestablish white control. Hundreds died in the riots, and thousands were left homeless. The economic and social effects of riots touched a greater percentage of the black communities than did lynchings. Moreover, in the aftermath of the riot of 1921 in Tulsa, although lynchings continued, the rate was never so high as before the riot, and whites had become accustomed to at least a somewhat improved status for blacks.

ALFRED BROPHY

See also Crisis, The; Riots: 2—Red Summer of 1919; Riots: 3—Tulsa, 1921

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Riots: 2—Red Summer of 1919

The summer and winter months of 1919 were marked by numerous incidents of racial violence that exploded across the American landscape, visibly exposing the hostility of much of white America toward African Americans. Throughout the nation, from large metropolitan areas such as Chicago and Washington, D.C.,

to rural communities such as Elaine, Arkansas, and Longview, Texas, African Americans faced attacks from white mobs. Although this frenzy of mob violence was most apparent in the summer of 1919, attacks on blacks and black communities continued, and this era of white mob violence would include the Tulsa riot of 1921.

During these attacks on their communities, some blacks fought back, although in almost every case they were outnumbered, and they often faced not only white vigilantes but the police or state militias. In a number of places, including Longview, Texas, Chicago, and Washington, D.C., the blacks—many of them veterans—who resisted killed and injured whites who were attacking their neighborhoods. In most places, though, injuries and deaths among blacks far outnumbered those among whites.

These riots were often sparked by specific incidents in which blacks had violated unwritten rules about race and status. However, the root cause of most of the riots was the vast social dislocation caused by World War I. Black veterans had returned in uniform with a new sense of self-confidence that made them less inclined to accept the humiliations of segregation and white supremacy. Meanwhile, during the war the North had witnessed changes in population as more than 325,000 blacks moved out of the South. This migration threatened white hegemony in the North and created labor shortages in parts of the South. The waves of unrest created by population shifts, by the stress of war, and by white people's fears spilled over into mob violence in the summer of 1919 and beyond.

Thus the origins of the racial violence characterizing the "red summer" of 1919 can be traced to social, economic, and political conditions in the early twentieth century, most importantly at the time of World War I. The threatened loss of liberty and democracy signaled by the continually changing political alliances of various European nation-states forced people across the globe to put aside their differences and unite in a common cause: the preservation of freedom. In the United States, men and women who joined the labor force or enlisted in the armed forces symbolized this united front. African Americans made a contribution to this nationalistic goal, as exemplified by the formation and participation of the all-black 369th Infantry Regiment in France. For a brief period, the racial divide that troubled the United States was at least partially bridged or disregarded. The realities of World War I functioned as a call to action for all Americans, regardless of skin color, to uphold the ideas of democracy

and to combat any transgressions against liberty and freedom.

However, this new sense of racial harmony lasted for only a brief period. Segregation and discrimination in the military had led to great resentment among most black soldiers; and many whites had been shocked and deeply disturbed by the positive treatment blacks received in France. When the war ended, an atmosphere of fear and suspicion developed, as concerns over imminent revolution, racial and religious intolerance, and the sheer threat of anarchy haunted the minds of Americans. Those in power began to feel that the nation was being saturated by Bolsheviks and other dissident elements. The fear of communism intensified, and the rhetoric of hate pushed the nation deeper into bigotry.

There were in fact a few bombing incidents and other acts of subversion by the left wing; moreover, the national economy soured after the war. War contracts abruptly ended, causing hundreds of factories and industries to close or reorganize their infrastructure in order to adapt to the new peacetime climate. These changes resulted in a period of severe labor strife as millions of the unemployed—native whites, blacks, and the rising immigrant class—competed for a limited number of jobs. America's economic outlook became increasingly bleak and uncertain in 1919, as labor strikes became commonplace. The mounting uncertainty led to outward expressions of hostility toward blacks, immigrants, and anyone else who was perceived as a threat to the status quo.

Rampant suspicion, antiradicalism, and xenophobia developed into what became known as the "red scare" of 1919. Initially, African Americans were in general uninformed about or unaffected by this development. The "red scare" was at first perceived as a concern only for white Americans, as the political elite focused on suppressing socialists, communists, Wobblies (members of the Industrial Workers of the World, IWW), and various labor radicals. However, postwar tensions soon affected blacks when unemployed whites in the North turned their attention to recent "immigrants" from the South, and southern whites sought to reassert racial supremacy over blacks who had demanded greater equality during the war. Part of this new violence was a reaction against black veterans. Not since the Civil War had most white Americans seen blacks in uniform, proudly claiming equal status with whites. Black veterans, praised for their heroism and valor in the war effort abroad, faced discrimination and segregation at home. Many refused to accept this

status. Their experiences in Europe had showed them that integration with and respect from whites were possible. Moreover, as veterans they felt that they had earned equality. Their attempts to gain equal treatment led to violence by whites.

At the same time, the rapid influx of African Americans into large northern cities in search of improved living and working conditions further destabilized the color line. Known as the “great migration,” this large-scale movement of African Americans was driven primarily by economic factors. Between 1915 and 1916, the South experienced economic disaster as a result of torrential rains in some places, prolonged droughts in others, and the devastating effects of the boll weevil. With the southern economy suffering, white southerners often resorted to lynchings and other forms of violence to express their rage and anger over the current conditions. This situation, in turn, propelled African Americans to leave the South for better opportunities and a life free of racial strife.

Although the North held the promise of freedom and opportunity, the aftermath of World War I and the postwar situation quickly shattered African Americans’ hopes for a better life. Eventually African Americans became ensnarled in the frenzy of the “red scare,” becoming objects against whom white Americans vented their frustration. Anxious whites feared an impending loss of jobs and, most important, feared a loss of social status; accordingly, they were determined to maintain a segregated society. In their minds, the growing presence of African Americans in what had been white spaces represented the black man’s quest for social equality. African Americans wanted to better their lives socially, economically, and politically, and many white Americans resented these aspirations. African Americans—by their very nature, skin color, and culture—threatened white people’s sensibilities and, in particular, threatened the color line that had been so carefully and so rigidly maintained. African Americans, however, felt entitled to enjoy the rewards and opportunities associated with being an American, especially after their contributions to the war effort. The two races had different concepts of equality; and as doubts about the economic future plunged the nation into chaos, the racial climate, combined with feelings of anxiety and disorder as a result of the war, created an atmosphere in which hostility would inevitably be expressed.

Unsurprisingly, then, racial hostility intensified in 1919. Shootings, lynchings, beatings, and other acts of violence and terror occurred in rapid succession.

For instance, eleven men were burned at the stake, and the number of lynchings rose dramatically each month. The “red summer” of 1919 had begun. There were numerous incidents of racial violence during the “red summer.” Some of the more noteworthy were the following.

On 10 May 1919, in Charleston, South Carolina, rumors spread about a racial incident involving a naval officer and a black man. Mobs of angry white servicemen and veterans, of whom many were armed and all seemed to be inspired by the rhetoric of hate, invaded one of Charleston’s predominantly black neighborhoods. Eventually, this mob was out of control, and the city police called the naval command for help in subduing the rioters. To a certain extent, order was restored, but not before two black men had been killed and countless others had been beaten or otherwise wounded and injured.

In June 1919, John Hartfield was lynched in Ellisville, Mississippi. Hartfield, an alleged rapist, became the target of an angry white mob and was severely wounded. At first, his life was spared through the good graces of a doctor in the neighborhood, but then the inflammatory rhetoric of local newspapers took effect. White citizens felt that their cause was justified; moreover, some officials believed that mob violence could never be quenched unless justice was done—in this case, “justice” meant Hartfield’s death. Hartfield was hanged, burned, and eventually shot by members of a crowd of 3,000 rioters.

A particularly ominous event occurred in Longview, Texas, a few weeks after the incident in Charleston. In Longview, racial tension had begun to intensify as a result of economic concerns. Specifically, whites had been unsettled by the activities of the National Negro Business League, an organization originally founded by Booker T. Washington to promote economic productivity for African Americans. The league had encouraged black farmers to negotiate business deals directly with their market buyers in nearby Galveston, Texas; as a result, black business owners were able to sell their products at lower prices than whites could offer. The incident began when the naked, mutilated body of Lemuel Walters was found and black residents, headed by members of the league, demanded an investigation. It soon became apparent that the local police force was not actively pursuing the investigation; furthermore, black residents expressed concern that evidence in the case would be destroyed. Mistrust between the races intensified. Then a black newspaper, the *Chicago Defender*, published an article alleging that

Walters had been killed by a mob because of his love for a white woman, that the police in Longview had refused to investigate the murder, and that the police had actually encouraged the mob violence against Walters. In reaction, a group of irate white men confronted S. L. Jones, a local agent for the *Defender*, and accused him of having written the article; Jones denied the allegation but was nevertheless severely beaten. He sought the aid of a local physician, C. P. Davis; he and Davis were then personally threatened, but they refused to leave Longview, and they thus became a target of impending racial violence. On the night of 10 July, tension between these two men and the white townspeople worsened, and several black citizens helped Jones and Davis prepare an assault against an approaching mob. Davis started a shootout in which four men were killed and others were wounded. Whites retaliated by burning black residents' homes and murdering Davis's father-in-law. Davis and Jones managed to escape, and martial law was eventually imposed. By then, however, many blacks and whites had died.

Another significant incident occurred in Washington, D.C. During the summer of 1919, there had been accounts of sexual assaults by black men against white women, and although some of these claims proved to be false, tension amounting to hysteria developed. As in other incidents, white citizens were egged on by the inflammatory rhetoric of local newspapers. In this case, the situation exploded during a night when a group of white servicemen roamed the streets, attacking any black person in sight. The local police force was unable or unwilling to control this group of marauders, and violence continued for three days. The well-known African American scholar Carter G. Woodson is said to have witnessed this outbreak of violence and indeed to have barely escaped with his life. African Americans then formulated plans to retaliate. They acquired weapons from people in nearby Baltimore and asked biracial soldiers to infiltrate white mobs and gangs as spies, to learn about plans for further attacks. However, the secretary of war, Newton Baker, asked the infantry to patrol the city's streets; and bad weather, in the form of torrential rains, soon discouraged any additional acts of violence. Still, before the violence ended, six people had died and hundreds more had been seriously injured.

Yet another episode of violence and insurrection took place in Chicago. It started at Lake Michigan, where whites threw rocks at a young black man, Eugene Williams, who was swimming too close to a

customarily "white" beach. Williams attempted to swim back to the "black" beach but was drowned. Evidence later suggested that he had not been hit by the rocks, although his fear of being hit may have been a factor in his drowning. In any event, this incident resulted in a full-scale riot in Chicago. The rumor soon spread that a white youth had drowned after being assaulted by rock-throwing black youths; another rumor was that a local police officer had denied assistance to Williams. The truth became distorted beyond recognition; misinformation and hatred took hold, blacks and whites stormed the beach, gunfire broke out, and a race war began. Gangs of angry whites roamed the streets of Chicago's South Side, attacking blacks at random. The city's newspapers published racially biased and provocative articles depicting African Americans as undesirable and unfit to participate in society. The riot in Chicago lasted for perhaps thirteen days and led to the deaths of fifteen whites and twenty-three blacks. Also, according to the records, 537 people were injured, about two-thirds of them black and one-third white. Probably many more were actually injured but were not taken to hospitals and so were not included in the count. More than 1,000 black families were left homeless. In Chicago, as in Washington, the police did not handle the turmoil effectively.

These episodes of racial strife, and many others, crippled relations between whites and African Americans. Furthermore, the conflicting interests of labor and capital exacerbated hostility between the races. White Americans seemed determined to eradicate the presence of African Americans at any cost, and there was renewed interest in the radical hate group known as the Ku Klux Klan. Despite the countless deaths, the antiblack rhetoric, and the destruction of property, however, the incidents of the "red summer" provided one glimmer of hope: a reaffirmation of African Americans' sense of racial pride, as illustrated by the emergence of a new identity, the "New Negro."

Although the concept of the New Negro had existed years earlier, the events of 1919 created more interest in it. Generally, the term "New Negro" referred to middle-class African American men and women who were in a position to acquire their share of America's promised democracy and equal rights and to promote a new image of the race. The expression of racial pride was a focal point of the concept of the New Negro. After the events of 1919, the image of the lazy, shuffling, inferior African American would be cast aside and replaced by a new image of African Americans as

proud, resolute, and dignified. Alain Locke's *The New Negro* (1925) served as a written manifesto of this new image. Armed with a new sense of self-expression and self-definition, the New Negro was prepared to demand equality, aggressively, at all costs.

Therefore, the months of conflict in 1919 strengthened African Americans' resolve to acquire a better life. The "red summer" fostered a growing feeling of outrage and militancy toward the oppressor. For example, a leading periodical of the Harlem Renaissance movement, *The Messenger*, published a series of articles praising its own readers for fighting back against acts of violence. *The Messenger* and other periodicals also saw the New Negro as someone who would not stand by idly and allow further degradation to occur. These publications developed a language of empowerment.

The New Negro, as a concept, implied and contributed to a positive self-image of the race. It also suggested that African Americans would need to use new methods in their quest for equality and democracy: "The German Hun is beaten, but the world is made no safer for Democracy. Humanity has been defended, but lifted no higher. Democracy never will be safe in America until these occurrences are made impossible either by the proper execution of the law or with double-barrel shot guns" (quoted in Lewis 1997). After the "red summer" of 1919, the New Negro would no longer serve as a scapegoat or victim.

In literature, perhaps the most poignant expression of African Americans' resolve to confront race relations defiantly was Claude McKay's important poem "If We Must Die" (1919), which was inspired by the events of the "red summer." This sonnet, published in McKay's collection *Harlem Shadows* (1922), pleads for the dignity of the oppressed: "If we must die, let it not be like hogs/Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot. . . /If we must die, O let us nobly die/So that our precious blood may not be shed/In vain. . . ." McKay expressed an oppressed people's moral outrage and desire for dignity; he was hailed as a revolutionary poet, and his literary works became the voice of those who were victimized by the events of the "red summer." Other poems by McKay also capture these events. For example, "The Lynching" (1919) depicts the mentality of mob violence: "The ghastly body swaying in the sun/The women thronged to look. . . ." And "America" (1921) reflects the ambivalence many African Americans felt toward their nation, a land that promoted freedom and democracy but despised them as a race: "Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,/And sinks into my throat her tiger's tooth,/Stealing my breath of life,

I will confess/I love this cultured hell that tests my youth!" McKay's harsh, vivid imagery depicts life along the color line. Later generations would in their turn use poems such as "If We Must Die" as an international anthem of protest for all the world's oppressed and disenfranchised. In a speech during World War II, British prime minister Winston Churchill quoted "If We Must Die," though without attributing it to McKay; and in the early 1970s, after an uprising in the state prison at Attica, New York, a copy of this poem was found in the possession of one of the insurgent inmates.

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See also Chicago Defender; Fifteenth Infantry; Great Migration; Harlem Shadows; McKay, Claude; Messenger, The; National Negro Business League; New Negro; Racial Violence: Riots and Lynching; Riots: 3—Tulsa, 1921; Woodson, Carter G.; World War I

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Riots: 3—Tulsa, 1921

On 31 May 1921, the *Tulsa Tribune* carried a front-page story, "Nab Negro for Attacking White Girl in Elevator." The article was about an alleged attempted rape of Sarah Page by nineteen-year-old Dick Rowland (whom the newspaper identified as "Diamond Dick"). By late afternoon, there was talk of lynching, and Tulsa's

black citizens were becoming alarmed. There was good reason to fear that Rowland would be lynched. Less than a year before, a white man had been taken out of the jail and lynched in the presence of police officers who did nothing to stop the killing.

Earlier, in 1920, when a black man was lynched in Oklahoma City, A. J. Smitherman had said in an editorial in his weekly paper, the *Tulsa Star*, that “any set of citizens had a legal right—it was their duty—to arm themselves and march in a body to the jail . . . and to take life if need be to uphold the law and protect the prisoner.” Now groups of veterans met throughout the evening at the offices of the *Tulsa Star*, debating their next moves. Around seven o’clock that evening, black veterans of World War I appeared at the courthouse and offered their services to protect Rowland. They received assurances that Rowland was safe and were told by a black deputy sheriff that they were just stirring up racial trouble and that they should go home, which they did.

By ten o’clock that night, when a white mob had assembled and had not been dispersed, several dozen black veterans—who were carrying weapons—appeared at the courthouse. Their leader was someone named Mann, who had reportedly come back from the war in France “with exaggerated ideas about equality and thinking he can whip the world.” When one of the men refused to relinquish his gun to law enforcement officers, shooting started and a riot began. As soon as the shooting began, members of the white mob broke into stores to get guns and ammunition. At about the same time, the police department began deputizing men to assist in what they saw as a “Negro uprising.” After the riot, some whites testified that they were told to “get a gun, and get busy and try to get a nigger.” The black veterans quickly headed north, across the railroad tracks that separated black and white Tulsa.

Local units of the National Guard began working with the police department to put down the “uprising.” Dozens of cars patrolled along the border of the black community, Greenwood, and talk could be heard everywhere of driving into “Little Africa,” as Greenwood was often called. Within Greenwood, veterans put on their uniforms and their helmets and got out their rifles.

Before dawn on 1 June, the National Guard, working in conjunction with the police and their deputies, began disarming and arresting black men along the outskirts of Greenwood. Beginning around dawn, the arrests became more widespread. Everyone in Greenwood

was disarmed and arrested. Most of those arrested surrendered peacefully, but there were a few pitched battles, and some who refused to give up their guns were killed.

After the arrests were made, the mobs looted Greenwood. One white observer later testified that some rioters took phonograph players out of houses, starting playing them, and continued looting; then the rioters began to burn the houses. One photograph of the riot was labeled “running the Negro out of Tulsa,” which is what the deputized mob was doing. Civilization broke down completely that day. There was cold-blooded killing of unarmed men and women; a man was dragged behind a car; there are even stories that airplanes shot at people on the ground.

The arrests were completed by about ten o’clock in the morning, and the burning and looting ended shortly afterward, as units of the National Guard arrived from Oklahoma City and enforced the martial law declared by the governor. The riot claimed perhaps as many as 150 lives and destroyed thirty-five blocks in Greenwood. Over the next several days, residents of Greenwood were released from custody, as their white employers came and vouched for them. Those residents who stayed on in Greenwood lived in tents, often for months, until they rebuilt their homes.

This riot, like others in the wake of World War I, had resulted from the rising aspirations of blacks and their refusal to defer to whites as the whites demanded. The grand jury investigating the riot attributed it to agitation for social equality and to radical literature circulating in Greenwood. The great periodicals of the Harlem Renaissance, such as *The Crisis*, the *Chicago Defender*, and *The (Indianapolis) Freeman*, were accused of disseminating radical ideas. Many commentators suggested that W. E. B. Du Bois, who had visited Tulsa a few months before, had stirred up “race trouble.” The grand ideas of the renaissance were making their way out to the territories and were having important consequences.

After the riot, the city attempted to prevent rebuilding by rezoning the burned area for industrial uses. That rezoning was struck down as an interference with property rights; nevertheless, many residents of Greenwood left for such places as Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City, Los Angeles, and Boston. Insurance companies refused to honor fire insurance policies, citing “riot exclusion” clauses, and the city was immune from lawsuits. Despite initial promises of assistance for rebuilding, the remaining residents of Greenwood received little help.

A. J. Smitherman, who was under indictment for inciting the riot, fled to Boston, where he wrote editorials promoting the cause of the riot victims in Tulsa. Smitherman also wrote a long poem to tell the story of the riot and to celebrate Tulsa's veterans for ensuring that the rule of law, not a lynch mob, would prevail. He concluded: "Nobly they had stopped a lynching,/Taught a lesson for all time. . . ./Though they fought the sacrificial/Fight with banners flying high,/Yet the thing of more importance/Is the way they fought—and why!"

ALFRED BROPHY

See also Riots: 1—Overview, 1917–1921

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Riots: 4—Harlem Riot, 1935

On 19–20 March 1935, 500 policemen patrolled central Harlem, where roving bands of black men and women smashed 626 windows and looted stores before order was restored. After initially being dispersed by the police into side streets during the late afternoon of 19 March, crowds soon returned to resume the assault on white stores on 125th Street. Harlemites attacked and looted stores between 120th and 138th streets and Fifth and Saint Nicholas avenues, hurling missiles down from roofs and windows onto the police. By the time the riot ended, more than 200 Harlemites had been injured or arrested, and seven policemen had been injured. The image of renaissance Harlem as a cultural magnet for white downtowners seeking the primitive under the guise of modernity—the image of the 1920s—was shattered with the plate glass; in the 1930s, Harlem appeared angrier. Alain Locke, in a postmortem article about the renaissance, noted that this riot, more than any other single event, had changed the public image of Harlem as a bright, superficial world of nightclubs, cabaret tours, and arty magazines.

The riot had been triggered by an erroneous rumor that a sixteen-year-old Puerto Rican, Lino Rivera, accused of stealing a knife from the Kress Store on West 125th Street, had been beaten to death by store officials and the police. In the history of American urban racial violence, it was unique: It was a riot against property and for commodities, and it stemmed from the economic deprivation wrought by the Great Depression. Before 1935, racial rioting usually involved (1) invasion by whites of black residential areas, sometimes provoking retaliation or self-defense; (2) pitched battles between black and white civilians in an area contiguous to both communities; or (3) attacks on blacks caught in white downtown areas. These elements had been present to varying degrees in earlier riots, such as those in Atlanta, Georgia (1906); Washington, D.C. (1919); Tulsa, Oklahoma (1921); and East St. Louis, Illinois (1917)—and in many of the twenty-six race riots of the “red summer” of 1919, including the largest, in Chicago. But these ingredients were not present in the Harlem riot of 1935, and this suggests the difficulty of classifying it as simply another race riot. What happened in Harlem—the activity of white and black communist agitators against police and white merchants during the rioting, and the attacks on white people's property instead of on the whites themselves—reveals undertones of an interracial class revolt against discrimination and unemployment within a more generalized racial rebellion by Harlemites.

Still, the riot in Harlem had some similarity to traditional urban racial disorders. In previous riots, one factor in the onset was smaller-scale violence related to various earlier grievances; this was also true in Harlem. For more than a decade, black newspapers like *New York Age* and the *New York Amsterdam News* had carried articles about white police brutality and use of excessive force in Harlem. In 1933, the police had attempted to stop the sale of copies of the *Liberator* (a black leftist publication) at a street meeting held by the communist-sponsored International Labor Defense; the reason given was that a front-page story exposing a white policeman's brutal attack on a black girl would have led to a race riot. The *New York Daily News* observed in an editorial: “There has been more street rioting in New York City in the first three months of Mayor [Fiorello] La Guardia's administration than in any similar period of time that we can remember.”

The most significant clash before 1935, however, occurred on 17 March 1934 at a rally sponsored by the International Labor Defense to support the Scottsboro boys. Five thousand black and white demonstrators at

126th Street and Lenox Avenue became involved in a physical confrontation with the police, who used tear gas to break up the rally; at one point, a police car was driven onto the sidewalk and into the crowd. Several policemen and demonstrators were injured, and various organizations charged the police with brutality. The police claimed to have been reacting to violence by the demonstrators, who had hurled rocks, trash can covers, grapefruit, and so on; the police also denied that they had beaten a girl and a man at the rally and that they had drawn their revolvers on the crowd. A report by the chief inspector recommended disciplinary action against two policemen for using excessive force, and against an acting sergeant “for failing to exercise proper supervision” (a failure that resulted in the use of tear gas). However, the police commissioner, in a letter to Mayor La Guardia, disagreed with that report, and the commissioner’s department later exonerated the two police officers. For many Harlemites, this incident at the rally increased their bitterness against the police and demonstrated the hopelessness of relying on internal discipline in the police department. Still, the incident did not provoke retaliatory violence from blacks and did not develop into a major riot. The people of Harlem may well have viewed the conflict as a confrontation between black and white communists on the one hand and the police on the other, rather than as a general community confrontation. It is worth noting, though, that the willingness of the Communist Party to stand up for blacks helped the party to organize in Harlem and contributed to its increasingly favorable image among some Harlemites who were not communists.

Another, more encompassing issue, then, was needed to make Harlem erupt. During the Great Depression, the most immediate issue, amounting to a crisis, was the extraordinarily high unemployment rate and the resulting struggle for food, clothing, and shelter. Meanwhile, white merchants and chain stores on 125th Street refused to employ black clerical and sales personnel; in the 1920s, this policy had caused resentment, but now, in the 1930s, it became the master symbol of white arrogance in the face of black deprivation. The initial impetus for a campaign to obtain jobs in white stores came from Sufi Abdul Hamid, who had led such a campaign in Chicago. In 1933, Hamid began aggressive picketing and boycotting of stores above 125th Street. Also, parishioners at Saint Martin’s Episcopal Church, led by Rev. John H. Johnson, formed the Citizens’ League for Fair Play, which became an umbrella organization for many groups in

Harlem, both working class and bourgeois, agitating for clerical jobs on 125th Street. Groups of varying ideologies, from black nationalism to integrationism to communism, at one time or another took part in the boycott or organized their own boycotts. To the middle class, the boycott was an opportunity to enter white-collar employment; to black nationalists, it was a prelude to taking over all the jobs and businesses of Harlem and ending “economic colonialism” there. To the Communist Party, initially, the campaign was a threat to their goal of solidarity between black and white workers—a ruse by which the black petit bourgeois intended to gain strength. But once the communists saw how popular the campaign was, they changed their tactics and began their own boycott and picketing.

The jobs campaign—and Harlem—appeared to achieve a victory in late July 1934, when Blumstein’s department store agreed to hire thirty-five black saleswomen by September. However, Sufi Abdul Hamid’s Negro Industrial and Clerical Alliance considered thirty-five an insufficient number and continued picketing; Arthur Reid and Ira Kemp of the Citizens’ League then formed their own organization and continued picketing because Blumstein’s gave the jobs to lighter-skinned rather than darker-skinned women. The courts began to prohibit picketing, merchants began to discriminate once again in hiring, and some stores fired the black workers who had been hired during the jobs campaign.

Ironically, one reason given by the courts for forbidding picketing was that it might lead to racial violence. For instance, Justice Samuel Rosenman of the state supreme court, who issued an order restraining back organizations from picketing the A. S. Beck shoe store in Harlem, said that a fear of race rioting had influenced his decision. Actually, the restraining order increased the chances of racial violence by precluding at least one peaceful alternative and adding to Harlemites’ frustration.

The climate, then, was conducive to rioting; the false rumor of Lino Rivera’s death merely provided the occasion. Many Harlemites were entirely prepared to believe the rumor, on the basis of their own experience with the police and with white merchants; and the way the incident unfolded did nothing to dispel the story. Rivera—who was not beaten—later stated that store employees threatened to take him down to the basement and beat him, although the store manager denied making this threat. The policemen took the youth through the basement to the rear entrance and released him there, to avoid the excited spectators;

this action led one black woman in the store to cry out that the boy was being taken to the basement to be beaten up. The coincidental appearance of an ambulance and a hearse appeared to support her idea, and to support the community's fear that Rivera had been killed. Accounts of what the police did at this critical juncture are contradictory. One policeman testified before the Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem, which was charged with investigating the riot, that a committee of women was formed among the shoppers to search the basement, but the commission was never able to find these women. The police and the store managers testified that they had told the crowd gathered in the store that the boy was alive and unharmed. Others, however, testified that the police made no effort to inform the spectators, the boy's condition being none of the onlookers' business. It is possible that both the police and the spectators were testifying accurately, because the actual composition of the crowd and the police personnel changed over the course of the episode; in any case, the Harlemites evidently gave little credence to what the police said.

At five-thirty that afternoon, the crowd had become so agitated that the store was closed, but no violent confrontations had yet developed, either between blacks and whites or between Harlemites and the police. At this point, some white and black leftists sought to give direction to the crowd's anger; their idea was to form an interracial alliance to protest not only against the treatment of Rivera but more generally against social and economic conditions in Harlem. A white member of the Nurses and Hospital League, an organization fighting for black hospital workers, was pushed off a ladder on 125th Street by the police, who had long been antagonistic toward interracial gatherings and cooperation. A white member of the New York Students' League, an organization sympathetic to civil rights, was dragged off a lamppost on 125th Street, beaten, and arrested for attempting to address the crowd. At approximately the same time, a number of black residents of the Salvation Army's facility on 124th Street began throwing stones, breaking windows in the rear of the Kress store. The smashing of windows and subsequent looting of white stores along 125th Street gathered momentum as the evening wore on, with the crowds spreading to Seventh and Lenox avenues.

The leftist speakers were not the cause of the rioting, but they did try to channel the anger of the crowd toward white merchants and political leaders. In particular, the distribution of leaflets by the Young Communist

League and Young Liberators has led some authorities to claim that the communists were responsible for the rioting. Actually, the leaflets did not appear on the streets before seven-thirty in the evening, after the rioting had begun. Still, these leaflets may have influenced the crowds to attack property rather than people. A circular issued by a leftist Harlem youth organization, the Young Liberators, claimed that Rivera had been beaten nearly to death; such circulars called for black and white workers to unite and also called for the arrest of the Kress store managers "responsible for the lynch attack."

Leaflets of the Young Communist League appeared on the streets after those of the Young Liberators. The league's wording stressed even more the need for interracial working-class solidarity and warned that any conflicts between black and white workers would benefit the capitalist "bosses." James Ford, the black leader of the Harlem section of the Communist Party, indicated that his organization and the Young Liberators rejected rioting as a legitimate vehicle for social change, but he was probably more disturbed by the possibility that rioting could lead to fighting between black and white workers (as in previous race riots) and thus destroy the party's program of working-class unity. Ford's issuance of a leaflet to defuse potential interracial clashes resembles his action during the Chicago race riot of 1919 when he and two fellow communists—William Z. Foster and Earl Browder—distributed leaflets to prevent the spread of racial rioting into the stockyards. To achieve a similar end in Harlem, the party distributed 15,000 copies of the *Daily Worker* and thousands of copies of the Young Communist League's leaflet. There were in fact no clashes between blacks and whites, but this cannot be attributed solely to the activities of the communists. In New York (unlike, say, Chicago or East St. Louis), there had been no significant clashes between striking white workers and black scab laborers before the riot; nor did Harlem have the high level of violence surrounding the integration of white residential areas, and whites tended to flee Harlem rather than engage in physical violence to maintain their dominance. Consequently, New York had a lower level of racial animus than many other cities.

After two nights of violence, the riot subsided. Then, public officials, community leaders, and the press all tried to explain the causes of such an outbreak in liberal New York. Two official explanations evolved for this riot, as for other urban race riots in the twentieth century. According to one explanation, the

riot was attributable to the “riffraff”—irresponsible petty criminals and other social deviants. According to the second explanation, the riot was due to communists, anarchists, or socialists. On the second day of the riot, Mayor La Guardia released a statement expressing the “riffraff” theory: “The unfortunate occurrence of last night and early this morning was instigated and artificially stimulated by a few irresponsible individuals.” He also sent into Harlem two patrol wagons loaded with circulars expressing this theory and saying that most Harlemites were decent, law-abiding citizens, not rioters. The mayor’s assertion remained unsubstantiated. No polls were taken in Harlem after the riot of 1935 to ascertain people’s attitudes (nor was any such poll taken after the riot of 1943); however, the impression formed by the mayor’s investigatory commission was that “among all classes, there was a feeling that the outburst was justified and that it represented a protest against discrimination and privations resulting from unemployment.” La Guardia does not seem to have considered massive unemployment and the racially discriminatory or indifferent policies of certain municipal departments as key causes of the riot.

William Dodge, the district attorney for Manhattan, expressed the second explanation, attributing the riot to “communist agitators”—a conspiracy of immigrant foreign communist provocateurs. As the attorney general of the United States, A. Mitchell Palmer, had done in 1919, Dodge said he would ask the commissioner of immigration to deport any alien rioters: “My purpose is to let the Communists know that they cannot come into this country and upset our laws.” The Uptown Chamber of Commerce expressed similar sentiments.

However, most of the press did focus on economic conditions as the fundamental cause of the riot. The *New York Sun* said, for instance: “Seeing red is an official privilege, diversion, and avocation at the moment” in which “no disorder can occur without being attributed to those terror-inspiring Communists whose shadows darken the sky at noon-day. . . . Actually, the Communists are more likely to have been passengers on the ebullience of a volatile population than the authors of its effervescence.” The liberal white press interpreted the riot to its readers as an explosion of an unemployed, ill-paid population who lived in poor, overcrowded, rent-inflated housing and had no adequate health care. (In Harlem, family income had declined 44 percent between 1929 and 1932, but the cost-of-living index for New York State had declined

only 17 percent. By September 1933, 43.2 percent of Harlem’s families were on relief.)

African American community leaders and liberal whites also focused on problems that were common nationwide during the Depression and had simply been intensified in Harlem. Cecelia C. Saunders, executive director of the Harlem branch of the YWCA, mentioned “too much unemployment, too much poverty, too much idle time; . . . too small a proportion of Work Relief . . . ; too many people . . . on inadequate Home Relief.” The leaders of the jobs campaign—Rev. William Lloyd Imes and Rev. John H. Johnson—saw the riot as retaliation against white merchants who refused to hire blacks.

The mayor’s investigatory commission reached much the same conclusion: that the riot had been caused by severely depressed social and economic conditions, by rampant racial discrimination in the private sector, and by pervasive racial bias or indifference in city government. In fact, the commission ruled out criminality (“riffraff”) and communist agitation as causes. (There was only one dissenter: Rev. William R. McCann, pastor of Saint Charles Borromeo Roman Catholic Church on West 141st Street, who thought the communists were responsible.) This conclusion was quite unusual—most such commissions established to investigate riots concluded, conservatively, that hoodlums and agitators were to blame.

The makeup of the commission in New York may have been a factor in this outcome. Unlike the other investigatory bodies, it had a majority of black Harlemite members (seven blacks to six whites). Its chairman was Dr. Charles H. Roberts of Harlem; its vice chairman was the white liberal publisher Oswald Garrison Villard; and its director of research was Dr. E. Franklin Frazier, a professor of sociology at Howard University. Interestingly, the commission did not include some of the more prominent and militant Harlem activists—such as Rev. Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and the socialist labor organizer Frank Crosswaith—and this omission had given rise to criticism and to fears of a whitewash. Yet the commission’s final report was so critical of the city government that La Guardia asked for written rebuttals from city department heads and put off the official release of the report. The *Amsterdam News* in Harlem published a leaked copy of the report on 18 July 1936.

The riot of 1935 produced a slightly more responsive attitude in the La Guardia administration to community needs, though without altering the overall picture of black deprivation. In the year following the riot,

certain appointments were made to defuse some of the criticism in the commission's report: the first black female public school principal; Dr. John West as director of the Central Harlem Health Center; Rev. John H. Johnson as a member of the advisory board for the Emergency Relief Bureau, and more blacks at the bureau itself; and five blacks as members of the medical board of Harlem General Hospital (instead of only one, as earlier). Also, *La Guardia* began to speak before black audiences, especially at religious conferences, promising Harlemites their fair share of appointments, school positions, playgrounds, and hospitals. However, three years after the riot, the income of the average black family was still insufficient to maintain a decent and healthful standard of living.

The riot of 1935 in Harlem represented a transition: The target of violence in riots was changing from black people (in the early twentieth century) to white property (in 1935) to white property and white people (in the 1960s, usually after some accusation of excessive police force). The fact that only property was attacked, and the dissemination of militant propaganda by black and white activists, made the riot of 1935 unique and led Claude McKay to deny that it was a riot at all—he preferred to describe it as an economic or class revolt. Still, throughout history the urban poor have often erupted in protest against their material destitution and powerlessness, and in this regard at least the riot in Harlem was traditional.

LARRY A. GREENE

See also *Amsterdam News*; Communist Party; Ford, James William; Frazier, E. Franklin; Hamid, Sufi Abdul; *Liberator*; Locke, Alain; McKay, Claude; Riots: 1—Overview, 1917–1921; Scottsboro; Villard, Oswald Garrison

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Robeson, Paul

Paul Robeson (1898–1976), one of the twentieth century's greatest concert singers and actors, was a major contributor to the culture of Harlem from 1919 through 1929. From a tiny two-block enclave in 1900, black Harlem had grown by the end of 1919 into an African American mecca that nurtured a myriad of cultural treasures. The interaction of blacks from all parts of the United States, the West Indies, and distant Africa led to the growth of a highly race-conscious, sophisticated community.

Robeson arrived in the fall of 1919 from Rutgers College as America's foremost scholar-athlete, and by 1929 he would become one of the leading symbols of the Harlem Renaissance. He entered Columbia University Law School in early 1920, as an all-American football star and a member of Phi Beta Kappa, and with a reputation as an inspiring orator because of his memorable valedictory address to his graduating class at Rutgers College on 18 June 1919:

May I not appeal to you . . . to join us in continuing to fight . . . until in all sections of this fair land there will be equal opportunities for all, and character shall be the standard of excellence; . . . [until] an injury to the meanest citizen is an insult to the whole Constitution; and until black and white shall clasp friendly hands in the consciousness of the fact that we are brethren and that God is the father of us all.

Some listeners said that this speech was the most eloquent message ever delivered at a Rutgers commencement.

Robeson found living quarters in central Harlem, at the hub of its cultural and social life. In great demand as a public speaker, he made many contacts among Harlem's elite and was soon welcomed into the exclusive group of intellectuals who set the cultural tone for the Harlem Renaissance. W. E. B. Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson, who was simultaneously the leader of the new black literary movement and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), exerted the greatest influence on Robeson's thinking through their commitment to the idea that achievement of artistic recognition by

blacks was the most effective means of advancing the cause of civil rights.

At Johnson's gatherings, Robeson cautiously entered the heated political debates. He was a good listener and a brief talker, and he asked penetrating questions without seeming to challenge. Even though he could not yet compete intellectually with the members of this formidable group, everyone was attentive when he sang. Sometimes J. Rosamond Johnson accompanied him; often, though, he sang a cappella.

It was during the summer of 1920 that Robeson made his first attempt at acting. A friend, Dora Cole Norman, revived a work by the white playwright Ridgely Torrence, *Simon the Cyrenean*, which had broken with theatrical stereotypes of black characters by telling the story of an African who carried Christ's cross to Golgotha. She persuaded Robeson to play the leading role. Kenneth McGowan and Robert Edmond Jones, two founders of the Provincetown Players, a successful experimental theater group in Greenwich Village and Massachusetts, saw Robeson's opening-night performance. After the show, they congratulated him and invited him to audition for them. But he went home, put the theater out of his mind, and returned to law school the next day as if nothing special had happened. He was much too busy studying law and developing his singing skills.

Moreover, Robeson needed to play professional football, to pay his expenses at Columbia Law School. When he and his friend Fritz Pollard were invited to join the Akron Pros during the season of 1920, at \$500 or more a game, he accepted without hesitation. The Pros, led by Robeson and Pollard, won the championship and national fame; undefeated in thirteen games, they held all their opponents scoreless. Robeson, billed as the greatest defensive end in the history of football, consistently drew large crowds.

He did not return to the stage until April 1922, when he appeared as the main black character in a new play, *Taboo*. This play, the first work of Mary Hoyt Wiborg, a wealthy white socialite, opened its trial run in New York in late April at the Sam Harris Theater. Most critics gave it lukewarm or even cold reviews: They described it as "diffuse" and objected to its "obscure" plot. By contrast, Robeson's notices were generally favorable. He was given credit for a powerful stage presence and a magnificent speaking voice. Only the drama critic for the *New York Times*, Alexander Woollcott, dismissed Robeson's acting ability with the tart comment that he belonged almost anywhere but in the theater.

Robeson's next acting opportunity came his way purely by chance. Late one Saturday night in May 1922, he was standing on the corner of Seventh Avenue and 135th Street, talking to friends, when along came Harold Browning, who was the leader of a quartet called the Four Harmony Kings. They were singing in the black musical comedy *Shuffle Along*, which had become a hit on Broadway. Browning was bewailing the fact that the bass singer of the quartet had suddenly left for Chicago, and that unless another bass could be found by Monday, the Harmony Kings would have to drop out of the show.

Robeson, who had been restless ever since he finished his law exams, stepped up eagerly and said, "Brother, you're looking at your bass right here!" Out of sheer desperation, Browning took him home to try out a few notes. He was astonished to find that Robeson could sing three tones lower and many notes higher than the former bass, and that his voice was rich and beautiful. Robeson got the job and became one of the stars of the show.

This experience whetted his appetite for the legitimate theater, and in early 1923 he sought a meeting with Eugene O'Neill, who he felt might "possibly have Negro roles." The next month Robeson received a note from Kenneth McGowan, director of the Provincetown Players, inviting him to read for a leading part: Jim Harris in O'Neill's new play *All God's Chillun Got Wings*. This was the story of a tragic interracial marriage and was one of the first mainstream American plays to confront the issue of interracial marriage head-on. Robeson's audition almost hypnotized the audience of theater professionals. The part was his for the taking.

In late March, while waiting to make his debut with O'Neill's company, he took the opportunity to appear in a revival of *Roseanne* presented by the Lafayette Players. The all-black company, founded by Charles Gilpin, presented limited runs of the play for one week each at Harlem's Lafayette Theater and the Dunbar in Philadelphia. With the famous actress Rose McClendon in the title role, Paul played a wayward preacher who is rescued from his congregation by a strong woman.

On 1 April 1924, a review in the *Philadelphia Record* noted that "the players seem a good deal more interesting than the play itself. . . . Paul Robeson is a strapping man with a voice that rolls out of him like a vibrant tide. It would be extremely interesting to see what he could do with *Emperor Jones* or the frustrated young negro in *All God's Chillun Got Wings*."

Robeson focused on preparing for his role in *All God's Chillun Got Wings*. As matters developed, he would need all this concentration. The Provincetown Players decided to deflect attention from the controversy over the interracial theme by first reviving *The Emperor Jones* for a week, with Robeson playing the lead. Originally made famous by Charles Gilpin, this role was an ideal vehicle for Robeson because it offered both complexity and tragic possibilities—in short, a fully realized character.

Brutus Jones is a wily Pullman porter who becomes the self-proclaimed emperor of a small Caribbean island after having gotten into trouble in the United States and having escaped from prison by killing a brutal guard. Ultimately, Jones is the victim of his rebellious subjects, who inflict their revenge on him for his misrule. It required a tour de force to learn this role and the part of Jim in *All God's Chillun Got Wings* simultaneously.

The Emperor Jones opened on 6 May 1924, and the reviewers heaped praise on Robeson's performance. The critic for the *New York Herald Tribune* commented that the play was "vitalized by a Negro with power and a full measure of understanding." The *New York Telegram* reported that "Robeson held his audience enthralled. . . . He has a powerful voice that fairly booms, and it is resonant. . . . If [he] had the proper training he would become one of the greatest singers in the world."

When *All God's Chillun Got Wings* opened the following week—on 15 May 1924—not a single protester appeared, although there had been numerous threats that created a highly dramatic situation. Alexander Woollcott praised the "noble figure . . . superbly embodied and fully comprehended by Paul Robeson." Robert Welsh of the *New York Telegram and Evening Mail* wrote that the "difficult role" of the Negro husband was "played powerfully and with a convincing simplicity by Paul Robeson." And Heywood Brown commented in the *World* that Robeson brought "a genius to the piece," and wondered if he would play Othello someday.

In an interview with the *New York Herald Tribune* about his "possibilities," and in two articles for the black magazines *The Messenger* and *Opportunity*, where he discussed his own hopes and O'Neill's plays, Robeson set out his defense of O'Neill's black tragic heroes. He believed in Jim Harris and Brutus Jones in spite of the black stereotypes that still marred them, and he responded to the strong criticism leveled at

O'Neill's characterizations by much of the black press, by black nationalists, and by many black civil rights leaders:

In *All God's Chillun* we have a play of great strength and beautiful spirit, mocking all petty prejudice, emphasizing the humanness, and, in Mr. O'Neill's words, "the oneness" of mankind. Any number of people have said to me: "I trust that now you will get a truly heroic and noble role, one portraying the finest type of Negro." I honestly believe that perhaps never will I portray a nobler type than "Jim Harris" or a more heroically tragic figure than "Brutus Jones, Emperor," not excepting "Othello."

The reactions to these two plays among Negroes but point out one of the most serious drawbacks to the development of a true Negro dramatic literature. We are too self-conscious, too afraid of showing all phases of our life—especially those phases which are of greatest dramatic value. The great mass of our group discourage any member who has the courage to fight these petty prejudices. I am still being damned all over the place for playing in *All God's Chillun*. It annoys me very little when I realize that those who object most strenuously know mostly nothing of the play and in any event know little of the theater and have no right to judge a playwright of O'Neill's talents.

Robeson remained steadfast in his view that O'Neill's tragic hero was a transitional figure, a first step away from dehumanized caricature. His own ultimate goal was to portray black characters from a fully black perspective:

One of the great measures of a people is its culture, its artistic stature. Above all things, we boast that the only true artistic contributions of America are Negro in origin. We boast of the culture of ancient Africa.

I am sure that there will come Negro playwrights of great power, and I trust I shall have some part in interpreting that most interesting and much needed addition to the drama of America.

Later in 1924, Robeson appeared for the first time in a film by the black director Oscar Micheaux, the classic *Body and Soul*. Robeson performed the two leading male roles: a charming but evil preacher who is also a seducer, gambler, thief, and killer; and his twin,

an upright young man who is a model of benevolence as he courts the heroine. Here was an interesting experiment for the fledgling actor. The fact that the film was silent deprived Robeson of his main asset, his speaking voice. Moreover, the film's low budget virtually precluded retakes, so for the most part he had to do everything right the first time. His later success as a film star throughout the 1930s was due in part to the experience he gained from working with Micheaux.

In March 1925, the distinguished accompanist-arranger Lawrence Brown had returned to the United States on receiving the news that his father was dying. After the funeral, he went to the flat of his friends the Sawyers at 188 West 135th Street, put his luggage down, and decided to take a walk. As he turned the corner, there was Paul Robeson, whom he had met briefly in Europe, standing by himself. If Brown had come at any other time, he would have missed Robeson. Brown recalled that by then, Robeson was the most popular man in Harlem. In response to Brown's greeting, Robeson asked Brown to accompany him in an impromptu concert of Negro spirituals he was singing at Carl Van Vechten's house that night. Brown agreed, and they were a great hit, Brown singing counterpoint tenor in several numbers. Van Vechten was so impressed that he organized a formal concert for them at the Greenwich Village Theater.

The reviews launched Paul Robeson's concert career. On 20 April 1925, the music critic of the *New York Times* wrote: "His Negro Spirituals . . . hold in them a world of religious experience; it is their cry from the depths, this universal humanism, that touches the heart. . . . Sung by one man, they voiced the sorrow and hopes of a people." At the end of Robeson's concert tour in 1925–1926, an article by Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant in the *New Republic* referred to Robeson as "a symbol . . . of the increasing important place of the American Negro on the American stage." Sergeant added: "Let us give thanks that we were not born too late to hear this Negro Chaliapin render the Spirituals reverently, with wildness and awe, like a trusting child of God."

By the end of 1926, Robeson had become a popular recording artist and radio personality. Thousands of people who listened to his spirituals at home found them intimate and compelling. From the concert stage, he firmly established the spiritual as an accepted art form. His entire program consisted of Lawrence Brown's authentic arrangements in the traditional folk style. In the first annual *Who's Who in Colored*

America, Robeson was ranked twentieth among concert singers in the United States. He was also a record holder for the number of times his radio concerts were interrupted by applause from the studio audience.

Robeson continued to pursue a stage career. In 1926, he played the lead in *Black Boy*, a play based partly on the life of the black former heavyweight boxing champion Jack Johnson. His performance brought him excellent reviews and increasing fame. Brooks Atkinson, the critic for the *New York Times*, wrote on 7 October 1926, "From all this huggermugger Mr. Robeson's performance emerges as a fine-grained, resilient bit of characterization. His huge frame fits him well for the part of a prize fighter, and his full, deep voice has a sustaining beauty. . . . One suspects that he approaches the authors' conception of *Black Boy* more closely than does the play." However, no adequate dramatic vehicle was available to Robeson.

Then Jerome Kern, one of the greatest figures in American musical theater, composed the score for the hit musical *Show Boat* in 1926, and the famous Oscar Hammerstein II wrote the lyrics. The theme song "Ol' Man River" was dedicated to Paul Robeson, and Robeson's rendition of it captivated audiences around the world and became his signature piece.

Although Robeson was touring Europe in concert when *Show Boat* opened in New York in 1927, he starred in the London production in 1928. The show became a smash hit that would run for almost a year at the Drury Lane Theater, and all the reviews hailed Robeson's singing of "Ol' Man River" as the best part of the show. From then on, Paul Robeson singing "Ol' Man River" was an important fixture of American popular culture.

In late October 1929 Robeson, then age thirty-one, arrived in New York to begin a two-month national concert tour. His repertoire had been expanded beyond spirituals to include folk songs from many lands and selected classical compositions. On 5 and 10 November he became the first concert singer ever to sell out Carnegie Hall twice within a week. By the end of his tour, he was being compared to the great Russian bass Fyodor Chaliapin and had established himself as one of America's leading concert singers.

In the decade since his arrival on the scene in Harlem, he had enriched the culture of its renaissance as both performing artist and intellectual. The power to create beauty, which he realized he possessed, was, in his mind, the source of the grace he could offer.



Paul Robeson with gold football and Phi Beta Kappa key, c. 1929.
(Courtesy of Paul Robeson Jr.)

Truth, as a measure of right, was beauty's indispensable companion.

Robeson's preoccupation with beauty and truth stemmed in part from his close ideological kinship with W. E. B. Du Bois, who had eloquently expressed this theme in an essay published in *The Crisis* in October 1926. Du Bois called forth the vitality of the African American artistic tradition:

We have within us as a race new stirrings; stirrings of the beginning of a new appreciation of joy, of a new desire to create, of a new will to be; as though in this morning of group life we had awakened from some sleep that at once dimly mourns the past and dreams a splendid future. . . . I am one who tells the truth and exposes evil, and seeks with beauty and for beauty to set the world right.

The black press referred to Robeson as the "king of Harlem," and when, one day in 1929, he appeared at Seventh Avenue near 135th Street, it took him half an hour to walk a block. In the eyes of most Harlemites, he had not only personified the beauty in their culture

but also invested it with power and dignity. In his own eyes, his proudest achievement was his initiation of a change in the popular culture from the neutered "Sambo" caricature of the black male to a virile image incorporating a full measure of heroism and nobility.

Arguably, Paul Robeson's greatest gift to the Harlem Renaissance was his full-throated challenge to the cultural foundations of American racism.

Biography

Paul Robeson, son of an escaped slave, gained national prominence at Rutgers College, where he was an all-American football player for two years, was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, and was the valedictorian of his graduating class. He completed Columbia University Law School in 1923 but chose instead to pursue a career in the performing arts. During the 1920s, Robeson established himself as the leading black stage actor, with roles in seven major theatrical productions, including two plays by Eugene O'Neill: *All God's Chillun Got Wings* and *The Emperor Jones*. Robeson's talent as a singer also brought him stardom in the nation's concert halls, where he introduced the Negro spiritual as an accepted art form. In 1924, he made his debut as a film actor in Oscar Micheaux's classic *Body and Soul*. From 1927 to 1938, Robeson was based in London and toured throughout Europe, becoming one of the world's leading performers in theater, on the concert stage, and in film. He also strove tirelessly to improve the conditions of his own people and of the less fortunate around the world. When Robeson returned home in 1939, at the start of World War II, his rendition of the patriotic song "Ballad for Americans" helped to unify America; at this time, he enthralled theatergoers in the title role of a record-breaking production of Shakespeare's *Othello* on Broadway. Having reached the pinnacle of success, he entered the struggle against racial segregation in the 1940s and helped lay the foundation for the civil rights movement of the 1960s. During the McCarthy era of the 1950s, every attempt was made to silence and discredit Robeson because of his political views and his dedication to civil rights. His consistent opposition to the cold war and his continued expression of goodwill toward the Soviet Union incurred relentless persecution by the U.S. government. In 1950, Robeson's passport was revoked, and his artistic career was abruptly halted. When Robeson's passport was revalidated by a decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in 1958, he embarked

on a successful three-year tour of Europe and Australia. Illness ended Robeson's professional career in 1961, and he lived the remainder of his years in the United States among family and friends as a retired private citizen.

PAUL ROBESON JR.

See also Blacks in Theater; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Emperor Jones, The; Film: Actors; Gilpin, Charles; Johnson, James Weldon; Johnson, John Arthur; Johnson, John Rosamond; Lafayette Players; McClendon, Rose; Micheaux, Oscar; Music; O'Neill, Eugene; Provincetown Players; Show Boat; Shuffle Along; Singers; Theater; Van Vechten, Carl

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Robinson, Bill "Bojangles"

Bill "Bojangles" Robinson was one of the most important American dancers of the twentieth century and one of the first black performers to gain critical acclaim and commercial fortune in the entertainment industry. His virtuosic stage appearances throughout the years of the Harlem Renaissance helped to create new images of African Americans onstage and thereby challenged racist theatrical representations lingering from the era of minstrelsy. Reflecting on Robinson's

contributions to black culture, Marshall Stearns and Jean Stearns wrote, "To his own people Robinson became a modern day John Henry, who instead of driving steel, laid down iron taps" (1994). However, Robinson's legacy has been compromised by a series of films he appeared in throughout the 1930s that arguably undermined some of the many developments ushered in during the Harlem Renaissance.

"Bojangles," whose original name was Luther Robinson, was born to Maxwell Robinson and Maria Switching in 1878 and was raised in Richmond, Virginia, by his grandmother, a former slave. As a boy, Robinson earned small sums of money shining shoes and dancing in taverns and beer gardens. According to Robinson's biographers, he acquired the name "Bojangles" as a result of a childhood prank during his days on the streets of Richmond. In 1892, Robinson ran away to Washington, D.C., taking with him yet another name—that of his younger brother, Bill. Eventually, he appeared with Mayme Remington, a former burlesque dancer, in *The South Before the War*. In this black musical revue, Robinson appeared for fifty cents an evening as a "pick," or "pickaninny"—terms referring to black child actors. When he physically outgrew the role, Robinson moved back to Richmond and served in a regimental company in the U.S. Army.

By the turn of the century, Robinson was in New York City, dancing and singing at the Douglass Club, a late-night cabaret for New York's white elite. In 1905, he went on the Keith and Orpheum vaudeville circuit as the comedian George W. Cooper's sidekick. The pair performed in blackface, and their routines centered on racial and ethnic humor, which was a way to defuse the profound social discrimination they faced offstage. In order to protect himself from potential racial violence while on the road, Robinson actively sought acceptance into the National Vaudeville Artists' Association (NVA), which protected vaudevillians—but only white vaudevillians—from problems of housing and traveling. His petition was declined. Robinson decided to carry a concealed revolver on the road; this weapon, combined with his gambling and his quick temper, landed him in a number of encounters with the law. Robinson was arrested in 1908, charged with assault, and eventually found guilty. However, during a retrial, which took place in part because of the outstanding written affidavits that had been furnished by men in the entertainment industry, Robinson was acquitted. Jim Haskins and N. R. Mitgang (2000) suggest persuasively that Robinson was framed. Ironically, he was also a lifetime member of various police and

fraternal associations, giving them large sums from his earnings and performing at their innumerable benefits, to maintain his relationships with civic and commercial leaders. Protecting the rights of black performers was one of Robinson's lifelong concerns. In 1936, he was one of the founding members of the Negro Actors Guild of America (NAG), a welfare and benevolent organization for mainly African American performers in New York City. He was named honorary president at its inception.

After the dissolution of his partnership with Cooper in 1908, Robinson, with the help of his agent Marty Forkins, carefully cultivated a public image that would enable him to pursue a solo career in white theaters. Forkins helped to project a positive image of Robinson, focusing on his rare ability to consume quarts of ice cream and sprint backward. In time, Robinson was a highly sought-after performer in the United States and Europe. With his solo performances, he not only earned up to \$6,500 a week but also broke the "two-color" rule whereby no black performer could appear onstage alone. Soon thereafter, he would become one of the first black entertainers to refuse to perform in blackface, a racist theatrical practice left over from minstrelsy. These two significant breaks with theater tradition suggest that Robinson was aware of the political dimensions of theatrical representation, a connection that he would later be accused of disavowing.

In 1932, Robinson toured with a revue, *Hot From Harlem*, which in midtour changed its name to *Goin' to Town*. According to Haskins and Mitgang, as the Depression took hold, Harlem and its excessive theatrical forms lost their cachet in the vaudeville world. Although Robinson was rarely in New York for long periods of time (a fact that strained his marriage to Fannie S. Clay, the first of his three wives), he did move to Harlem, where he maintained a residence throughout his life as well as a lifetime association with the Hooper Club and Cotton Club there. In 1933, he was named "mayor of Harlem," an honor that was immortalized in 1935 in a motion picture, *Hooray for Love* (RKO). In the same year, Robinson rescued Harlem's "tree of hope," an elm on Seventh Avenue and 131st Street that had become a symbol for aspiring black performers. When Robinson heard of its impending removal, he invoked the power of his unofficial office and successfully pleaded his case to Mayor Fiorello La Guardia.

Robinson's major breakthrough came when he was fifty and made his Broadway debut in the black musical *Blackbirds of 1928*. His performance in *Blackbirds*

not only received rave reviews but also firmly established the "Bojangles" style. Robinson's dancing thrived on contradiction: His expressive face and humorous asides seemed to challenge the intensity and intricacy of his feet. Robinson brought tap dancing "up on the toes," moving away from previous styles of buck-and-wing dancing characterized by heavy-footed stomping and animated arms. His controlled style of dancing rarely used the torso and arms. Instead, he emphasized the clarity of tone and complex rhythms produced by his wooden heels and split-soled shoes. Langston Hughes once described Robinson's percussive dancing as "among the finest sounds in jazz music" (1957, 49). In 1940, Duke Ellington composed a short work, "Bojangles," inspired by the dancer's jazziness. While Robinson's performances appeared improvised, they were in fact highly choreographed and rehearsed. His most celebrated routine was a "stair dance," in which he tapped his way up and down a flight of stairs. He introduced this number in 1918 at the Palace Theater in New York. The stair dance became Robinson's signature routine; he would perform variations of it in subsequent stage and screen appearances. He is also credited with having introduced the "Suzie-Q" dance when, in 1936, he and Cab Calloway were headliners at the opening night of the new Cotton Club. Robinson claimed that his choreography and dance style were authentic. In fact, throughout his career he had taken credit for having taught a new generation of dancers, from Fred Astaire to the Nicholas Brothers. However, many artists have argued that Robinson borrowed or outright lifted steps from lesser-known performers.

During the Depression, Robinson, a man with no formal education, had a fortune estimated in the millions, which grew even greater once he moved from stage to screen. Although Robinson was cast in the all-black film *Harlem Is Heaven* (1933), it was his appearances in three films with the child star Shirley Temple that catapulted him into national prominence. Robinson and Temple were the first interracial couple to dance onscreen. The political import of this unprecedented pairing might have been more significant were it not for the fact that within each of these films, Robinson portrayed characters in subservient, if not menial, positions. For example, in *The Little Colonel* (1933), Robinson plays a domestic, and Temple is the granddaughter of a retired southern colonel; he dances to cheer her up. By portraying such thinly veiled minstrel characters, Robinson seemed to undercut the very developments in the representation of blacks for which he had helped open the door. Black

audiences and critics suspected Robinson of pandering to white audiences for fame and fortune. Robinson expressed outrage at such notions. Reportedly, he went, with gun in hand, to the offices of Harlem’s newspaper *New York Age* after reading a story that went so far as to call him an “Uncle Tom.”

Robinson was later cast in leading roles. With the film *Stormy Weather* (1943), he had an opportunity to control, if not rehabilitate, his image. This film traces the life of a fictional legendary performer, Bill Williamson, played by Robinson. It opens with Williamson telling a group of black children about his rise to fame and fortune, a story that bears a striking resemblance to Robinson’s own, minus the legal entanglements and the stints with Temple. The film’s all-star cast includes Lena Horne (as Robinson’s leading lady) and Cab Calloway.

Robinson died of heart failure in 1949; his funeral was held at the 369th Regiment Armory just outside Harlem, and although many blacks were ambivalent toward Robinson, it was attended by some 32,000 mourners. Ed Sullivan had arranged the funeral; Adam Clayton Powell Sr. gave the eulogy, which was broadcast on nationwide radio. Powell spoke against the notion that Robinson was an Uncle Tom and instead focused on Robinson’s transcending of color lines.

Robinson’s embattled legacy has been reflected in a broad range of performance tributes and dedications. In the year of his death, a group of tap dancers formed a fraternal organization in his honor. The Copacetics took their name from a term he had coined during his days in Richmond. On 7 November 1989, President George Bush signed a resolution establishing National Tap Dance Day in the United States on the anniversary of Robinson’s birth. In 1996, the Broadway musical *Bring in ‘Da Noise, Bring in ‘Da Funk* offered a performance history of tap dancing. This work, conceived and directed by George Wolfe, focused on the influence of dancers such as Honi Cole, Chuck Green, and Buster Slyde rather than Robinson, who was in fact lampooned in one scene as “Uncle Huck-a-Buck.” Uncle Huck-a-Buck appears onstage dressed in a smoking jacket and holding a martini, then disrobes to reveal a “pick” costume beneath. While dancing up and down a flight of stairs, he sings biting lines such as “Who the hell cares if I acts the fool, when I takes a swim in my swimming pool?” Uncle Huck-a-Buck is then joined by a character called Li’l Darlin, an animated doll resembling Shirley Temple. As they dance together, Li’l Darlin asks him, “Why do I make more money than you?” In 1990, the film



Bill Robinson, photographed by Carl Van Vechten, 1933. (Library of Congress.)

Bojangles (based on Haskins and Mitgang’s biography) explored Robinson’s achievements and the controversies surrounding his career. Robinson was played by another legendary tap dancer, Gregory Hines. This film makes little attempt to justify Robinson’s professional choices or his criminal behavior, but it does suggest that Robinson had to navigate with care—in his personal and his professional life—through radically shifting social boundaries.

Biography

Bill “Bojangles” Robinson (Luther Robinson) was born in Richmond, Virginia, on 25 May 1878. He served in the U.S. Army, c. 1898–1900. Robinson performed in various clubs and cabarets in New York City, c. 1898–1902. He married Lena Chase in 1907. He toured on the Keith and Orpheum circuit from 1902 to 1914. He married Fannie Clay in 1922. Robinson was a performer on Broadway from 1928 to 1949 and a contract

Robinson, Bill "Bojangles"

player with RKO Pictures from 1930 to 1934 and with Twentieth-Century-Fox from 1934 to 1938. He married Elaine Plaines in 1944. His awards and honors included being named honorary mayor of Harlem in 1933 and honorary president of the Negro Actors Guild in 1937. Robinson died in New York 25 November 1949.

PAUL SCOLIERI

See also Blackbirds; Calloway, Cabell "Cab"; Dance; Ellington, Duke; Hughes, Langston; New York Age

Stage Credits

- South Before the War*, c. 1892. (Traveling show, prod. Whallen and Martel.)
Blackbirds of 1928. 1928. (Revue, prod. Lew Leslie; Alahambra Theater, New York.)
Brown Buddies. 1930. (Revue, prod. Marty Forkins; Apollo Theater, Atlantic City; Liberty Theater, New York.)
The Hot Mikado. 1939. (Revue, prod. Mike Todd; Broadhurst Theater and World's Fair, New York.)

Film Credits

- Dixiana*. 1930. (Dir. Luther Reed; RKO.)
Harlem Is Heaven. 1933. (Prod. Jack and Dave Goldberg; Herald.)
The Little Colonel. 1935. (Dir. David Butler; Twentieth-Century-Fox.)
Stormy Weather. 1943. (Dir. Andrew Stone; Twentieth-Century-Fox.)

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Rochester

See Anderson, Edmund Lincoln

Rockland Palace

See Manhattan Casino

Rogers, Joel Augustus

Joel Rogers was a historian, anthropologist, publisher, journalist, lecturer, novelist, and world traveler. He was born in Negril, Jamaica, to Samuel Rogers, a schoolteacher and Methodist minister, and Emily Johnstone. After failing to get a university scholarship, he served for four years in the British royal army. He emigrated to the United States in 1906, settling in New York City and later Chicago. For nine years he studied commercial art, supporting himself as a Pullman porter. But he was barred from a career in art because of anti-African prejudice, and he returned to New York City in 1921.

Rogers became a naturalized citizen in 1917, the same year in which he published the first of several major historical works, *From "Superman" to Man*. In the early 1920s, he began to write (including weekly historical columns) for many of the major African American newspapers of his day. They included *The Messenger*, *Chicago Defender*, *Pittsburgh Courier*, and *Amsterdam News* (he would write for the latter two until his death in 1966). He wrote regularly for two publications of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA): *Negro World* and *Daily Negro Times*. He also lectured to many local chapters of the UNIA. He wrote the novels *Blood Money* in 1923, *The Golden Door* in 1927, and *She Walks in Beauty* in 1963.

In 1925, Rogers went to Paris; this was his first trip to Europe. In 1927, he traveled to Germany; in 1928, to Egypt; and in 1930, to Paris and to Ethiopia, where he covered for the *Amsterdam News* the coronation of Ras Tafari, who became Emperor Haile Selassie. Rogers returned to Ethiopia in 1935–1936 to cover the Italian-Ethiopian war for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, becoming the first African American to serve as a war correspondent. While he retained his residence in Harlem, Rogers made Paris his international base of operations,

traveling from there to do research in libraries, museums, churches, art galleries, and antiquarian bookstores in Europe and Africa. In 1930, Rogers addressed the International Congress of Anthropology, which was held in Paris and was opened by the president of France. He was a member of the Société d'Anthropologie in Paris, the American Geographical Society, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the Academy of Political Science. Because of Rogers's African heritage, his lack of an advanced degree, the nature of his research findings, and the persistence of entrenched white supremacist propaganda in the United States, American publishers rejected his work, forcing him to be his own publisher. His scholarship was viewed as controversial, and many of his conclusions were dismissed as erroneous, although after his death they were confirmed by scholars who did have university degrees.

In his lifetime Rogers devoted some fifty years to research and publication. He was one of the most prolific writers of his time; became fluent in German, French, Portuguese, and Spanish; and conducted exhaustive research in primary and secondary documents and historical artifacts in those languages in Africa, Europe, and the United States. His work combined history and anthropology, exploring the origins of the human race, the role of Africans in world history, and the genetic mixing of Africans and Europeans in the historical experience. He rejected the doctrine of African inferiority, and he sought to establish that success was not an exclusively European preserve and that enslavement was not an inherently African fate or condition.

Biography

Joel Augustus Rogers was born in Negril, Jamaica, 6 September 1880. He served for four years in the British royal army. He emigrated to the United States in 1906 and was naturalized in 1917. He published his first major historical work, *From "Superman" to Man*, in 1917. In the early 1920s, he wrote for African American newspapers including *The Messenger*, *Chicago Defender*, *Pittsburgh Courier*, *Amsterdam News*, *Negro World*, and *Daily Negro Times*. He traveled to Paris, 1925; Germany, 1927; Egypt, 1928; and Paris and Ethiopia, 1930. Also in 1930, he addressed the International Congress of Anthropology in Paris and covered the coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia for the *Amsterdam News*. In 1935–1936, he covered the

Italian-Ethiopian war for the *Pittsburgh Courier*. He was a member of the Société d'Anthropologie in Paris, the American Geographical Society, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the Academy of Political Science. Rogers died in New York City, 26 March 1966.

AHATI N. N. TOURE

See also Amsterdam News; Chicago Defender; Messenger, The; Negro World; Pittsburgh Courier

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Roseland Ballroom

The Roseland Ballroom, a dance hall at Broadway and Fifty-first Street, was a thriving venue for jazz from the 1920s through the mid-1950s. Roseland opened in 1908. Following a hiatus during World War I and the great influenza pandemic of 1918–1919, it reopened, with great fanfare, in 1919. Like other midtown halls, Roseland catered exclusively to a white clientele for many years. It had a regular annual season beginning in September and ending in May. During the summer months, the leading resident bands would go off on tour, leaving Roseland to summer replacements.

Roseland offered ragtime and jazz for dancing beginning in 1919. Until the mid-1920s, its dance music was dominated by ensembles led by the white band-leader Sam Lanin. Some of these ensembles, such as Ladd's Black Aces, featured early jazz soloists such as the cornetist Phil Napoleon and the pianist Jimmie Durante. Another white band playing a combination of "sweet" and "hot" jazz at Roseland in this period was led by Mal Hallett. The first African American band to have a residency at Roseland was led by Armand J. Piron (1888–1943), a violinist, songwriter, and publisher from New Orleans; Piron opened at Roseland in 1924. The most important residency by a black jazz band at Roseland during the Harlem Renaissance was that of the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra. Henderson's band moved into Roseland on 8 September 1924 and played there regularly for the next fifteen years. During these years the band made numerous recordings featuring innovative arrangements

by Don Redman, Benny Carter, and Henderson himself. The band's superb roster of soloists included Louis Armstrong from September 1924 to November 1925, Buster Bailey (clarinet) from 1924 to 1928, and Coleman Hawkins (tenor saxophone) off and on for over a decade.

By the autumn of 1926, Roseland was presenting a lavish mixture of dance music played by both black and white bands, sometimes pitting them against each other in direct competition. Lanin had departed, but there was a band led by his former sideman "Miff" Mole, a fine trombonist. The highly disciplined band of Jean Goldkette battled Fletcher Henderson's band one night during this season, and by all accounts vanquished it. Goldkette featured innovative arrangements by Bill Challis, and his band included Steve Brown (the finest bass player of the era) and the cornetist Bix Beiderbecke (considered the most exciting brass soloist to hit New York since Louis Armstrong). Another band at Roseland in the 1926–1927 season was led by the young Thomas "Fats" Waller, who was already a leading stride pianist in Harlem. In the autumn of 1928, another important big band, McKinney's Cotton Pickers, arrived, featuring the arrangements and reed work of Don Redman. A year later, the peerless drummer Chick Webb brought his orchestra to Roseland; although these musicians were usually in residence at the Savoy in Harlem, they returned to Roseland in the early 1930s. Roseland had good acoustics, and some bands actually chose to record there; among these were Glen Gray and his Casa Loma Orchestra in 1929. Even in the summer months the hall featured some of the best jazz orchestras in the country. In 1929, these included an excellent New Orleans combo led by the pianist Luis Russell. Throughout the 1930s numerous important big bands continued to play frequently at Roseland. Count Basie first opened there in December 1936; his band was enormously popular with dancers, and among its numbers of the period, one, "Roseland Shuffle," was a tribute to the ballroom. The orchestras of Ella Fitzgerald, Earl "Fatha" Hines, and Claude Hopkins were also featured at Roseland.

After World War II, Roseland became a center for Latin dancing in New York, bringing throngs to dance the newly fashionable cha-cha and mambo. In 1956, the original Roseland was demolished, and it was replaced by a facility nearby on Fifty-second Street (where it still is as of this writing). It continued to cater to Latin dancers, and also to disco dancers in the 1970s, but thereafter it increasingly presented rock

and pop shows, often with little or no dancing or audience participation.

ELLIOTT S. HURWITT

See also Armstrong, Louis; Henderson, Fletcher; Savoy Ballroom; Waller, Thomas “Fats”

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Rosenwald Fellowships

Established in 1917 by the president of Sears, Roebuck and Company and incorporated in 1928, the Julius Rosenwald Fund concentrated on four philanthropic areas: education, race relations, health, and fellowships. In 1911, Julius Rosenwald, the son of German Jewish immigrants, met Booker T. Washington in Chicago and was favorably impressed with his self-help philosophy. Rosenwald was also affected by his subsequent trips to the South and his personal visits to the Tuskegee Institute. As a result, he decided to concentrate his philanthropic activities primarily on assisting African Americans.

The trustees of the Rosenwald Fund were initially concerned with building rural schools for blacks and helped in the construction of almost 5,000 public schoolhouses until the program ended in 1932. After investing much money in the creation of graduate-level university centers in Atlanta, Nashville, New Orleans, and Washington, D.C., the trustees felt that the development pace was slow and a scholarship fund was also vitally needed for the development of graduate training for African Americans. In 1928, the Rosenwald Fellowship program was established to financially assist American blacks (and later some white southerners) to pursue graduate and professional education at northern and western American universities (southern universities were deemed inadequate at the time) and also a few foreign institutions.

The original five-member fellowship committee consisted of Will Alexander, a white southerner who later served as the head of the Farm Security Administration



Mr. and Mrs. Julius Rosenwald, 1926. (Library of Congress.)

under Franklin D. Roosevelt; Charles S. Johnson, who became the first African American president of Fisk University; Henry Moe, who was born in Minnesota, was a Rhodes scholar, and later became the director of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship Program; and Edwin Rogers Embree, who was the president of the fund's board of trustees and was the grandson of a prominent abolitionist. These committee members helped shape the direction and philosophy of the fellowship program, which evidently became gradually more integrationist.

From 1928 through 1936, the fellowships mostly provided grants-in-aid for advanced training for nurses, social workers, and physicians. After 1932, the awards evolved from grants-in-aid to a more formal scholarship program. The fellowship awards were largely given to individuals with undergraduate or master's degrees in medicine or nursing, to those in vocational and industrial fields, and also to librarians and teachers in music and the fine arts. The awards, however, were not restricted to any specific subject field or activity. The fund recognized the importance of supporting black artists and writers and noted that “achievement in the arts gains recognition for the

individual concerned and for the Negro race as a whole." After the economic downturn in the early 1930s, the trustees acknowledged the importance of concentrating their resources on individuals who might in the future "exert leadership in Negro life."

The fellowships were open to both men and women between the ages of twenty-four and thirty-five, although some older candidates were accepted. Competition was keen, and more than 800 applications were received in just one year. During the twenty-year fellowship program, the fund dispensed almost \$2 million; a total of 1,537 fellowships were awarded, and 999 of the recipients were black. The Rosenwald Fund was nearly financially depleted by 1945 and officially ceased operations in 1948.

Some of the most distinguished African Americans of the twentieth century were recipients. They include the scientist and surgeon Charles R. Drew, the psychologist Kenneth Clark, the scholar W. E. B. Du Bois, the sociologist Clair St. Drake, the college president Horace Mann Bond, the chemist Percy L. Julian, and the United Nations official Ralph Bunche. The largest group of fellows was in literature and the fine and performing arts. These luminaries included Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, Arna Bontemps, Marian Anderson, Katherine Dunham, James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, and Paul Robeson.

DONALD ALTSCHILLER

See also Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Philanthropy and Philanthropic Organizations; *specific fellowship recipients*

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Runnin' Wild

Runnin' Wild is mostly remembered today as the show that started a worldwide craze for the Charleston, a



Runnin' Wild, dance number. (Billy Rose Theatre Collection, New York Public Library, New York City. © The New York Public Library/Art Resource, N.Y. Photo: White Studio, anonymous.)

dance indelibly associated with the flappers, the fashionable modern girls of the 1920s. *Runnin' Wild* was a direct successor to *Shuffle Along* and was one of the most successful black shows of the era.

Shuffle Along was still running successfully in 1923, but tension among the principals led the writers and comedians Flournoy Miller and Aubrey Lyles to break away and create their own new show. They were encouraged and financed by George White—famous for *The George White Scandals*—who was attracted by the idea of a "George White Black Scandals." The initial idea was to use the name *Shuffle Along* again, but Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake, the lyricist and composer, respectively, of *Shuffle Along*, blocked this attempt through the courts. The alternative title, *Runnin' Wild*, was taken from a song that was currently popular but was not actually featured in the show (much later, it would be performed memorably by Marilyn Monroe in the movie *Some Like It Hot*).

The fairly thin libretto, in two acts with five scenes, featured Miller and Lyles as their by now traditional "Jimtown" characters, Steve Jenkins and Sam Peck, from *Shuffle Along*. Jenkins and Peck have been forced to leave Jimtown because their insurance scam has been exposed. Their subsequent travels in search of food and warmth allow ample scope for their characteristic comedy routines, combining knockabout slapstick with clever wordplay. (For instance, Peck's financial misfortunes are due to "de ducks"—he "deducks" \$10 for this and \$10 for that.)

Added to the comedy was a dynamic dancing chorus and a rich selection of original tunes by the team of James P. Johnson (composer) and Cecil Mack (also known as R. C. McPherson, lyricist). Johnson was one of the great figures of jazz and stride piano playing. Mack was already a major figure in black music through his association with Bert Williams and George Walker, having written the lyrics for Aida Overton Walker's hit "That's Why They Call Me Shine." Also contributing musically was the legendary Will Marion Cook (orchestrations), with some assistance from the future dean of black classical composers, William Grant Still. The choreography was by Elida Webb, who later worked with Ziegfeld's Follies and the Cotton Club.

The cast included several stars poached from *Shuffle Along*, including the singers Adelaide Hall and Ina Duncan, the dancer Tommy Woods, and Mattie Wilkes, widow of the great Ernest Hogan. A very young Elisabeth Welch made her debut singing the Charleston song, titled "Charston" in the show. Other notable cast members included Revella Hughes and Katherine Yarborough. The show started with an out-of-town tryout at the Howard Theater in Washington, D.C., on 25 August 1923. It received enthusiastic reviews, and *Variety* reported that the audiences were three-quarters white.

Initially, the Charleston number did not attract much attention. "Old Fashioned Love" was the popular favorite. However, by the time the show reached New York via Boston, the exuberant dancing, with hand clapping and foot patting by the chorus, was making audiences sit up and take notice. The origins of the Charleston stretched back to the early days of slavery, and Maude Russell had danced it onstage the previous year in another show, *Liza*, to a different tune, but it had aroused little interest. This time, however, history was about to be made.

Runnin' Wild opened in New York at the Colonial Theater on 29 October 1923. It ran for a very profitable twenty-seven weeks and 213 performances. The mainstream critical response was highly favorable, though there were dissenting notes from some of the black intelligentsia, such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, Theophilus Lewis, and their white ally Carl Van Vechten. They felt there was still too much stereotyped material, such as the traditional scene of a Negro scared by a ghost, even though the critic for the *New York Times* detected less reliance on stereotypes than usual. Other black intellectuals like James Weldon Johnson and

Langston Hughes, who had an affinity with the emerging world of jazz, strongly endorsed the show.

After Broadway, *Runnin' Wild* continued to draw large audiences on the road. The major competition came from Lew Leslie and Florence Mills' show *Dixie to Broadway*; and from Sissle and Blake's ambitious but rather less successful response, *Chocolate Dandies*. Although *Runnin' Wild* had by far the longest Broadway run of the three, only *Dixie to Broadway* at the Broadhurst could claim to have been on Broadway proper. The Colonial, at Broadway and Sixty-second Street, was almost as far uptown from mainstream Broadway as *Shuffle Along* had been. On the other hand, *Runnin' Wild* and *Chocolate Dandies* not only had black casts but also had a libretto and music by black writers.

By August 1924, a full year after its debut in Washington, D.C., *Runnin' Wild* was still playing in Chicago, in opposition to *Dixie to Broadway*, both drawing full houses. It continued to play on the road and around New York for another two years, and a traveling company took it to London in 1928.

The success of *Runnin' Wild* was widely taken as evidence that the commercial niche opened up by *Shuffle Along* could still be successfully exploited. This encouraged a spate of black shows that continued throughout the 1920s with varying degrees of success. However, the relative failure of the more ambitious *Chocolate Dandies* suggested that commercial success was proportionate to the degree to which a formulaic approach was maintained. Van Vechten deplored this so vehemently that he wrote a "Prescription for the Negro Theatre," offering suggestions on how to break the mold and tap into what he considered the true genius of black talent.

In the overall context of the Harlem Renaissance, *Runnin' Wild* contributed to the image of happy-go-lucky blacks, with a talent for singing, dancing, and celebrating, that made Harlem a magnet for slumming whites. However, in a deeper sense, along with the other black shows of the period, it helped to develop a growing liaison between black entertainers and jazz musicians. Apart from composers like James P. Johnson, Eubie Blake, and Thomas "Fats" Waller, musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Fletcher Henderson found a niche supporting the entertainers. This became the basis of a jazz-based popular culture that the United States would export to the world for decades to come. It has few more potent symbols than the Charleston.

BILL EGAN

Runnin' Wild

See also Chocolate Dandies; Cook, Will Marion; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Hall, Adelaide; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, James P.; Johnson, James Weldon; Lewis, Theophilus; Liza; Locke, Alain; Lyles, Aubrey; Mack, Cecil; Miller, Flournoy; Musical Theater; Shuffle Along; Still, William Grant; Van Vechten, Carl

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Saint Louis Blues

Saint Louis Blues (1929), a two-reel short written by William C. Handy and Kenneth W. Adams, was one of the first talking films with an all-black cast. It featured several influential actors and musicians of the Harlem Renaissance and contains the only existing footage of the singer Bessie Smith. The plot of the film, which Handy described as “a serious picture of Negro life,” was loosely based on his popular hit song “Saint Louis Blues” (1914). Although the film was chiefly intended to showcase Smith’s dazzling performance of the classic title song, *Saint Louis Blues* nevertheless represents a significant event in the history of African American cinema.

At Handy’s recommendation, the film’s white director, Dudley Murphy, cast as the female lead Bessie Smith, then thirty-five years old, who was a vaudeville blues singer and a recording star with Columbia. In 1925, she had recorded the definitive version of “Saint Louis Blues” at Columbia’s studios in New York, accompanied by Louis Armstrong on cornet. The cast of the film also featured the dancer Jimmy Mordecai and the actress Isabel Washington. John Rosamond Johnson helped Handy arrange the choral music and conducted the forty-two-member Hall Johnson Choir that accompanied Smith in the picture. The stride pianist James P. Johnson and several former members of the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra performed onscreen in the film’s jazz band.

Saint Louis Blues was produced by RCA Phototone and was shot on a small budget in June 1929 at

Gramercy Studio in Astoria, Long Island. The seventeen-minute film was released later that year as a two-reel short to be shown before feature attractions, and it was screened in black theaters until 1932. *Variety*, in its review of *Saint Louis Blues*, described the film as “pungent with tenseness and action and replete with Aframerican local and other color.”

The sparse plot, set in Memphis, centers on a long-suffering woman named Bessie (played by Smith), whose handsome, crap-shooting lover, Jimmy (Mordecai), physically abuses her and uses her for her money. Although Bessie supports him financially, Jimmy becomes romantically involved with another woman (Washington). A violent confrontation ensues in which Bessie attacks this woman after catching Jimmy and her together in the hotel room Bessie rents. Jimmy then batters and deserts Bessie despite her tearful pleadings. In the film’s final scene, Bessie drowns her sorrows in bootleg liquor in a smoky saloon on Beale Street, and there, accompanied by the choir and jazz band, moans “Saint Louis Blues” for an appreciative crowd of patrons. Jimmy enters, embraces Bessie, and surreptitiously steals a roll of bills Bessie has tucked in her garter as they dance together. The film concludes with Bessie sinking into a deep depression after Jimmy abandons her permanently.

Since its release, *Saint Louis Blues* has met with mixed reviews by film historians and scholars of blues, although most have praised Smith’s powerful screen presence and her electrifying performance of “Saint Louis Blues.” Thomas Cripps (1977) considered the picture “the finest film of Negro life up to that time,” but Donald Bogle (1973) asserted that the film



Scene from *Saint Louis Blues*, 1929. (Kisch/Photofest.)

“was marred by its white director’s overstatement.” Angela Davis (1998) has criticized the film not only because it “incorporates an overabundance of racist and sexist stereotypes,” but also because it “flagrantly disregards the spirit of women’s blues by leaving the victimized woman with no recourse.” Despite such criticisms, *Saint Louis Blues* remains an important example of African American filmmaking and one that highlights the musical and acting talents of a number of prominent entertainers of the Harlem Renaissance.

PATRICK HUBER

See also Armstrong, Louis; Blues; Blues: Women Performers; Handy, W. C.; Henderson, Fletcher; Johnson, Hall; Johnson, James P.; Johnson, John Rosamond; Smith, Bessie; Washington, Isabel

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Saint Mark’s Methodist Episcopal Church

Saint Mark’s Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in June 1871 by Rev. William F. Butler. It was initially affiliated with the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) church, but Butler sought credentials through the Methodist Episcopal Church. He proposed the idea of a new church to Bishop Gilbert Haven of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This effort bridged the gap between black and white Methodist parishioners. There were a number of divisions within the Methodist faith that resulted in the formation of three African American denominations: African Methodist Episcopal (AME), AMEZ, and CME groups. White Methodists were divided into two groups: ME South and ME north. Saint Mark’s is credited with having inaugurated one of the earliest Methodist churches for people of color.

Butler served as pastor for the newly formed church, which was originally located in Washington Hall on Broadway between Thirty-seventh and Thirty-eighth streets. Saint Mark’s strove to meet the needs of African American Christians. In January 1873, a church was bought for \$50,000, and the congregation of Saint Mark’s moved into this permanent building, at 65 West Thirty-fifth Street between Fifth and Sixth avenues. During a period of expansion between 1873 and 1889, Saint Mark’s had a number of ministers; in 1875, the leadership of William Butler ended, and in 1887 the congregation experienced another move.

In 1889, under the pastorate of Rev. Dr. Henry A. Monroe, Saint Mark’s paid off its indebtedness and sought another church building. A building was found on Fifty-third Street and was obtained through an equitable exchange between Saint Mark’s and the New York City Mission and Church Extension Society, leaving the church debt-free. In 1896, the church was incorporated under the direction of a board of trustees.

The twenty-six-year tenure of the eighth pastor, Rev. Dr. William H. Brooks, ushered in a period of significant change. Saint Mark’s acquired additional properties: a church house, a parsonage, and a brick dwelling in New Rochelle, New York. Its investments in property provided seed capital that was used to expand the ministry. Eventually, all auxiliary church property was sold, netting a sum of \$215,000. In November 1920, Saint Mark’s bought a site on Edgecombe and Saint Nicholas avenues between 137th and 138th streets for \$43,000. Also, Brooks contributed to the establishment of several other churches in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Jamaica.

In 1923, Brooks retired from the full-time ministry and was succeeded by Rev. Dr. John W. Robinson. The cornerstone for the church at the new site was laid on 24 September 1924, during Robinson's pastorate. During the Depression, this new facility was a challenge for Saint Mark's, because it had required the congregation to carry a mortgage. However, the church remained and offered Harlem secular as well as religious leadership.

IDA JONES

See also Religion; Religious Organizations

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Saint Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church

The roots of Saint Philip's go back as far as Trinity parish, which was formally organized in 1697; at that time, African Americans attended services at Trinity church. Around 1810, African Americans in Trinity parish had grown in number and often met separately in fellowship with one another. According to church records, the "colored" group grew so large that they found a room on Williams Street for their meetings, and then found a colored public school for



Saint Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church, 1920s. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library)

that purpose. In 1812, Peter Williams served as lay reader for this growing congregation of African American Episcopalians. Williams, whose parents were slaves, became the first rector of Saint Philip's church.

Before being officially recognized by the Episcopal denomination in 1818, this group of African American Christians worshiped in facilities that they rented. There were then only forty parishes in New York State, nine of which were in New York City; Saint Philip's became the tenth parish in the city, and one of the first congregations to have a majority of African Americans. At this point a church historian noted that "our congregation is now in possession of the land. The next step is to build a church." Efforts to build were encouraged through donations and bequests from numerous sources, and a cornerstone was laid on 6 August 1818. By the end of the nineteenth century, Saint Philip's had experienced tremendous growth but also significant struggles; it had served as a barracks during the draft riots of 1863, as well as as a refuge for those seeking human and religious freedom.

There had been numerous ministerial appointments to Saint Philip's; however, the tenure of Rev. Hutchens Chew Bishop from roughly 1886 to 1923 was an especially remarkable period of growth and movement. Under his leadership, Saint Philip's acquired church property on 133rd and 134th streets in Harlem, and in 1910, he oversaw the construction of a new church and parish house. Bishop broadened the physical presence of Saint Philip's with the purchase of 207–219 West 133rd Street, as well as 117 West 137th Street. Through

these properties, the church was able to offer the community camping and social services for children, housing for the elderly, and rental units. Moreover, the parish grew to more than 3,000 members. During this period of revitalization, Saint Philip's began to play an active role in Harlem not only as a church but as an institution.

As of this writing, Saint Philip's church was still an active congregation and was raising funds to restore and preserve its buildings and historical materials. The records of Saint Philip's are located in the manuscript division at the Schomburg Center.

IDA JONES

See also Religion; Religious Organizations; Schomburg, Arthur A.

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Salons

Most creative people need to share their work—to have others listen to it, critique it, and support it—and many creative artists found an audience in the literary salons of the Harlem Renaissance. Of course, not all

the artists of the renaissance were actually in Harlem; many lived and worked elsewhere, particularly in Philadelphia, Chicago, Cleveland, Eatonville, Jamaica, and Washington, D.C.

A “salon” was not a fixed meeting place but a social event, usually held in someone's home. Its primary purpose was to provide a forum for introducing works in progress, presenting completed works, and exchanging ideas and criticism. African American artists and intellectuals came together to encourage each other, share and develop their work, and immerse themselves in black culture, philosophy, and politics. The only requirement for admission to a literary salon was talent, although it was definitely helpful to have a friend who knew the host or hostess.

A crucial element of the salon was the host or, more usually, the hostess. Although a few men did occasionally hold salons, a salon was typically organized by and held in the home of a creative woman. Thus African American hostesses were a lively part of the literary renaissance. They tended to be beautiful, well dressed, and gracious, but, more important, they provided a wonderful, exciting social incubator for the nurturing of writers, artists, politicians, and intellectuals. Although unlike in many ways, they had some common traits. For the most part, they were dynamic, socioeconomically middle to upper class, well educated, artistic in their own right, and generous. They provided elaborate food and drinks. Nearly all possessed a keen sense of humor, were socially outgoing, had a wonderful wit, and created a warm, welcoming climate. They opened their doors wide to friends, who usually brought more friends, often new artists who needed an introduction into literary society. The hallmarks of a salon were abundant laughter, great conversation, and wonderful times.

The hosts and hostesses of salons shared an ardent belief in the importance of the creative artist. They, and other participants in the salons, became champions of the younger artists. For many new artists the salons were responsible for the first publication of their works. If members of a salon did not personally promote an artist's work, they provided a network through which the artist could meet others who would be able to publish works, provide connections to publishers, and in general be of assistance. Each host or hostess enjoyed the friendship of the artists and was instrumental, to a certain extent, in shaping their work.

Hostesses, in particular, also provided a civilizing influence for a somewhat ideologically polarized

group. During the renaissance, the direction art would take was challenged by almost every creative artist, and no attempt was made to formulate a common creed. But at a salon, all viewpoints and ideologies were accepted as having some validity, then analyzed and criticized. Although there was never a consensus, some agreement might be reached about style, goals, and artistic attitudes. Arnold Rampersad (in Locke 1970) has said that “something approaching a cultural revolution . . . was taking place among blacks in New York, as well as elsewhere in the United States and perhaps around the world.” Revolutions do not occur in isolation; and in this regard, an atmosphere of safety usually pervaded the literary salons, so that participants felt free to discuss their work and their ideas without restraint, sharing their artistic concepts, their political ideology, and their personal convictions. The topics discussed were very diverse: socialism; folklore; vernacular traditions in African American literature; Jean Toomer’s attempt to convert black intellectuals to the Gurdjieff system for the “harmonious development of man”; Zora Neale Hurston’s refusal to be a member of the “sobbing school of Negrohood.”

Georgia Douglas Johnson (1880–1966) was not only a significant and prolific African American writer but also the hostess of an important, intense, and enduring literary salon in her home at 1461 S Street NW, in Washington, D.C. Johnson published four volumes of poetry, a number of plays during the 1920s, short stories, and a weekly newspaper column, “Homely Philosophy.” Several of her works have been lost—discarded after her death by family members who did not recognize their value—and these lost works include a book-length manuscript about her salon.

Johnson’s weekly salons were important to her personally as well as for creative reasons. Johnson (who was a younger cousin of the writer Dorothy West) was a natural hostess, and her salon provided her with her own creative culture. She began occasionally opening her door to artists as early as 1920, and she and her husband, the attorney Henry Lincoln “Link” Johnson, enjoyed these social events. However, the weekly sessions began after his death in 1925: For more than ten years Georgia Johnson made her home available to the “Saturday Nighters”; the salons continued, infrequently, from 1935 until about 1942. The first public mention of Johnson’s salon was made in October 1926 in Gwendolyn Bennett’s column for *The Crisis* magazine. The regular attendees included Langston Hughes, Anne Spencer, Alain Locke, Jessie Redmon Fauset, Angelina Weld Grimké, William

Stanley Braithwaite, W. E. B. Du Bois, Alice Dunbar Nelson, Richard Bruce Nugent, Marieta Bonner, Lewis Alexander, May Miller, Willis Richardson, E. C. Williams, Gwendolyn Bennett, Clarissa Scott Delany, Zora Neale Hurston, and Jean Toomer (who is said to have begun the salons by asking Johnson to be the hostess for a weekly conversation among Washingtonian writers). It is also said that when Toomer read his “The First American” at Johnson’s salon, someone present remarked, “You’re white”; Toomer agreed and, in effect, left his life as an African American at that time. (Nevertheless, Toomer still attended black literary salons.)

Carrie Williams Clifford (1862–1934) also opened her home in Washington as a literary salon, though it was somewhat overshadowed by Johnson’s. In a preface to her work *The Widening Light*, Clifford claimed that “the theme of the group here presented—the uplift of humanity—is the loftiest that can animate the heart and pen of man.” Among those who gathered at Clifford’s home for literary and political discussions were black intellectuals from Howard University and elsewhere in Washington who were vital in shaping the African American cultural and political heritage, like Mary Church Terrell, W. E. B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, Charles Chesnutt, and Georgia Johnson herself. Clifford was a political activist as well as a writer and helped organize the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1910.

In Harlem, a notable salon, frequented by writers, artists, and intellectuals (including Toomer), was that of Ethel Ray Nance and her roommate Regina Anderson, a librarian, in 1924 and 1925. Anderson also helped to promote writing, by reviewing new books and preparing and distributing digests. A second salon in New York was held by Dorothy Peterson, a teacher, at her father’s home. A third was held by Jessie Redmon Fauset, who was a novelist, a journalist, and the editor of the literary section of *The Crisis*; she opened her home on Sunday afternoons as a literary salon for Harlemite writers, artists, and intellectuals. The intellectual discussions at Fauset’s salon were usually in French. Fauset was responsible for getting the work of many of the artists, including Langston Hughes, first published.

A’Lelia Walker, the beautiful, statuesque daughter of Madame C. J. Walker (1867–1919), held the most famous salon in New York. She had inherited her mother’s wealth and businesses, and she opened her double town house at 108–110 West 136th Street in Harlem hundreds of times during the 1920s. She also

held lavish parties at her cream-colored mansion on the Hudson, Villa Lewaro. Unlike the other hostesses, A'Lelia Walker was not herself a writer, had little interest in intellectual discussions, and rarely read books, although she had elegant bookcases filled with the writings of African Americans. She called her town house "Dark Tower" after Countee Cullen's column in *Opportunity*; and on the walls, poems by Cullen and Langston Hughes's "The Weary Blues" were lettered. Black and white patrons, artists, and publishers met regularly at Walker's town house, and a great deal of networking went on there, although some artists, like Richard Bruce Nugent, avoided this salon. Walker could be prankish regarding cultural stereotypes. Once, her white guests were served pigs' feet, chitterlings, and bathtub gin while the African Americans were served caviar, pheasant, and champagne.

Networking was also important at the salons of white patrons. Carl Van Vechten helped to organize the salon of Mabel Dodge Luhan, held in 1912–1914 at her apartment at 23 Fifth Avenue, in New York. She did not entirely share his love and acceptance of African American artists; but her salon was attended by a group of intellectuals from Greenwich Village, including Van Vechten himself, Max Eastman, John Reed, William English Walling, Sinclair Lewis, and H. L. Mencken, who assisted and promoted the work of African Americans. Luhan was possibly the person most out of place at her own salon. Van Vechten once brought the African American cast of J. Leuria Hill's *My Friend From Kentucky*, who sang "coon songs" and cakewalked, embarrassing and "shocking" Luhan. From then on, her guests tended to be people less offensive to her sensibilities, although they still seem to have been a diverse group: "ladies with bobbed hair and mannish cut garments," alongside men in evening dress and workmen's clothes.

Van Vechten became the most renowned white patron of the Harlem Renaissance. He was a music critic, photographer, and novelist, and his own work was critiqued by those who attended his salon-cum-soiree. For example, his novel *Nigger Heaven* (1926) was read in galley proofs by James Weldon Johnson and Walter White; Rudolph Fisher read it for "authenticity," and Langston Hughes wrote blues lyrics for later editions. Van Vechten's gatherings became legendary as huge all-night racially mixed drinking parties, but they included many of the same people, black and white, who attended more sober salons. Van Vechten, by promoting artists' work and by providing

connections, was responsible for getting much of this work published and known. He was an unofficial "guide" to black Harlem and a close friend of many of the artists.

Many African Americans benefited from these salons. For example, Claude McKay, after having refused Van Vechten's offer of publication at Knopf, accepted the assistance of contacts he made at Luhan's salon. Through this salon, McKay also established an association with Max Eastman, Floyd Dell, and people at *Liberator*, the periodical in which he published his best-known poem, "If We Must Die." At one salon, Walter White was introduced to H. L. Mencken by James Weldon Johnson; eventually Mencken gave White's novel *The Fire in the Flint* to Knopf, which published it. Through these salons, White also came to know Heywood Brown, Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Sinclair Lewis, George Gershwin, Willa Cather, Alain Locke, and many other writers and artists. White reciprocated by taking Carl Van Vechten to NAACP events and elsewhere around Harlem, introducing him to African Americans.

There were essentially two types of salons: large, raucous groups of people who gathered to socialize but incidentally listened to and promoted the works of artists, and groups that met for the purpose of promoting creative art but had a raucous good time doing it. The adjective for each is "fun." Langston Hughes called these events "parties," and basically that is exactly what they were—parties that fostered and encouraged a special, serious, creative, fun-loving spirit among people who were good friends, shared good conversation, and encouraged each other in the name of a literary salon.

CARMALETTA M. WILLIAMS

See also Bennett, Gwendolyn; Johnson, Georgia Douglas; Knopf, Alfred A., Inc.; *Liberator*; Nance, Ethel Ray; Peterson, Dorothy Randolph; Van Vechten, Carl; Walker, A'Lelia; West, Dorothy; *other specific individuals*

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San Juan Hill, 1910–1915. (Brown Brothers.)

San Juan Hill

In the mid-nineteenth century, the black population of New York City began moving uptown, that is, northward in Manhattan. By the turn of the twentieth century, the bulk of the city's black population lived in the San Juan Hill district, which stretched between Sixtieth and Sixty-fourth streets (with a satellite community on its southern edge, extending down into Fifty-third Street), and bounded by Tenth and Eleventh avenues. This population grew with tremendous speed, partly or mostly because of an increasing migration of black people into the city, and soon became one of New York's most congested neighborhoods. One block alone housed upward of 5,000 residents.

At this point, San Juan Hill was less racially diverse than it had been in earlier decades. Although European immigrants and blacks lived in close proximity on adjacent blocks, individual tenement buildings and even entire streets tended to be racially homogeneous. The tension between blacks and their white immigrant neighbors made this area highly contentious. The open tracks of the New York Central Railroad—"which maimed black and white impartially"—offered a neutral ground between blacks in San Juan Hill and their "white enemies" to the west. The story is that San Juan Hill received its name not to honor the famous battle of the Spanish-American War but to satirize the constant clashes between its black and white residents.

Within the black population, different classes and ethnicities coexisted awkwardly. "Lewd women" lived alongside "neat, hard-working mothers," while "porters and longshoremen, night watchmen and government clerks" contrasted with men who "lounged

on street corners in . . . dandified dress." Mary White Ovington, a white reformer who spent eight months in 1908 living in this notorious neighborhood, characterized the overcrowded tenements as "human hives, honeycombed with little rooms thick with human beings" (1909). The tiny apartments often opened into air shafts or narrow courtyards that admitted no fresh breezes, only the smell of the garbage down below. Many rooms had no windows at all.

As this district expanded, the number of neighborhood institutions serving the black community increased as well. Black churches followed their constituents to midtown. Saint Mark's Methodist Episcopal, Mount Olivet Baptist, and Saint Benedict the Moor all opened new buildings on West Fifty-third Street during the 1880s and 1890s. The rapid increase in the southern-born black population in this district contributed to the proliferation of storefront churches, often appealing to the specific needs and customs of city newcomers. The YMCA opened on West Fifty-third Street at the end of the nineteenth century as well. Many of the fraternal and benevolent societies, including the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, the Colored Freemasons, and the Negro Elks, had locations in the neighborhood.

The artistic crowd also joined the march to San Juan Hill. The Marshall Hotel, with its headquarters on Fifty-third Street, became a center for black bohemia. Members of this elite cohort included Paul Laurence Dunbar, the jockey Isaac Murphy, James Weldon Johnson, Bert Williams, and George Walker. They added to the mix of this congested district, making San Juan Hill among the most vibrant and complex areas in Manhattan.

MARCY SACKS

See also Black Bohemia; Dunbar, Paul Laurence; Johnson, James Weldon; Ovington, Mary White; Saint Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church; Williams, Egbert Austin "Bert"

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Saturday Evening Quill

First published in June 1928 in Boston, the *Saturday Evening Quill* was a literary magazine edited by Eugene Gordon. The publication was a product of the Boston Quill Club, a literary salon of black intellectuals. The staff issued three numbers, published annually, before ceasing publication with the final issue of 1930.

Eugene Gordon, president of the Boston Quill Club, worked on the editorial staff of the *Boston Post*. He also contributed to the magazines *The Messenger* and *Opportunity*. In June 1928, in the inaugural number of the *Saturday Evening Quill*, Gordon explained that the main purpose of the publication was to serve as a literary outlet for the work of members of the club. The members paid for the production of the publication themselves and did not offer it for sale until the final number, published in 1930. The club published 300 copies of this third issue.

The *Saturday Evening Quill* featured stories, poems, plays, and essays. In the first number (June 1928), Roscoe Wright contributed an essay on the artificiality of "Negro" spirituals as performed by black concert singers. He maintained that the songs lost their

spirituality when performed out of their natural environment. Wright also contributed four poems in addition to designing the cover and a monogram for the publication.

In addition to serving as editor, Eugene Gordon contributed work to the *Saturday Evening Quill*. The first number included two short stories by Gordon as well as a closing essay, "On Uncritical Criticism." In this essay, Gordon asserts that because black and white artists are American and receive the same training, it is ludicrous to think that black artists should be influenced by some innate connection to the African "jungle." This view contradicted the expectations of many whites regarding the primitive in black artists at that time.

Other contributors to the magazine included Alice Dunbar Nelson, Dorothy West, Waring Cuney, and Helene Johnson. West and Cuney were well known in Harlem and national literary circles, and both won prizes from *Opportunity* magazine for their work. Cuney contributed two poems—"Murder Blues" and "Old Man Death"—to the first number of the *Saturday Evening Quill*. Both poems use a blues rhythm to tell their stories. West's contribution to the third number was the short story "Funeral," about a girl's reaction to the funeral of her uncle. Edythe Mae Gordon, wife of the editor Eugene Gordon, contributed her first published work to the *Saturday Evening Quill* in 1928. The O. Henry Memorial Award Prize Committee honored her short story "Subversion" as one of the best short stories of the year.

In September 1928, in the magazine *The Crisis*, W. E. B. Du Bois praised the *Saturday Evening Quill* as the best of the literary magazines being produced by African American writers of the time. Du Bois considered the publication "well printed and readable" and commented that it "maintains a high mark of literary excellence." The *Saturday Evening Quill* also received praise from the *Amsterdam News*, *New York Age*, and *Commonweal*. Unlike *Fire!!*, *Harlem*, and other literary magazines of the Harlem Renaissance, the *Saturday Evening Quill* was a relatively conservative publication. Other literary publications of the period used black dialect and language considered offensive. Before the *Saturday Evening Quill* and other "little magazines" came on the scene, *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* provided the earliest literary publication outlets for blacks.

HEATHER MARTIN

See also Cuney, Waring; *Fire!!*; Harlem Renaissance in the United States: 1—Boston; Johnson, Helene; Nelson, Alice Dunbar; West, Dorothy

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Savage, Augusta

Augusta Savage—an accomplished sculptor who was an important figure in the New Negro movement—was born in 1892 in Green Cove Springs, near Jacksonville, Florida. She was the seventh of fourteen children. Around 1907, her father, Rev. Edward Fells, a Methodist minister, moved the family to West Palm Beach, where she impressed her teachers with her artistic ability. While still at school, she earned pocket money by teaching sculpture to other students.

Savage married John T. Moore; but he soon died, leaving her with a young daughter. For the next few years, Savage made a small income from minor sculptures until she was commissioned to make a portrait of a local fair superintendent, George Graham Currie, who gave her a booth where she could sell her sculptures of animals. Currie recognized her talent and persuaded her to study in New York.

In 1921, Savage enrolled in art classes at Cooper Union. Unable to support herself in New York during the four years of the sculpture program, Savage was the first student awarded living expenses by the school. She soon became known for her portraits of black leaders. But in 1923, because of her race, she was rejected for an art study program sponsored by the French government at Fontainebleau. This incident became a cause célèbre: A number of well-known figures in the arts, scholars, and ministers protested in Savage's favor. As a result of the experience, Savage became engaged in problems confronting African American artists.

Savage's first major commission came from the Friends of the Harlem Library, for a portrait bust of W. E. B. Du Bois. Later she did a bust of Marcus Garvey, a powerful study of the dynamic black nationalist leader that conveys his forceful intellect and determined character. Savage then married Robert L. Poston, one of Garvey's assistants, who was a committed member of the New Negro movement. Poston died returning from Liberia, where he had worked to found a colony of former American slaves. At around the same time (1929–1930), Savage produced her famous *Gamin* (a bronze cast dated 1930). This shows a black boy, evidently quick-witted and full of impish charm. According to some sources, the subject was her nephew, Ellis Ford. *Gamin* led to a Rosenwald Fellowship that financed a period of study in Paris, where Savage met Henry Ossawa Tanner and Hale A. Woodruff.

In Paris, Savage entered the Académie de la Grande Chaumière and studied for a short time with the portraitist Charles Despiau. While she was in Europe, her work appeared in several exhibitions, although she was not interested in either the avant-garde or African art. She objected to Alain Locke's view that blacks should base their art on their African heritage.

In 1931, Savage returned to New York, impoverished by the Depression but determined to pursue her career and to encourage young black artists. Her main income came from portraits of black intellectuals, most notably the poet James Weldon Johnson. She worked for the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and helped several other artists, including Jacob Lawrence, find work there.

Savage spent a great deal of energy teaching and promoting black artists. In 1932, she opened the Savage Studio of Arts and Crafts, affiliated with the State University of New York (SUNY) and funded by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation. It was located in a basement at 163 West 143rd Street in Harlem. There she taught art to local children and led discussion groups on topics affecting black artists. From 1937 to 1942, the Savage Studio became the Harlem Community Art Center, which Savage directed until 1939. More than 1,500 black children were trained there in drawing, painting, printmaking, and sculpture. In 1934, Savage was elected the first African American member of the National Association of Women Painters and Sculptors.

One of Savage's most famous commissions came in 1937 from the World's Fair Board of Design, for a sculpture based on the theme "American Negro



Augusta Savage, shown in 1937 with two of her sculptures: *Susie Q* (left) and *Truckin'*. (© Bettmann/Corbis.)

Contribution to Music, Especially Song.” She made a 16-foot-high plaster model inspired by James Weldon Johnson’s poem and song “Lift Every Voice and Sing.” It shows a group of singers forming the shape of a harp, and the work was also called *The Harp*. The folds of the singers’ long robes resemble the harp strings, and a large, detached arm forms the base of the instrument. Kneeling at the front of the harp, a boy extends a bar of music. For lack of funds, the work was never cast. It was painted black for the exhibition and later destroyed.

Throughout her life, Savage was involved in a number of organizations dedicated to improving the status of black artists. Among these were the Harlem Artists’ Guild and the Harlem Art Workshop (later part of the Schomburg Center for Research on Black Culture). The Harlem Artists’ Guild evolved out of Savage’s protests that the WPA did not award high-level jobs to qualified black artists. For a brief time in 1939, she ran an art gallery in Harlem, the Salon of Contemporary Negro Art, but it soon went out of business.

For a significant period of time, Savage’s commitment to administration and political activism drained her energy away from her art. Also, she

antagonized a number of people in positions of authority, and this too had an adverse effect on her career. In the 1940s, after a few unsuccessful exhibitions, Savage retired to a farm in upstate New York and produced almost no further work. Most of her works were never cast into bronze and, like *The Harp*, were eventually destroyed. Some are known only from photographs. The bust of W. E. B. Du Bois was stolen from the Harlem Library and (as of this writing) was never recovered.

Biography

Augusta Christine Savage was born in 1892 in Green Cove Springs, Florida. She began making sculptures in grade school. In 1921, she went to New York City and enrolled in the four-year sculpture program at Cooper Union. Her ability to reveal character in her portrait busts led to several commissions from leading members of the Harlem Renaissance. Much of her life was dedicated to the problems faced by black artists and to teaching. She was involved in founding and leading several organizations, such as schools and galleries, dedicated to helping blacks in the arts. Savage retired as a professional artist in the 1940s and moved to upstate New York. She died in 1962.

LAURIE ADAMS

See also Artists; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Garvey, Marcus; Johnson, James Weldon; Lawrence, Jacob; Rosenwald Fellowships; Tanner, Henry Ossawa; Woodruff, Hale; Works Progress Administration

Selected Works

Gamin. 1929.

Bust of W. E. B. Du Bois. (Lost.)

Head of Marcus Garvey. c.1930. (Collection of Amy Jacques Garvey.)

The Harp. (Destroyed.)

Bust of James Weldon Johnson. 1939. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

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Savoy Ballroom

On 12 March 1926, Moe Gale (owner) and Charlie Buchanan (manager) opened a dance hall space that occupied the second floor of an entire city block along Lenox Avenue between 140th and 141st streets. Designed to rival downtown ballrooms like the Roseland and the Arcadia, the Savoy boasted a marble staircase, a grand cut-glass chandelier, thick patterned carpets, and a soda fountain. It also boasted a 200-by-50-foot polished maple and mahogany dance floor that gained the club its reputation as the “home of happy feet” (in Harlem, simply “The Track”). The floor reputedly had to be replaced every three years to counter the wear and tear of the Lindy hop, the big apple, and other dances that developed there. The space could accommodate 4,000 people over the course of an evening—*Ebony* magazine estimated that 28 million feet had stomped there by 1946 (Anderson 1982, 307)—and housed two bandstands to allow for continuous music. On opening night, Leon Abbey’s Savoy Bearcats and Fess Williams and His Royal Flush Orchestra alternated sets; in time, nearly every major jazz orchestra would play at the Savoy. The house bands alone included those of Claude Hopkins, Jimmie Lunceford, Chick Webb, Benny Carter, and Lucky Millinder.

The Savoy’s entertainment was markedly participatory. The club featured dance contests, barn dances, and drag balls. If floor shows featured professional troupes like Whitey’s Lindy Hoppers (1935–1941), the dancers were drawn from those, like Frankie Manning or Norma Miller, who first danced there socially. A 10-foot-square “Cats’ Corner” to the right of the bandstand was reserved for the most competitive dancers (preserved by the occasional well-placed Charleston kick). A band’s success at the Savoy depended on the customers who, literally, voted with their feet. Audience response also decided the celebrated battles of bands, such as the one Benny Goodman waged on 11 May 1937 with Chick Webb. (Webb’s band had performed the debut of Edgar Sampson’s “Stompin’



Band at the Savoy Ballroom, 1941. (Library of Congress.)

at the Savoy” in 1934, and their signature Savoy tempo made the band a house favorite.) The Savoy claimed that 25,000 fans tried to attend.

If the Savoy integrated performers and audiences, it was also remarkably integrated economically and racially. The white Goodman’s organization (itself integrated) could square off against Webb’s black orchestra; Charlie Barnet’s band could be featured alongside those of Ella Fitzgerald and Erskine Hawkins. Although Gale paid well below union scale, the Savoy’s radio network hookup was rarely offered to black bands elsewhere. Just down the block, the Cotton Club charged a \$2.50 cover, featured Sunday “Celebrity Nights,” and turned away black customers. The Savoy, in contrast, charged 50 cents (75 cents on weekends), sponsored a Thursday “Kitchen Mechanics Night” for domestic workers on their day off, and attracted a primarily black audience that might, nevertheless, be anywhere from 10 to 30 percent white. Indeed, when the police closed the Savoy for six months on vice charges in 1943—a year marred by nationwide race riots—many suspected that such social integration was the target. The Savoy would not close again until 1958, and in 1959, it would be torn down to make way for the Delano Village housing development.

RYAN JERVING

See also Cotton Club; Nightlife

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Schomburg, Arthur A.

Arthur (Arturo) Alfonso Schomburg (1874–1938) gained a reputation as the “Sherlock Holmes” of black history during the Harlem Renaissance. His archival collection of rare books, manuscripts, and artifacts was a key resource for writers, researchers, and community activists of the period. A committed activist and researcher, both nationally and internationally, he made a number of major contributions to research on the African diaspora and to advocacy organizations. Schomburg was also a major figure in Puerto Rican and Cuban radicalism of the 1890s in New York City.

Schomburg's biographers have documented only a few facts about his birth, childhood, and family life. Schomburg was born 24 January 1874 in Cangrejos, a historically free black working-class neighborhood near the port of San Juan. Schomburg's mother, Maria Josefa Schomburg, bore him out of wedlock. He apparently never met his father. So far, researchers have not located records confirming Schomburg's own sometimes contradictory account of his family's transatlantic history. He was married three times—in 1895 to Elizabeth Hatcher, in 1902 to Elizabeth Morrow Taylor, and in 1914 to Elizabeth Green—and had seven sons and one daughter.

There is also scant documentation about Schomburg's education. Information in his collected papers suggests that he may have attended the Instituto Civil de Segunda Enseñanza, the Instituto de Enseñanza Popular, or the Instituto de Párvulos, all in San Juan. While still a teenager, Schomburg also studied, perhaps formally, with the faculty at the College of Saint Thomas in the Virgin Islands. Shortly after his immigration to New York in 1891, he took night classes in English. He recounted his employment in a number of odd jobs during his first decade in the United States. He began working as a legal mail clerk for a Wall Street firm, Bankers Trust Company, in 1906 and remained with this firm until his retirement in 1929.

Schomburg's early introduction to Caribbean radicalism largely evolved within the workers' movement. The 1890s were a period of major social unrest and political upheaval in Puerto Rico and Cuba, and this led to a trickle of immigration to New York City when many Puerto Rican and Cuban activists went there as political exiles. After Schomburg arrived in New York in the early 1890s, he immediately became involved in political projects in the working-class expatriate community. In 1892, he cofounded and then became secretary of the Dos Antillas Club, a group informally linked to the Puerto Rican and Cuban sections of the Partido Revolucionario Cubano. Schomburg collaborated with a number of well-known revolutionaries of the period, including José Martí. His other acquaintances in New York City's Puerto Rican and Cuban political organizations included Ramón Emeterio Betances, Flor Baerga, Rafael Serra, Julio Henna, Sotero Figueroa, and Pachín Marín. In 1892, he also joined a Masonic lodge called El Sol de Cuba number 38, founded by Cuban and Puerto Rican migrants in the early 1880s. He helped the lodge prioritize the recruitment of new members from New York City's English-speaking black community. Around 1911 the lodge was renamed Prince Hall number 38 in honor of the founder of the first African American Masonic lodge. Although Schomburg was often active throughout his later life in a number of local and national organizations, including the National Urban League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, his duties as a Mason clearly formed some of his primary lifelong commitments.

Schomburg published dozens of letters, articles, and bibliographies. His earliest articles were published in newspapers in New York; these articles included pieces he wrote for the Spanish-language



Arthur Alfonso Schomburg, c. 1900–1910. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

periodical *Patria* under the pen name Guarionex. After 1900 he wrote and circulated a number of important essays and working papers, the originals of which are today archived as the Schomburg Papers at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. “The Negro Digs Up His Past,” originally published in *Survey Graphic* in 1925, is considered Schomburg’s most important essay. It was republished in Alain Locke’s anthology *The New Negro*, also in 1925.

Schomburg’s main contribution to American and black historical research is his work as a collector and archivist of books, papers, and art of the African diaspora. Although his biographers disagree about when precisely he began his collection and the extent of his travels, his correspondence suggests that he started his acquisitions project in earnest around the beginning of the twentieth century. He obtained most of his items by rummaging through used bookstores and sundry odd places in the United States, by following leads from other bibliophiles on private

holdings, and by petitioning his friends who traveled to Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean to purchase for him specific books and documents whose whereabouts he had surmised through research. In 1911, he cofounded, with John Edward Bruce and others, the Negro Society for Historical Research, an international organization based in Harlem and dedicated both to recovering books and documents of the African diaspora and to educating the black community about the cultural and intellectual legacy of the diaspora. This organization welcomed autodidacts and other nontraditionally trained scholars, and sponsored a number of public lectures and exhibits in the 1910s and 1920s. Schomburg was elected in 1914 to the more erudite American Negro Academy and was its president from 1920 to 1929. In 1924, he chaired the Citizens Committee of Harlem’s 135th Street Branch of the New York Public Library, which was dedicated to preserving and expanding the branch’s black studies collection. This committee arranged for the Carnegie Corporation to purchase Schomburg’s private collection and donate it to the library in 1926, as part of an effort to establish and maintain the library’s Division of Negro Literature, History, and Prints. Schomburg’s private collection included some 10,000 books, manuscripts, documents, works of art, prints, and other historical artifacts pertaining to the history of the African diaspora, and it became the cornerstone of the branch’s permanent research collection, which is today the world’s largest combined archives of the African diaspora.

Using part of the money he received for his private collection in 1926, Schomburg made a major research trip to Europe that same year. Schomburg received a pension from the Bankers Trust Company when he retired in 1929, and he stayed active as an archivist, curator, and collector during the 1930s. From 1930 to 1932 he held a temporary post at the Fisk University Library’s Negro Collection, but otherwise his main professional activities of the 1930s centered on acquisitions and exhibits for the 135th Street branch in Harlem, where he worked pro bono as curator of the Division of Negro History, Literature, and Prints until his death on 10 June 1938.

Biography

Arthur (Arturo) Alfonso Schomburg was born 24 January 1874 in Cangrejos, Puerto Rico. He studied at parochial and public schools in San Juan from 1874 to 1891 and

Schomburg, Arthur A.

at the College of Saint Thomas, Virgin Islands, in 1891. He immigrated to New York City in 1891 and was initiated into El Sol de Cuba number 38 Masonic lodge in 1892. Schomburg was a messenger for a law firm (Pryor, Mellis, and Harris) from 1891 to 1896. He was a cofounder of the Dos Antillas Club in 1892, the Citizens Committee of the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library, and the Negro Society for Historical Research in 1911. His first published article in Spanish was "Club Político Puertorriqueño las Dos Antillas" (*Patria*, 1892); his first published article in English was "Is Hayti Decadent?" (*Unique Advertiser*, 1904). From 1906 to 1929 he was a mail clerk supervisor at Bankers Trust Company. He had essays and letters published in *New Century*, *Negro World*, *New York Times*, *Papers of the American Negro Academy*, *The Crisis*, *Opportunity*, *African Times and Orient Review*, *Champion*, *AME Review*, *The New Negro*, *Survey Graphic*, *Light*, *Amsterdam News*, and other journals, books, and periodicals from 1902 to 1936. He was elected a member of the American Negro Academy in 1914. He received U.S. citizenship by imposition of colonial law in 1917. Schomburg was president of the American Negro Academy from 1920 to 1929. His private collection of books, documents, prints, and artifacts was purchased by the Carnegie Corporation in 1926. He made a research trip to Europe in 1926 and to Cuba in 1933. He was curator of Fisk University Library's Negro Collection from 1930 to 1932 and volunteer curator of the Division of Negro Literature, History, and Prints from 1929 to 1938. He was awarded the William E. Harmon Foundation medal in 1927. Schomburg died in New York City on 10 June 1938.

LISA SÁNCHEZ GONZÁLEZ

See also Bruce, John Edward; New Negro, The; 135th Street Library; Survey Graphic

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Schuyler, George S.

George S. Schuyler was a prolific journalist, fiction writer, and political commentator, as well as one of the most controversial figures in African American history. Although he was a major contributor to the culture and legacy of the Harlem Renaissance, Schuyler nonetheless argued that neither "Negro art" nor the Harlem Renaissance as a definable movement ever truly existed.

Schuyler was born in 1895 to a family extremely proud of its apparently slaveless genealogy. He served in the army from 1912 to 1919 before moving to New York City. After enduring a period of homelessness and itinerant work, Schuyler joined the Socialist Party of America, through which he met A. Philip Randolph, later president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. In 1921, Randolph hired Schuyler to work at his magazine, *The Messenger*, which described itself as "the only magazine of scientific radicalism in the world published by Negroes." At *The Messenger*, with

its socialist creed and well-cultivated iconoclasm, Schuyler developed the satirical style that would shape his novel *Black No More* and would inform much of his journalistic work. Schuyler later rejected socialism in favor of extreme conservatism (he was a staunch member of the John Birch Society), and his early membership in the Socialist Party and his position at the magazine were apparently not so much opportunities to advocate socialism as they were chances to gain invaluable experience as a journalist and editor. Nonetheless, Schuyler's articles and columns for *The Messenger* were mostly filled with rhetoric that would have done any socialist proud, even after the magazine had lost some of its radical fire well before Schuyler's name was added to the masthead. Regardless of his political views, though, Schuyler was first and foremost an unrepentant iconoclast who used his columns to comment on and frequently satirize everything and everyone, from W. E. B. Du Bois and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). In addition, any group or individual who supported any form of racism, whether actively or passively, felt the sting of Schuyler's barbs. Several months after Schuyler started writing his regular column for *The Messenger*, "Shafts and Darts: A Page of Calumny and Satire," he and its drama critic, Theophilus Lewis, drew up a topical philosophy for the column: "[Our] intention is . . . to slur, lampoon, damn and occasionally praise anybody or anything in the known universe, not excepting the President of the immortals."

Schuyler's work at *The Messenger* was hardly his sole outlet for satiric invective. Schuyler became a correspondent for the *Pittsburgh Courier* in 1924 and spent the early part of his forty-year career with the paper writing many columns similar to those in the magazine. After he was promoted to associate editor in 1926, Schuyler became an indispensable part of the *Courier's* editorial staff, traveling around the nation to increase the paper's circulation and writing most of its editorials as well as the satirical column "Views and Reviews." Schuyler's controversial stances on contemporary issues soon earned him the nickname "the black H. L. Mencken." In addition, Schuyler wrote a handful of landmark columns for Mencken's *American Mercury* magazine and eventually became a great admirer and friend of Mencken.

Schuyler's most famous essay, "The Negro-Art Hokum," published in *The Nation* in 1926, argued against an essential African American artistic tradition.

This particular column was followed by Langston Hughes's "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," which disagreed with Schuyler's argument at certain points. Both columns had a significant influence on the intellectual politics of the Harlem Renaissance. On matters of race, Schuyler was remarkably consistent in his inconsistency. He was inarguably antiracist in his general outlook and philosophy, but he repeatedly scoffed at the possibility of black cultural nationalism or a group identity as viable means for fighting racism. This opposition underscored much of Schuyler's work in the 1920s and 1930s. He delighted in lampooning anyone who supported any cause that resembled either racism or radicalism in his view, including Marcus Garvey and the UNIA, the NAACP, the African Blood Brotherhood, and the Ku Klux Klan. Simultaneously, however, Schuyler supported black economic cooperatives in Harlem and wrote predominantly in black publications for most of his career, with the focus almost always on "racial" issues.

Schuyler's literary reputation rests largely on his novel *Black No More: Being an Account of the Strange and Wonderful Workings of Science in the Land of the Free, A.D. 1933-1940* (1931), which stands as a double milestone in African American literature. It is simultaneously the first completely satirical novel written by an African American about African Americans and the first extended work of science fiction by an African American. It was also the crowning achievement of his journalistic work and enabled Schuyler to obtain a perspective on racial matters that he easily translated into crisp, deadly satirical jabbing. *Black No More* presented a world in which African Americans were able to turn white, thereby upsetting the American racial caste system. In the course of the plot, all the targets Schuyler excoriated in his essays received another lambasting.

Despite its pioneering achievements, *Black No More* remained, along with virtually all of Schuyler's early work, in relative obscurity for decades. Given Schuyler's iconoclasm, the common perception that he was an assimilationist trying to escape his "blackness," his sharp anticommunism, and his rancorous criticism of the civil rights movement, most critics of African American literature found it easy to dismiss his oeuvre. Not until the 1980s did interest in Schuyler grow, owing in part to increasing interest in the Harlem Renaissance in general and, arguably, to a wave of black neoconservatism in particular. Until Michael Peplow's biography of 1980, critical studies of Schuyler were confined almost exclusively to brief



George S. Schuyler, photographed by Carl Van Vechten, 1941.
(Library of Congress.)

mentions in retrospectives on the literature of the Harlem Renaissance. Since then, however, many critical articles have appeared, and some of Schuyler's more obscure work has been reprinted, most notably his novel *Black Empire* (1991, originally serialized under the pseudonym Samuel I. Brooks from 1936 to 1938). Ultimately, Schuyler's significance is likely to rest on *Black No More* and his penchant for controversy.

Biography

George Samuel Schuyler was born 25 February 1895 in Providence, Rhode Island. He studied at public schools in Syracuse, New York. He enlisted in the United States Army, 1912–1915; was commissioned as a first lieutenant, 1917; and was discharged in 1919.

His editorial positions included managing editor, *The Messenger*, 1923–1926; editorial writer, *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1924–1964; associate editor, *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1942–1964; business manager, *The Crisis*, 1937–1944; editor, *National News*, 1932; associate editor, *The African*, 1943–1945; and contributing editor, *Plain Talk*, 1946–1950. He also wrote for *American Mercury*, *American Opinion*, *Christian Herald*, *Cultural Freedom*, *Freeman*, *Harlem*, *Interracial Review*, *Inter-State Tattler*, *Manchester Union Leader*, *Modern Monthly*, *Modern Quarterly*, *The Nation*, *National News*, *Negro Book Club News*, *Negro Digest*, *New Masses*, *New South*, *New York Evening Post*, *Phylon*, *Spirit of Mission*, and *Transatlantic*. He was a member of the Socialist Party of America, 1921–1926; Friends of Negro Freedom, 1923–1928; Young Negroes' Cooperative League, beginning in 1930; Committee on Cultural Freedom, 1939–1954; Post World-War Council, 1945; American Writers Association, 1945; American Committee for Cultural Freedom, 1952–1954; John Birch Society, 1961–1977; Katanga Freedom Fighters, c. 1961–1964; New York State Conservative Political Association, 1961–1977; and North American Newspaper Alliance, 1965–1977. He was a candidate for the House of Representatives, Eighteenth District, New York, 1964, Conservative Party. Schuyler died 31 August 1977 in New York City.

DARRYL DICKSON-CARR

See also *American Mercury*; Harlem Renaissance: 1—Black Critics of; Hughes, Langston; Lewis, Theophilus; Literature: 5—Humor and Satire; Mencken, H. L.; Messenger, The; Pittsburgh Courier; Randolph, A. Philip

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Scott, Emmett Jay

Emmett Jay Scott (1873–1957), as a "race man," anticipated the African American fervor and sense of pride that would characterize the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s. In 1919 and 1920, respectively, he published books on the black soldier in World War I and on black migration. His daughter Clarissa Scott Delany was

one of the budding poets of the Harlem Renaissance at the time of her death in 1927. Scott was not one to value art for art's sake or even, in an abstract sense, for the race's sake. Any of his undertakings in the realm of aesthetics were calculated to produce profits and promote specific interests of African Americans; an example is his campaign in 1916 and 1917 to produce the movie *The Birth of a Race* in response to the racism of D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*.

Scott launched his extraordinary, though largely unheralded, leadership in 1897 as private secretary and right-hand man to Booker T. Washington, the illustrious principal of Tuskegee and African American political boss. Scott was frequently said to be the "brains of the Tuskegee machine," because of his remarkable efficiency; his ability to anticipate Washington's thinking and act accordingly; and his work as a press agent, polemicist, and go-between in meetings with powerful whites and blacks to accomplish Washington's goals.

That Scott was prepared for such a role had much to do with his childhood and early career in Houston, Texas. He was born to Horace and Emma (Kyle) Scott and was the first of nine children of the family. Horace Scott had been born a slave in Virginia in 1850 and transported by his owner (who was also his father) to Texas in the early 1860s during the American Civil War. More than 182,000 slaveholders migrated to Texas, hoping to protect their property and perpetuate a slaveholding empire there. Scott's mother had been born and reared in the all-black community of Rosharon, Texas, and migrated to Houston after the Civil War to live with her brother. He introduced her to Horace Scott, and the two were married in the city in 1873. Horace Scott worked for the Houston and Central Railroad Company, and Emma Scott remained a housewife to raise the expanding family.

The Scotts were involved in efforts by the post-Civil War generation of African Americans to build a viable black community. Horace Scott, who lived in Houston's Fourth Ward, joined the Republican Party, armed himself to guarantee free political elections in Houston in 1873, and became a founding member of Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church, which ministered to blacks. Emma Scott notably enlisted the church's ministers to enroll Emmett in Wiley College, the first African American institution of higher education west of the Mississippi. At Wiley, Scott worked in the school's post office and central business office, gaining invaluable experience in economic management and governance. He was a precocious student and was

recognized for his literary ability, but in 1889, he had to withdraw and go to work, to supplement the family income and help educate the younger Scott children. In the economically vibrant setting of downtown Houston, he was employed as a janitor—significantly—in the office of a newspaper, the *Houston Post*. His literacy, and the legibility of this handwriting, led to a promotion to addressing envelopes and a subsequent reportorial assignment to cover the commencement exercises at Prairie View College. In 1893—confident that he had the work ethos and skills necessary to begin his own newspaper company to cover events within and affecting black communities in Houston and statewide—Scott, along with two partners, organized the *Texas Freeman*. This is believed to be the first African American newspaper west of the Mississippi River.

Owing to his early activities on behalf of the Republican Party of Houston and his prescient essays in the *Texas Freeman* on politics and overall economic issues related to African Americans, Scott was hired by the state's ranking Republican political boss, Norris Wright Cuney of Galveston, an African American. Scott served Cuney well and loyally, as he would later serve Booker T. Washington. An important issue for blacks in Texas and throughout the nation was how to build better African American communities and capitalize on political and economic opportunities.

In Texas, Scott pressed for institutional and organizational growth and development in politics and economics. Blacks were urged to support the Republican Party and take advantage of economic, especially entrepreneurial, opportunities. For such advice—and for his newspaper essays underscoring this need—Scott became known as “Get-Together Scott.” For a time, he found an ally and mentor in Cuney, who was preoccupied with African Americans' rights under the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments and was consequently known among whites as a “civil rights nigger.” But Cuney was soon deposed, in 1896, and then died, in 1897. (Cuney had refused to support William McKinley's bid for the presidential nomination and had then been outmaneuvered and eventually toppled by McKinley's allies in Texas at the national convention of 1896.)

After Cuney's death, Scott focused on expanding his newspaper business in Houston and on supporting black leaders who shared his concern for community development in education, economics, and politics. His editorials had begun to extol the virtues of Booker T. Washington, in the aftermath of Washington's speech at the Atlanta Exposition in 1896, and Scott led an effort

on the part of blacks in Houston to have Washington come there and address them. Washington's visit to and speech in Houston in 1897 resulted in his offer to Scott, whom he admired, to join the staff at Tuskegee as the principal's private secretary. Scott eventually accepted, but this was a difficult decision for him: He had recently married Eleanora Baker of Galveston, Texas; they were expecting a baby; and he was reluctant to pull up roots.

Arriving at Tuskegee in 1897, Scott quickly demonstrated remarkable skills in supporting Washington, who was seeking additional recognition and credibility as a leader, and in anticipating Washington's needs. Scott, as private secretary, handled Washington's mail with a sophistication and deftness rare for a young man. Scott's wisdom soon led to emissarial roles and concomitant responsibilities to sustain Washington as an African American leader; Scott was dispatched to meet with American presidents (notably Theodore Roosevelt and William H. Taft) and high-ranking businessmen (such as Andrew Carnegie and Julius Rosenwald). Scott also advised Washington about dealing with adversaries and foes such as W. E. B. Du Bois and William Monroe Trotter, to name two inveterate critics of Washington and of Washington's ideology for racial uplift and reform.

Scott relished most his role in the birth and nurturing of the National Negro Business League, which Washington founded in Boston in 1900 as a centerpiece of the program for economic uplift through the virtues of capitalism. Scott labored indefatigably, calling for annual meetings, identifying the ranking black entrepreneurs to be invited, and exploring means to promote black businesses.

After Washington died in 1915, Scott narrowly lost his bid to be Washington's successor at Tuskegee and in the African American community. Two years later, however, Scott became the highest-ranking African American government leader with his appointment as special adviser on Negro affairs to Secretary of War Newton D. Baker. In 1919—eager to escape from Tuskegee, where he was under the shadow of the new principal, Robert Russa Moton—Scott used this wartime appointment as the basis for new employment as secretary-treasurer and business manager of Howard University (founded 1867), which was considered the capstone of “Negro education.” At Howard University, Scott used his ties to the Republican Party to obtain increased funding for the school and passage of the Enabling Act of 1926, which guaranteed Howard government funds for annual operating



Booker T. Washington, seated, and his private secretary Emmett Jay Scott, photographed by Frances Benjamin Johnston, 1906.

(Library of Congress.)

expenses. Scott also led a successful campaign for Howard's first full-time elected African American president, Mordecai Johnson.

In the 1920s, black pride was manifested in such movements as the Harlem Renaissance; the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), led by the inimitable Jamaican Marcus Garvey; and remnants of Booker T. Washington's "Tuskegee machine," which was guided by Scott in political and economic activities such as supporting the Republican presidents Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover. Scott also sought to expand African American business endeavors for both collective and personal economic uplift, reverting back to the promotion of activities of Booker T. Washington's time: black realtors, insurance firms, filmmakers, automobile producers, skin and hair care products, and the record industry. Notable in this regard were Scott's involvement in the making of the film *The Birth of a Race* and his efforts to establish an African American country club in Washington, D.C., where black businessmen could conduct negotiations in an agreeable and even opulent setting.

Scott remained a lifelong Republican. He served as the party's assistant publicity director from 1939 to 1942 in its efforts to restore blacks' historic allegiance and ties to it. In 1942, Scott rose to prominence as the director of the Sun Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company's Yard Number 4, which built large maritime vessels for ocean transportation of supplies during World War II. This venture was an experiment in the use of black labor; the segregated black workforce numbered 12,000 at the height of production. Scott oversaw the yard's production of a transportation ship each month during the war.

Remaining loyal to the movement and ethos of Booker T. Washington, Scott sought at all times to involve himself in organizational and institutional efforts for reform and uplift. He served at varying times as secretary to the Southern Educational Fund, the Board of Indeterminate Sentence and Parole of the District of Columbia, and the Young Men's Christian Association.

Scott and his wife had five children. One of their daughters, Clarissa Scott, graduated from Wellesley College and achieved note as a promising poet during the Harlem Renaissance; their other two daughters, Evelyn and Lenore, were schoolteachers. Their elder son, Emmett Jr., became an architect; their younger son, Horace, became a physician. Scott's wife, Eleanora, died in 1939, and he himself died in 1957, both in Washington, D.C. His legacy was that of a Washingtonian, maintaining the Tuskegee approach to racial uplift throughout the twentieth century.

Biography

Emmett Jay Scott was born 13 February 1873 in Houston, Texas. He was educated in the public school system of Houston and at Wiley College, Marshall, Texas, from 1887 to 1889. Scott was founder and editor of *Texas Freeman*, 1893–1897. He was private secretary to Norris Wright Cuney, 1894–1897; private secretary to Booker T. Washington, 1897–1911; secretary of the National Negro Business League, 1900–1922; member of the American mission to Liberia, 1909; secretary of the International Conference on the Negro, 1912; and secretary of the Tuskegee Institute, 1912–1919. Scott was special assistant on Negro Affairs to Newton D. Baker, secretary of war, 1917–1919; and secretary-treasurer and business manager of Howard University, 1919–1938. He also was assistant publicity director of the Republican National Committee, 1939–1942; director of Yard Number 4 of the Sun Shipbuilding

Scott, Emmett Jay

and Dry Dock Company, 1941–1945; and secretary of the Southern Educational Fund. Scott died in Washington, D.C., in 1957.

MACEO CRENSHAW DAILEY JR.

See also *Birth of a Race, The*; Delany, Clarissa Scott; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Moton, Robert Russa; National Negro Business League; *Race Men*; Trotter, William Monroe; Washington, Booker T.

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Scott, William Edouard

William Edouard Scott was one of the first African American artists to depict scenes of everyday African American life in his paintings, drawings, and prints. His determination to include African American subjects and themes in the early years of the twentieth century made him an important precursor to the Harlem Renaissance, when such interests and concerns became widespread among African American artists.

Scott was born in 1884 in Indianapolis. He studied at the Art Institute of Chicago before he went to Europe, where he lived from 1909 to 1914 except for occasional return visits to the United States. In France he studied with Henry Ossawa Tanner and at the Académie Julien and Académie Colarossi. While in Europe he exhibited his works at the Paris Salon and the Royal Academy of London. When he returned to the United States, he settled in Chicago, where he lived for most of the rest of his life.

Scott depicted a variety of fairly traditional subjects, including portraits, figures, and landscapes. His early works were impressionistic in style and subject matter. Scott was a very productive and popular portrait painter. He may have done more portraits than any other African American painter of the early twentieth century. His sitters were usually from the more affluent, educated black middle class. He also painted some historical portraits. Among these are paintings of Toussaint-Louverture and Booker T. Washington. Scott painted scenes of everyday life of rural African Americans in the South. During World War I, he traveled to France and sketched African American soldiers in action on the battlefields. His depictions of the rural South and African American soldiers were used as covers for the magazine *The Crisis*. In 1953, he painted portraits to commemorate the consecration of the first black bishops in the Roman Catholic Church.

Scott visited Haiti in 1931–1932, with a grant from the Rosenwald Foundation. During his relatively brief stay in Haiti, his style evolved considerably. His work became more personal, emotive, and expressive in the use of color and handling of paint. His brushwork became looser and his colors more intense. Essentially early-modernist principles became apparent in his paintings at this time. Scott produced 144 paintings and drawings in Haiti. Most of them were scenes of the everyday lives of Haitians. Among them are *Haitian Fisherman*, *Haitian Market*, *Turkey Vendor*, *Night Turtle Fishing*, and *When the Tide Is Out*. While he was in Haiti, an exhibit of his recent works was held in Port-au-Prince. The exhibit was promoted by the Haitian government, and twelve works were purchased by the president of Haiti. This exhibit was an enormous success for an artist of African descent at this time. In Haiti, Scott was also active in teaching art. He played a major role in invigorating Haitian art in the mid-twentieth century.

On returning to the United States, Scott became the most productive and popular African American muralist of his generation, although he had painted

murals long before he went to Haiti. His first murals had been a series of twenty-four panels depicting biblical subjects for Indianapolis City Hospital in 1916. He painted a commemorative mural of Abraham Lincoln with his son for the Cook County Juvenile Courthouse in Illinois. He painted forty murals for churches in the Chicago area. He also painted many murals for field houses in Chicago's parks. In New York he painted murals for a YMCA in Harlem.

After several years of declining health, which included advanced diabetes and deteriorating vision, Scott died in 1964.

Biography

William Edouard Scott was born 11 March 1884, in Indianapolis. He was educated at Manual Training High School, Indianapolis; Art Institute of Chicago, 1904–1908; Académie Julien, Paris, 1912; and Académie Colarossi, Paris, 1913. He traveled to France, 1908–1915; and Haiti, 1931–1932. His awards and honors included first prize, Indiana State Fair, 1914; Frederick Manus Brand Prize, Art Institute of Chicago, twice; Harmon Foundation Gold Medal, 1927; Rosenwald Fellowship, 1931; Jesse Binga Prize, 1931; James McVeagh Prize, 1931; Municipal Art League Traveling Scholarship; and Legion of Honor, Government of Haiti. His memberships included the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago Art League, and Hoosier Salon Alumni Association. Scott died 16 May 1964 in Chicago.

HERBERT R. HARTEL JR.

See also Crisis, The; Tanner, Henry Ossawa

Exhibitions

- 1912: Royal Academy, London.
- 1912, 1931: Salon d'Automne, Paris.
- 1928, 1931, 1933, 1934–1935: Harmon Foundation, New York.
- 1929, 1931: San Diego Fine Arts Society.
- 1931: Cincinnati Museum of Art; San Diego Museum of Art; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Port-au-Prince. (Solo.)
- 1931, 1932: Art Institute of Chicago.
- 1931, 1935: Salon des Beaux Arts, Toquet, France.
- 1933: Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
- 1935: Findlay Galleries, Chicago; New Jersey State Museum, Trenton.

1936: Texas Centennial Exposition, Museum of Fine Arts, Dallas.

1940: American Negro Exhibition.

1941, 1945: South Side Community Art Center, Chicago.

1945: Howard University Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

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Scottsboro

On 25 March 1931, nine young African American men were falsely accused of raping two white women on a train passing through northern Alabama. Eight of the nine were sentenced to die. Contemporary reactions to the fate of the Scottsboro boys, as they came to be known, suggest the complex interrelations of race, gender, and class-based oppression in America during the Jim Crow era and illuminate the significance of the Great Depression for the Harlem Renaissance.

The accused—all poor, all uneducated, and ranging in age from thirteen to nineteen—had been hitching rides on a freight train. After a fight between the youths and some white men, the train was stopped. Hastily deputized white men and a sizable mob



The Scottsboro boys. (Brown Brothers.)

quickly gathered to round up the blacks. Though only four of the youths had participated in the fight, all nine, along with one white man, were arrested for vagrancy. Two white women in overalls were also discovered illegally riding the train. Recently laid off from the cotton mills, the young, unemployed women were in search of jobs. One of them, Ruby Bates, claimed that she and her friend, Victoria Price, had been raped by the black men. Though evidence conflicts as to whether the women or a deputy first mentioned rape, the accusation protected Bates and Price against charges of vagrancy or violation of the Mann Act (crossing state lines for immoral purposes).

The nine accused rapists were immediately taken to Scottsboro, where a lynch mob had assembled outside the jail. Taking a stand against extralegal violence, the sheriff of Jackson County asked the governor to call in the National Guard. Twelve days after the arrests, the trials began. Despite conflicting testimony from the accused, the women, and other witnesses, and despite a lack of physical evidence, in four days the all-white juries had convicted eight of the defendants—convictions carrying a sentence of death. In 1932, the U.S. Supreme Court twice reversed guilty verdicts. The following year, Ruby Bates retracted her accusation of rape. Nevertheless, the last defendant, Haywood Patterson,

remained in prison until 1942, when he escaped. Clarence Norris, the last surviving Scottsboro boy, was pardoned in 1976 by Governor George Wallace.

The Struggle Over the Defense

As the case attracted worldwide attention, Scottsboro became a crucial measure of the influence of two groups: the reform-oriented National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the revolutionary United States Communist Party (CPUSA). After the first trials, the International Labor Defense (ILD), the legal branch of the CPUSA, took over the defense. Declaring the case a “legal lynching,” ILD representatives believed the murder of black men for the rape of white women to be one instrument in an arsenal of capitalist weaponry deployed against impoverished working-class Americans. In their view, the defendants, the plaintiffs, and those who believed the story were alike victims of “false consciousness”—ignorant, blighted by poverty, and easily manipulated by incendiary media portrayals of the youths as sexually uncontrollable beasts. Such portrayals, they argued, functioned to pit black and white workers against one another. In conjunction with its mass antilynching campaigns, the ILD hoped that demonstrating the boys’ innocence would educate American workers of both races, paving the way for interracial labor solidarity and, eventually, the formation of a revolutionary American proletariat.

The NAACP, led by the anticommunist Walter White, initially stayed away from the case, fearing to be associated with either potential rapists or revolutionaries. The NAACP depended on the largely northern middle and upper classes for support, and its eventual fight for the defense was based on its commitment to eliminating race prejudice within the legal system of the United States. Both White and W. E. B. Du Bois claimed that the Communist Party had less interest in saving the defendants than in martyring them to the revolutionary cause. The communists, they argued, were taking advantage of Americans’ increasingly precarious economic circumstances. However, as the trials dragged on and the CPUSA shifted its policy from domestic antiracism to the international fight against fascism, compromise became a necessity. By 1935, the ILD and the NAACP had joined with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to form the Scottsboro Defense Committee, which in 1937 brokered a plea to release four of the nine boys in exchange for a promised end to communist agitation about the case.

From the time of the arrests, protesters worldwide took up the call to “free the Scottsboro boys.” In 1931, Harlem was the site of three significant protests, one of which turned violent. In 1933, 150,000 black and white protesters marched together through New York. In addition to marches and rallies, residents of Harlem signed mass petitions and sent hundreds of thousands of telegrams and letters to local, state, and national authorities. Harlem’s involvement in these protests, sponsored by the ILD, signifies the extent to which the communists successfully radicalized significant numbers of African Americans during the Depression.

Literary Scottsboro

Divergent understandings of Scottsboro’s meanings are illustrated in the poems, drama, and music of the Harlem Renaissance. Comparing representations of Scottsboro by Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen illustrates the tension between artists committed to Du Bois’s notion of the “talented tenth” and those committed to writing for the common folk. Using the vernacular and familiar Christian iconography, Hughes’s poem “Christ in Alabama” (1931) indicts the racism of organized religion as well as ironically recalling the historical and continuing rapes of black women by white men. In contrast, Cullen’s “Scottsboro, Too, Is Worth Its Song” (1934) addresses poets, implying that race accounts for the conspicuous silence of those who he believes can effect change—black and white intellectuals and artists. Turning even further away from Alain Locke’s belief in the leadership of the “enlightened minorities of both race groups” (1925/1997, 9), Hughes’s increasing radicalism is manifest in his pamphlet “Scottsboro Limited” (1932). Focusing on the interrelations of racial and class oppression in America, the play in the pamphlet uses agitprop techniques to call for an end to capitalist exploitation. Together with the poems, the play *Scottsboro Limited* portrays the case in terms of the need for interracial solidarity among workers.

Other writers on Scottsboro include Sterling Brown, Robert Hayden, Theodore Dreiser, Kay Boyle, and Nancy Cunard. Dramas about Scottsboro include *Scottsboro Limited* and John Wexley’s *They Shall Not Die*. Songs and ballads performed at protests and fund-raisers include L. E. Swift’s “The Scottsboro Boys Shall Not Die” and Leadbelly’s “The Scottsboro Boys.”

SONDRA GUTTMAN

See also Brown, Sterling; Communist Party; Cullen, Countee; Cunard, Nancy; Dreiser, Theodore; Hayden,

Robert; Hughes, Langston; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Talented Tenth; They Shall Not Die; White, Walter

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Second Harlem Renaissance

The second Harlem Renaissance (1930–1945) differed importantly from the first. With the Depression, economic conditions in New York had changed, with dramatic and disastrous effects on blacks in Harlem. Soaring unemployment, heightened discrimination, and political neglect all worked to transform Harlem’s once glittering facade into an ever-expanding array of decaying tenements and lost opportunities. The “talented tenth,” the old Harlemites of literary and cultural acclaim who had dominated the 1920s, retreated into their enclaves on Sugar Hill even as the great migration of southerners decreased to a small trickle. During the Depression Harlem became a world of vanished dreams.

Yet the infusion of funding through the New Deal, in the form of the federal arts, theater, and music programs, provided the impetus for a second Harlem Renaissance. If 125th Street, the Apollo Theater, and the Cotton Club had been the center of the first Harlem Renaissance, in the 1930s 135th Street became the cultural center for the second. In a stretch of two blocks, from just off Seventh Avenue eastward to Lenox, stood the Harlem YMCA, the Schomburg Collection of the Harlem Branch of the New York Public Library, and the offices of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Urban League, and the *Amsterdam News*. Four blocks to the south lay Harlem's legitimate theater, the Lafayette, home to the Harlem unit of the Federal Theater Project; and one block to the north, between Seventh and Lenox avenues, stood Harlem General Hospital. Harlem's largest church, Abyssinian Baptist, led by Rev. Adam Clayton Powell Jr., occupied a Tudor-Gothic building on 138th Street and had a congregation estimated at 13,000. Members of Harlem's artistic community gravitated to the corner of 135th Street and Seventh Avenue, where they might encounter James Weldon Johnson, Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, or the sculptor Augusta Savage, and the painters Aaron Douglas, Charles Alston, Romare Bearden, and Jacob Lawrence.

Bearden expressed well the paradoxical effect of the Great Depression on Harlem's artists. "The 'movement,'" he recalled, "was a positive, proud, and participatory realization of what it meant to be black—not on the *soirée* scale of the Harlem renaissance, but on a mass scale." During the second Harlem Renaissance, New York's African American painters, sculptors, writers, musicians, actors, dancers, and poets expanded the meaning of modern African American culture. Through the support of the federal arts and theater projects, artists in Harlem affirmed their artistic independence and engaged in a political struggle for racial equality. Whereas writers had dominated the first Harlem Renaissance, visual artists led the second renaissance. Bearden, Savage, Alston, and Lawrence used the resources of Harlem and the New Deal to transform New York's racial and artistic dialogue.

The sculptor Augusta Savage emerged as a central figure in the creation of the second Harlem Renaissance. She was born in Florida and educated at Cooper Union; in the 1920s, she had worked as a laundress as she struggled to gain acceptance in the arts. In 1931, with support from the Carnegie Foundation, she opened

her own studio school on 143rd Street. Savage's Harlem Community Arts Center, later funded by the Federal Arts Project, reached out to the community, offering workshops to more than 1,500 students, including the psychologist Kenneth B. Clark and the sculptor Gwendolyn Knight, between 1931 and 1936.

In 1935, seventy-five African American artists joined Savage to form the Harlem Artists Guild, which devoted itself to sharpening the focus of black artists on issues of racism, poverty, and unemployment. It had headquarters on 136th Street, and it found a supporter in the politically active abstract painter Stuart Davis, who approved of the guild's strategy of pressuring the Federal Arts Project (FAP) of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to accept more black participants. As Alston remembered, "We formed it originally to create a pressure group to get more Black artists on the federal projects." While the FAP eventually hired 115 African American artists, supervisory positions remained virtually impossible to obtain.

Charles Alston became the first Harlem artist, and the first African American, appointed as a supervisor by the FAP, when he was chosen to direct the mural project at Harlem General Hospital. When the mural directed by Alston, *Mystery and Medicine* (1938–1939), was unveiled, a wave of criticism surged up. White officials at the hospital insisted that Alston alter the mural, which showed blacks and whites working together on an equal footing. In response, Alston mobilized the Harlem Artists Guild and with the support of Burgoyne Diller, the FAP's administrator for the mural division, forced the hospital to accept the work.

Alston, who had been educated at Columbia University, loved jazz and blues and often frequented the Schomburg Library, whose collection of African art tempered his training as a modernist. Despite his triumph in the controversy over the mural, Alston did not consider himself a political artist. "In those days it was Negro pride, now it's black and African," he recalled. Alston felt that, as a black artist, "you cannot but be concerned about how [art] affects your people."

Like Savage, Alston created a community art program, the Harlem Art Workshop, which he located at a renovated stable at 306 West 141st Street. Studio 306, or just "306," became the hub of the FAP in Harlem and the heart of the second Harlem Renaissance. Both Jacob Lawrence and Romare Bearden studied with Alston at 306; Alston lived in an apartment at the rear of the building, and Lawrence maintained a small studio there in the late 1930s. Buoyed by the financial

and political support of the WPA, 306 brought Harlem's artists together. Alston, Lawrence, Bearden, Gwendolyn Wright, and Ralph Ellison worked and argued with Harlem's older artistic generation. As Lawrence remembered, 306 offered "a social and artistic atmosphere. I would hear talk about the various problems in their special fields of acting, theater, and so on. Bearden . . . was experimental and scholarly, very much involved and curious."

Bearden and Lawrence emerged as the dominant young painters of the second Harlem Renaissance. Lawrence's work tied Harlem's artistic revival directly to the second "great migration" of African Americans to New York. Set off by World War II, the second great migration brought hundreds of thousands of rural blacks from the South to the cities of the North. As New York broke out of the Depression and its economy boomed, the city lured blacks with promises of freedom and opportunity.

"People would come up to the centers," wrote Jacob Lawrence of his early apprenticeship at the Harlem Artists Guild. "People like Katherine Dunham, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes. They may not have talked with me because I was too young, but I would hear their conversations with each other." Lawrence, whose southern-born mother migrated to New York with him in 1930, had first studied with Alston at 306 and then studied at the American Artists School downtown on Fourteenth Street. Between 1937 and 1938 Lawrence painted a forty-one canvas series on the life of Toussaint-Louverture, the first of his explorations of black history. "Having no Negro history makes the Negro people feel inferior to the rest of the world," he wrote.

In the early 1940s, Lawrence painted his masterpiece, the series called *The Migration of the Negro*. Working in a modern narrative style, Lawrence used the panels of this series to tell the stories of the African American migration northward during World War I. Perhaps prophetically, he chose to tell this story on the eve of the second great migration during World War II. Lawrence, as if following Bearden's injunction, focused on the epic journey of African American masses, satchels in hand, leaving the South for the "promised lands" of New York, St. Louis, and Chicago. Lawrence's work is painted in a collage-cubist vocabulary, crowding the subjects together as they press against each other and struggle to board the trains that will take them northward. Lawrence told his audience that African Americans left the South to escape racial violence and hatred, for fear of their

lives. He showed his audience that the migrants encountered a new form of racism and a new kind of urban melancholy when they arrived.

Later Lawrence turned to African American life in New York. The *Harlem Series* combined elements of his earlier experimentalism with collage-like figures and bold graphic images. Lawrence painted wartime Harlem, moving his gaze from poverty and cheap bootleg whiskey to the newly rich middle class who dress to the nines as they prepare for a night on the town. As in the *Migration Series*, Lawrence continued to use the flattened perspective of modernism together with decorative patterns reminiscent of Henri Matisse. In the *Harlem Series*, Lawrence painted the social world that he and Bearden had come to know.

As young men, both Lawrence and Bearden often took off from 306 to gather at Joe's on 136th Street or at the Savoy Ballroom, whose manager admitted artists free of charge. At the Savoy, they listened and danced to the era's great jazz bands, black and white, from Benny Moten to Benny Goodman. Bearden and Alston formed what the *Amsterdam News* called the "dawn patrol," hitting all the after-hours spots like Mom Young's, where "for twenty-five cents you could get a beer that she made herself in a coffee can. . . . This was a place where the artists came, and the show people came after the show." Young's, like Alston's 306 or the Harlem Artists Guild and Savage's Harlem Community Art Center, gave Harlem during this second renaissance its own institutions, which replaced the white-owned patronage of the 1920s. Black pride combined with modernist artistic accomplishment and direct political engagement, rather than racial uplift, characterized the second Harlem Renaissance. From the Lafayette Theater, a few blocks South of 306, the actors Rex Ingram and Canada Lee often walked to join Ellison, Bearden, Lawrence, and Alston at 306. Alston's studio, remembered Bearden, "evoked the feeling in African American artists of belonging to a creative community." Nothing, he added, was more stimulating to the crowd at 306 than the WPA Negro Theater Project.

Established in 1935 in the wake of the Harlem riots of March 1935, the Negro Theater Project of the Federal Theater Project at the Lafayette Theater was directed by John Houseman, who, concerned that the Negro Theater Unit produce plays for and by black people, appointed African American deputies and gave regular employment to black actors like Jack Carter, Canada Lee, and Eric Burroughs. Houseman, together with Orson Welles, produced an extraordinary

“voodoo” *Macbeth* in April 1936. They pulled out all the stops in this epochal production. Set in Haiti and featuring a troupe of African drummers, the new *Macbeth* transformed Birnam Wood into Napoleonic Haiti. Like Lawrence’s series about Toussaint-Louverture, “voodoo” *Macbeth* re-created a critical chapter in black history.

The show played at the Lafayette for ten weeks and then on Broadway for another eight. The Federal Theater subsequently produced it nationally. Following this triumph, praised wildly by Brooks Atkinson in the *New York Times*, Houseman left the Negro Theater Unit and turned it over to his African American colleagues. Like the federally supported programs in the visual arts, the Negro Theater experiment belongs to the second Harlem Renaissance. There, African Americans in the 1930s assumed control of their artistic organizations and created art on their own terms, often addressing the racial inequities in American life but also confirming the value and richness of African American culture. Without the Lafayette Theater and the Harlem Artists Guild, the federal theater and arts projects in Harlem would have simply mirrored the segregation in American society. Augusta Savage’s Harlem Community Art Center and Charles Alston’s Studio 306 provided the means for Harlem’s youth to become artists, writers, and actors. The Depression provided an unintended blessing. Supported by federal programs and mobilized by community needs, Harlem’s artists used their isolation to form a new artistic community. Within the political and social context of the New Deal, the artists of Harlem’s second renaissance worked alongside their white counterparts downtown as they broke through New York’s de facto segregation.

New York’s federal arts programs initiated a process that within a decade abolished Jim Crow in New York, a dream that many in the first Harlem Renaissance had embraced as well. Moreover, the second Harlem Renaissance linked Harlem’s literary movement of the 1920s with the far more militant bebop jazz and civil rights revolutions of the late 1940s. Without the second Harlem Renaissance, it would become almost impossible to imagine the self-conscious independence and brilliance of Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Miles Davis.

PETER M. RUTKOFF
WILLIAM B. SCOTT

See also Abyssinian Baptist Church; Alston, Charles; Bearden, Romare; Cullen, Countee; Douglas, Aaron;

Ellison, Ralph; Federal Programs; Harlem General Hospital; Johnson, James Weldon; Lafayette Theater; Lawrence, Jacob; Lee, Canada; McKay, Claude; Savage, Augusta; Savoy Ballroom; Works Progress Administration

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Senghor, Léopold

Léopold Sédar Senghor was both a poet and a statesman. His life in some ways parallels that of Langston Hughes—a child of the hinterland, raised largely by his mother and her family, and assured of a classical education by an ambitious, entrepreneurial father. Both struggled with poetic sensibility grafted onto Negro or African roots and identity.

Senghor’s early years were spent among an extended matrilineal family and the griots of Joal, Thiés region, on the Atlantic coast South of Dakar. Although his family status freed him from sharing the labor of transhumant economic existence, he felt the poverty of the agricultural milieu and formed the ambition to become a teacher and priest. At age seven, he was transplanted from a Muslim and traditional setting to Catholic mission schools. His mother called him “Toubab,” or white man, when he visited during holidays from Collège Libermann, a seminary in Dakar. Father Lalouze, director of the seminary, decided that, despite his academic excellence, Senghor lacked a religious vocation (1927). At a public secondary school (later Lycée van Vollnhoven), Senghor earned two French baccalaureates (1927 and 1928).

In 1928, he won a scholarship from the governor general of French West Africa for study in Paris and

entered the Lycée Louis-le-Grand (where he became a close friend of his classmate Georges Pompidou). He studied at the École Normale Supérieure and then the Sorbonne (1931–1935) and did fieldwork on indigenous Senegalese languages under Paul Rivet (director of the Museum of Man) and Liliás Homburger. He also frequented the salon of the Nardal sisters from Martinique and discovered the American writers W. E. B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Jean Toomer, and Claude McKay. McKay's *Banjo*, translated into French by the fall of 1931, became a major influence; and Senghor translated the works of Hughes, Countee Cullen, and other writers of the Harlem Renaissance. With the West Indian Aimé Césaire and the Guianan Léon Damas, he developed an ideology of pride in African culture and helped found the Association of West African Students and the journal *L'Étudiant Noir* (*Black Student*), in which the term *négritude* (negritude) first appeared. Ethnological studies by Maurice Delafosse and Leo Frobenius underscored the significance of African contributions to world culture, which Senghor incorporated into his philosophical writings and poetry. He wrote a thesis, "Exoticism in Baudelaire," and obtained the equivalent of a Ph.D. in French grammar. He was appointed professor of literature and grammar at two lycées; during World War II, he served in the army and was a prisoner of war. He became a professor of African languages and civilization at the École Nationale de la France d'Outre-Mer (National Overseas School of France; later the Institute des Hautes Études d'Outre-Mer). He was also selected as one of the first two delegates to the French assembly from Senegal. He was immediately placed in charge of ensuring that the new constitution would be written in the purest French, entering on a career that involved many international cultural and scientific organizations.

Senghor's first published poems appeared in a review, *Volontés* (*Offerings*): "In Memoriam" and "To the Senegalese *Tirailleurs* Who Died for France" (1939). Following the appearance of his first book of poetry in 1945, *Chants d'ombre* (*Songs of Shadow*), he helped a fellow Senegalese, Alioune Diop, found the review *Présence Africaine* (1947). Other volumes of poetry included *Hosties noires* (*Black Hosts*) and *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache* (*An Anthology of the New Black and Madagascan Poetry*), for which Jean-Paul Sartre wrote an introduction entitled "Orphée noire" ("Black Orpheus"). Sartre's interpretation of negritude as a manifestation of existentialism enhanced Senghor's reputation. Senghor's own poetry is rich in

African subject matter and allusion; most poems specify types of drums or musical instruments—sometimes jazz ensembles—that should accompany their reading.

In 1950–1951, Senghor was a delegate to the Fifth Session of the United Nations General Assembly; in 1952, he was secretary of state for scientific research and a founder of what became the University of Dakar. He was mayor of Thiés in 1955–1956, published *Ethiopiennes* (poetry) and married Colette Hubert of Normandy in 1956, and became leader of a new political party in Senegal and adviser to Charles de Gaulle in 1957–1958. Cautiously urging effective self-determination for Senegal and other colonial entities, Senghor helped to dismantle colonial rule. In 1960, he was instrumental in persuading de Gaulle to endorse formation of the Mali Federation and shortly after was elected president of the newly formed republic of Senegal (5 September 1960). In 1961, on a visit to the United States, he arranged for Langston Hughes to be invited to a dinner at the White House so that they could meet.

During twenty years as president (reelected at intervals), Senghor published poetry (notably *Nocturnes* in 1961) and essays (*Liberté*, Vols. 1–4, 1964–1969) and received countless honors, among them the Apollinaire Prize for poetry (1974), honorary degrees from several universities, and election to the Academy of Moral and Political Science of the Institute of France (1969).

Senghor's broad worldview included African traditions of his birthplace, his Catholic education, his concentration on New Negro writing in the 1920s and 1930s, and his involvement in new trends of ethnology and religion through academic advisers and Teilhard de Chardin, to whom he dedicated a compilation of essays (*Liberté*, Vol. 5, 1993). Senghor attributed some of his inspiration explicitly to the international leadership of the Harlem Renaissance and to renaissance principles, especially respect for the civilizations of Africa and the influence of the African diaspora, the common heritage of blacks everywhere, and the need to ameliorate problems of the working classes.

Critics of "negritude" like Wole Soyinka (1999), who accused Senghor of yielding to his youthful ambition to become a priest and teacher, focus on conservative aspects of the concept; but Senghor's approach to political involvement was unquestionably inspired by internalized African values and "New Negro" ideas. Senghor's videotaped address to a

three-day celebration by UNESCO of his ninetieth birthday confirmed his lifelong identification with a tradition of prophetic admonition and a plea for cultural *métissage* (blending) and for integrated humanism based on the cross-fertilization of values among the cultures of Africa and its diaspora, of Asiatic peoples, and of Europeans and their dispersed cultures. Senghor is sometimes compared to Martin Luther King Jr. with regard to religious fervor and activism; such comparisons must have pleased Senghor, who admired King and who consistently preached universal tolerance throughout a long and distinguished career.

Biography

Léopold Sédar Senghor was born in Ndjitor, Senegal, 14 August 1906 (father Serer, mother Mandinke or Peul-Fulani). He was educated at Catholic mission schools in Joal and N'Gasobil; Collège Libermann, Dakar; Lycée Louis-le-Grand, École Normale Supérieure (Licence des Lettres, 1931); and the Sorbonne (Diplôme d'Études Supérieures, 1932), studying linguistics with Ferdinand Brunot and Charles Bruneau. Senghor promulgated the concept of "negritude" with Aimé Césaire and Léon Damas, inspired partly by writers of the Harlem Renaissance. Senghor was the first African to earn the Agrégé de l'Université (1935). He was a professor of literature and grammar, Lycée Descartes, Tours (1935–1938) and Lycée Marcelin-Berthelet near Paris (1938–1940, 1942–1944). During World War II, he was an infantryman, a prisoner of war, and a member of the Resistance. In 1945, his first book of poetry, *Songs of the Shadow*, was published, and he was chosen as the first delegate to the French Constituent Assembly from Senegal. He married Ginette Eboué in 1946; they divorced in 1955. He married Colette Hubert in 1956; they had a son, Philippe Maquilen. Senghor was an adviser to Charles de Gaulle. He was president of the Mali Federation, then was elected president of the new republic of Senegal in 1960; he resigned in 1980. He was a gold medalist and member of the French Academy and received numerous prizes, awards, and honorary degrees in the United States, France, and Europe. The French University of Alexandria, Egypt, was named for him. He died in Normandy 20 December 2001.

NAN SUMNER-MACK

See also Césaire, Aimé; Damas, Léon; Negritude

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Servant in the House, The

The Servant in the House (1907), a play by Charles Rann Kennedy (1871–1950), reflects the author's Christian idealism and the "social gospel" movement. Kennedy was an ardent advocate of Christian principles and used his plays to explore their religious and sociological implications. The resulting works were not always effective as drama, although Thomas Dickinson observed of *Servant in the House*: "The American stage has not elsewhere seen as perfect an example of adaptation of dramatic format to didactic purpose" (1967, 180).

The Servant in the House opened on 23 March 1908 at the Savoy Theater, New York, produced by Henry Miller. It ran for eighty performances, closed on 1 June 1908, then started touring. Its English premiere was on 25 October 1909 at the Adelphi in London. It was revived four times in New York: in 1918, 1921, 1925, and 1926; and it was part of the repertoire of the Lafayette Theater in Harlem.

This play, in five acts, concerns Rev. William Smythe, his wife, and their niece Mary; they are anxiously awaiting the arrival of two bishops, who they hope will help with the funding needed repairs to their dilapidated church. One, the rich and worldly bishop of Lancashire, is Smythe's brother-in-law; the other, the bishop of Benares, is Smythe's brother. Another brother—Robert, Mary's father—is also visiting, but he is not entirely welcome: He is a common laborer, and because of his own experiences with suffering, he is rather antagonistic to the church. The bishop of Lancashire and Robert arrive, with a humble servant called Manson, but there is no sign of the bishop of Benares. As they are wondering about his absence, Manson guides them to reflect on their lives, reviews past mistakes and suffering, and brings the family members to a reconciliation. He then reveals himself as Smythe's brother.

Charles Rann Kennedy came from a family of classical scholars. He married a famous actress, Edith Wynne Matthison, and became an American citizen in

1917. His career as a playwright reached its height before World War I, though after the war he continued to create plays and worked with students at Bennett College. *The Servant in the House* was made into a film in 1918; it was directed by Hugh Ryan (Jack) Conway and had its premiere in July 1920 at the Strand Theater in Washington, D.C.

AMY LEE

See also Harlem: 3—Entertainment; Lafayette Theater

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Seven Arts

Seven Arts was a pacifist political and literary magazine, founded by a poet and former social worker, James Oppenheim, in 1916. Oppenheim asked the writers Waldo Frank and Van Wyck Brooks to be associate editors, and they were soon joined by the radical Floyd Dell and other figures of the "lost generation." Oppenheim also obtained the sponsorship of a patron, Annette Kittredge Rankine. *Seven Arts* was a groundbreaking venture: Unlike any other American writing at the time, it presented a courageous, almost brazen mix of poetry, fiction, and drama. It promoted art as a regenerative social force and covered topics of interest to New York's intellectuals, such as cultural criticism, pacifism, and psychoanalysis.

Seven Arts published Claude McKay's first poem, "The Harlem Dancer," under the pseudonym Eli Edwards in 1917, making him the first black American to appear in a white avant-garde literary magazine.

This early work was the first substantial poem by a black writer in print since Paul Laurence Dunbar's dialect pieces at the turn of the twentieth century. "The Harlem Dancer" and the Silent Protest Parade of the same year—1917—may also mark the beginning of the movement that came to be known as the Harlem Renaissance.

Though it was published for only one year, *Seven Arts* had a significant impact on the New Negro movement. Because books were too expensive to reach a broad readership, the movement depended on periodicals, including but not exclusively those of the black community, to facilitate a conversation between writers and readers. *Seven Arts*, one of the most dynamic publications of the "lost generation," helped to launch Sherwood Anderson (a businessman turned writer) and introduced the French avant-garde to the United States. It also provided a forum for the pacifist cultural critic Randolph Bourne. It published one of the first manifestos proclaiming the imminent conquest of art and humanism over materialism.

When the editors of *Seven Arts* opposed the United States' participation in World War I, Rankine withdrew her financial support; as a result, the journal collapsed after one year in print. It merged with the literary journal *The Dial*, which was published until 1929.

KATHLEEN COLLINS

See also Anderson, Sherwood; Dunbar, Paul Laurence; Frank, Waldo; Lynching: Silent Protest Parade; Magazines and Journals; McKay, Claude

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Shipp, Jesse A.

Jesse A. Shipp (1859–1934) was a producer, director, playwright, librettist, and performer in musical and

dramatic theater. He was a pioneer in black musical comedy and contributed to the dismantling of holdovers from the minstrel tradition. As a chief librettist and director of Bert Williams and George Walker's shows, he was also one of the earliest blacks to direct a musical on Broadway and indeed may have been the first.

Shipp began his career touring with the Sam P. Jacks Revue in 1879; in the 1880s, he performed in beer gardens and variety halls. He toured with the Beethoven Quartet and later worked with the integrated Eureka Minstrels, a troupe of African Americans and white Englishmen. After the Eureka Minstrels broke up, many of the African Americans, including Shipp, continued to work together as the Georgia Minstrels. Shipp then joined another integrated troupe, Primrose and West's Forty Whites and Thirty Blacks, but eventually he left minstrelsy for musicals. The first musical in which he performed was *The Octoroons* (1895); the second was *Oriental American* (1896).

Beginning in 1899, Shipp cowrote (mainly with Alex C. Rogers), directed, and performed in most of Williams and Walker's musicals, including *The Policy Players*, 1899; *The Sons of Ham*, in which he played Old Ham, 1900–1902; *In Dahomey*, in which he played Hustling Charlie, 1902–1905; *Abyssinia*, in which he played the Tegulet, a chief justice, 1906–1907; *Bandana Land*, 1907; and *Mr. Lode of Koal*, 1909. The highly successful Williams and Walker Company also produced plays at the Shaftesbury Theater in London.

In 1910, Shipp headed the Jesse A. Shipp Stock Company at the Grand Theater in Chicago. He wrote, produced, and directed *A Night in New York's China Town* for that group, and it had a notable production at the Pekin Theater in Chicago. He also produced *The Lime Kiln Club* with this stock company, in 1911; in the same year, he produced *Dr. Herb's Prescription* and toured with a vaudeville act, the Tennessee Ten. He played Barabbas in the Hapgood Players' production of *Simon the Cyrenian* in 1917–1918. Shipp wrote a number of shows that were produced at the Lafayette Theater between 1919 and 1925.

In October 1922, the Peter P. Jones Photoplay Company announced the formation of the Seminole Film Producing Company; its first production, *Shadows and Sunshine*, was based on an original story by Shipp and starred the renowned black actress Bessie Coleman. Shipp also wrote for Whitney and Tutt's *North Ain't South*, 1923; and for James P. Johnson's and Cecil Mack's *Moochin' Along*, 1925. He was also one of several

collaborators on *Darktown Affairs* in 1929; it reached Broadway in 1930 under the title *Change Your Luck*. In addition, Shipp wrote vaudeville acts for several groups, including the Down Home Ten, the Dixie School Days' Company, and the Mills Sisters.

In 1930, Shipp played Abraham in the original Broadway production of *The Green Pastures*; he also directed *Kilpatrick's Old Time Minstrels*, a retrospective tribute to minstrelsy that played in a theater in downtown New York.

Biography

Jesse A. Shipp was born in 1859 in Cincinnati, Ohio. He toured with Sam P. Jacks Revue in 1879, and with the Beethoven Quartet, the Eureka Minstrels troupe, the Georgia Minstrels, and Primrose and West's Forty Whites and Thirty Blacks. He performed in *The Octoroons* in 1895, *Oriental American* in 1896, *The Policy Players* in 1899, *The Sons of Ham* in 1900–1902, *In Dahomey* in 1902–1905, *Abyssinia* in 1906–1907, *Bandana Land* in 1907, *Simon the Cyrenian* in 1917–1918, and *The Green Pastures* in 1930. Shipp was a member of the Frogs Theater Group and headed the Jesse A. Shipp Stock Company. He died in Richmond Hill, Queens, New York, on 1 May 1934.

CARMEN PHELPS

See also *Green Pastures*, The; Johnson, James P.; Lafayette Theater; Mack, Cecil; Williams, Egbert Austin "Bert"

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Show Boat

The hugely successful musical *Show Boat* opened at the Ziegfeld Theater in New York City on 27 December 1927. It was based on Edna Ferber's novel *Show Boat* (1926); the lyrics and libretto were by Oscar Hammerstein II, the score was by Jerome Kern, and the director was Zeke Colvan. *Show Boat* was the first musical to break away from stereotypical portrayals of African Americans as comical, even farcical, characters; instead, it focused on social issues faced by African Americans living in the South. It is considered a masterpiece of American musical theater, fully integrating memorable music, a complex story line, invigorating choreography, and vivid characterizations; and it prompted all other composers and producers of musicals to rethink the genre. Several of the songs from *Show Boat* became standards, including "Ol' Man River," which is reminiscent of spirituals; "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man," which is inspired by blues; and the love ballads "Make Believe" and "Why Do I Love You?"

Show Boat is a sprawling epic in two acts that follows the lives of three generations of performers and crew from the mid-1890s to the late 1920s. Cap'n Andy Hawks and his wife, Parthy, run the *Cotton Blossom*, a showboat on the Mississippi River. Other characters include the Hawks's daughter Magnolia; their maid, Queenie, and her stevedore husband, Joe; the actress Julie La Verne and the actor Steve Baker, Julie's husband; and the vaudevillians Frank Schultz and Ellie May Chipley. The musical opens with the showboat docking at Natchez, where it is welcomed by townspeople and dockworkers singing "Cotton Blossom." After the crowd leaves, a devilish riverboat gambler named Gaylord Ravenal meets Magnolia, and their mutual attraction is made obvious in their duet "Make Believe."

Later Magnolia asks Joe what he thinks of Gaylord, but Joe tells her to ask the river—the Mississippi—for advice “bout dem boys.” Joe then breaks into the song “Ol’ Man River,” the signature piece of the show. In the original production, he was accompanied by the famous Jubilee Singers as a group of black bargemen.

The next scene finds Julie, Magnolia, and Queenie in the kitchen of the *Cotton Blossom*, where Julie sings “Can’t Help Lovin’ Dat Man” after the three of them discuss the difficulties of relationships. Shortly thereafter Julie is discovered by the local authorities to be breaking laws against miscegenation because she is of mixed blood and her husband is white. Julie and Steve leave the ship, accompanied by “Mis’ry’s Comin’ Aroun’” sung by a black chorus. Magnolia and Gaylord—who conveniently needs to leave Natchez because of gambling debts—are recruited to take Julie’s and Steve’s places in the showboat company, and during their first performance together on the *Cotton Blossom* they express their love in the duet “You Are Love.” Shortly thereafter they marry, and the curtain falls on the first act.

The second act opens in 1893, on the Midway Plaisance at the World’s Columbia Exposition in Chicago, where Magnolia, Andy, and Parthy are waiting for Gaylord, who is late. He soon appears with news of a financial windfall from a successful wager, and he and Magnolia sing the romantic duet “Why Do I Love You?” This is soon followed by a lively and visually stunning African village song and dance, “In Dahomey.” In the next scene, the year is 1904. Gaylord and Magnolia have left the showboat and moved to Chicago; there, his gambling intensifies, and he ultimately deserts her. Magnolia finds a job at the Trocadero Music Hall, where Julie—who has herself been abandoned some time ago by her husband, Steve—is the star. Julie brings down the house with her rendition of the song “Bill” but then generously gives her starring role to Magnolia. Magnolia becomes an instant hit with her rendition of the popular ballad “After the Ball” and goes on to a successful career as a performer. The final scenes are set in the year 1927. Magnolia has returned to the *Cotton Blossom*; her daughter, Kim, has become a star on Broadway; and Gaylord returns for a reconciliation. The curtain falls after Joe’s reprise of “Ol’ Man River.”

Show Boat ran for nearly two years in New York, playing 575 performances and grossing about \$50,000 a week. The original cast included Edna May Oliver (Parthy), Charles Winninger (Andy), Norma Terris (Magnolia), Howard Marsh (Gaylord), Eva Puck (Ellie), Sammy White (Frank), Helen Morgan (Julie),

Charles Ellis (Steve), Jules Bledsoe (Joe), and Tess Gardella (Queenie). From 6 May 1929 through March 1930 the production toured the United States, and in 1932, the original cast returned to New York for an additional 180 performances. During the Broadway run of *Show Boat* there were also a number of productions abroad. These included a production at the Drury Lane Theater in London in 1928 and productions in Australia and Paris in 1929. For the production in London, Paul Robeson was cast as Joe; he had been intended to take this part in the original New York production. A revival opened at the Ziegfeld Theater on 5 January 1946 and ran for 418 performances.

Show Boat was adapted for the screen three times—by Universal Pictures in 1929 and 1936 (with Irene Dunne in one of the leads) and by MGM in 1951 (with Ava Gardner and Howard Keel). On 8 April 1954, *Show Boat* entered the opera repertoire, when it was performed by the New York City Opera.

Show Boat was revived on Broadway by Hal Prince in 1994, with great success: The production was nominated for ten Tony awards in 1995 and won in five categories—best revival, best featured actress, best director, best costume designer, and best choreographer.

ERIN STAPLETON-CORCORAN

See also Bledsoe, Jules; Musical Theater; Robeson, Paul

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Shuffle Along

The musical *Shuffle Along* (1921) had a book by Flournoy Miller and Aubrey Lyles and music by Eubie

Blake (composer) and Noble Sissle (lyricist). It opened at the Sixty-Third Street Music Hall in New York on 23 May 1921.

Looking back on the 1920s in his autobiography *The Big Sea* (1940/1993), Langston Hughes suggested that the Harlem Renaissance effectively began with the opening of *Shuffle Along*. He called it “a honey of a show” and remembered it as “funny, rollicking and gay, with a dozen danceable, singable tunes” (such as “I’m Just Wild About Harry” and “Baltimore Buzz”); but what made it most noteworthy for him was the outstanding array of African Americans who had brought it to the stage. In addition to Miller, Lyles, Blake, and Sissle, there were the performers Josephine Baker, Caterina Jarboro, Florence Mills, and Trixie Smith onstage; the musicians included the noted choir director Hall Johnson and the composer William Grant Still as oboist. *Shuffle Along* was a monumental success; it ran for 504 performances on Broadway and then spent two more years on the road as a touring show. As James Weldon Johnson recalled in *Black Manhattan* (1930/1991), this show “made the Sixty-Third Street Theater one of the best-known houses in town and made it necessary for the Traffic Department to declare Sixty-Third Street a one-way thoroughfare.”

Actually, though, *Shuffle Along* had emerged from humble beginnings. It was first conceived when Sissle and Blake—the Dixie Duo, established stars of the vaudeville circuit—agreed to perform in a benefit show of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People at the Paul Laurence Dunbar Theater in Philadelphia. Sharing the bill with them, as a comic team, were Miller and Lyles, two alumni of Fisk University who were also veteran vaudevillians. The two pairs were impressed by each other’s performance; later, when they met again in New York, Miller and Lyles expressed an interest in reviving a play called *The Mayor of Dixie*, a farce they had staged in Chicago in 1907. It had a simple plot (Miller and Lyles played schemers and cheats who become rivals in a mayoral election and both lose), and Miller thought that it could be brought to Broadway inexpensively. Sissle and Blake, who had already tried to sell songs on Broadway, were eager to collaborate. The show went into production early in 1921; the meager plot was fleshed out with catchy song-and-dance numbers, and there were limited runs at the Dunbar in Philadelphia and the Howard Theater in Washington, D.C. *Shuffle Along* was financed mainly by its four creators, from their earnings in vaudeville, and it

arrived in New York in May \$18,000 in debt. But although it was apparently a financial risk, although there were no big names on the marquee, and although the theater was somewhat run-down, enthusiasm spread like wildfire after the premiere. *Shuffle Along* went on to gross more than \$8 million.

As the first successful play written and produced by African Americans on Broadway since Bert Williams’s *Mr. Lode of Koal* closed in 1909, *Shuffle Along* cleared a path for numerous black musical productions throughout the 1920s. These included *Chocolate Dandies* (1924, music by Eubie Blake and Spencer Williams), *My Magnolia* (1926), *Keep Shuffling* (1928, featuring music by Thomas “Fats” Waller), and *Hot Chocolates* (1929, which introduced the standard “Black and Blue” by Fats Waller and Andy Razaf, made popular as a recording by Louis Armstrong). *Shuffle Along* certainly established the black American musical as a marketable commodity in New York: As early as 1922, the white singer Gilda Gray was performing a number in the Ziegfeld Follies called “It’s Getting Dark on Old Broadway”; the lyrics joked uneasily, “Real dark-town entertainers hold the stage/You must black up to be the latest rage.”

Shuffle Along has always been regarded as significant for having given exposure to its African American performers and for having opened the door to other all-black shows, but relatively recently scholars have also considered the importance of its content to the social concerns of the Harlem Renaissance. For example, Eileen Southern (1997) argues that *Shuffle Along* brought uniquely African American expressivity to the development of American musical theater, through its use of jazz and black folk dances like the buck-and-wing. Jacqui Malone (1996) suggests that the sixteen-woman chorus line in *Shuffle Along* may have been its most notable innovation; these dancers performed folk steps and also popularized an assortment of contemporary jazz dance steps: slow-motion acrobatics, tap, and legomania. As Eubie Blake himself remembered decades later (Huggins 1976), *Shuffle Along* changed the way chorus lines performed onstage—they now danced with a verve that had been lacking in earlier white reviews like the Ziegfeld Follies, in which the chorus line was a mostly static group intended only to showcase the women’s beauty. John Graziano (1990) argues that *Shuffle Along* should be considered in relation to the “racial advancement” project of intellectuals such as W. E. B. Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson, who sought to improve the social status of African Americans through excellence

in the arts. *Shuffle Along* did not represent the “high” art championed by the intelligentsia, but Graziano suggests that its financial success and its idiomatic use of elements from blues and jazz contributed to the widespread recognition of black creativity that these intellectuals were trying to facilitate.

Shuffle Along also worked against stereotypes from nineteenth-century minstrelsy that had persisted in, and dominated, black theatrical projects in the early twentieth century. Ann Douglas (1995) argues that *Shuffle Along* was a self-conscious parody of blackface minstrel traditions, a “free-form mock homage.” Its songs about Dixie, its slapstick violence, its occasional exaggerated black dialect, and its hackneyed plot all appeared rooted in minstrel conventions. But the show unsettled the stability of those practices through juxtaposition, by situating them in combination with modern African American dance and innovative jazz. According to Douglas, *Shuffle Along*, with its sophisticated parody and its financial triumph, occurring after a decade when there had been no black musical theater on Broadway, “spelled the decline of white blackface,” which had been the predominant representation of African American life on the Broadway stage in the interim.

MICHAEL BORSHUK

See also Baker, Josephine, Blake, Eubie; Chocolate Dandies; Hot Chocolates; Johnson, Hall; Lyles, Aubrey; Miller, Flournoy; Mills, Florence; Musical Theater; Sissle, Noble; Smith, Trixie; Still, William Grant

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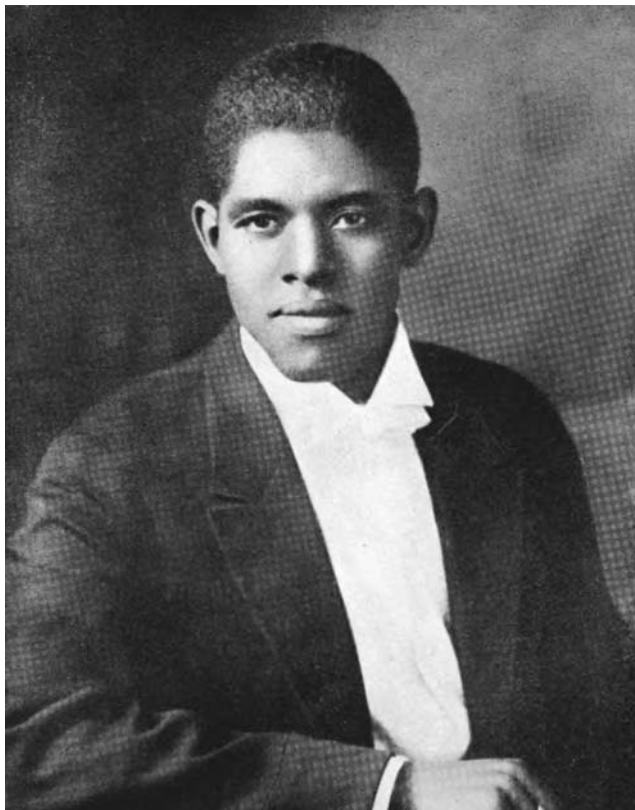
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Singers

The Harlem Renaissance created significant opportunities for African American singers. They performed in venues that were previously not available to them, such as Broadway theaters, and they introduced new genres, such as blues, to their audiences. Their success in the 1920s, however, did not materialize overnight; it had been preceded by almost half a century of achievements. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, African American vocalists made great strides in public performances. They appeared in classical concerts, vaudeville, variety shows, and musicals. The Hyers sisters, Anna Madah (1853–1930s) and Emma Louise (1855–c. 1899), led a company in the 1870s and 1880s that performed operatic excerpts as well as sentimental songs in evening-long entertainments. Their shows toured the country from coast to coast with great success. In the 1890s, various entrepreneurs produced entertainments that combined popular song, operetta, and opera excerpts. Vocalists generally could be classified into one of two categories: those who sang popular songs of the period and those who sang operatic excerpts. The most important operatic singers of the period were Marie Selika (Williams, 1849–1937), Flora Batson (1864–1906), and Sissieretta Jones (1868–1933, known nationally and internationally as “Black Patti”). These three women followed in the footsteps of the Hyers sisters, studying and singing arias by Verdi, Donizetti, and Bellini, as well as lighter pieces by Offenbach, Jacobowski, and Ardit, and joining with members of their companies to sing ensemble pieces, such as the quartet “Bella figlia dell’amore” from Giuseppe Verdi’s *Rigoletto*. Jones’s career from 1892 through 1896 was one of the most important indicators of the progress of African American performers in the United States: Her engagements were managed by a well-known talent agent, James Pond, whose portfolio of artists included Mark Twain and John Greenleaf Whittier. Pond was able to negotiate a higher salary for her than any other black performer had yet received. Her appeal to both



Roland Hayes, c. 1920s. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)



Marian Anderson. (Brown Brothers.)

black and white audiences made it clear that a high level of talent was emerging from the African American community. By the turn of the twentieth century, a number of African American entertainers who sang vernacular songs were also achieving recognition and acclaim from white, as well as black, audiences. Among the most important women singers were Belle Davis, Ada Overton Walker (1880–1914), Abbie Mitchell (1884–1960), and Stella Wiley (b. c. 1870s). The most important male singers included Ernest Hogan (1865–1909), Robert “Bob” Cole (1868–1911), George Walker (1872–1911), John Rosamond Johnson (1873–1954), and, preeminently, the renowned Egbert Austin “Bert” Williams (1874–1922). Williams recorded eighty songs for two companies—Victor and Columbia—over a twenty-year period, more than any other African American performer of the time. As with many of his contemporaries, Williams’s repertoire mostly consisted of comic narrative songs that focused on the protagonist’s bad luck with money, women, and landlords, as well as topics that were particularly directed to African American audiences. Williams’ signature song, “Nobody,” told of his bad

luck in a number of situations in which no one offered to help him. “He’s a Cousin of Mine” took up the infidelity of a young woman: “You’re gwine to get somethin’ what you don’t expect,” the infidelity of a husband. In 1910, Williams was hired by Florenz Ziegfeld to appear in the Follies. His performances, as the only African American in casts that over the years included distinguished performers such as Leon Errol, Fanny Brice, Eddie Cantor, and W. C. Fields, were significant in the same way that “Black Patti”’s appearances on otherwise white programs were in the early 1890s.

Vaudeville provided expanded opportunities for African Americans to be seen by a wide variety of audiences. During the first decade of the twentieth century, Bob Cole and John Rosamond Johnson played the major vaudeville circuits; their salary was said to be \$750 per week. Other performers included the composer, comedian, and singer Irving Jones (c. 1874–1932), who appeared in an act with his brother and wife, Ada Walker, after her husband, George, was incapacitated by syphilis; and Florence Mills, who was featured with her sisters. Concert singers did not fare as well; most of their concerts, as had been the case during the



Ethel Waters. (Library of Congress.)

nineteenth century, were given at black churches, usually in conjunction with local talent. Yet several persevered in spite of the difficulties. Harry Thacker Burleigh (1866–1949) gave recitals of art songs for almost two decades after his graduation in 1896 from the National Conservatory of Music. His repertoire included German lieder, English and American songs, and, after 1910, arrangements of spirituals. Roland Hayes (1887–1976) began singing while still a student at Fisk University. He joined the Fisk Jubilee Singers before giving solo recitals. From 1916 to 1919, Hayes organized his own recital tours. He sang in cities from coast to coast and appeared with many prestigious African American groups in New York City, Washington, D.C., Chicago, and elsewhere. His career attracted little notice from mainstream audiences until he returned from Europe in 1923 after a triumphant three years of concertizing, which included a command performance before George V of England. Rachel Walker (1873–1940s) based her career in Europe from 1900 to 1915, when she returned to the United States. After a few additional years of concertizing, she settled in Cleveland, where she gave voice lessons. In 1914, Marian Anderson (1897–1993), a

teenager from Philadelphia, began her professional career singing with James Reese Europe's Clef Club orchestra. In 1922, she gave a debut recital at Town Hall, and the following year she sang another. In 1925, she won a singing competition that offered her the opportunity to sing with the Philharmonic Society at Lewisohn Stadium on the campus of the City College of New York. Her appearance there resulted in critical acclaim, unlike the reviews she had received in response to her concerts at Town Hall. During the next four years, Anderson appeared in many concerts. In 1929, she departed for Europe for further study.

Whereas "Black Patti" and other singers of her generation had been able to perform with established opera companies only after great difficulty, during the Harlem Renaissance there were more opportunities for African American women to sing in complete staged performances, particularly in Europe. They were usually cast in exotic roles so that audiences would not be concerned with the issue of "miscasting." Thus Lillian Evanti (1890–1967) was heard in Nice and Paris, where she sang the title role in Léo Delibes's *Lakme*; Florence Cole Talbert (1890s–1961) sang the title role in Verdi's *Aida* in Cosenza, Italy, in 1927; and Caterina Jarboro (1903–1986) appeared in Milan in 1930 and with the Chicago Opera Company in 1934 in the same role. African American men faced more resistance to roles in opera, so most of them turned to solo concerts or appeared as soloists in oratorios. William Richardson (1869–1930s), for example, was known in the Boston area as a fine soloist in oratorio; he toured throughout the United States and the West Indies, giving solo recitals of art songs, from his formal debut in Jordan Hall in 1919 to his death. Similarly, the tenor George Garner (1890–1971) toured with his wife during the late 1920s and 1930s after studying for several years in London with the well-known singer and conductor George Henschel (1850–1934).

A number of African American singers appeared both in concert venues and in musical theater productions. Abbie Mitchell (1884–1960) began her career in 1898 in Paul Laurence Dunbar and Will Marion Cook's *Clorindy, or the Origin of the Cakewalk*. During the first decade of the twentieth century, she appeared in leading roles with Williams and Walker's company. During the late 1910s, she continued to sing parlor songs, ragtime numbers, and early jazz pieces from the popular repertoire. In 1921, however, she began lessons once again, studying classical song in Paris with the famous tenor Jean de Reszke (1850–1935), while performing vernacular songs with her Full

Harmonic Quartet. After her studies were completed, Mitchell then gave concerts of art songs in Europe and the United States. Her singing career ended with her portrayal of Clara in George and Ira Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* in 1935. The mezzo-soprano Minto Cato (1900–1979) appeared in revues and in the musicals *Keep Shufflin'* (1928), *Hot Chocolates* (1929), and Lew Leslie's *Blackbirds of 1930*. During the 1930s, she was heard in several operatic roles, including Amneris in Verdi's *Aida* at the New York Hippodrome. Taylor Gordon (1893–1971) began his career in vaudeville in 1919; he toured on the Keith-Albee circuit for two years. He then joined with John Rosamond Johnson to sing concerts of spirituals. In 1925, he returned to vaudeville as a member of the Inimitable Five. Later in his career, he appeared in musicals on Broadway. The baritone Jules Bledsoe (1898–1943) had moved to New York City in 1919 to study medicine at Columbia University. While in school, he began to take voice lessons. By 1924, when he made his solo debut at Aeolian Hall, Bledsoe had decided to change careers. In 1926, he made his stage debut in an opera by Frank Harling (1887–1958), *Deep River*. The following year, he created the role of Joe in Jerome Kern's *Show Boat*, in which he later toured Europe. Bledsoe was chosen to sing the title role for the European production of Louis Gruenberg's opera *The Emperor Jones*, based on Eugene O'Neill's play; he was the first African American to undertake the role, which he sang in New York also. In the 1930s, he sang several other operatic roles, including Amonasro in *Aida* and the title role in *Boris Godunov* in Europe. He also appeared in the London production of *Blackbirds of 1936*. The most prominent African American singer to have major musical careers both as a concert artist and in musical theater (and to act in dramatic plays and on film) was Paul Robeson (1898–1976). He had been singing since childhood, and one of his first professional engagements was as a member of the chorus in Sissle and Blake's *Shuffle Along* (1921), the first black musical to be seen on Broadway in more than a decade. After appearances in several shows in Harlem, Robeson made his solo debut in 1925 at the Greenwich Village Theater, singing an entire program of spirituals. His success with the program enabled him to tour with it to countries all over the world for several decades and to record many of the spirituals. In 1928, Robeson was chosen to play the role of Joe for the first London production of *Show Boat*. In 1936, he also appeared in a film version of the musical. At the very end of the Harlem Renaissance, a young singer, Todd Duncan

(1903–1998), was recognized as a major talent when he created the role of Porgy in Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*. His costar, Ann Brown (b. 1915), achieved fame as well for her portrayal of Bess. Both went on to major careers.

For many African American singers, the 1920s were the decade of the musical. The profusion of shows during the years of the Harlem Renaissance—on Broadway, in road companies, and in Harlem's speakeasies—provided continuous employment for black singers and dancers. After a hiatus of eleven years, black musical theater returned to Broadway with *Shuffle Along*, a farcical book musical that ran for more than two years and generated three road companies. Its great success with audiences and the critics gave many young singers their first exposure on Broadway, and it ushered in a cascade of shows, both book musicals and revues, that constituted a significant percentage of musical theater productions in New York City until the Great Depression. These shows provided showcases for a large number of talented performers, several of whom achieved stardom. While some performers, such as Inez Clough (c. 1870s–1933), Georgette Harvey (1883–1952), and Florence Mills (1895–1927), had careers that dated back to the beginning of the century, most of the singers who achieved prominence were just beginning their careers at the start of the renaissance. Clough had first performed in John W. Isham's shows *The Octoroons* and *Oriental America* during the late 1890s. She then joined Williams and Walker's company, appearing in three of their shows. During the renaissance, she appeared in *Shuffle Along* and *The Chocolate Dandies* (1924). Harvey's career began in 1905 when she joined the cast of *Rufus Rastus*, a musical starring Ernest Hogan. She then formed a female quartet that toured Europe for several years, finally disbanding in Russia. Harvey stayed in Saint Petersburg until the revolution, then went to the Far East, where she remained until 1921. On her return to New York, she appeared in the musicals *Strut Miss Lizzie* (1922) and *Runnin' Wild* (1923) and several other shows. In 1935, she appeared in *Porgy and Bess*, and at the end of her long life she appeared in Kurt Weill's *Lost in the Stars* (1949). Mills started her career as a "pickaninny" (a child performer in vaudeville) when she was four years old. In her teens, she and her sisters formed a trio that played the vaudeville circuits. In 1916, she became one of the Panama Trio, with Ada "Bricktop" Smith and Cora Green. After creating a sensation as Gertrude Saunders's replacement in *Shuffle Along*,

Mills was managed by the Broadway producer Lew Leslie, who starred her in his *Plantation Revue* (1922), *From Dover to Dixie* (1923), *Dixie to Broadway* (1924), and *Blackbirds of 1926*. She was scheduled to star in *Blackbirds of 1928* but died suddenly of appendicitis. Cora Green (c. 1890s–c. 1940s), who sang with Mills in the Panama Trio, was a contralto. She appeared in many shows during the 1920s, including *Put and Take* (1921), *Strut Miss Lizzie*, and (with Mills) *Dixie to Broadway*. In the 1930s and 1940s, Green also appeared in several movies by the black filmmaker Oscar Micheaux. Eva Taylor (1896–1977) began her career at the age of three as a pickaninny in Josephine Gassmann's troupe. As a teenager, she was seen on Broadway in a number of musicals. After her marriage to Clarence Williams around 1920, she sang with his instrumental group and also appeared in a number of musicals, including *Shuffle Along*, her husband's musical *Bottomland* (1927), *Keep Shufflin'*, and *Queen o' Hearts* (1928). Taylor recorded extensively, sometimes using pseudonyms. In her teens, Gertrude Saunders (1890s–1940s) joined Billy King's Chicago troupe. After developing her skills for a few years, she moved to New York and auditioned for *Shuffle Along*, in which she played Ruth Little, a friend of the ingenue. Saunders created a sensation at every performance with her rendition of "I'm Craving for That Kind of Love," which can be heard on a recording she made in 1921. She left the show to star in a revue by Hurtig and Seamon, which was a flop. She then played the vaudeville circuits until she was chosen to star in Maceo Pinkard's musical *Liza* (1924). She appeared in several other shows and in a race film, *Big Timers* (1945). Another contemporary, Alberta Hunter (1895–1984), began her career in Chicago when she was fifteen. In 1923, she starred in Eddie Hunter's musical *How Come?*, and in 1927, she appeared with Robeson in the London production of *Show Boat*. Ethel Waters (c. 1896–1977) also began her professional career during her teens. After a major recording career with Black Swan, Waters appeared in several Broadway shows, including *Africana* (1927), Lew Leslie's *Blackbirds of 1930*, and *Rhapsody in Black* (1931). She also appeared in *On With the Show* (1929), a film in which she sang "Am I Blue?" and "Birmingham Bertha." The career of Edith Wilson (1896–1981) was similar to that of Waters and Hunter: She started performing professionally while still a teenager; began recording in 1921; and appeared in *Put and Take* (1921), *From Dover to Dixie*, *Chocolate Kiddies* (1925), *Blackbirds of 1926*, and *Connie's Hot Chocolate Revue* (1929). Valaida Snow

(c. 1900–1956) was seen in Sissle and Blake's *The Chocolate Dandies* (1924) and *Rhapsody in Black* (1931). Adelaide Hall (c. 1901–1993) began her career as a member of the chorus of *Shuffle Along*. Her extraordinary talent propelled her into starring roles in *Runnin' Wild*, *Chocolate Kiddies*, *Blackbirds of 1928* (in which she replaced Florence Mills), and *Brown Buddies* (1930). She also recorded with Duke Ellington's band. Blanche Calloway (1902–1978), the older sister of Cab Calloway, was first seen in one of the road companies of *Shuffle Along*. She then joined James P. Johnson's musical revue *Plantation Days*, with which she toured until 1927. Thereafter she became a nightclub entertainer and toured during the early 1930s with her band, the Joy Boys. One of the most important performers to achieve stardom after beginning as a chorus member in *Shuffle Along* was Josephine Baker (1906–1975). Her antics in that show called attention to her and led to her being cast in Sissle and Blake's next show, *The Chocolate Dandies*. After appearing at the Plantation Club in 1925, she left for Paris to appear in *La Revue Nègre*, which was originally planned as a vehicle for Ethel Waters. Baker's Parisian debut, in which she was entirely nude except for a feather or two at strategic places, made her a star overnight. Most of the remainder of her career was centered in Paris, with an occasional trip to the United States. Rosa Henderson (1896–1968) was one of the few singers whose careers were centered in Harlem. She performed at the three major uptown theaters—the Lincoln, the Lafayette, and the Alhambra—in musicals such as *The Harlem Rounders* (1927), *Blackouts of 1929*, and *Blackberries Revue* (1930). She was also a prominent recording artist of blues from 1923, when her first recording was released, to 1931.

Although female black singers dominated musical theater during the Harlem Renaissance, several male entertainers achieved prominence as well. They were multitalented as writers, composers, lyricists, and producers, and they also sang, danced, and acted. Salem Tutt Whitney (1869–1934) was first noticed in the 1910s, when he and his younger brother, J. Homer Tutt (b. 1870s), established a company, the Smarter Set, that produced their original musicals, the most important of which were *George Washington Bullion Abroad* (1915), *Darkest Americans* (1918), and *Children of the Sun* (1919); the company toured the country with various shows until 1923. Though they were primarily creative artists, Whitney and his brother starred in all their shows. *Bamboula* (1921) was seen in Harlem, and their show *Oh, Joy* (1922), though not a great success, was seen

briefly on Broadway. Whitney also toured the vaudeville circuits as a song-and-dance man during the 1920s. In 1930, he joined the cast of *The Green Pastures*, where he played the role of Noah until shortly before his death. Noble Sissle (1889–1975) and Eubie Blake (1883–1983), like Tutt and Whitney, initially intended to work as a songwriting team, but they soon were seen in vaudeville and later appeared in the musicals they wrote. Sissle and Blake met in Baltimore in 1915; their first song, “It’s All Your Fault,” which was picked up by Sophie Tucker, became a hit and established them as successful songwriters. In 1916, they became part of the inner circle of James Reese Europe (1881–1919), who had founded the Clef Club in 1910. After his death, they appeared in vaudeville in 1919 and 1920. A meeting with the comedians Flournoy Miller and Aubrey Lyles led to the collaboration that produced *Shuffle Along*, for which Sissle and Blake wrote all the music. Although Sissle appeared in the role of Tom Sharper in the show, Blake was seen only in the penultimate scene, when he and Sissle interrupted the plot to present some of their songs, as if they were appearing in vaudeville. They were dressed in tails, with Blake at the piano, and the scene was called “A Few Minutes With Sissle and Blake.” At the end of their musical set, the show resumed. In 1923, they wrote the words and music for a white show, *Elsie*, and in 1924, they teamed up with Miller and Lyles once more to produce *The Chocolate Dandies*. Through 1926, they were headliners on the vaudeville circuits again, in the United States and in England and France. While they were performing in London, they wrote the score for the producer Charles Cochran’s *Revue of 1926*. When their European tour ended, Blake chose to return to the United States. Sissle decided to remain in Europe, thereby dissolving the partnership. Both continued to perform, although Blake’s reputation rested more on his accomplishments as a composer. Another composer-performer was Shelton Brooks (1886–1975). His first fame was as a songwriter, as three of his early songs—“Some of These Days” (1910), “I Wonder Where My Easy Rider’s Gone” (1913), and “Darktown Strutters’ Ball” (1917)—quickly became standards. During the late 1910s, Brooks played the vaudeville circuit as a singer-pianist. He then joined with Florence Mills in Lew Leslie’s *Plantation Revue, Dixie to Broadway*, and *Blackbirds of 1926*. He also produced and performed in *Nifties of 1928*. Cabell “Cab” Calloway (1907–1994) is now known primarily as a bandleader, but his early career was as a singer in musicals. In 1927, he joined the cast of *Plantation Days*, a revue in which his sister, Blanche,

was appearing. In 1929, he formed his own band, but a year later he dissolved it and joined the road company of *Hot Chocolates*. When that show closed, he replaced Ellington at the Cotton Club, where he appeared as a singer-bandleader-composer. One of the first songs he wrote, “Minnie the Moocher,” became the theme song of his band and his signature piece. Thomas “Fats” Waller (1904–1943) is also known as a pianist-composer. Waller composed songs for two shows in Harlem—*Tan Town Topics* (1926) and *Junior Blackbirds* (1927)—and the Broadway shows *Keep Shufflin’* and *Connie’s Hot Chocolates*. As a soloist, he sang many of his own songs as well as those by other composers, and he recorded extensively after 1926; in 1930, he was featured on a radio program, *Paramount on Parade*, broadcast on New York’s WABC. The singer-dancer John Sublett (1902–1986), known as John Bubbles, of the team Buck and Bubbles, started with his partner in vaudeville in the late 1910s. In addition to their vaudeville appearances, they were seen in two musicals during the renaissance: *Ziegfeld Follies of 1921* and *Blackbirds of 1930*. In 1931, they appeared at the Palladium in London for two weeks, and in 1935, Sublett created the role of Sportin’ Life in *Porgy and Bess*.

During the Harlem Renaissance, many movie houses included a vaudeville show as part of the entertainment. First-rank performers were able to join the Keith-Albee circuit or one of the other national booking services, which guaranteed them continuous employment. When black entertainers were not able to join one of the white circuits, they could join the Theater Owners’ Booking Association (TOBA), which provided the same services as its white counterparts. It was founded during the 1910s by Sherman H. Dudley (1873–1940), who was a former minstrel and a member of the Smart Set. During the 1920s, TOBA was able to provide continuous employment for many black entertainers. Although it was not totally competitive with its white counterparts, a number of entertainers were able, after several years of touring, to tighten their acts and move on to one of the better-paying white agencies. In addition to those vaudeville performers already mentioned, the following singers should be noted. J. Turner Layton (1894–1948) was a songwriter who, with the lyricist Henry Creamer (1879–1930), contributed numerous songs to several book musicals and revues, including *Strut Miss Lizzie*. In 1923, Layton joined with Clarence “Tandy” Johnstone (c. 1890s–1953) in a vaudeville act, which they took to the Empire Theater in Paris in 1924. From Paris, they journeyed to London, where they settled for the remainder of the

decade. Layton and Johnstone were favorites with the British public; they played most of London's largest vaudeville venues and gave command performances for the royal family. They recorded frequently in the 1920s and were heard on BBC radio in the 1930s. Layton and Johnstone disbanded their act in 1935. Layton remained in London as a popular solo performer. Another popular team, Jody Edwards (1895–1967) and Susie Hawthorne (c. 1896–1963), toured as Butterbeans and Susie. Their vaudeville act was first seen in 1914, several years before they were married on the stage of the Standard Theater, a black-owned auditorium in Philadelphia. As members of the TOBA circuit, they performed in many revues during the 1920s. They formed their own company toward the end of the 1920s and produced their own shows, including *Laughing Lightning* (1929), *Ease on Down* (1930), and *Harlem Bound* (1932). They recorded frequently during the last half of the decade and appeared with Clarence Williams, Bessie Smith, and Ethel Waters, among others. The early career of Ada "Bricktop" Smith (1895–1984) included singing as one of the three Panama Girls. She continued as a solo act in the early 1920s. In 1924, she went to Europe to sing in several Parisian cafés; two years later, she opened her own club, *Chez Bricktop*, which she operated until the start of World War II. Smith performed frequently at her club and also imported other African American talent to appear there. One important artist who got her start at Bricktop's, and appeared there frequently, was the British singer Mabel Mercer (1900–c. 1990s). Mercer lived in Paris during the Harlem Renaissance and toured in most of Europe until her emigration to the United States in 1938. Hattie McDaniel (1895–1952) is best-known for her Oscar-winning performance in *Gone With the Wind*. Earlier in her career, though, she had great success as a vaudeville entertainer; she was sometimes billed as the "colored Sophie Tucker." During the 1920s and early 1930s, McDaniel sang in musical revues, was heard on the radio, and appeared in a film version of *Show Boat* (1936).

The origin of blues is shrouded in the mists of musical history. References to the genre are known as early as the mid-nineteenth century. Undoubtedly, blues songs were transmitted by itinerant singers who could not notate them. By the 1910s, blues existed in two forms: folk and, for want of a better term, commercial. Folk blues, which maintained a simple musical style that incorporated a repeated text and a tag line, were performed by bluesmen, who generally accompanied themselves on a guitar or banjo. Commercial

blues, which achieved prominence through the early compositions of W. C. Handy (1873–1958), such as "Memphis Blues" and "Saint Louis Blues," were patterned on the popular song forms of the period. Commercial blues were usually performed by a small group of jazz musicians and were heard in vaudeville and as solo and ensemble songs in virtually every musical on Broadway after 1918. Because folk blues songs did not lend themselves to extravagant production numbers, performers of this style are not as well known as those who sang the commercial songs. A typical folk blues singer was Charley Patton (1887–1934), who sang and played guitar as a teenager in the Mississippi Delta region. Although his reputation was established in the early 1920s, his first recording dates from 1929. He continued to record until his death. Although commercial blues were performed during the second decade of the twentieth century, it was not until Mamie Smith recorded "Crazy Blues" that the genre was established as part of mainstream popular music. Gertrude "Ma" Rainey (1886–1939) sang blues in variety shows and vaudeville as early as 1902. By 1904, she and her husband were touring the South with their vaudeville act. She appeared as a solo act as well, accompanied by jug bands and jazz ensembles. From 1923 on, she recorded frequently. Mamie Smith (1883–1946) began her professional career in vaudeville. She was a member of the Smart Set company around 1910. By 1913, she was seen in cabaret shows. Smith included blues numbers in her act, and blues became her central focus after the commercial success of her early blues recordings, which in addition to "Crazy Blues" included "You Can't Keep a Good Man Down" and "It's Right Here for You." All three songs were by Perry Bradford (1893–1970), who had recommended Smith to Okeh Records when Sophie Tucker was unavailable. During the 1920s, Mamie Smith toured in the United States, appearing in cabarets and in vaudeville with her Jazz Hounds. As a teenager, Bessie Smith (1894–1937) toured with black minstrel shows. During the 1910s, she met "Ma" Rainey, who became a major influence on Smith's singing style. Smith appeared in vaudeville during the 1920s, usually accompanied by jazz musicians. Her many recordings between 1923 and 1933 were made with leading black jazz musicians, including Fletcher Henderson, James P. Johnson, and Clarence Williams. She also toured with her own band, the Midnight Stoppers, and made a two-reel film, *Saint Louis Blues*, in 1929. Clara Smith (1894–1935), who was not related to either of the other Smiths, was active as a blues singer during the 1920s,

when she was billed as the “queen of moaners.” As with the blues singers discussed above, Clara Smith was a frequent recording artist, and she can be heard in duet with Bessie Smith on two disks. Three other singers who regularly recorded blues were Ida Cox (1896–1967), Beulah “Sippi” Wallace (1898–1986), and Bertha “Chippie” Hill (1905–1950). During the 1910s, Cox toured with several traveling shows. In the 1920s, her recorded performances were accompanied by Fletcher Henderson, among others. Cox produced her own traveling shows in the late 1920s and 1930s. Wallace performed with tent shows during World War I; in 1923, she settled in Chicago, where for the next seven years she recorded blues. Hill’s career began when she was a teenager singing in Harlem’s nightclubs and cafés. She toured with Ma Rainey in the early 1920s and, like Wallace, settled in Chicago in the early 1920s. Her first recording appeared in 1925; her many recordings during the remainder of the decade were accompanied by jazz groups, including Louis Armstrong and his band.

While jazz is primarily an instrumental form of music, some numbers include vocals. Louis Armstrong (1901–1971) is known primarily as a trumpeter, although singing was always one of his talents. Armstrong appeared in several shows, most notably *Hot Chocolates* and *Hot Chocolates of 1932*. James “Jimmy” Rushing (1903–1972) was a singer-pianist whose career started in nightclubs in and around the Los Angeles. In 1925 and 1928, he appeared with Walter Page’s Blue Devils; from 1929 to 1935, he appeared in Benny Moten’s band.

Female vocalists have also appeared with jazz bands from time to time. During the 1920s, Duke Ellington recorded with Alberta Prime, Florence Bristol, and Alberta Jones. Helen Humes (1909–1981) began her professional career as a nightclub singer. After her first jazz recording appeared in 1927, she sang in hotels and clubs. She recorded many jazz vocals in the following years.

The Harlem Renaissance was a watershed for African American musicians in general, and for vocalists specifically. Although classically trained singers were making some headway in being accepted by their white colleagues, the most important venue for singers was black musical theater, which underwent a dramatic resurgence at the start of the renaissance. Although some of the shows had short runs, a few of them attracted critical attention and propelled their performers into stardom. *Shuffle Along* was certainly the most important of the musicals that played a

crucial role in inspiring the revival. Broadway shows, combined with the interest of white audiences in the various clubs and theaters in Harlem, generated an increased public interest, which continued through the 1930s. Many singers appeared in a variety of venues: in musicals, on Broadway, in Harlem, and on the road; in vaudeville, through both the white and black booking organizations; in the late-night clubs and speakeasies in New York, Chicago, and many other American cities and in various large cities in England, France, Germany, and Russia; on radio and in movies. While it is known that blues are an old genre, the public craze for the commercial form did not coalesce until 1920, when the first blues recordings were sold. For the remainder of the decade, a number of female singers were recorded singing blues, usually accompanied by a small jazz band. By the end of the renaissance, blues were accepted as an important component of American popular music, as most composers of songs included blue notes and blues progressions. As the Harlem Renaissance progressed, jazz became an increasingly important genre. Although vocalists were not of prime importance to the development of early jazz, several singers were recorded with jazz groups, setting the stage for the emergence of singers, such as Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald, during the 1930s. Much of the multifaceted artistic activity that occurred during the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s was abruptly halted by the onset of the Great Depression. Some activity in a few musical venues continued during the early 1930s, but by the mid-1930s a confluence of factors reduced the opportunities for African American singers to provide their varied contributions to the musical arts in America.

JOHN GRAZIANO

See also Black Swan Phonograph Company; Blackbirds; Blues: Women Performers; Clef Club; Chocolate Dandies; Emperor Jones, The; Hot Chocolates; Liza; Micheaux, Oscar; Music; Musical Theater; Porgy and Bess; Runnin’ Wild; Saint Louis Blues; Show Boat; Shuffle Along; Theater Owners’ Booking Association; *specific singers and musicians*

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Sissle, Noble

Noble Lee Sissle was a singer, lyricist, and bandleader. By 1915, he had considerable performing experience, beginning in high school glee clubs, then touring with the Edward Morris Male Quartet and Hann's Jubilee Singers. He decided to enter show business after an encounter with James Reese Europe, founder of the Clef Club, while on tour. In 1915, while he was with Joe Porter's Serenaders in Baltimore, Sissle met the ragtime pianist and songwriter Eubie Blake; the two would form one of the most enduring and productive partnerships in show business, writing songs together over the coming decades.

In 1915–1916, Sissle was with Bob Young's Royal Poinciana Sextet in Baltimore, then in Palm Springs (Florida), and finally in New York. Sissle reintroduced himself to James Europe in 1916 and was soon appearing with Europe's popular dance orchestras in New York. He sang and played bandolin (a banjo-mandolin hybrid, now extinct) with the Europe Double Quintet, 1916–1917. He made his first recordings in 1917.

Also in 1917, Sissle enlisted in the American Expeditionary Force. He served with New York's 369th Regiment, the famous "Harlem Hellfighters," in World War I. The unit, including the band, saw heavy fighting in France and was decorated by the French government; Sissle rose to the rank of second lieutenant. The Hellfighters Band, led by James Europe, was acclaimed the finest American band of the war; Sissle served as a singer and drum major with it. In 1919, after the conclusion of the war, the Hellfighters Band returned to the United States and went on tour. During an engagement in Boston, Europe was murdered by a deranged band member; Sissle then briefly

took over the direction of the band. Shortly before Europe's death, the band had made twenty-four sides for Pathé; Sissle sang on nine of these.

In 1919–1921, Sissle and Blake became popular as a duo act. In 1921, their show *Shuffle Along* took Broadway by storm, playing more than 600 performances in New York and on tour. The performers included the authors of the script—Flournoy Miller and Aubrey Lyles—as well as Sissle and Blake. Immortal songs from the show included "I'm Just Wild About Harry" and "Love Will Find a Way." Sissle and Blake collaborated on other shows, including *In Bamville* (originally titled *Chocolate Dandies*, 1924), but these were less successful. The first revival of *Shuffle Along* was produced in 1928.

During the 1920s, Sissle and Blake toured widely as a duo in vaudeville, achieving great acclaim both in the United States and in England. In 1923, Sissle made a very early short sound movie for De Forest Phonofilms. Sissle recorded in duo format with Blake (and occasionally others) every year from 1920 to 1928. An English tour with Blake in 1925 was an immense triumph. The pair split up in 1926, when Blake returned to the United States, while Sissle remained in England and then returned to New York separately.

In October 1927, Sissle returned to France with other black veterans for an American Legion convention; he laid a wreath at the statue of Joan of Arc on Rue Rivoli in Paris (commemorating his performances of the song "Jeanne d'Arc, la victoire est pour vous" during the war). In 1928, Sissle played at English music halls with the songwriter Harry Revel at the piano. In Paris, where he had a long residence at the club Les Ambassadeurs, he formed an African American expatriate band with musicians living in Montmartre, including the soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet. In 1929–1931, Sissle toured Europe and the United Kingdom with a big band; eventually he brought it to New York. In 1931, he was in residence at the Park Central Hotel and began regular broadcasts on CBS radio. Sissle encountered financial difficulties during the Great Depression, filing for bankruptcy in 1929 and 1932; but he was an optimist by nature and always regrouped and started over. In the late 1930s, his orchestra featured the young Lena Horne as vocalist.

In the 1930s, Sissle and Blake teamed up again for performances, including revivals of *Shuffle Along* in 1933 and (most successfully) in 1945–1946, as a USO camp show to entertain the troops. A final revival in 1952 was a failure, largely because of "modernizing" touches added by others.



Noble Sissle, photographed by Carl Van Vechten. (Library of Congress.)

From the 1920s to the 1950s, Sissle was a successful as a bandleader, performing widely and recording for several labels. His big bands often included leading jazz musicians, such as Bechet, the clarinetist Buster Bailey, and the trumpeter Tommy Ladnier. Sissle recorded as a bandleader in 1921 and repeatedly between 1928 and 1937. He was in residence at Billy Rose's nightclub in New York, the Diamond Horseshoe, from 1938 to 1942.

Sissle was a leader in black entertainment organizations and founded the Negro Actors Guild. He helped organize "Oh, Sing a New Song"—a pageant of "the Negro experience in America"—performed at Soldiers' Field in Chicago in 1934. He took an active role in the Republican Party and performed at the first inaugural ball for President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1953. Sissle was tireless in entertaining American troops in World War II and the Korean War and served on the board of directors of the USO. Although Sissle retired from active band-

leading in 1963, he sent a band out to entertain the troops in Vietnam in 1968; he was recorded with Blake by Columbia Records for an LP set, *The Eighty-Six Years of Eubie Blake*, in 1969.

Sissle received many honors in his later years. He was voted mayor of Harlem in 1950, following the death of Bill "Bojangles" Robinson; and in 1960, a portrait bust was erected in his honor at the 369th Regiment Armory in New York.

Sissle had a pleasant, somewhat thin tenor voice and an energetic but formal stage manner. Despite his obvious dignity, he enjoyed clowning onstage, which made him a great favorite in vaudeville. A highly moral, refined person, he had a personality that contrasted strongly with that of many of his fellow entertainers. His lyrics, while they lack the brilliance of those by his greatest contemporaries, such as Ira Gershwin and Andy Razaf, are charming and memorable. Several are still being sung more than eighty years after they were written.

There is a clippings file for Noble Sissle at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

Biography

Noble Lee Sissle was born 10 July 1889 in Indianapolis, Indiana. He was the son of Rev. George A. and Martha Scott Sissle, from a highly respected family. Sissle studied at DePauw University and Butler University, both in Indiana; he left the latter in 1915 without graduating. He began performing in high school glee clubs, then toured with the Edward Morris Male Quartet and Hann's Jubilee Singers. He and Eubie Blake, his longtime partner, met in 1915. Sissle performed with James Reese Europe's dance orchestras and other groups. He served in the 369th Regiment in World War I and was a member of its famous band, led by James Europe; after the war ended and James Europe died, Sissle briefly led this band. In 1919–1921, Sissle and Blake became popular as a duo act; in 1921, their hit musical *Shuffle Along* opened. Later they collaborated on other musicals, and in the 1920s they continued touring as a popular vaudeville duo. However, their partnership ended in 1926. Sissle was also a recording artist, performed at music halls in England, formed a band in Paris, and was a radio performer (CBS, beginning in 1931). He and Blake teamed up again for performances in the 1930s. Into the 1950s, Sissle was a successful bandleader. He was also a

leader in black entertainment organizations. He retired from active bandleading in 1963. Sissle died 17 December 1975 in Tampa, Florida, age eighty-six.

ELLIOTT S. HURWITT

See also Bechet, Sidney; Blake, Eubie; Europe, James Reese; Fifteenth Infantry; Lyles; Aubrey; Miller, Flournoy; Musical Theater; Shuffle Along

Selected Songs

"Baltimore Buzz."

"If You've Never Been Vamped by a Brownskin."

"I'm Craving for That Kind of Love."

"I'm Just Wild About Harry."

"It's All Your Fault."

"Love Will Find a Way."

"You Were Meant for Me."

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Small's Paradise

Small's Paradise, at 2294½ Seventh Avenue near 135th Street, was owned and operated by Edwin Smalls and was one of the premier nightspots in Harlem during the late 1920s. Smalls, a former elevator operator, was a descendant of Captain Robert Smalls, a former slave who became a captain in the Union navy and later a congressman from South Carolina. Small's Paradise

(usually so spelled, with a misplaced apostrophe) was one of the most successful and best-known nightclubs in the history of Harlem, and the most prestigious club owned by an African American. Its reputation for first-class musical acts, elaborate floor shows, and dancing waiters attracted thousands of patrons who were eager to participate in the exciting nightlife of Harlem during the Roaring Twenties.

By the time he opened the Paradise in the autumn of 1925, Ed Smalls was already an experienced nightclub owner. Since 1917 he had been running a popular joint in Harlem called the Sugar Cane Club, which catered primarily to an African American clientele. But Small's Paradise was a much more elaborate venture, and one designed to attract not just local Harlemites but also moneyed white revelers from downtown. When the Paradise opened its doors on 26 October 1925, Smalls marked the occasion by throwing a spectacular gala. Nearly 1,500 guests jammed themselves into the brand-new basement club and danced to the tunes of Charlie Johnson's jazz band, which would serve as the house band for the next ten years. Of course, national Prohibition was in full force at the time, but patrons at Small's could either drink discreetly from their own bottle or flask of hooch, or else buy bootleg liquor from the waiters (at an exorbitant price).

In 1929, the entertainment magazine *Variety* listed eleven major nightclubs in Harlem that catered to a predominantly white crowd. The four most popular were Small's Paradise, the Cotton Club, Barron Wilkins's Exclusive Club, and Connie's Inn. The tremendous financial success of these clubs was due, in large part, to the fascination that many white people at the time felt for black culture. Huge numbers of white people swarmed into Harlem during the 1920s to experience the "exotic" or "primitive" African American nightlife. Many wealthy white curiosity seekers actually preferred some of the other big-name clubs—especially the Cotton Club and Connie's Inn—to Small's Paradise, because these other clubs were owned by whites and admitted only white patrons. While the entertainers and the waiters at these establishments were almost exclusively black, African American customers were firmly turned away unless they were true celebrities, such as the dancer Bill "Bojangles" Robinson. Small's Paradise, in contrast, appealed to whites who wanted to attend a club where African Americans made up a sizable portion of the audience. But despite the racially integrated nature of Small's Paradise, all its patrons were financially well-off; the high prices for

both food and liquor were enough to force most working-class Harlemites to seek out a more affordable speakeasy. Although Small's was not as expensive as Connie's Inn, for example, an average tab at Small's was about \$4 per person in 1929, when the average domestic laborer in Harlem earned between \$6 and \$12 a week.

One of the signature features of Small's Paradise was its dancing waiters, who would balance heavy trays full of bootleg liquor while dancing the Charleston, sometimes on roller skates, as they moved among the tables. Small's also carved out a niche for itself in the competitive nightclub business by staying open much later than most other clubs, including the aristocratic Cotton Club. After other cabarets closed down at three or four o'clock in the morning, black and white patrons alike would descend on Small's Paradise for one of its famous early-morning "breakfast dances." The floor show, complete with twenty-five or thirty dancers and showgirls and two dozen musicians, would go on at six o'clock in the morning, and the dancing might last until noon or even later. The entertainment at Small's was always first-rate, and some of the most famous musicians of the Harlem Renaissance played there, including Willie "the Lion" Smith and Duke Ellington. And in the early-morning hours, many of the finest musicians in Harlem who were engaged by other clubs met at Small's for impromptu jam sessions.

More than most nightclubs in Harlem, Small's Paradise figured prominently in the lives of many important artists and writers of the Harlem Renaissance, including Alain Locke, Harold Jackman, Countee Cullen, and Langston Hughes. Even William Faulkner is said to have attended a party at Small's during a visit to New York. One of the club's most loyal customers was Carl Van Vechten, the wealthy white writer who helped launch the careers of many famous figures of the renaissance. In fact, some critics claim that Van Vechten based his description of the Black Venus, a nightclub prominently featured in his controversial novel *Nigger Heaven*, on his experiences at Small's Paradise. After *Nigger Heaven* was published in 1926, the managers of Small's were so offended by its portrayal of Harlem that they permanently banned Van Vechten from his favorite watering hole, much to his dismay.

Small's Paradise holds the distinction of being the longest-operating nightclub in Harlem, witnessing the rise of not just jazz but rock and roll and even disco before it finally closed its doors in 1986. After

Ed Smalls sold the business, the Paradise changed hands a number of times. The late basketball star Wilt Chamberlain owned the club briefly in the 1960s, renamed it Big Wilt's Small's Paradise, and featured Ray Charles as his star performer. Although the doors have now closed on Small's Paradise, the frequent references to the club in newspapers, essays, autobiographies, and fiction from the 1920s testify to its enduring legacy as one of the most popular racially integrated nightclubs of the Harlem Renaissance.

KATHLEEN DROWNE

See also Cotton Club; Cullen, Countee; Ellington, Duke; Hughes, Langston; Jackman, Harold; Locke, Alain; Nigger Heaven; Nightclubs; Nightlife; Smith, Willie "the Lion"; Van Vechten, Carl

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Smith, Ada

Ada Smith was called Bricktop because of her red hair; her full name was Ada Beatrice Queen Victoria Louisa Virginia Smith. She was born in 1894 in West Virginia; when she was about four or five, her father died, and her mother relocated the family to Chicago. Shortly after the family's relocation, Smith made her

stage debut in a local production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. When Smith was about fourteen, she auditioned for and received a part in the chorus at the Pekin Theater (one of the first theaters in Chicago dedicated to black drama). Although her mother made her leave the chorus and return to school, one of Smith's greatest ambitions was to become a saloon performer, and by age sixteen she dropped out of school to pursue her dream, joining the chorus of Flournoy Miller and Aubrey Lyles's vaudeville comedy team. Just before her eighteenth birthday, Smith was given an opportunity to perform in the Roy Jones saloon in Chicago. During the next few years, she performed in various clubs, including the Cabaret de Champion, the Panama Club, and the Watts Country Club. While she was with a group called the Crosby Trio, she first met Barron Wilkins, who owned a café on Seventh Avenue in Harlem (and who is said to have given her the nickname Bricktop). In 1916, she, Florence Mills, and Cora Green formed the Panama Trio and toured as vaudevillians. By 1922, Smith was back in New York performing at Barron Wilkins's café. By this time, his café was catering to the rich and famous, so Smith was able to meet celebrities such as John Barrymore, Charles MacArthur, and Jack "Legs" Diamond.

In 1924, Smith moved to France to perform at the nightclub Le Grand Duc, and at this point her career began to soar. She met people like F. Scott Fitzgerald, Fred Astaire, Ernest Hemingway, Josephine Baker, Elsa Maxwell, Cole and Linda Porter, and Langston Hughes (who worked as a busboy at Le Grand Duc). In 1926, she opened her own club, called Chez Bricktop, which would remain open until war broke out in 1939 and Smith left Europe.

After Smith returned to Harlem, her life was vastly different. In France, there had been no segregation, but in the United States, she encountered racism everywhere. She found it difficult to get singing engagements in either white or black clubs, and she was never able to re-create the success she achieved in France. However, she continued to perform until 1964, when she announced her retirement. Throughout her entire career, Smith recorded only one song, "So Long Baby," with Cy Coleman.

Biography

Ada "Bricktop" Smith was born 14 August 1894 in Alderson, West Virginia. Around 1898 or 1899 her father died, and her mother relocated the family to

Chicago, where Smith made her stage debut in a local production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Around 1908 Smith auditioned for and received a part in the chorus at the Pekin Theater, although her mother made her leave it and return to school. By around 1910 she dropped out of school and joined the chorus of a vaudeville duo. She performed in various clubs and in 1916 formed the Panama Trio with Florence Mills and Cora Green. She appeared in Barron Wilkins's club in Harlem. In 1924, she went to Paris, where she opened her own club, Chez Bricktop, in 1926. At Chez Bricktop she met the saxophonist Peter Duconge; they were married in December 1929. She returned to the United States in 1939. Smith retired in 1964 and died in January 1984.

TERI WEIL

See also Lyles, Aubrey; Miller, Flournoy; Mills, Florence; Singers

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Smith, Bessie

One day in 1923, the "empress of the blues" walked into a recording studio with her piano player, Clarence Williams, and performed "'Tain't Nobody's Bizness If I Do" nine times and "Down-Hearted Blues" two times for Columbia Records' producer Frank Walker. The next day she returned to the studio and performed "Down-Hearted Blues" again. This time her voice was so powerful that Walker simply declared the audition

“satisfactory.” This was the beginning of the “empress’s” highly successful recording career: Within six months after she signed with Columbia, her first recording sold 780,000 copies, and she eventually became the highest paid black entertainer of her time.

The “empress” was Bessie Smith. Born into poverty in 1894 in Tennessee, she grew up in what she described as a “little ramshackle cabin,” and by age ten she had witnessed the failing health and subsequent death of her mother, her father, and a brother, leaving her older sister, Viola, responsible for caring for the other five children, including Bessie. For poor black southerners at the turn of the twentieth century, the prospect of success—educationally or financially, for example—appeared dim; but Bessie Smith would gradually emerge from her poverty-stricken, parentless situation. She performed song-and-dance routines on the streets, made her professional debut at the Ivory Theater in Chattanooga at age nine, and became a dancer with the Moses Stokes minstrel troupe at age eighteen.

Bessie Smith had not only a powerful voice but a powerful performance style and a formidable stage presence. People who knew her, including the noted photographer Carl Van Vechten and the clarinetist and saxophone player Mezz Mezzrow, offered descriptions such as “mesmerizing,” “a beautiful face,” and “a real woman.” Smith was 5 feet 9 inches tall and weighed 200 pounds; and as a performer she exuded charm and queenly grace. Within a year after Smith had joined the Moses Stokes minstrels, her special quality and her natural talent as a singer were impelling audiences to throw money onto the stage when she performed such early favorites as “Weary Blues.”

Around 1910, Smith performed on a southern circuit of segregated tent shows and black theaters with the well-known blues singer Gertrude “Ma” Rainey, who evidently gave Smith some guidance and teaching. These traveling shows included singers, jugglers, comedians, dancers, and wrestlers; and Smith eventually joined other such shows, including the Florida Cotton Pickers and then her own group, the Liberty Belles. Patterning herself after Rainey, the “mother of the blues,” Smith became a popular entertainer in both southern and northern cities.

Eventually Smith joined the Theater Owners’ Booking Association—the black vaudeville circuit—and she was soon performing more and more blues in as many as twenty different acts in various shows. In 1918, she was a featured performer at the Douglas Gilmore Theater in Baltimore, Maryland, sharing the bill with well-regarded acts such as Holmes and

Edwards, the Crazy Man and the Maid, and Ralph Harris and Alda Fatima. One factor in her popularity was her ability to attract both white and black audiences, although her numerous recordings (more than 160 in all) were categorized as “race music.”

Like Rainey, Smith sang of such themes as love and sexuality, emotional battles and mistreatment, independence and freedom, and self-respect, particularly in relation to black womanhood. In “Get It, Bring It, and Put It Right Here,” for example, she says: “I’ve had a man for fifteen years, given him his room and his board./Once he was like a Cadillac, now he’s like an old worn-out Ford. . . /Oh, there’ll be some changes from now on, according to my plan./He’s got to get it, bring it, and put it right here . . .” Many of her compositions and performances have political implications, suggesting her public response to a patriarchal society and patriarchally structured relationships. She expressed the tension between black men and black women and boldly challenged anyone who attempted to assert authority over black women, by implication challenging the “roles” of dependence and independence in black people’s lives. All this allowed Smith to connect with her audience, perhaps especially in such popular pieces as “Mistreatin’ Daddy,” “Money Blues,” and “Hateful Blues.” In “Mistreatin’ Daddy,” for instance, the singer is despondent after being abused by a man (“. . . you mistreated me and drove me from your door”) but also asserts her own freedom, independence, and sexuality: “If you see me setting on another daddy’s knee/Don’t bother me, I’m as mean as can be.” In “Money Blues” a woman explicitly demands money and other material pleasures from her husband: “Daddy, I need money now./All day long I hear that song/’Papa, it’s your fault if I go wrong.” Angela Davis (1998) argues that for her mostly working-class black audiences, Smith “made the blues into women’s music and a site for the elaboration of a black cultural consciousness that did not ignore the dynamics of gender” (142).

The recording contract that Smith signed with Columbia after her “satisfactory” audition in 1923 was important for her and for the company. Her recordings were successful immediately and, as noted above, appealed to both whites and blacks. These numerous records averted a possible bankruptcy at Columbia, and her association with Columbia gave her a foothold that might otherwise have been hard to find. This was a time when black entertainers and performers had difficulty becoming a part of the commercialized world of established recording companies



Bessie Smith, photographed by Carl Van Vechten, 1936.
(Library of Congress.)

and producers. Smith's popularity gave her considerable status at Columbia, but some years earlier she had auditioned for and been turned down by at least two other companies. (One of them was Black Swan, which was owned by blacks and had W. E. B. Du Bois and John Nail on its board of directors, but rejected her anyway.) With the release of her first "race record" by Columbia, Smith began to see an increase in her performance fees as well as her recording fees.

Smith's appeal to a large number of white listeners was significant. Unlike Ma Rainey, who performed for almost exclusively black audiences, Smith proved that her music was captivating enough to imply a redefinition of racial lines and of listeners' interests. At the same time, though, Smith's music and performances helped to create a space in which the social conditions and daily realities of black people's life could be addressed, in the aftermath of slavery and in the context of Jim Crow. Davis (1998) writes: "For masses of black people during the decade of the twenties—for those who remained geographically rooted in traditional southern culture as well as for migrant populations in the North and Midwest—Smith was an articulator and shaper of African American identity

and consciousness" (142). The objection might be raised that although Smith's audiences were diverse, even interested white Americans could not easily ignore, break through, or erase the existing barriers of race, and that for this reason white people's exposure to blues might actually reinforce their sense of black people's inferiority. But Smith's powerfully emotional songs and presence directly connected to the experiences of working-class black people and made such experiences meaningful and significant even within a generally racist society.

Smith prospered as an entertainer, performer, and recording artist in the 1920s; her popularity was at its peak from 1923 to 1930. During the Depression, though, she met with hard times. In 1931, Columbia Records dropped Smith from its roster because sales of her records were falling. She continued to compose and perform, still focusing on themes that were familiar in her life, such as poverty, love, independence, and even alcoholism. She appeared in nightclubs and theaters in Philadelphia, New York, and some southern cities, maintaining her large following. But with the persistent economic depression and Smith's own personal depression, her career eventually declined. In 1933, during her final recording session, she sang "Down in the Dumps," a piece that reflected the end of a great career. In 1937, at age fifty-three, Smith was on the verge of establishing a second career when she died in an automobile accident in Mississippi.

Through her memorable voice and her serious subject matter, Smith made an important contribution to blues, to jazz, and to the Harlem Renaissance.

Biography

Bessie Smith was born in 1894 in Chattanooga, Tennessee. In 1912, she joined the Moses Stokes minstrel troupe as a dancer. She joined the Theater Owners' Booking Agency and in 1918 was featured at the Douglas Gilmore Theater in Baltimore, Maryland. Smith signed a recording contract with Columbia Records in 1923 and released four songs, including "Saint Louis Blues," "Down-Hearted Blues," and "Gimme a Pigfoot." That same year, she sold 780,000 records in six months and became the highest paid black entertainer of the time. Her recording fee increased from \$150 to \$200 in 1924. Smith adopted a six-year-old boy in 1926. She was dropped from Columbia Records in 1931. In 1933, she made a record with swing-band accompaniment. She sang "Down in

the Dumps" during her last recording session, also in 1933. On the night of 26 September 1937, Smith was involved in an automobile accident and died.

VALERIE FELITA KINLOCH

See also Black Swan Phonograph Company; Blues; Blues: Women Performers; Rainey, Gertrude "Ma"; Saint Louis Blues; Singers; Theater Owners' Booking Association; Van Vechten, Carl; Williams, Clarence

Selected Compositions and Recordings

- "After You've Gone." (T. Layton and H. Creamer.)
 "Alexander's Ragtime Band." (Irving Berlin.)
 "Baby Doll." (Bessie Smith.)
 "Backwater Blues." (Bessie Smith.)
 "Blue, Blue." (Bessie Smith.)
 "Dirty No-Gooders Blues." (Bessie Smith.)
 "Dixie Flyer Blues." (Bessie Smith.)
 "Down-Hearted Blues." (Alberta Hunter and Lovie Austin.)
 "Gimme a Pigfoot." (Wesley Wilson.)
 "Golden Rule Rules." (Bessie Smith.)
 "Hateful Blues." (E. Johnson.)
 "He's Gone Blues." (Bessie Smith.)
 "Hot Springs Blues." (Bessie Smith.)
 "In the House Blues." (Bessie Smith.)
 "It Makes My Love Come Down." (Bessie Smith.)
 "Lonesome Desert Blues." (Bessie Smith.)
 "Long Old Road." (Bessie Smith.)
 "Lost Your Head Blues." (Bessie Smith.)
 "Mistreatin' Daddy." (Porter Grainger and B. Ricketts.)
 "Money Blues." (D. K. Leader and H. Eller.)
 "Moonshine Blues." (Ma Rainey.)
 "My Man Blues." (Bessie Smith.)
 "Saint Louis Blues." (W. C. Handy.)
 "Shipwreck Blues." (Bessie Smith.)
 "'Tain't Nobody's Bizness If I Do." (Porter Grainger and E. Robbins.)

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Smith, Clara

The singer Clara Smith was called "queen of the moaners." It is believed that she began her career around 1910, performing in southern vaudeville acts and tent shows. By 1918, Smith was a featured star on the Theater Owners' Booking Association circuit. She spent the next five years performing in cities such as Columbus (Georgia), New Orleans, Nashville, and St. Louis. In 1923, Smith relocated to Harlem, where she was placed under contract with Columbia Records.

In Harlem, Smith performed in and managed numerous revues. In 1924, the Clara Smith Theatrical Revue Club was born. The following year, Smith performed in two of her own shows, the *Clara Smith Revue* and the *Black Bottom Revue*. Over the next decade, Smith appeared in various revues, including

the *Swanee Club Revue*, the *Ophelia Show from Baltimore*, *Dream Girls*, and *Candied Sweets*. She performed in such theaters as the Alhambra, the Lafayette, the Lincoln, the Ambassador, the Harlem Fifth Avenue, and the Opera House.

Through her recording, performing, and management of revues Clara Smith sang with some great figures in blues and jazz. For example, while she was under contract to Columbia, she and Bessie Smith recorded three songs together: "Far Away Blues," "I'm Going Back to My Used to Be," and "My Man Blues." Clara Smith and Bessie Smith were not related, although they were said to be great friends until an argument in 1925. Clara Smith reportedly recorded some 125 songs, accompanied by jazz musicians such as Fletcher Henderson, Louis Armstrong, James P. Johnson, Don Redman, Charlie Green, Porter Grainger, and Joe Smith (who was not a relative of hers).

Smith became known as the "queen of the moaners" because of the way she would begin a song—with a long emotional moan that gripped her listeners and drew them into the music. A striking example is her recording of "Awful Morning Blues."

To dramatize her performances, Smith drew on her experiences in vaudeville and musical revues. She used dress, facial expressions, tears, and her trademark mournful moans to convey the emotion behind a song. Smith was able to express sadness very effectively, but she was also a comedienne, as she demonstrated in her performance in the revue at Club Alabam.

Between 1925 and 1928, Smith made the recordings that are thought to be her best. At about this time, her music changed from "moaning blues" to a more highly charged, more explicit sound. She continued to perform in revues in Harlem's theaters until 1931, and around the country until 1934.

Biography

Clara Smith was born about 1894 or 1895 in Spartanburg, South Carolina. There is little or no information on her early childhood. She may have performed in vaudeville acts and tent shows about 1910; by 1918, she was featured on the Theater Owners' Booking Association circuit. She came to Harlem in 1923, contracted with Columbia Records, performed in and managed revues, and formed the Clara Smith Theatrical Revue Club. She married Charles Wesley in 1926. In February 1935, after returning home from an appearance in Detroit, Smith checked

into a hospital with chest pains; she died eleven days later.

TERI WEIL

See also Alhambra Theater; Armstrong, Louis; Blues: Women Performers; Henderson, Fletcher; Johnson, James P.; Lafayette Theater; Lincoln Theater; Singers; Smith, Bessie; Theater Owners' Booking Association

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Smith, Mamie

Mamie Smith was reputedly born in Cincinnati, Ohio, on 26 May 1883. Bitten early on by the performing bug, she was on the road with the Four Dancing Mitchells at around the age of ten. After touring with the Smart Set Company in 1912, Smith made New York City her home base beginning in 1913.

While she was performing in Harlem, she appeared in Perry Bradford's revue *Made in Harlem*, which ultimately led to Smith's first recordings, inaugurating the boom in blues recordings of the 1920s. Bradford had selected two songs from the revue—"That Thing Called Love" and "You Can't Keep a Good Man Down"—for Smith to record for Victor in 1920, but Victor rejected the idea of an African American recording the songs. Fred Hager at Okeh, too, hesitated to record Smith, but with Bradford's urgings bravely proceeded to record her rather than his first choice,

Sophie Tucker. The *Chicago Defender*, which had been pushing for recordings by “race” artists since 1916, helped make the record a success. Buoyed by its sales, Okeh recorded Smith again on 10 August 1920, producing the first vocal blues record by an African American, “Crazy Blues” backed with “It’s Right Here for You (If You Don’t Get It . . . ‘Tain’t No Fault of Mine”). These were two composed and sophisticated blues, based on folk blues of the type that had been performed informally around the South for twenty years or so, reflecting a stage and city orientation in their structure and performance. This record sold 75,000 copies in its first month of release and inaugurated the era of blues recordings by African Americans, including the blues craze of the 1920s, which was dominated by female blues artists up until 1926. As a result of this success, Smith, billed as “queen of the blues,” revisited the recording studios many times, appearing in New York City and around the country in revues and stage shows performing her own brand of vaudeville blues and pop songs to highly appreciative audiences. Okeh Records, in fact, even proclaimed a “Mamie Smith Week” in the spring of 1922 in recognition of her popularity and record sales. Recording on occasion with accompanists such as Willie “the Lion” Smith, Coleman Hawkins, and Sidney Bechet, Smith established the genre of vaudeville blues that created a space for Gertrude “Ma” Rainey, Bessie Smith, Lucille Hegamin, Victoria Spivey, and, ultimately, male blues performers in the recording industry, and fashioned a sophisticated but sassy style for numerous female singers who performed in Harlem’s cabarets in the 1920s to take up.

Following a European tour in 1936, Smith returned to the United States. She made five movies, which, though not enough to revive a flagging career, still demonstrated her ability and her popularity with African American audiences.

After approximately two years in Harlem Hospital, Smith died in 1946; she was buried in Frederick Douglass Memorial Park Cemetery in Staten Island, New York. Smith was a pioneer who helped gain recognition for African Americans in American popular culture through her spirited performances of vaudeville-style blues.

Biography

Mamie Smith was born 26 May 1883 in Cincinnati, Ohio (unconfirmed). She toured with the Four Dancing Mitchells in 1893. Smith worked as a chorus dancer

with J. Homer Tutt and Salem Tutt-Whitney’s Smart Set Company in 1912. She worked in clubs, cafés, and cabarets in New York City from 1913 to 1920, and in Perry Bradford’s *Made in Harlem* at the Lincoln Theater. She recorded prolifically for Okeh Records from 1920 to 1923 and toured the country as a result of the success of her recordings. She recorded for Ajax (1924), Victor (1926), Okeh (1929, 1931), and Victor (1929). Smith appeared in the musical comedy *Follow Me* at the Lafayette Theater in 1923. She headlined in the revues *Struttin’ Along*, *Syncopationland*, *Dixie*, *Syncopated*, *Frolicking Around*, *Sugar Cane*, *A Riot of Fun*, and *Sun Tan Frolics* during 1923–1929. She appeared in the film *Jailhouse Blues* in 1929 and continued to appear in musical revues in New York City. She toured with Fats Pichon in her *Yelping Hounds Revue* from 1932 to 1934 and toured Europe, appearing in theaters around 1936. Smith appeared in the films *Paradise in Harlem* (1939), *Mystery in Swing* (1940), *Murder on Lenox Avenue* (1941), and *Sunday Sinners* (1941), and the short *Because I Love You* (1943). She was the first African American to record vocal blues. Okeh Records proclaimed a “Mamie Smith Week” in 1922. Smith died in Staten Island, New York, c. September–November 1946.

STEVEN TRACY

See also Bechet, Sidney; Blues; Blues: Women Performers; Bradford, Perry; Hegamin, Lucille; Rainey, Gertrude “Ma”; Singers; Smith, Bessie; Smith, Willie “the Lion”; Spivey, Victoria

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Smith, Trixie

Trixie Smith was among the more successful singers who recorded during the 1920s, the heyday of "classic blues." She is often compared to the other "singing Smiths" of the era—Bessie, Mamie, and Clara—who were not related to her or each other. Trixie Smith emerged during the early period of a boom in "race records" that was set off by the success of Mamie Smith's "Crazy Blues" (1920). Like others who were part of that boom, Trixie Smith was from the South (Atlanta, in her case) and began her career as a vaudeville and minstrel entertainer who performed comedy, danced, acted, and sang in traveling shows. Unlike most other black entertainers of the era, though, she came from a middle-class background and was well educated; she attended Selma University in Alabama.

Attracted by the lure of show business and the North, Smith moved to New York at age twenty and worked in a number of cafés and theaters in Harlem and Philadelphia. Between 1916 and the early 1920s, she toured as a featured singer in shows and on the Theater Owners' Booking Association circuit with acts such as the popular comedy team Butterbeans and Susie (Edwards and Edwards).

Smith's career changed dramatically in 1922, when she competed in the highly publicized first blues contest, held at the Manhattan Casino. Billed as the "southern nightingale" and singing her own composition "Trixie's Blues," she won first prize. Shortly afterward she signed with Harry Pace's newly established Black Swan label and began a recording career that brought her success and fame. Smith's voice, though not as rough, powerful, or emotional as the voices of some better-known women who sang classic blues, was pleasing and convincing. She made four dozen recordings for Black Swan, Paramount, and Decca between 1922 and 1939. In her Down Home Syncopaters

and other recording groups, she was backed by some of the biggest names in jazz, including Louis Armstrong, James P. Johnson, and Fletcher Henderson. Most of Trixie Smith's recordings were made during a four-year period, 1922–1925; her sessions in 1925 featuring Armstrong are considered her best early work.

In 1926, Smith's recording career declined, but she continued to work throughout the 1920s in local shows and traveling revues, sometimes in nonsinging roles. Thus, whereas the careers of many classic blues singers faded before 1930, Smith continued to sing, act, and tour in shows. In 1931, she performed in a road show with the legendary star Mae West. She appeared in four films, including Oscar Micheaux's *Swing* (1938) and *God's Stepchildren* (1938). Her singing career was revived briefly during the late 1930s, when she performed in clubs in New York and—after an eleven-year absence from the studio—made what some people think are her best recordings. Backed by an all-star band that featured Sidney Bechet and Charlie Shavers, Smith recorded half a dozen songs, including remakes of her earlier releases "Trixie's Blues" and "Freight Train Blues," as well as her best-remembered song, "My Daddy Rocks Me." By 1940, her career waned again, and she faded into near obscurity, performing only occasionally until her death at age fifty-eight. Trixie Smith was considered one of the more versatile black performers of early recorded classic blues. Her vocal style was a successful blend of vaudeville and southern blues traditions. Compared with Bessie Smith and other legendary blues singers (who recorded more often and had more successful singing careers), Trixie Smith had a lighter sound, with less depth and conviction. Her later recordings have a laid-back, mellow quality more characteristic of popular singers of the swing era. Her twelve-bar blues songs and vaudeville-style pop songs have common themes—love, grief, travel, sexual mischief, and good times—conveyed with Smith's distinctive mood, which is dominated by a feeling of humor, joy, and optimism.

Biography

Trixie Smith—a blues singer, vaudeville entertainer, and actress (also known as Tessie Ames and Bessie Lee)—was born in 1885 in Atlanta, Georgia. She came from a middle-class background and attended Selma University in Alabama. She moved to New York at age twenty and worked in cafés and theaters in Harlem and Philadelphia. She toured with the

Theater Owners’ Booking Association, 1916–early 1920s. She won a blues contest at the Manhattan Casino in 1922, then signed with the recording company Black Swan. When her successful recording career waned, she continued to perform in traveling shows and revues; she also appeared in films. Smith died of an illness on 21 September 1943 in New York City.

MICHAEL WHITE

See also Armstrong, Louis; Bechet, Sidney; Black Swan Phonograph Company; Blues; Blues: Women Performers; Henderson, Fletcher; Johnson, James P.; Manhattan Casino; Micheaux, Oscar; Smith, Bessie; Smith, Clara; Smith; Mamie; Singers

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- “Everybody Loves My Baby.” 1924.
- “Freight Train Blues.” 1924, 1938.
- “Messin’ Around.” 1926.
- “My Daddy Rocks Me.” 1938.
- “Trixie’s Blues.” 1922, 1938.
- “The World’s Gone Jazz Crazy and So Am I.” 1925.

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Smith, Willie “the Lion”

The pianist and composer Willie “the Lion” Smith is considered by many one of the fathers of Harlem

stride piano, along with “Abba Labba,” Eubie Blake, James P. Johnson, and Luckey Roberts. Smith’s boldness, flamboyance, and braggadocio made him a legend around Harlem during the 1920s and 1930s and beyond. He was one of the more popular “ticklers” on the rent-party circuit and was a mentor to many other pianists, including James P. Johnson, Fats Waller, Joe Turner, Sam Ervis, Count Basie, and most notably Duke Ellington.

By his teen years Smith had established a reputation as an extraordinary ragtime pianist and was lauded for his exemplary use of the left hand, his ability to play in all keys, and his thorough approach to accompanying. Before 1914, he performed primarily in and around Newark, New Jersey, and was a mainstay at legendary venues such as Randolph’s café (where he met his closest friend, James P. Johnson) and Buss’s saloon.

In 1914, Smith left Newark for Atlantic City, New Jersey. A lover of excitement and the daring adventure of nightlife, Smith emerged in the red-light district of Atlantic City and established himself as a main attraction at Kelly’s Café (replacing Eubie Blake, who was on his way to New York in 1915) and at Ralph (Rafe) Welloff’s New World. Smith now wore fine suits, custom-made shoes, and a derby hat and carried a cigar and a cane.

In November 1916, Smith enlisted in the army, joining the Ninety-second Division, 153rd Negro Brigade, 350th Field Artillery Unit. For his proficiency as an A-1 gunner and for his courageous acts on the front line of battle, he was nicknamed “Willie the Lion.” Smith also served as drum major and pianist for the 350th Field Artillery Marching Band, also known as the “Seventy Black Devils.”

After his discharge in 1919, Smith settled in Harlem and became known as “the Lion.” Even though he was a headliner at clubs such as Leroy’s and the Catagonia Club (also known as Pod’s and Jerry’s) in Harlem and the Onyx on Fifty-second Street, he was much more sought-after for rent parties. As a member of the “big three” (along with Johnson and Fats Waller), Smith spent a great deal of time during the 1920s and 1930s performing at society parties and private social gatherings (often accompanied by Waller).

In 1920, Mamie Smith and Her Jazz Hounds, with Smith as the bandleader and pianist, made the first of numerous recordings catering to a new black audience; they were issued under the Okeh label and marketed as “race records.” During the 1920s, Smith accompanied many vocalists, often in cabaret settings. In 1927,

Smith, Willie "the Lion"

Smith performed on Broadway as a cast member in Dana Burnet and George Abbott's *Four Walls*.

As a composer, Smith highlighted his unique use of the left hand and his love for ragtime. By the 1930s, Smith had also incorporated elements of impressionistic counterpoint. After a number of years recording as a sideman, "the Lion" recorded and toured extensively with his own group: Willie Smith and His Cubs.

Biography

William Henry Joseph Bonaparte Bertholoff Smith was born 25 November 1897 in Goshen, New York. He studied piano and organ as a child with his mother; attended Newark High School; and studied theory, counterpoint, and harmony with Hans Steinke in New York during the 1930s and 1940s. Smith served in the U.S. Army's Ninety-second Division, 153rd Negro Brigade, 350th Field Artillery Unit; he was a drum major for the 350th Field Artillery Marching Band, the "Seventy Black Devils." He was a member of the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP). Smith died in New York City 18 April 1973.

EMMETT G. PRICE III

See also Blake, Eubie; Ellington, Duke; House-Rent Parties; Johnson, James P.; Smith, Mamie; Waller, Thomas "Fats"

Selected Compositions

"Keep Your Temper." 1925.

"Fingerbuster." 1934.

"Echo of Spring." 1935.

"Passionette." 1935.

"Rippling Waters." 1939.

Recordings

Mamie Smith and Her Jazz Hounds. "Crazy Blues" and "It's Right Here for You." Okeh 4169, August 1920.

Gulf Coast Seven. "Santa Claus Blues" and "Keep Your Temper." Columbia 14107D, November 1925.

Clarence Williams's Jug Band. "What If We Do." Philips LP 7521, June 1929.

Seven Gallon Jug Band. "Wipe It Off." Columbia W149690-2, December 1929.

Clarence Williams's Washboard Band. "Shim Sham Shimmy Dance" and "High Society." Columbia 2806, Philips LP 7521, July 1933.

Mezz Mezzrow and His Orchestra. "Apologies" and "Sendin' the Vipers." Victor 25019, Bluebird 10250, Label "X" LP 3015, May 1934.

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Willie Smith and His Cubs. "There's Gonna Be the Devil to Pay" and "What Can I Do?" Decca 7073, April 1935.

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Snow, Valaida

Valaida Snow is a remarkable figure in the history of jazz. Her first instrument was the trumpet, but she also played saxophone, clarinet, violin, cello, accordion,

banjo, mandolin, and harp; in addition, she was a conductor, an arranger, and a dancer. Her admirers included Louis Armstrong and Earl Hines. Hugues Panassié and Madeleine Gautier (1956) call her a “good singer and an astonishing trumpet player.” Bobby Short (1971) remembers that Snow “traveled in an orchid-colored Mercedes-Benz, dressed in an orchid suit, her pet monkey rigged out in an orchid jacket and cap, with the chauffeur in orchid as well.” She had a successful career in the United States, and her extended tours abroad created a sensation. Yet she only partially recovered from a traumatic experience during World War II, and today she is largely, and undeservedly, forgotten.

After performing in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and Philadelphia, Snow had an extended run at Barron Wilkins’s cabaret in Harlem in 1922, and later she toured with Will Mastin and his trio. Snow made her debut on Broadway in 1924, as Manda in *Chocolate Dandies*. In 1926, she went to Shanghai with Jack Carter’s octet (featuring the New Orleans clarinetist Albert Nicholas); and she toured Europe, Russia, and the Middle East in 1929–1931. She also began recording (with the Washboard Rhythm Kings, Earl Hines, Billy Mason, Noble Sissle, and others). Already well known in Europe, Snow became famous at home through Lew Leslie’s production of Sissle and Eubie Blake’s *Rhapsody in Black* (1931), in which, billed simply as “Valaida,” she costarred (and feuded) with Ethel Waters. Snow performed the show’s most popular song, “Till the Real Thing Comes Along.” Another highlight for her was a dramatic entrance during which she played splitting high C’s on a trumpet while perched atop a mammoth drum.

Other shows followed, including *Grand Terrace Revue* (1933) and *Blackbirds of 1934*. Snow claimed to have been in two Hollywood films—*Take It From Me* and *Irresistible You*—though no proof such films exists; she did, however, appear in two French films: *L’alibi* (1935), in which Sidney Bechet also appeared, and *Plièges* (1939). Snow played at the Apollo Theater before embarking on a five-year tour all over Europe in 1936. She arrived in England shortly after Louis Armstrong’s first tour there; and although the unusual sight of this glamorous, beautiful woman playing a brass instrument may have initially been confusing, Snow soon became a star there as well. She was billed as “queen of the trumpet” and “little Louis”; a reviewer at the time noted her broad tone, sharp sense of swing, and “a most unfeminine vibrato” (Placksin, 1982). Her signature tune, which

she also wrote, was “High Hat, Trumpet, and Rhythm.”

In 1941, Snow was arrested in Sweden and deported; soon afterward she was detained in Nazi-occupied Copenhagen. The circumstances remain unclear, but she spent nearly two years under arrest by the Nazis, either at Wester-Faengle concentration camp or in a jail for prisoners of war. When she returned to the United States, she bore scars and weighed only sixty-eight pounds. Jack Carter financed a six-month rehabilitation for her at a sanitarium in New York. Later, she married her manager, Earle Edwards. (Snow had been married twice before: to a dancer who went by the stage name King Knappy Brown, and to the dancer Ananias Berry.)

Snow resumed her career, but with little success; in the 1950s, she was reduced to working at resorts in the Catskills in New York State. According to friends and associates, she had become virtually unrecognizable, both physically and emotionally. Snow died in New York on 30 May 1956.

Biography

Valaida (possibly originally Valyda) Snow was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, on 2 June 1900, 1903, or 1905. When her father died, she moved to Washington, D.C., with her mother and two sisters, Lavaida and Alvaida. She was encouraged by her mother, a music teacher, who taught her to play the trumpet. Snow’s first instrument remained the trumpet, although she also played saxophone, clarinet, violin, cello, accordion, banjo, mandolin, and harp. She performed in Philadelphia and Atlantic City c. 1920; performed at Barron Wilkins’s cabaret in Harlem, 1922; toured with Will Mastin, 1923; made her Broadway debut in *Chocolate Dandies*, 1924; toured in Shanghai with Jack Carter’s band, 1926; had a long engagement with Earl Hines’s band at Chicago’s Grand Terrace, 1929; toured Europe and Asia, 1929–1931; appeared in *Rhapsody in Black*, 1931; appeared in *Blackbirds of 1934*; recorded extensively for the Parlophone label (of England) in the 1930s; toured Europe, 1936–1941; was arrested and held in Nazi-occupied Denmark, 1941–1942; and returned to United States, 1942. Snow died in New York City in 1956.

GREGORY MILLER

See also Armstrong, Louis; Bechet, Sidney; *Blackbirds*; *Chocolate Dandies*; Leslie, Lew; Waters, Ethel

Selected Works

- "Imagination." 1935.
"High Hat, Trumpet, and Rhythm." 1936.
"Take Care of You for Me." 1936.

Recordings

- Hot Snow: Queen of Trumpet and Song*. DRG 8455 2CD.
Valaida Snow: 1933–1936. Classics Jazz 1158. (CD.)
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Social-Fraternal Organizations

Although creative writers and artists rarely played a prominent role in the life of social clubs, benevolent societies, and fraternal lodges, such organizations helped create the vibrant environment in which the Harlem Renaissance flourished. In her play *The Starter* (1927), Eulalie Spence (1894–1981) depicted a resident

of Harlem as a young man of promise: He paid "dues in a club, two Societies and a Lodge."

Migration to big cities made possible the creation of a rich fabric of African American voluntary associations. White racism restricted African Americans to organizations that they created for themselves, sites for community, dignity, and pride. Unlike the black churches, black social organizations were mostly for men or for women only. Often they were connected, with male societies recognizing female auxiliaries.

Diverse and overlapping, social organizations are difficult to categorize. Despite their central function of providing an opportunity for social intercourse, many of them were more than simply social organizations. The most numerous are best called clubs, often local and brief-lived and without much formal structure. Club members might play cards, discuss books, perform music, raise money for charity, function as church auxiliaries, organize picnics, or serve innumerable other purposes. Although black social organizations existed to provide occasions for sociability, they could be enlisted to support political agitation. Many women's civic clubs were affiliated with the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs and its New York division, the Empire State Federation of Women's Clubs.

Members of the African American elite often preferred clubs with restricted memberships to more heterogeneous organizations. Clubs provided opportunities to develop a network of professional connections. Some prestigious clubs were small enough to meet at the homes of members. Large societies, such as the Savoy Ballroom "400," founded in 1927 and noted for its elaborate initiation ceremonies, could not be as choosy about their members. History often remembers no more than the names of many clubs, such as the Wall Street Boys Association, organized around 1925. The Gay Northeasterners, for young women, which began in 1930, survives as simply the Northeasterners.

The most exclusive and prestigious society in the black community was the first Greek-letter fraternity organized by African Americans, Sigma Pi Phi, founded in 1904 and often called the Boulé after an ancient Athenian governing body. Sigma Pi Phi was not a college fraternity. It provided fellowship for African American men who already held college degrees and were established in the professions or business. This fraternity's sixth boulé was Zeta Boulé in New York City, organized in 1912 at the office of *The Crisis*, with its editor W. E. B. Du Bois as a charter member.

In practice, through their postcollege activities, African American undergraduate fraternities and sororities also functioned as clubs for the privileged elite, both people who had joined during their student days and a few co-opted men and women. For instance, Alpha Phi Alpha, organized in 1906, claimed Du Bois as a member; and Phi Beta Sigma, organized in 1914, claimed James Weldon Johnson and Alain Locke.

Other organizations—generally called benevolent societies—brought together large numbers of blacks who had migrated to New York City from a particular southern state or West Indian island, together with their children. Along with social and cultural functions, such societies provided insurance for burial and in times of illness. Typically they were male societies, with female auxiliaries, and had as leaders business entrepreneurs and professionals or their wives. For instance, the Sons and Daughters of Virginia and the prosperous United Sons and Daughters of Georgia were organized in 1920; and the Grenada Mutual Association was organized in 1926.

As early as the 1880s, reacting to the influx of migrants, the Society of the Sons of New York admitted into full membership only applicants who had been born in New York, some of whom had Dutch names that underscored the long residence of their families. Although it was a relatively elite organization, in Harlem this meant a membership that included headwaiters as well as professionals. Its clubhouse was located on West Fifty-third Street. Women organized a parallel Society of the Daughters of New York. The Sons of New York held an annual ball in April.

For the most part, fraternal lodges were affiliated with national or regional organizations. Characterized by quasi-Masonic rituals and regalia, they too existed largely to promote sociability. The journalist George S. Schuyler regarded black fraternal societies as evidence that African Americans were not a distinct people. He pointed out that, like whites, “Aframericans” joined “the Elks, Masons, and Knights of Pythias” (*Nation*, 16 June 1926). In fact, all fraternal societies were racially segregated, and some black societies, like the True Reformers (based in Virginia), did not share their name with a white counterpart. When there was a parallel white organization, it sometimes sued to prohibit the African American society from using a similar name.

Fraternal societies were showier than clubs and benevolent societies. They were societies with secrets, such as rituals and distinctive handshakes and passwords, but membership in them was not secret. Lodge

brothers loved to parade in costume before an admiring audience. In his autobiography, *The Big Sea*, Langston Hughes (1940/1976) said that “on Sunday afternoons in the spring when the lodges have their turnouts, it is good to stand on the curb and hear the bands play and see the women pass in their white regalia with swinging purple capes, preceded by the brothers in uniform, with long swords at their sides and feathered helmets, or else in high hats, spats, and cutaway coats.” He added that “once I saw such a lodge parade with an all-string band leading the procession, violins and mandolins and banjos and guitars playing in the street.” The celebrated photographer James Van Der Zee left a visual record of Harlem’s colorful fraternal regalia and banners.

The Elks, a relatively new organization, constituted Harlem’s largest fraternal society. The male Elks sponsored a women’s auxiliary, the Daughters of the Improved Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World. The *New York Times* (24 August 1927) reported that during a national convention held in Harlem, 30,000 male and female Elks, attired in costumes and encouraged by twenty-five bands, paraded before 100,000 onlookers. According to Jervis Anderson (1981), the marchers “cakewalked and Charlestoned . . . to tunes like ‘Me and My Shadow’ and ‘Ain’t She Sweet.’” On a showery afternoon, the “grand exalted ruler” reviewed the procession from a grandstand at Seventh Avenue and 145th Street. When 1,034 delegates representing 565 lodges met at Mother Zion AMEZ Church, at 140 West 137th Street, African Americans from around the country acquired firsthand knowledge of Harlem.

Harlem had several prosperous local Elks lodges, including the Imperial lodge and the heavily Caribbean Henry Lincoln Johnson lodge. The largest local organization, with 2,000 members, was the Manhattan lodge, whose impressive headquarters at 266 West 139th Street included club rooms, an assembly hall, and offices. Its orchestra and band played at parks and schools in Harlem.

Another Elks affiliate, Monarch lodge, founded in 1907, owned a hall located at 245 137th Street, where concerts and dances were held. Members could relax at a first-floor bar. The lodge helped members find jobs and housing, organized boat rides and parties, and sponsored a marching band. It also raised money for a variety of purposes, from education to politics. One of Harlem’s best-known residents, Casper Holstein, headed the Monarch lodge at the time of the Harlem Renaissance. He made a fortune in the

numbers racket, won popularity as a philanthropist, and attracted considerable attention when he was kidnapped and held for ransom. In 1929, he unsuccessfully vied for the first office in the national Elks organization. His opponents used his foreign birth against him (Holstein came from the Virgin Islands, which the United States had only recently purchased from Denmark).

Other than the Elks, the leading fraternal societies were the Prince Hall Masons, the Odd Fellows, and the Knights of Pythias, each of them supported by a female auxiliary. In 1916, the Masons built a large temple in Harlem. Blacks from the Caribbean dominated the Ancient Order of Shepherds, the Mechanics, and the Free Gardeners. Membership in fraternal societies often overlapped from one organization to another and frequently was brief. Reflecting the economic realities of the African American community, most members were working class or lower middle class. After World War I, fraternal societies generally lost membership, but this varied. In fact, some new black societies were founded: for instance, the Grand United Order of Toussaint-Louverture in 1921 and the Lebanon Foresters in 1923.

Arguably, fraternal societies as a whole reached their institutional peak in the 1920s even if their membership already was in decline. For instance, in New York City, the white Masons erected a seventeen-story building in 1926; the white Pythians built a massive temple in the same year; the Knights of Columbus erected a fifteen-story building in 1927; and the white Elks erected a thirteen-story building in 1928.

Prominent men of Harlem often belonged to fraternal societies. For instance, a biographical sketch, published in 1927, of a physician born in Jamaica proudly reported that he was a thirty-second-degree Mason, a past exalted ruler of an Elks lodge, and a member of the Knights of Pythias, the Independent Order of Saint Luke, and the Ancient Order of Foresters. Membership in the Freemasons carried special prestige. It was the fraternal society that members of the black elite were most likely to join. Du Bois, for example, was a Mason. The book collector Arthur A. Schomburg spent much of his time in carrying out his duties as grand secretary of the Grand Lodge of New York, Prince Hall Masons, from 1918 to 1926. Out of frustration with petty internal disputes, he quit the Masons in the 1930s, but he had been an active member for more than four decades. Schomburg also was the first treasurer of the Loyal Sons of Africa, founded by John Edward Bruce. For

some black intellectuals, no doubt, membership in a fraternal society was only nominal, but for others it entailed weekly lodge meetings.

Often relying on ministers and politicians to provide leadership, black fraternal societies were integrated into the larger African American community. Most fraternal societies offered some kind of mutual insurance, and the founders of many African American commercial insurance companies learned their craft in the lodges. In *Black Manhattan*, James Weldon Johnson complained that burial insurance bulked too large in the work of fraternal societies: "Very often the amount of money spent for burying the dead is out of proportion to that in caring for the living." In his autobiography, Langston Hughes (1940/1976) poignantly remembered that on weekdays lodge funerals took place at night to allow working people to participate: "Sometimes at ten or eleven at night, you hear a funeral march filling the air on Seventh Avenue."

Other organizations borrowed the rhetoric and symbols of fraternalism: trade unions like the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids, founded in 1925; black nationalist organizations such as the Universal Negro Improvement Association, whose leader, Marcus Garvey, was a Mason; and radical organizations such as the multiracial, communist-tinged International Workers Order (IWO). The Harlem Suitcase Theatre (1937) staged plays at an IWO hall, and Louise Thompson Patterson worked for this leftist organization.

Scholars of the African American experience have been ambivalent about black fraternal societies. Did they merely imitate white organizations, or did they draw on West African cooperative traditions? Did they foster self-reliance and mutual aid, or did they surrender to the bourgeois values of the white community? Were they embarrassingly noisy and tawdry, riven with petty quarrels and personal ambition, or should blacks be proud of their heritage of fraternal societies? As a result of such uncertainties, neglect has been widespread. A paper prepared for the Works Progress Administration by Baxter Leach, "Fraternal Orders in Harlem" (1939), was never published. Among relatively recent books, the study by Irma Watkins-Owens (1996) stands out for its attention to fraternal societies.

Scholarly interest may be awakening. From 28 March to 1 July 2003, the black studies program of City College of New York (CCNY) and the Institute for Research on the African Diaspora in the Americas

and the Caribbean sponsored an exhibit that documented the history of one of Harlem's Elk lodges, Monarch lodge, from 1907 to 1997. The exhibit focused on the rhetoric of the African American Elks, expressed in language, rites, and regalia. A professor at CCNY, Venus Green, who served as chief curator, opened the exhibit with a presentation about rescuing from a dumpster nearly a hundred boxes of archival materials of the Monarch lodge, including photographs, posters, uniforms, and banners.

DAVID M. FAHEY

See also Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; Bruce, John Edward; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Holstein, Casper; Johnson, James Weldon; Locke, Alain; Patterson, Louise Thompson; Schomburg, Arthur A.; Schuyler, George S.; Universal Negro Improvement Association; Van Der Zee, James

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Spencer, Anne

Nearly thirty of Anne Spencer's poems can be found in influential anthologies of the Harlem Renaissance, but she never published her own volume. Greatly influenced by the nineteenth-century romantics, she wrote about nature, simplicity, freedom, immortality, life and death, chaos and peace, love, and transcendent beauty, using conventional forms like the sonnet and lyric. At first appearance, her work deviates from the themes of social protest and modernity and the jazz and blues aesthetics characterizing much of the literature of the Harlem Renaissance; as a result, she has been overlooked or misunderstood in discussions of the era. Similarly, she has invited backward glances to such writers of the "American renaissance" as Ralph Waldo Emerson and particularly Emily Dickinson, whom she resembles in her metaphysical themes and enigmatic voice, as well as in having written a large body of works that she never published. Yet her poems—such as "Before the Feast at Shushan" (1920), her first publication; "White Things" (1923); "Lady, Lady" (1925); "Letter to My Sister" (1927); and "Grapes: Still-Life" (1929)—also raise themes of women's liberation and racial equality, or they experiment with modernist styles and forms.

Spencer grew up "in the home of a middle-class Black family . . . in a primarily white community" (Honey 1989), and she was of black, white, and Native American ancestry. Her formal schooling exposed her to students from Virginia's black elite, and her home became a center of intellectual discussions and social activism for African American educators, writers, entertainers, and political figures. Her residence in Lynchburg, Virginia, at 1313 Pierce Street, doubled as a literary salon where her guests

included luminaries such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Paul Robeson, and Sterling Brown. Those who attended Spencer's salon found her elegance and intellect a welcome respite from the humiliations of segregated conveyances, restaurants, and hotels endured by blacks of all social strata as they traveled through the South during the era of Jim Crow. Her mentor James Weldon Johnson introduced her to critics like H. L. Mencken and assisted her in publishing in the leading "race magazines"—*The Crisis*, *Survey Graphic*, and *Opportunity*—as well as in the books that defined the era: Alain Locke's *The New Negro* (1925), Countee Cullen's *Caroling Dusk* (1927), and Johnson's own *Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922), among others.

Spencer combined artistic seclusion with the iconoclasm and public daring of a pioneer in civil rights. On the one hand, she could retreat to write and meditate in her garden cottage, Edankraal, enjoying a privileged introspection and isolation that most southern married women could not experience, regardless of race and class. On the other hand, she generally was in the thick of civil rights activities when writing or not. She avoided and publicly objected to segregated transportation and public services, helped found the Lynchburg branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and fought to secure state funding for a library in the all-black city high school, which she subsequently supported by serving as its librarian.

Subsequent generations value her poetry because its formal, classical, and pastoral elements remind us of how widely approaches and attitudes ranged among artists of the Harlem Renaissance. Her work also stands as a reminder of the cultural richness that we lose and social history that we skew by centering the Harlem Renaissance in New York, Chicago, and all other points North of the Mason-Dixon line.

Biography

Anne Spencer was born 6 February 1882 in Henry County, Virginia. She graduated from a private school—Virginia Seminary in Lynchburg—in 1899. She was a teacher (second grade) from 1899 to 1901. She married Edward Spencer (a postal worker and businessman) on 15 May 1901. She taught at Virginia Seminary in 1911. Spencer published major poetry during 1920–1931. She was a cofounder of the Lynchburg NAACP in 1918. She was a librarian at

Dunbar High School from 1924 to 1946. Spencer died in Lynchburg, Virginia, on 27 July 1975.

BARBARA MCCASKILL

See also Authors: 5—Poets; Brown, Sterling; Crisis, The; Cullen, Countee; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, James Weldon; Literature: 7—Poetry; Locke, Alain; Mencken, H. L.; New Negro, The; Opportunity; Robeson, Paul; Salons; Survey Graphic

Selected Works

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Spingarn, Arthur

Arthur Spingarn was born in New York City in 1878 to Sarah Barnett Spingarn and Elias Spingarn, a



Arthur Spingarn. (Library of Congress.)

prominent tobacco merchant of Austrian Jewish heritage. His family included his older brother Joel Elias Spingarn, another leading civil rights activist. Spingarn earned an A.B. from Columbia in 1897, an A.M. in 1899, and a law degree from the same institution in 1900. He served as a captain in the U.S. Army Sanitary Corps from 1917 to 1919; during the war, he married Marion Mayer, a social worker, on 27 January 1918. They had no children.

Spingarn's early experience as a lawyer convinced him of the need to address racial prejudice through his work. He joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1911, soon after its founding. From 1911 to 1940, he was a vice president of the organization and chairman of the NAACP's National Legal Committee. In the latter role, Spingarn played a crucial part in the development of the NAACP's efforts to achieve civil rights by working through the legal system. He guided the NAACP's contribution of an amicus brief in *Guinn v. United States* (1915), which challenged the use of

"grandfather clauses" to protect poor whites from being disenfranchised by laws aimed against black voters; it was the organization's first victory in the courts. Spingarn also spearheaded another early victory for the NAACP in *Buchanan v. Warley* (1917), which overturned an ordinance in Louisville, Kentucky, that required residential segregation by race. Throughout the 1920s, Spingarn helped increase the visibility of the NAACP. In 1925, Spingarn brought Clarence Darrow, the most prominent lawyer of the times, into the NAACP's fold. After Ossian Sweet, an African American doctor in Detroit, moved into a white neighborhood in 1925, mob violence by whites led to another man's death; the authorities in turn charged Sweet with murder. Spingarn and Darrow helped clear Sweet of all charges.

Spingarn and the NAACP also challenged the exclusion of African Americans from voting booths. In 1923, the legislature of Texas passed a law restricting participation in Democratic Party primaries to whites only, effectively disenfranchising black voters in the overwhelmingly Democratic state. Spingarn scored another victory in *Nixon v. Herndon* (1927), arguing in the U.S. Supreme Court in support of Dr. L. A. Nixon's challenge to the Texas law. When white Texans continued to maneuver around court rulings, Spingarn argued another successful challenge in *Nixon v. Condon* (1932). Spingarn also played an important role in the NAACP's effort in 1930 to block the nomination of John J. Parker, an avowed racist, to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Spingarn also participated in the rich cultural life of the Harlem Renaissance. In 1913, Spingarn and his wife, Amy, began amassing what would become an unparalleled collection of rare books and manuscripts on African and African American topics. The collection was later donated to Howard University. Spingarn contributed annual bibliographies on black books to the NAACP's publication *The Crisis*, and worked closely with W. E. B. Du Bois while Du Bois was its editor. As Du Bois became more explicitly Marxist in the 1930s, Spingarn split with him. Du Bois resigned as the editor of *The Crisis* in June 1934.

In 1940, the NAACP's National Legal Committee became an independent organization, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. Spingarn served as president of the group from 1940 to 1957. During these years, the litigation arm of the civil rights struggle achieved numerous victories against segregation, most notably in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). From 1940 to 1966, Spingarn also served as president

of the NAACP itself. His gradualist approach to social change and his faith in the legal system made enemies among more strident activists; others objected to the fact that one of the nation's leading organizations for black civil rights was led by a white man. While sympathetic to radicals, Spingarn rejected their separatism. As the civil rights movement became increasingly militant in the mid-1960s, Spingarn came under increasing attack. Hurt by the criticism, Spingarn resigned in 1966 at age eighty-seven. He died in New York City in 1971.

History has judged Arthur Spingarn a moderate, but this interpretation does not reveal the moral passion that informed Spingarn's legal crusade in the early twentieth century, when courts were systematically hostile to African Americans.

Biography

Arthur Barnett Spingarn was born in New York City on 28 March 1878. He received degrees from Columbia University (A.B., 1897; A.M., 1899; LL.B., 1900), Howard University (LL.D., 1941), and Long Island University (L.H.D., 1966). He was admitted to the New York bar in 1900 and had a private legal practice, 1900–1969. In the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, he was vice president, 1911–1940; chairman, NAACP National Legal Committee, 1911–1940; and president, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, 1940–1957. Spingarn died in New York City on 1 December 1971.

CHRISTOPHER CAPOZZOLA

See also *Civil Rights and Law; Crisis, The; Du Bois, W. E. B.; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Spingarn, Joel*

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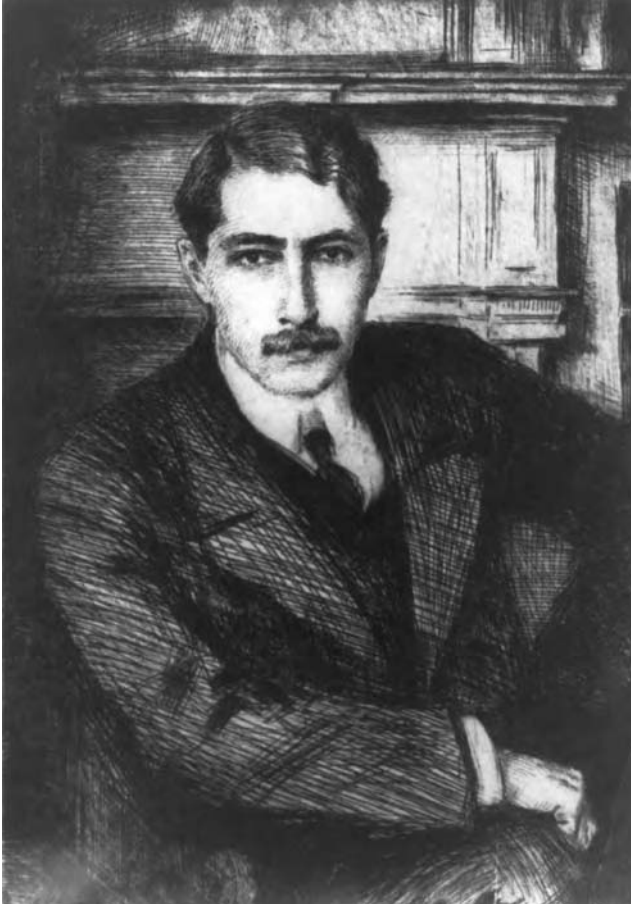
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Spingarn, Joel

Despite the relative oblivion into which his name has fallen, Joel Spingarn's influence on African American life in the first half of the twentieth century is notable. His acquaintances and colleagues included many of the most noteworthy individuals associated with the achievements of the Harlem Renaissance. Trained as a literary scholar of the Italian Renaissance, Spingarn was also very much a man of his own times. He frequently claimed that personal dignity was measured by the extent to which one was willing to perform one's responsibilities toward society at large. After a relatively brief but influential career as a scholar of comparative literature at Columbia University (1899–1911), Spingarn turned his focus during the 1910s and 1920s toward social activism, largely through his involvement with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). His service is still commemorated through that organization's annual presentation of the Spingarn Medal, an award he instituted in 1914 to recognize outstanding achievement by Americans of African descent.

In addition to his work with the NAACP, he acted privately as a patron and informal adviser to a number of artists (such as Claude McKay, whose work Spingarn helped to publish as early as 1917). Along with a number of notable black and white figures (for example, Ida B. Wells Barnett, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Oswald Garrison Villard), Spingarn helped to found the NAACP in 1909. His most active period of participation in the group would not begin until the next year, though, when he joined its New York Vigilance Committee, adding his considerable political clout (he ran for Congress unsuccessfully in 1908) and social clout to legal actions undertaken on behalf of African Americans. After his dismissal from Columbia University in 1911, Spingarn intensified his involvement with the NAACP. By 1913, he was making national speaking tours in which he spoke of the "new abolitionism" and condemned the gradualism and assimilationism espoused by Booker T. Washington.

Spingarn established a close relationship with Du Bois during this period, and their collaboration would prove invaluable for the direction of the fledgling



Joel Elias Spingarn, c. 1910–1920. (Library of Congress.)

NAACP. In 1910, Spingarn had contacted Du Bois seeking advice on how to operate the Heart of Hope Club, an organization Spingarn had created to provide food and leisure activities for the poor African Americans of Amenia, New York, the small town near Spingarn's estate, Troutbeck. The two quickly became close friends, although their relationship was marked by lengthy periods of intense ideological disagreement. Du Bois was an influential ally for Spingarn in the organization and greatly aided Spingarn's rise to the post of chairman of the NAACP's board of directors in 1913. In August 1916, Spingarn was host to the historic Amenia Conference, which Du Bois said was intended to unify African Americans and their allies. Among the attendees at this conference were James Weldon Johnson, William Pickens, and Mary Burnett Talbert, all of whom would play important roles in the Harlem Renaissance.

Spingarn volunteered for military service in 1917 and combined his service with social activism, urging African Americans to support the war effort wholeheartedly as he fervently lobbied the War Department

for the institution of a training facility for African American officers. Spingarn's concession that this facility would most likely have to be segregated was unpopular with many of his colleagues in the NAACP, who recalled his denunciations of Washington's strategy of integration by accommodation. A number of African American publications openly questioned Spingarn's motives and even went so far as to accuse him of being a white saboteur who was perpetuating racism from within the NAACP by pretending to be a friend—an argument that some scholars have perpetuated. As the larger movement of African American cultural empowerment gained momentum in the early 1920s, African American leaders such as Du Bois, Johnson, and Alain Locke gained favor within the NAACP over white "fellow travelers" such as Spingarn. Nevertheless, Spingarn remained an active participant in the organization for most of his remaining life, serving as both its treasurer and its president.

The mid-1920s and early 1930s were a period of extensive publication for Spingarn, whether as an editor, an author, or a publisher. He had helped to found the publishing firm Harcourt Brace in 1919 and became editor of its "European Library" series during the 1920s. At Du Bois's request, Spingarn participated along with Jessie Redmon Fauset, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Charles Waddell Chesnutt, and nearly twenty others in a symposium called "The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed?" that was published over the course of several months in *The Crisis* in 1926 and 1927. Spingarn took a view corresponding fairly closely with Du Bois's idea that artistic depictions of African Americans—whether by white or black writers—were inherently politicized. However, his critics associated him with the more incendiary ideas of other white contributors to the series, such as Carl Van Vechten and Vachel Lindsay; and so Spingarn was criticized as lacking understanding of and sympathy with the cause of African American uplift.

In 1924, suffering from recurrent chronic exhaustion, Spingarn went on inactive status at Harcourt and returned home to Troutbeck. He spent the remainder of his life engaged in a somewhat more subdued blend of his previous pursuits. He published two series of what he called the "Troutbeck Leaflets," which ranged from Du Bois's summary of the Amenia conference of 1916 to a collection of twelve poems written by Spingarn's wife, Amy. He gave six well-received lectures on a variety of literary and social topics at the New School for Social Research in New York in 1931. He addressed the NAACP's national convention in 1932 and then

was host to a second Amenia conference in 1933; the attendees at this conference included such social and intellectual luminaries as Du Bois, Johnson, Ralph Bunche, Charles Houston, Juanita Jackson, Walter White, and Roy Wilkins. Almost all of Spingarn's published work subsequent to 1932 dealt with his horticultural interest in the clematis vine, a subject on which he is still considered the foremost American authority. In 1939, he accepted a teaching post at Atlanta University, but he died before he could make the trip.

Biography

Joel Elias Spingarn was born in New York City on 17 May 1875. He attended public schools in New York; Collegiate Institute of New York City, 1893; City College of New York, 1893; Columbia University, A.B., 1895; Harvard University, 1895–1896; and again Columbia, Ph.D., 1899. He was an assistant professor of comparative literature at Columbia, 1899–1904; associate professor, 1904–1909; professor, 1909–1911; and chair of the division of modern languages and literature, 1910–1911. He was the owner and publisher of the *Amenia* (New York) *Times* from 1911 to 1926. Spingarn was a cofounder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1909; chairman of its board of directors, 1913–1919; founder of the Spingarn Medal, 1914; treasurer, 1919–1930; and president, 1930–1939. He was host to the Amenia conferences in 1916 and 1933. He was a cofounder of Harcourt Brace in 1919 and its literary editor from 1919 to 1932. Spingarn died in Amenia, New York, on 26 July 1939.

DEREK MAUS

See also Amenia Conference, 1916; Amenia Conference, 1933; Crisis: The Negro in Art—How Shall He Be Portrayed? A Symposium; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Harcourt Brace; McKay, Claude; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Publishers and Publishing Houses; Spingarn, Arthur; Spingarn Medal

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Spingarn Medal

The Spingarn Medal was created in 1914 by Joel Spingarn, the newly elected chairman of the board of directors of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). It was to be given annually in recognition of the "highest or noblest achievement by an American Negro during the preceding year." This medal was the first and most important of the many prizes for African Americans established during the Harlem Renaissance. As of this writing, it had been awarded by the NAACP every year since 1915 except 1938.

The plan for the award was first announced in June 1914 in *The Crisis*, which featured on its cover a drawing of the medal's obverse—a female figure wearing classical draperies and a blindfold, holding aloft the scales of justice in one hand and leaning on a sword with the other, flanked by the words "For Merit." Behind this figure shone the rays of a brightly rising sun. According to *The Crisis*, candidates from

“any field of elevated or honorable human endeavor” were eligible for the award, “whether that field be intellectual, spiritual, physical, scientific, commercial, educational or any other” (June 1914, 88). Spingarn promised to furnish \$100 per year for the cost of producing each gold medal. To ensure that the award would survive his death, Spingarn bequeathed \$20,000 to the NAACP in his will to endow the prize, with the further provision that it would be administered by the president of either Howard University or Fisk University if the NAACP itself ceased to exist.

The first medal was awarded in March 1915 to Professor Ernest Everett Just of Howard University Medical School for distinguished research in physiology and biology. Indeed, the first several medals bore out the promise made by *The Crisis* that the selection committee would consider nominees from a wide range of fields. The second winner, recognized for his service to Liberia, was Major Charles Young, the ranking black officer in the U.S. Army. (He would soon be promoted to lieutenant colonel.) The third winner was the musician, singer, and composer Harry Thacker Burleigh. As the aesthetic dimension of the Harlem Renaissance became prominent, artists began to dominate the list of winners. After Burleigh’s prize in 1917, five of the next eleven medals went to writers, actors, singers, and poets, including William Stanley Braithwaite (1918), Charles Gilpin (1921), Roland Hayes (1924), James Weldon Johnson (1925), and Charles Waddell Chesnutt (1928). Other honorees from the 1920s include a former president of the NAACP, Archibald Grimké (1919); W. E. B. Du Bois (1920); Mary Burnett Talbert (1922); the agricultural scientist George Washington Carver (1923); Carter G. Woodson (1926); Anthony Overton, president of the Victory Life Insurance Company (1927); and Mordecai W. Johnson, the first black president of Howard University (1929). Winners from the early 1930s include H. A. Hunt, president of Georgia’s Fort Valley Industrial School (1930); Richard Harrison (1931); Robert Russa Moton (1932); Max Yergan of the YMCA, who was an activist in Africa (1933); W. T. B. Williams, dean of the college at Tuskegee Institute (1934); and Mary McLeod Bethune (1935). Three early winners—Grimké, Carver, and Overton—had been born in slavery; one winner, Harrison, was the son of fugitive slaves. Until the singer Marian Anderson received the Spingarn Medal in 1939, only two of the first twenty-three recipients had been women.

From its inception, the medal was regarded as an important marker of black achievement in white America and thus a potentially useful tool for improving

race relations. In describing Ernest Just’s qualifications for the award, for example, *The Crisis* declared: “This is the sort of man that this Association, this race and this country delight to honor” (April 1915, 284). Writing to his wife, Amy, in November 1916 from the University of North Carolina (where he had a speaking engagement), Spingarn succinctly summarized the medal’s larger purpose: “I realize that the problem is to convince the white man that the Negro really has capacity for higher things. The Spingarn medal is a trifle, but the Spingarn medal idea is the main thing.” In October 1923, in a letter to Spingarn, the newly honored medalist Carver agreed:

The larger view as to the medal’s value, to my mind, supersedes everything else and is giving a kind of education that nothing else will give. It is certainly having its effects right in our own little town. The white people seem to be even more anxious to see this medal than my own people. I must confess again that I do not feel worthy of such a distinction. However, I shall endeavor, with all that is within me and as fast as the great Creator gives me light, to at least make my friends have no regret that it came this way.

The medal was not without controversy. When Chesnutt received the award in 1928 not for his achievements of the preceding year but instead for “his pioneer work as literary artist depicting the life and struggle of Americans of Negro descent,” the *Cleveland Gazette* wondered why the award had taken so long to bestow, noting that Chesnutt had last published a book in 1905. Other commentators were less enthusiastic about Chesnutt’s selection, complaining that candidates who were better qualified—and more relevant to the time—had been overlooked. This public grumbling led Du Bois, the editor of *The Crisis*, to defend the selection of Chesnutt vigorously in the issue of August 1928, insisting that it was not simply Chesnutt’s “pioneer work” as a writer but also his direct influence on the present “renaissance of American Negro literature” that had earned him the award. “Perhaps no single man could be picked out who is more worthy to be called the Dean of the young black artists who are writing today,” Du Bois asserted (1928, 176).

In later years several other people prominent during the Harlem Renaissance would also receive medals, including Walter White (1937), A. Philip Randolph (1942), Paul Robeson (1945), and, near the end of his long career, Langston Hughes (1960).

WILLIAM GLEASON

Spingarn Medal

See also *Crisis*, The; Du Bois, W. E. B.; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Spingarn, Joel; *specific medal recipients*

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Spirituals

Spirituals are religious folk songs created by Negro slaves during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They used these songs to record the history of the slave experience and to express their religious beliefs, their emotions, and their attitude toward slavery. Spirituals were part of the education and religious worship of both slaves and freedmen.

As a song form, spirituals shared many characteristics of African music: the oral transmission of history, descriptions of family and community life, expressions of religious beliefs, communal participation, the call-and-response form, and the use of movement and rhythmic percussion in performance. Spirituals may be classified into three different styles: (1) slow with long sustained melodies, (2) rhythmic up-tempo shouts, and (3) call and response performed by a leader with chorus. The origins of the songs may be traced back as early as the late 1700s along the Atlantic coast and in the southern regions. The earliest formal record of spirituals was Allen, Garrison, and Ware's collection *Slave Songs of the United States*, in 1867.

Spirituals were often created and performed by slaves during camp-meeting revivals or secret religious services held at night in the woods. These secret meetings, described as the "brush harbor meetings," laid the foundation not only for the African American church but also for the use of singing, shouting, and other forms of religious expression within African American culture. The brush harbor meetings gave slaves an opportunity to describe openly the experiences and hardships they may have endured during the day. Their response to these experiences was expressed in song.

The primary sources of the texts were the Bible and secular experiences. Although slaves were discouraged from reading the Bible—and in some situations were forbidden to read it—many did learn to read and interpret this source. Slaves identified strongly with the trials and tribulations as well as the victories of the Hebrew slaves, and with the Hebrews' faith in God. They also expressed a strong faith and belief in Jesus as their savior. In addition to the literal meanings, spirituals conveyed "coded" messages or hidden meanings through the use of metaphors. The hidden meanings in spirituals were perhaps the most important means of communication for the Underground Railroad. For example, the metaphor for the North or freedom was "heaven," the slave master was "Satan," and slaves were the "Hebrew children." Moses was identified with both the biblical figure and people such as Nat Turner and Harriet Tubman. Tubman and other "engineers" were often called "Moses." The song "Steal Away" was said to have been created by Turner to communicate plans for a revolt and later used by Tubman to signal to the slaves the time for escape. The spirituals "Deep River" and "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" were used to signal plans for escape. One of the most famous songs of the Underground Railroad was "Follow the Drinking Gourd," which detailed finding the road to escape by following the North Star or the Big Dipper.

Spirituals as folk music began to diminish in popularity during the years following emancipation, but they were revived by the Fisk Jubilee Singers in formal concerts in 1871. At the beginning of the twentieth century, spirituals began to emerge in a more formalized version through the choral and solo arrangements of Nathaniel Dett, Harry Thacker Burleigh, and Hall Johnson. In 1925–1926, James Weldon Johnson and John Rosamond Johnson produced a two-volume collection of Negro spirituals. During the Harlem Renaissance, spirituals became an important source of cultural pride and struggle, expressed in poetry and other literature by Langston Hughes, James Weldon

Johnson, and W. E. B. Du Bois. Spirituals also began to gain popularity in formal concerts through performances by Roland Hayes, Paul Robeson, and Marian Anderson in the United States and Europe. They were also used as material for theater, as in *The Green Pastures*, for which Hall Johnson did the musical arrangements and directed the choir.

In recent times spirituals have sustained their popularity through public performances by college and high school choirs and professional choruses, using contemporary arrangements by composers such as Moses Hogan, Roland Carter, William Dawson, and Jester Hairston. They have also maintained their presence in the African American church; and they are recognized as the basis for or an element in many other styles of music, including gospel, jazz, and blues. They are a staple of the American tradition and a universal language of hope.

BRENDA ELLIS

See also Anderson, Marian; Burleigh, Harry Thacker; Dett, Nathaniel; Green Pastures, The; Hayes, Roland; Johnson, Hall; Johnson, James Weldon; Johnson, John Rosamond; Music; Musicians; Robeson, Paul; Singers

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Spivey, Victoria

Though she may not have been as famous or talented as Bessie Smith or Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Victoria Spivey is considered one the most significant and

enduring of the classic women blues singers of the 1920s. She is noteworthy for her prolific output as a songwriter; her southern, folk-influenced "moaning" vocal style; and her direct and honest treatment of sordid and frightening subjects. Many of her songs offer instructive parallels to many of Langston Hughes's early "blues poems," which were criticized by some members of the black elite for their depiction of "lowdown" black life.

Spivey was born in Houston, Texas, in 1906. She grew up on church hymns, her family's string band music, and the music of the bordellos, honky-tonks, and picnics where she began her career playing piano. Here she met and shared the stage with other Texas blues musicians, including the legendary singer and guitarist Blind Lemon Jefferson. Encouraged by her idol, the blues singer Ida Prather Cox, Spivey soon left the Houston area to work as a songwriter for the St. Louis Music Company. She made a name for herself in 1926 with "Black Snake Blues," which she wrote and recorded for the Okeh label. Other notable records from the Harlem Renaissance period included several with the guitarist Lonnie Johnson. "No. 12, Let Me Roam" (1927) stands as a shining example of a traveling blues in which Spivey's country-blues vocals distinguish her from more refined classic blues women who sang with an urban sensibility. Like her peers, however, she recorded many playful double-entendre songs, such as "Organ Grinder Blues" (1928). These songs, which were typical fare for women who performed classic blues, usually veiled taboo sexual themes by using suggestive imagery and amusing metaphors.

Spivey's contribution to the challenge blues presented to social propriety also took more serious forms. "Blood Hound Blues" (1929), for example, illustrates Angela Davis's claim (1998) that early "blues women" created a discourse of feminist self-definition and empowerment by singing about the reality of male violence and their reactions to it. In this song, the narrator tells matter-of-factly of being a victim of domestic abuse ("He kicked me and blacked my eyes") and of taking action against it ("I poisoned my man"). Other stark and seedy topics Spivey sang about candidly could be found in "Dope Head Blues" (1927), considered the first blues song to address the reality of cocaine abuse.

Although the market for blues fell off dramatically for most women artists during the Depression, Spivey stayed active, touring with bands and variety shows, even forming a stage act with her husband, the dancer Billy Adams. She played a minor role in the all-black

musical *Hallelujah* in 1929 and continued to record throughout the 1930s for RCA Victor, Vocallion, and Decca. She also moved for a short time to Chicago, where she performed variously with “Georgia” Tom Dorsey, Memphis Minnie, and Washboard Sam.

Aside from a brief period during the 1950s, when her only musical activity was as a church organist, Spivey stayed committed to blues. In the early 1960s, she was rediscovered by the folk and blues revivals, and was inspired to return to the stage and start up her own record label, Spivey Records, in 1962.

Biography

Victoria Regina Spivey was born 15 October 1906 in Houston, Texas. She performed in Houston (1918–1925) and recorded for Okeh (1926–1929), RCA Victor (1929–1930), Vocallion (1931, 1936–1937), Decca (1936), and Spivey (1962). She performed in *Hallelujah* (1929), *Tan Town Topics* (1933), and the revue *Hellzapoppin* (1934). She worked as a church organist in Brooklyn, New York, in the 1940s. She founded Spivey Records in 1962. Spivey died in New York on 3 October 1976.

DAVE JUNKER

See also Blues: Women Performers; Cox, Ida Prather; *Hallelujah*

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“Blood Thirsty Blues.” 1927.

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“Organ Grinder Blues.” 1928.

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Stevedore

Stevedore (1934) is a play by two white intellectuals: Paul Peters and George Sklar. It opened on 18 April 1934 at the Civic Repertory Theater in New York and ran for 111 performances; it was revived on 1 October the same year, running for another 64 performances. It had a racially mixed cast that included Canada Lee, Abbie Mitchell, and Edna Thomas; and it also drew racially mixed audiences. On 6 May 1935, *Stevedore* opened at the Embassy Theater in London.

This play belonged to a then fashionable genre, protest drama, that focused on liberal causes such as social, economic, and racial problems. In the South, such plays might focus specifically on conflicts between whites and blacks. *Stevedore*, however, included Marxist ideas and took up the theme of anticapitalism, linking racial prejudice to economics and social class.

The main character in *Stevedore*, Lonnie Thompson, is an outspoken black dockworker who is falsely accused of raping a white woman. Apparently, this accusation is a punishment for his attempts to unionize other black dockworkers. Thompson is defended by a white union organizer who sees capitalists as the real enemy of the people. Together, they work for cooperation between black and white workers to fight against capitalistic exploitation.

Stevedore can be seen as representative of a new generation of protest plays in which the theme of conflict between blacks and whites has deeper implications. Whereas earlier protest plays tended to center on revealing prejudice against the black race in a white society, newer playwrights responded to changes in economic conditions by examining not just racism

but also the class conflict, to which it was in many ways seen as related. As a result of new initiatives in industry, African Americans had a better chance to join the workforce, but this development also opened up new possibilities for social, economic, and class conflicts between and within the black and white communities. Accordingly, dramas might focus not just on how African Americans were exploited but also on how white communities needed to deal with the effects of a more fluid class structure—effects such as increased mixing with blacks in daily life.

AMY LEE

See also Lee, Canada; Mitchell, Abbie; Thomas, Edna Lewis

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Still, William Grant

By far the most prominent composer of concert music of the Harlem Renaissance, William Grant Still (1895–1978) was also important for his contributions as a commercial musician, especially for his innovations as an arranger for early radio.

A major early influence on Still’s career was his exposure as a teenager to Victor Red Seal opera recordings. In 1911, after graduating from M. W. Gibbs High School, one of the few black high schools in the South with a college preparatory program, he enrolled in Wilberforce University, where he was musically active although there was no music curriculum. He attended for four years but left before receiving his degree. After spending some time as a freelance musician in Ohio—in Dayton, Columbus, and Cleveland—Still went to work as a performer and arranger for W. C. Handy in Memphis in the summer of 1916. This

is where he learned the Delta blues tradition on which Handy drew so successfully. Having received a small inheritance, he left Handy after a few months and enrolled at Oberlin, where he had wanted to study from the first. He interrupted his studies there to volunteer for the navy after the United States entered World War I, serving as a busboy on a ship for a year. He returned to Oberlin briefly in 1919 but left again to rejoin Handy, who by then had relocated permanently in New York City.

In New York from 1919 to 1934, Still began by performing in and writing arrangements for black theater orchestras, starting with Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake’s landmark musical *Shuffle Along* (1921). (Blake later wrote that George Gershwin had heard Still improvise the tune that became “I Got Rhythm” on his oboe before one of the performances.) *Shuffle Along* played for more than a year before moving to Boston; there, Still studied composition with the director of the New England Conservatory, George Whitefield Chadwick. Returning to New York, he became recording director for Harry H. Pace’s Black Swan Recording Company. At this time, he began two years of composition study with Edgard Varèse, then the most prominent of the white avant-garde “ultra-modern” composers. Still’s double life as both a working commercial musician and a composer of concert music can be followed fairly clearly from this point on. After Black Swan folded, he played and conducted at the Plantation Club and elsewhere, sometimes on tour, until he was able to support himself and his family through his arrangements. (Still had played oboe, cello, and violin but preferred to arrange and compose.) Among the people for whom he made arrangements during his career were Will Vodery, Eubie Blake, Sophie Tucker, Earl Carroll, Willard Robison, Donald Voorhees (with whom he worked for several years), and Paul Whiteman (for whom he made radio arrangements during 1929–1930). His arrangements for radio, especially those for *Willard Robison’s Deep River Hour* (1931–1932), were considered particularly effective and innovative. (For a time Still also conducted Robison’s radio orchestra, becoming the first black man to conduct an all-white commercial orchestra.) Later, after moving to Los Angeles in 1934, he worked for a time at Columbia Pictures and Twentieth-Century-Fox.

In his concert music, which included symphonies, ballets, shorter symphonic works, and operas, Still sought a fusion of the African American experience and the European-based traditions of opera and



William Grant Still, c. 1930–1950. (Library of Congress.)

concert music. Evidence of this can be found in most of his scores, although it is not always apparent to the ear and was sometimes missed by white and black critics. (Harold Bruce Forsythe is the main exception.) At first, Still was welcomed by white critics as one of the promising young modernist composers of the 1920s; but in the 1940s, his concert music was sometimes criticized for being too “commercial.” Critics who were part of the “black power” movement of the 1960s either ignored his work or objected that it was not sufficiently “black.” Nevertheless, Still had a substantial audience for more than three decades. In the 1930s and 1940s, his symphonic works were performed frequently by major symphonies in New York, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, and Rochester, making him one of the most successful American composers of his time.

Works that were performed in the 1920s in concerts of new music include *From the Land of Dreams*, *From the Black Belt*, *From the Journal of a Wanderer*, *Levee Land*, and *Africa* (a major symphonic work that is entirely unknown to modern audiences). The *Afro-American Symphony* (1931, premiered in Rochester), his most famous work and the first of five symphonies, is based

on a blues theme, a new departure at the time. He chose the blues style as his source, Still wrote, because blues pieces “unlike Spirituals, do not exhibit the influence of Caucasian music.” His ballets include *Sahdji* (produced in Rochester in 1930 and revived there several times); *La Guiablese* (produced in Chicago, 1936); and *Lenox Avenue* (1937), which was commissioned by the CBS radio symphony, then converted to a ballet. *Song of a City* was commissioned as background music, playing continuously at the Perisphere at the New York World’s Fair in 1939. Still’s major protest piece, *And They Lynched Him on a Tree* (a setting of a poem by Katherine Garrison Chapin), was premiered by the New York Philharmonic at Lewisohn Stadium in 1940. As of this writing, most of these works and a number of others were available on compact discs.

Still aspired to compose operas from the first, but he had few opportunities until he received a Guggenheim fellowship in 1934, enabling him to give up most of his arranging work and move to Los Angeles, where he eventually composed eight. His first opera, *Blue Steel* (1935, libretto by Harold Bruce Forsythe), never produced, is set in the bayou country of Louisiana. When Langston Hughes approached him with a scenario based on a play about the revolution in Haiti, Still jumped at the opportunity. Although the opera was completed by 1941, getting a production took eight more years. *Troubled Island* became the first opera by an American composer to be produced by the New York City Opera Company and the first by an African American composer and writer to be produced by a major opera company. The production, in 1949, turned out to be the high point of Still’s career. He continued to compose operas, most on American themes, even though productions were slow in coming: *A Southern Interlude*, *Highway One USA*, *Bayou Legend*, *Costaso*, *Mota*, *The Pillar*, and *Minette Fontaine*.

Still lived in poverty in his later years, embracing anticommunism and writing for amateur and school groups who remained interested in his music. Relatively recently, there has been a strong revival of interest in his music.

Biography

William Grant Still was born 11 May 1895 and raised in a racially mixed middle-class neighborhood in Little Rock, Arkansas. He graduated from M. W. Gibbs High School and then studied at Wilberforce

University but left before receiving his degree. He married Grace Bundy in 1915. In 1916, he went to work as a performer and arranger for W. C. Handy; he worked for the Pace and Handy music publishing company in Memphis and then in New York City. He served in the navy during World War I. In 1921, he played oboe in the orchestra of the hit musical *Shuffle Along* on Broadway and on tour. In 1923, he studied at the New England Conservatory in Boston; he also studied in New York City with Edgard Varèse, and he became a recording director for Black Swan. In the late 1920s, Still received grants and awards and created jazz arrangements for Artie Shaw. He is also noted for composing European-style classical music. His Symphony No. 1, the *Afro-American Symphony*, was first performed in 1931 by the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra. He moved to Los Angeles in 1934, working for Columbia Pictures and Twentieth-Century-Fox. Still died 3 December 1978 in Los Angeles.

CATHERINE PARSONS SMITH

See also Black Swan Phonograph Company; Handy, W. C.; Hughes, Langston; Music; Musicians; Shuffle Along

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Stribling, Thomas Sigismund

Thomas Sigismund Stribling (1881–1965), who began his literary career writing light adventure fiction, became a major influence in the development of social realism in the southern novel in the 1920s and 1930s. With the publication of *Birthright* (1922), a realistic novel about the Negro from a black man's point of view, Stribling provided a great liberating impetus not only for southern writers but also for black writers of the Harlem Renaissance, like Jessie Redmon Fauset, who felt compelled to write sincerely and realistically about the problems of black people. Deeply influencing the literary awakening known as

the southern renaissance, Stribling was also frequently called a "white novelist of the Harlem Renaissance."

Using sociojournalistic methods, Stribling brought a fresh breath to southern fiction, which was dominated by a quite conservative and sentimental rendering of the region. The local colorists and historical romancers were favoring the southern white viewpoint in their works and avoiding all the negative aspects of race relations like bigotry, prejudice, oppression, and laws against miscegenation. This "genteel tradition" received a harsh blow from Stribling's realistic and bitter depiction of the South as a declining region of poverty and endless defeat. Being a bold social critic, Stribling offered a new image of the South as repudiating spiritual and humanistic values in favor of materialism.

In his novels set in the provincial South, Stribling presents a hostile image in the manner of critical realism. *Teefallow* (1926), published the year after the Scopes trial, attacks southern fundamentalism, and it became a great popular and critical success. Its sequel, *Bright Metal* (1928), fits into the "revolt from the village" trend, which took on momentum nationwide with the publication of Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* (1920). *The Forge* (1931), the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Store* (1932), and *Unfinished Cathedral* (1934) make up Stribling's "trilogy of the South," his most noteworthy literary production. Set in Florence, Alabama, the trilogy traces the history of the Vaiden family from the beginning of the Civil War through the 1920s. With this trilogy, Stribling became the only writer of the 1920s and 1930s who anticipated William Faulkner's panoramic vision of the history of the South.

Although Stribling achieved widespread popularity and received a Pulitzer Prize, he never won very high critical acclaim. Robert Penn Warren, who gave Stribling a low assessment, dismissed his work as propagandist art. The "agrarian new critics" found his fiction inartistic. Indeed, Stribling was not a writer who gave priority to aesthetic considerations. A fiction writer with sociological inclinations, he was a critical realist who believed that literature had to serve a broad political purpose. For Stribling, propaganda and art were not mutually exclusive forms, and "propagandist art" was a worthy vehicle to incite necessary social reform. He defended propagandistic literature and the merits of realistic writing with a serious social purpose as opposed to aesthetic perfection.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Stribling was one of the most popular and prolific southern writers who attacked provincial mentality and its materialistic

basis and deconstructed the myth of the South, thus paving the way for other writers to depict the problems of the region realistically.

Biography

Thomas Sigismund (T. S.) Stribling was born in Clifton, Tennessee, on 4 March 1881. He graduated from Florence Normal School in 1903 and from the University of Alabama School of Law in 1905. He was an editor, *Clifton News*, 1900; clerk and short-story writer, *Taylor-Trotwood Magazine*, 1907–1908; and reporter, *Chattanooga News*, 1917. Stribling traveled extensively in Cuba, Europe, and South America, 1908–1916; Canada, 1919; Venezuela, 1921; West Indies, 1934; and Mexico, 1943. He taught and lectured at several universities, including Columbia University from 1936 to 1940 and the University of Colorado in 1936. Stribling was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in letters for “The Store” in 1933; he received an honorary doctor of literature degree from Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, in 1936. He died in Florence on 8 July 1965. His autobiography, *Laughing Stock*, was published posthumously, 1982.

ASLI TEKINAY

See also Birthright

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Strivers’ Row

Strivers’ Row—a name that suggests black Americans’ striving to achieve—actually comprises four rows of private homes and three apartment buildings on 138th and 139th streets between Seventh and Eighth avenues (now known as Adam Clayton Powell and Frederick Douglass boulevards). The brownstones, built between 1889 and 1891, were designed by several architects, including James Brown Lord, Bruce Price, Clarence S. Luce, and Stanford White. These homes were first known as the King Model Houses, after their developer, David King Jr., who built Stanford White’s Madison Square Garden and the base of the Statue of Liberty. Although architectural styles vary from block to block, each residence features a courtyard, a driveway, and iron gates that open to a rear alley. The town houses contained as many as fourteen rooms and two bathrooms—with modern plumbing that was a luxury at the turn of the twentieth century—and were appointed with elegant woodwork, French doors, Corinthian columns, tiled fireplaces, and oak staircases.

Like most property in Harlem in the early 1900s, the King Model Houses were originally owned by wealthy whites. However, with the financial panic of 1893 and a bust in speculative housing in 1904, the

Equitable Life Assurance Company took title to the houses. In 1919, the company made the buildings available to black buyers in a transaction handled by John Nail of the Afro-American Realty Company, which was based in Harlem. Advertised in the black press as “the finest group of Negro residences in the country,” the brownstones sold within eleven months; and according to James Weldon Johnson, in 1925 they fetched \$2,000 to \$5,000 apiece, for an aggregate price of \$2 million.

During the Harlem Renaissance, the tree-lined streets of Strivers’ Row provided a quiet enclave for blacks of social prominence. Many residents were esteemed musicians, such as the composer Fletcher Henderson, the pianist Eubie Blake, the songwriter Noble Sissle, and W. C. Handy, “the father of the blues.” The singer and actress Ethel Waters, who in the late 1920s was said to be the highest paid black entertainer in the world, lived only a few streets away from the heavyweight boxer Harry Wills. Stars like Josephine Baker often visited. The neighborhood was also home to upscale professionals, like Louis T. Wright, the director of Harlem General Hospital, and Vertner Tandy, the first commissioned African American architect in New York State. Doctors and dentists had offices in suites just below street level.

Numerous writers of the Harlem Renaissance used Strivers’ Row as a setting. In Nella Larsen’s *Quicksand* (1928), for example, the protagonist initially admires another character’s brownstone on 139th Street, with its large cream-colored rooms; and in Jessie Redmon Fauset’s *Plum Bun* (1928), dark-skinned Virginia has a spacious flat in Strivers’ Row, while her light-skinned sister, Angela, “passes” in cramped Greenwich Village. In 1939, the neighborhood set the scene for Abram Hill’s “On Strivers’ Row,” a satire featuring the Van Strivens and their brownstone, lavishly decorated despite the “Room to Rent” sign tucked in the French door.

In 1967, the neighborhood was officially designated the Saint Nicholas Historic District. It still evokes images of upward mobility and creativity: In 2001, the publishing company Random House launched a “Strivers’ Row” imprint specifically for emerging black writers.

REBECCA MEACHAM

See also Afro-American Realty Company; Baker, Josephine; Blake, Eubie; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Handy, W. C.; Harlem: 5—Neighborhoods; Henderson, Fletcher; Johnson, James Weldon; Larsen, Nella; Nail,

John E.; Quicksand; Sissle, Noble; Waters, Ethel; Wright, Louis T.

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Stylus

Stylus was a literary magazine published from 1916 to 1941 by the Stylus Literary Society of Howard University under the supervision of faculty members such as Alain Locke, T. Montgomery Gregory, Benjamin Brawley, and Sterling Brown. The student members of the literary society were a small, select group, said to be the best, brightest, and most promising scholars on the campus. The honorary members of the society included the “most representative Negro men and women of letters” in the United States: William Braithwaite, W. E. B. Du Bois, Charles Waddell

Chesnutt, Alice Dunbar Nelson, James Weldon Johnson, Arthur Schomburg, and John Edward Bruce. The literary society that gave rise to the periodical was founded by students at Howard University “to encourage original literary expression” there, and to serve as an “organization where the forms of literary composition could be studied and practiced under more favorable conditions than the classroom could offer.” Both the society itself and the periodical were also intended to give emerging student writers an opportunity to publish their work.

The students and the faculty advisers as well contributed to *Stylus*, and its published issues illustrate an array of literary forms and stylistic techniques. A total of ten issues were published—in 1916, 1917, 1921, 1929, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, and 1941. After the issue of 1917, *Stylus* suspended publication because of World War I, but publication was resumed with the issue of 1921. As of the present writing, libraries such as those at Howard University, the Schomburg Center, and the Wisconsin State Historical Center hold a small number of issues in their collections.

The issue of May 1921 was of particular importance, especially because it marked the beginning of the career of Zora Neale Hurston, who was a student member of the literary society. This issue included her poem “Oh Night” and her first short story set in Eatonville, “John Redding Goes to Sea.” This story was in effect her ticket to New York; it resulted in an invitation from Charles Spurgeon Johnson to come there and further develop her craft, at a time when the literary Harlem Renaissance was flourishing.

PEARLIE PETERS

See also Braithwaite, William Stanley; Brawley, Benjamin; Brown, Sterling; Bruce, John Edward; Chesnutt, Charles Waddell; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Hurston, Zora Neale; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Johnson, James Weldon; Locke, Alain; Magazines and Journals; Nelson, Alice Dunbar; Schomburg, Arthur A.

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Sublett, John

See Bubbles, John

Sugar Hill

Sugar Hill in Harlem is generally considered to extend northward from 145th Street to 155th Street, and from Amsterdam Avenue on the west to Edgecombe Avenue on the east. It has long had connotations of the finer life for African Americans, along with an older and smaller neighborhood, Strivers’ Row. Both areas were populated by the rich and near-rich, although there were also middle-class and working-class residents. However, whereas most of those who lived in Strivers’ Row bought their homes, most of the inhabitants of Sugar Hill rented apartments, at a very high price. These apartments had large rooms and spectacular views of the valley of Harlem, the Harlem River, and the Polo Grounds.

The Harlem Renaissance was a factor in the rental market; it increased the appeal of Sugar Hill (and also of Strivers’ Row), and some landlords took advantage of the glamour surrounding the renaissance to charge outrageous rents. Many middle- and lower-class tenants had to struggle to pay these rents; as a result, rent parties and boarders were not unusual in Sugar Hill. But other residents of Sugar Hill could easily afford their apartments. Some of them had criminal associations that allowed for an

expensive lifestyle; others, though, were simply respectable African Americans who lived like upper-class whites of the time.

Evidently, Sugar Hill began as an outgrowth of Strivers' Row, which consisted of only two blocks—138th and 139th streets between Seventh and Eighth avenues—and did not offer enough space for the increasing numbers of well-to-do blacks. By the late 1920s, an area that had once been part of Washington Heights was gradually becoming Sugar Hill. This new upscale neighborhood would eventually become home to black celebrities such as Cab Calloway, Paul Robeson, and A'Lelia Walker and would have an influence on the Harlem Renaissance because the writers, musicians, athletes, civic and political leaders, and others who came to live in Sugar Hill sponsored and participated in talks, soirees, and literary gatherings there.

Two particular buildings are often mentioned in discussions of Sugar Hill. One is a fourteen-story apartment house at 409 Edgecombe Avenue that was both the tallest and the most exclusive building in Sugar Hill. During the 1930s and 1940s, its tenants included W. E. B. Du Bois, Thurgood Marshall, and Walter White. The second is the Roger Morris Apartments at 555 Edgecombe Avenue, which featured hardwood floors, uniformed elevator operators and doormen, and bright canopies.

There were, of course, other desirable and exclusive residential areas—and numerous cultural attractions—elsewhere in Harlem. Still, a special myth clung to both Sugar Hill and Strivers' Row, suggesting that during the renaissance these two places represented Harlem's best.

LOU-ANN CROUTHER

See also Calloway, Cabell "Cab"; Harlem: 5—Neighborhoods; House-Rent Parties; Robeson, Paul; Strivers' Row; Walker, A'Lelia; White, Walter

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Survey Graphic

One of the defining publications of the Harlem Renaissance was a special issue of the magazine *Survey Graphic* devoted to "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro." This special issue, which was edited by Alain Locke and included contributions from many of the most significant participants in the Harlem Renaissance, is a key example of African Americans' efforts to create and distribute images of themselves, in the hope that providing readers with information about African Americans might help undermine racism.

Survey Graphic was a monthly magazine edited by Paul U. Kellogg. Along with *Survey Midmonthly*, it was published by Survey Associates, a social work organization that defined itself as promoting "social exploration." *Survey Graphic*, so named because it included a great deal of visual material, often ran special issues that introduced its mostly white readers to groups of people from around the world, and it took particular interest in cultural nationalist movements. In the early 1920s, for example, it ran special issues on such developments in Ireland, Mexico, and Russia.

The catalyst for the special issue on Harlem was the Civic Club dinner organized by Charles Spurgeon Johnson in March 1924. Kellogg was one of the invited guests, and he was impressed by the African American writers who read their work and by comments from other speakers. The next day, he wrote to a friend,

describing his plans for a special issue on African Americans that would emphasize their contributions to American society and culture. The issue was published in March 1925, and it was quite successful. The circulation of *Survey Graphic* in 1924 was about 21,000, but the first printing of the “Harlem issue” was increased to 30,000 copies. Its popularity was immediate, and a second printing of 12,000 copies was arranged, with 3,000 of those distributed to African American students and organizations. Even before the special issue appeared, the Boni brothers’ publishing company asked about reprinting its contents as a book. Locke added many more essays, a good deal more fiction, and more poetry and visual arts to turn the magazine into *The New Negro*.

The special issue of *Survey Graphic* opened with two essays by Locke in which he defined the New Negro movement, asserted its connection to developments in American culture, and linked it to cultural nationalist movements in other countries. These and other issues Locke raised here—particularly the growing race consciousness of African Americans, the importance of African Americans’ literary and artistic accomplishments, and the need to battle racism and segregation—became recurring themes of the Harlem Renaissance.

The remaining texts, contributed by some of the most important participants in the Harlem Renaissance, were grouped into three sections. The first section included a number of texts that described Harlem and its residents; the second focused on African Americans’ accomplishments in literature, music, and the visual arts; and the third offered essays about various aspects of race relations. The essayists were Locke, James Weldon Johnson, Charles S. Johnson, W. A. Domingo, J. A. Rogers, Albert Barnes, Arthur Schomburg, Melville Herskovits, Konrad Bercovici, Walter White, Kelly Miller, Eunice Roberta Hunton, Elise Johnson McDougald, Winthrop D. Lane, and George Haynes. W. E. B. Du Bois, Countee Cullen, Anne Spencer, Angelina Weld Grimké, Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, Langston Hughes, and Rudolph Fisher contributed short stories and poems.

Some of the essays are illustrated with photographs of streets, homes, and churches in Harlem, but the most significant visual texts are two series of portraits by the Bavarian artist Winold Reiss: “Harlem Types” and “Four Portraits of Negro Women.” These proved to be one of the most controversial aspects of the issue. These portraits, along with others by Reiss, were shown in an exhibit at the Harlem Branch of

the New York Public Library which opened the same month that the issue was published. Some viewers saw them as unflattering depictions of African Americans. This criticism led Locke to write an essay for *Opportunity* magazine, “To Certain of Our Phillistines [sic],” in which he defended the depiction of African Americans in the portraits. He also defended the fact that they were by a white artist, arguing that Reiss, as a European, was free of the racism shown by so many white Americans. The place of these portraits in the special issue of *Survey Graphic*, then, sparked debate about what texts should show about African Americans and about who should be creating them.

Other texts in the special issue raise a number of additional questions that received attention during the Harlem Renaissance. For example, part of the point of the publication was to offer positive images of African Americans, but Hunton described Harlem as a ghetto, and Lane focused on the corruption in the area. These essays prompted discussion of whether writers should create what Du Bois would later call propaganda, or if they should show both the positive and the negative aspects of African Americans’ lives. Significantly, Locke included neither of these essays in *The New Negro*. And, though he included three of Reiss’s four portraits of black women in the book, he replaced Reiss’s “Harlem Types” with portraits of African American intellectuals. *The New Negro*, then, offered a more optimistic depiction of Harlem than had been presented in *Survey Graphic*, and its portraits drew attention to elite African Americans rather than the folk.

Despite the popularity of the “Harlem issue” of *Survey Graphic* in the 1920s and its role as the precursor of Locke’s anthology, the issue has received only limited attention from contemporary scholars. Part of the problem may be that few copies of the original issue remain. In 1981, though, it was republished by Black Classic Press, and a hypermedia version was later prepared at the University of Virginia’s Electronic Text Center. It also has been reprinted as part of *The Emergence of the Harlem Renaissance*, edited by Cary Wintz (1996). The issue is mentioned by a number of scholars of the Harlem Renaissance, mostly with reference to its connection to *The New Negro*; but given its significance as an early definition of the movement and an announcement of key themes of the renaissance, the special issue of *Survey Graphic* deserves much more extended analyses.

See also Civic Club Dinner, 1924; Kellogg, Paul U.; Locke, Alain; New Negro, The; Reiss, Winold; other specific contributors

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Taboo

Taboo (1922) by Mary Hoyt Wiborg, a white woman, was written and produced during a period when several other plays focusing on the life of African Americans were being written. Black characters and themes relevant to African Americans were also being widely addressed in American music, poetry, and dance during the early 1920s.

The plot of *Taboo* centers on the character of a black slave who falls asleep on a plantation and in his dreams returns to his homeland of Africa. The dream becomes the setting and context in which black Americans/native superstitions and myths, purportedly rooted in Africa, are explored. As the main character falls asleep, he sings the black spiritual "Go Down Moses." During one performance, this song elicited such a strong response from the audience that the director of the play, Augustin Duncan, encouraged audience members to request more songs for the cast to sing.

The play opened on 4 April 1922 at the Sam H. Harris Theater in New York. Paul Robeson had been asked to take the leading role, after Duncan saw him in an amateur performance at the Harlem YWCA; *Taboo* marked Robeson's first professional appearance as an actor. He played opposite the English actress Margaret Wycherly.

Taboo closed after only three days, evidently because its plot was weak; the critic Alexander Woollcott remarked that Robeson belonged anywhere except on the stage. Although it was not a success in Broadway, *Taboo* was performed on tour in England, where

Robeson appeared with the famous English actress Mrs. Patrick Campbell.

AMY LEE

See also Robeson, Paul

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Talbert, Mary Burnett

Mary Burnett Talbert is known primarily for her work as the chairman of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill Committee and for her role as the vice president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Talbert contributed to the development of the Harlem Renaissance in several ways, however. A club leader, civil rights activist, educator, and lecturer, Talbert was an expert organizer for a wide variety of racial causes throughout her life. She was born and educated in Oberlin, Ohio; she graduated from Oberlin College in 1886 with honors, after only three years. In 1887, Talbert became the first woman in the state to hold the

position of assistant principal, the highest position to which any woman had acceded. One year later, she became principal of the Union High School of Little Rock, Arkansas, before moving to her permanent home in Buffalo, New York. From there, Talbert became the founder and president of the Christian Culture Congress; a member of the Phillis Wheatley Club; and the founder of the Empire State Federation of Colored Women, an organization active in prison reform, in 1911. In this organization, she served as the second president from 1912 to 1916. Talbert also led a successful campaign to redeem and restore the Frederick Douglass Home in Washington, D.C., as a memorial and center for black history, and as part of the national centennial celebration of Douglass's birth.

She was a national organizer for the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) in 1913, and by 1914 she was its vice president. By 1916, its members elected her president, and she served in this capacity for two terms, from 1916 to 1920. Talbert also helped to organize branches and increase circulation for the newsletter of the NAACP. While raising funds for the United War Work Campaign, Talbert conveyed the NAACP's message throughout the South. Following her presidency of the NACW, she became a field-worker for the NAACP, yet she continued to lead local campaigns—for example, raising \$5,000 for a church-affiliated home for black working girls. She went to Europe during World War I to serve as a Red Cross war and canteen worker for black troops in France. Following the war, Talbert attended the Pan-African Congress in Paris and the International Congress of Women in Zurich, Switzerland. These international experiences led her to join the newly formed International Council of Women of the Darker Races of the World in 1921.

As the director of the Anti-Lynching Crusaders, a national network of black women working to raise money—and to raise consciousness about lynching and the need for a federal antilynching bill—she also worked with Congressman Leonidas Carstarphen Dyer, the sponsor of the federal bill, when she was president of the NACW. Her ad hoc group of black women built on fund-raising networks established during World War I and became official in 1922 as the Anti-Lynching Crusaders. She continued in a leadership role within the NAACP as a member of the board of directors and as vice president; she was the first woman to receive the NAACP's Spingarn Medal, for her years of dedicated service.

Biography

Mary Burnett Talbert was born on 17 September 1866 in Oberlin, Ohio. She studied in public schools in Oberlin, Ohio, and graduated from Oberlin College in 1886. She served as principal of Union High School of Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1891, the year she married William A. Talbert. She was a charter member of the Phillis Wheatley Club, 1899; founder and president of the Christian Culture Congress, 1911; president of the Empire State Federation of Colored Women, 1912–1916; national organizer, president, and vice president for the National Association of Colored Women, 1913–1920; organizer, International Council of Women of the Darker Races of the World, 1921; director of the Anti-Lynching Crusaders; and board member and vice president of the NAACP, 1918–1923. She was an elected delegate to the quinquennial conference of the International Council of Women in 1920. Talbert was awarded the NAACP's Spingarn Medal in 1922 and appointed to the League of Nations Committee on International Relations. She died at age fifty-seven of coronary thrombosis in Buffalo, New York, on 8 October 1923, after a lengthy illness.

CARMEN PHELPS

See also Antilynching Crusade; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Pan-African Congresses; Spingarn Medal

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Talented Tenth

The "talented tenth"—that is, the upper 10 percent of African American society—was hailed by some as the model to which all other African Americans should aspire. The concept was first promoted by W. E. B.

Du Bois as part of his program of racial uplift in *The Negro Problem* (1903); he emphasized the necessity for higher education for a black elite who would, as a result of its knowledge and character, provide leadership for the race. According to Du Bois, "It is, ever was and ever will be from the top downward that culture filters. The Talented Tenth rises and pulls all that are worthy of saving up to their vantage ground." Du Bois, like many other black intellectuals of the time, feared that an overemphasis on industrial and vocational training would permanently relegate the majority of African Americans to second-class citizenship. In many respects, Du Bois's program of civic and cultural uplift challenged Booker T. Washington's program of economic freedom, which Washington had proposed in 1895 in his "Atlanta compromise." Washington believed that material prosperity should take priority over political and cultural progress. Du Bois, on the other hand, felt that, in order to for blacks to achieve full political and civil status as American citizens, it was important to educate "the best and most capable" of black youth, who would become "leaders of thought and missionaries of culture among their people" by setting the ideals of the community where they live, directing its thoughts, and heading its social movements. Through the introduction of the "college-bred Negro" into African American communities across the United States, Du Bois hoped that "the Best of this race . . . may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst."

Du Bois's program of social uplift was also culturally conditioned, espousing the formula that art should be earnest, beautiful, and above all didactic. For Du Bois, art was essentially a tool for race-building that could solve the problem of the color line, because he believed that the "great mission of the Negro to America and the modern world is the development of Art and the appreciation of the Beautiful" (Rampersad 1976).

Thus, Du Bois actively promoted the works of artists that conformed to the ideal of the talented tenth: Novels such as Jessie Redmon Fauset's *There Is Confusion* and *Plum Bun* and the poetry of Countee Cullen were considered paragons of this approach. Fauset's works, in particular, represented the lifestyle of the talented tenth to outside readers, both black and white, for her characters were educated, urbane, and Republican, and often aspired to be lawyers, dentists, and doctors. Like the society she mirrored, black characters in Fauset's work often entertained in their own homes; attended prestigious universities such as Fisk, Howard, or Atlanta; joined Negro Greek-letter

fraternities and sororities; made formal debuts; and aspired to live in the most fashionable areas of major urban centers such as New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. Cullen came to epitomize the precocious flowering of the talented tenth, and with his charm, manners, and impeccable attire was invariably described as "a perfect gentleman" (Watson 1995).

Many of the photographic portraits of James Van Der Zee sought to give a visual record of the members of the talented tenth, who, with their beauty, pride, and dignity, offered an impressive example of this "new" Negro (McGhee 1969).

Other black intellectuals seconded Du Bois's social theories, although not without some misgivings. Carter G. Woodson believed, like Du Bois, that "the educational system of a country is worthless" unless it revolutionizes the social order. "Men of scholarship, and prophetic insight, must show us the right way and lead us into light which is shining brighter and brighter" (1918/1994). However, Woodson was concerned about the mass migration of educated blacks from the Southern states to northern cities, a movement that left an entire region of the country without its supposed leaders.

Alain Locke shared Du Bois's belief in the natural aristocracy of the educated elite and hoped that the talented tenth would become cultural role models and ultimately win from whites fair judgment of the race. Locke was less enthusiastic about Du Bois's use of art as propaganda for race-building, however; instead, he envisioned Harlem more as a cultural phenomenon that embraced all aspects of black culture and less as a political center embroiled in the "arid fields of controversy and debate" (1925/1992).

Ironically, this class-bound approach to art, which was supposed to inspire and uplift the masses, often had the opposite effect, creating hostility and resentment between the talented tenth and those they would enlighten. This schism is most visible between two warring camps: the NAACP's magazine, *The Crisis*, which was edited by Du Bois and touted the virtues of authors who came from the talented tenth, such as Fauset and Cullen; and Wallace Thurman's *Fire!!*, which embraced the vices of "Niggeratti Manor" and the folk idiom. "Talented tenthers" were often accused of elitism, and those less fortunate frequently used pejorative terms such as "dicty" (nouveau riche, haughty) and "lampblack whites" (blacks who aspire to white ways) to express their anger and resentment at what they saw increasingly as a black aristocracy that merely mimicked white European culture. Even Du Bois himself

came to reformulate his ideas about the success of the talented tenth, feeling that the black aristocracy had been seduced by its economic advantages and had turned its back on the masses: "My faith hitherto had been in what I once denominated the 'Talented Tenth.' I now realize that the ability within a people does not automatically work for its highest salvation. . . . Naturally, out of the mass of the working classes, who know life in its bitter struggle, will continually rise the real, unselfish and clear-sighted leadership" (1952).

Contemporary theorists have continued to debate Du Bois's concept of racial uplift. David Du Bois believes that "little more is passed on to our youth today of W. E. B. Du Bois than the elitist concept of black leadership" and that this idea exists today in the "most unlikely places," such as in marginalized militant groups (1993). Joy James and Lewis Gordon reject Du Bois's reformulated concept of working-class black leadership, and instead find it prominent "in the literature of cultural studies, critical race theory, feminisms, black postmodernism, and Afrocentrism" (1997). For James and Gordon, the leadership capacity of such writing "excises Du Bois's democratic radicalism and his conviction that those with the least to lose, and therefore the most to gain, are most likely to provide exemplary leadership in liberation struggles."

RANDALL SHAWN WILHELM

See also Crisis, The; Cullen, Countee; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Fire!!; Locke, Alain; Thurman, Wallace; Woodson, Carter G.

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Tannenbaum, Frank

Frank Tannenbaum was a labor leader, a social and political activist, an economist and criminologist, a specialist in race relations and prison reform, and a professor of Latin American history. He was born in Austria in 1893, immigrated to the United States in 1905, and died in New York in 1969. As a young man, Tannenbaum became involved in one of the radical political groups that operated on the fringes of the bohemian movement centered in Greenwich Village. He associated with Emma Goldman and became active in the International Workers of the World (IWW). In early 1914, he assumed leadership of a mob of unemployed workers who began marching on churches in lower Manhattan demanding food and shelter. After about ten days of relatively peaceful confrontations, his demonstrators clashed violently with the police, and Tannenbaum was arrested and sentenced to one year in prison.

After prison, with the help of warden Thomas Mott Osborne, Tannenbaum entered Columbia University, where he distinguished himself as an honor student and was a member of the Phi Beta Kappa honor society. After graduation in 1921, he worked for a time as a correspondent for *Survey* magazine in Mexico, then served a tour in the U.S. Army during which he was stationed in the South. During his military service he became interested in race and its impact on the South, and he began a study that resulted in two books on the African American experience. After leaving the army, he earned his Ph.D. in economics at the Brookings Institution with a dissertation on land reform in Mexico. He then spent several years in Mexico, conducting research on rural education and serving as an adviser to President Lázaro Cárdenas. In 1932, he

returned to the United States to teach criminology at Cornell. He also helped devise the legislation that established the Farm Security Administration, and in 1935 he joined the faculty at Columbia, ultimately becoming professor of Latin American history.

Tannenbaum's connection to the Harlem Renaissance centered on his groundbreaking study of race and racial violence in the South. This study, begun during his military service, resulted in his first book, *Darker Phases of the South*, published in 1924. Tannenbaum examined several aspects of southern life in his effort to uncover the explanation for the region's economic plight and its racial violence. He especially focused on the horrors and brutality endured by blacks in the southern penal system—the prisons, and especially the prison camps and the chain gangs—and the racial violence of the Ku Klux Klan. Avoiding emotionalism, he presented a starkly detailed description of the dehumanizing system of violence, which, he argued, affected both the victim and the perpetrator. Tannenbaum did more than expose the worst abuses of racism. He also described the oppressed condition of white workers ensnared in the legalized peonage of the mill towns, company-owned towns in which all aspects of the workers' lives were controlled by their employers. It was this lack of hope and joy, shared by farm tenant and mill-town worker, that led to lynchings and that provided members for the Klan. Racial violence, he suggested, was a temporary escape from the dull monotony of daily life for these oppressed whites; it also addressed the "underlying current of apprehension that the South will be outstripped in population by the colored as against the white. It is fear of losing grip upon the world, of losing caste, of losing control" (Tannenbaum 1924). Tannenbaum believed that the migration of blacks out of the South, and their replacement by European immigrants and labor conflict, might ultimately resolve racial conflict in the region and in the nation.

Tannenbaum's image of the South was compatible with that presented by Walter White in his study of racial violence, and with the work of other black novelists and poets. Tannenbaum's descriptions helped define the racial views of white liberals during the 1920s and 1930s. His work supported that of W. E. B. Du Bois and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in their antilynching crusade of the 1920s. Two decades later, Tannenbaum's views on racial issues, especially on the oppressive role of monotony in southern life, as well as his suggestion that the racial problem in the

South might be solved if white southerners were distracted by labor problems and overrun with foreign immigrants, were cited by Gunnar Myrdal in his pathbreaking study *An American Dilemma*.

Tannenbaum returned to the study of race in 1947 with *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas*. This was a pioneering study of comparative slavery by a white American scholar. He argued that greater intermarriage and the protective role of the Catholic Church lessened the impact of race in Latin America. Although more recent scholarship has challenged Tannenbaum's argument, his comparative approach inspired other historical studies of race and slavery, such as those by Stanley Elkins, Eugene Genovese, and Herbert Klein.

Tannenbaum retired from Columbia in 1965, best known for his work in Latin American history and the theory of criminology. His writings on race and slavery, surpassed by later scholarship, are much less known.

Biography

Frank Tannenbaum was born in Austria in 1893 and immigrated to the United States in 1905. He became active in the International Workers of the World and spent a year in prison in around 1914 after clashing with the police during a labor demonstration. After his release, he attended Columbia University, graduating in 1921; later he earned a Ph.D. in economics at the Brookings Institution. He served in the U.S. Army and was stationed in the South. He published *Darker Phases of the South* in 1924. He taught criminology at Cornell (1932) and Latin American history at Columbia (1935). He published *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* in 1947. Tannenbaum retired from Columbia in 1965 and died in New York in 1969.

CARY D. WINTZ

See also *Antilynching Crusade*; White, Walter

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Tanner, Henry Ossawa

Henry Ossawa Tanner was a pioneering African American artist and one of the most successful in the pre-Harlem Renaissance Period. He served as an inspiration and model to many artists who followed him. Tanner began sketching at age thirteen, when a painter in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park inspired him to draw images of animals at nearby zoos. Tanner began formal training in visual art in December 1879, when he enrolled as the only African American student at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia. For the next six years he studied landscape and seascape naturalism under the Anglo-American painters Thomas Eakins and Thomas Hovenden. During this period he also exhibited his work at the academy and in other sections of Philadelphia. After spending a couple of years renting a studio in Philadelphia to practice the craft, in January 1889 Tanner moved to Atlanta, Georgia, to set up a gallery of professional photography. Lack of business forced him to abort this venture and, a year later, to secure a job teaching at Atlanta's Clark University.

Throughout these student years and his early career, Tanner had been making oil paintings of three subjects: seascapes, including *Seascape*, *Seascape-Jetty*, and *Ship in a Storm* (c. 1876–1879); landscapes, such as *Sand Dunes at Sunset*, *Atlantic City* (c. 1886), and *Mountain Landscape*, *Highlands*, *North Carolina* (Cumberland Foothills, c. 1889); and animals, such as “Pomp” at the Zoo (c. 1880) and *Lion Licking Its Paw* (After Dinner, 1886). In December 1890, he exhibited many of these paintings at the headquarters of the board of education of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. The money he earned from this exhibition funded his travel a month later to Europe, where he sought to intensify his academic study of the visual arts. During his time abroad, Tanner underwent a crucial maturation in his approach to painting.

Initially, Tanner intended to study in Rome. After sojourning in Liverpool and London and then in the distinctive comforts of Paris, however, he decided to remain in Paris and to enroll in the Académie Julien. While studying under the French masters Jean-Joseph Benjamin-Constant and Jean-Paul Laurens, he soon

discovered the Salon—that is, the Salon de la Société des Artistes Français. He proposed his artwork for the Salon's annual spring exhibition of the best and brightest painters of Europe and the United States, but the Salon rejected this artwork because of its nonnormative style. Indeed, Tanner's remnant predisposition toward naturalism and his current attraction to contemporary American “genre” realism proved incompatible with the predominant French “impressionist,” “synthetist,” or “symbolic” style of art, which concentrated more on colorful and moody abstractions of the human emotions, psyche, and spirit. In the early to mid-1890s, Tanner oscillated between these two kinds of painting. His genre paintings comprised *The Bagpipe Lesson* (1892–1893), *The Banjo Lesson* (1893), *The Thankful Poor* (1894), and *The Young Sabot Maker* (1895); his *Bois d'Amour* (1891) and *Aix-en-Provence* (1894) suggest that he had experimented, however briefly, with French avant-garde styles.

After a bout with typhoid fever, Tanner returned to Philadelphia and accepted an invitation to speak at the Congress on Africa at the World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago on 14–21 August 1893. His lecture, “The Negro in American Art,” affirmed the competitiveness of African Americans with Anglo-Americans in the visual and fine arts. Lasting until October 1894, Tanner's sojourn in the United States marked his increased participation in and affection for African American communities. In 1894, he attended an AME conference in Tallahassee, Florida, as well as a commencement ceremony at Hampton Institute in Virginia. The black press and even African American leaders revered him. Booker T. Washington lauded Tanner in his autobiography, *Up From Slavery* (1901), and W. E. B. Du Bois two decades later heaped comparable praise onto him in *The Gifts of Black Folk* (1924).

Coincidentally, the mid-1890s marked Tanner's momentary and explicit artistic interest in African American genres. While *The Banjo Lesson* and *The Thankful Poor*, for example, seem to use tropes from minstrelsy (the banjo in *The Banjo Lesson*, religiosity in *The Thankful Poor*, the signs of socioeconomic poverty in both paintings), they still show the transmission of knowledge from an older to a younger generation as a form of emotional and intellectual uplift. This theme of uplift also informs his other genre paintings of the period, *The Bagpipe Lesson* and *The Young Sabot Maker*. Fame accompanied the exhibition of this genre work. In May 1894, the Salon had accepted one of these paintings, *The Banjo Lesson*, but hung it so high on the wall that it went virtually unnoticed. Still, the

acceptance boosted Tanner's self-confidence, which had already been soaring one month earlier when he had exhibited fifteen of his latest paintings with a former mentor at the Pennsylvania Academy, Thomas Hovenden. Fortunately for Tanner, never again would the Salon marginalize his paintings. The Salon would not only select but also give prominence to a painting from him for each of the next twenty years, until 1914.

In the 1890s, Tanner's confrontation with the politics of identity, race, and nation influenced his personal, artistic, and professional motives. The historical tendency of writers in American media and intellectual societies to address Tanner's African ancestry frustrated him. By contrast, Parisian media less frequently discussed his racial identity and, he felt, concentrated more appropriately on the aesthetic qualities of his paintings. He moved to France in 1895.

In the expatriate period of Tanner's career, *Daniel in the Lions' Den* (1895) captured his new thematic approach to painting. Although it was not his first painting of a religious subject—for that we must consider *Waiting for the Lord* (1882)—*Daniel in the Lions' Den* represented Tanner's decisive turn toward the Bible, especially the New Testament, for stories of humanity. Tanner, according to an acquaintance, W. S. Scarborough, in 1902, was aware of the religious symbolism of Daniel for the African American community, an idea undoubtedly passed on by his father, a prominent bishop of the AME Church, who regularly preached and wrote on the subject. Tanner's humanism and his own religious experiences consistently complicated the racial identification of humanity in his biblical paintings, however. Human representation in *Daniel in the Lions' Den* and the various versions of *Flight Into Egypt* (1899, 1916, 1923), for example, lacks racial specificity. The physiognomic and phenotypical traits of racial identity are at best ambiguous in these illustrations. *The Resurrection of Lazarus* (1896) more clearly contrasts the skin tones of the onlookers and Jesus Christ, but here, too, Tanner is emphasizing multiracial heterogeneity, not racial homogeneity. Tanner's subsequent biblical paintings similarly refrain from consigning humanity to one racial typology and try instead to convey a universalism that accommodates the histories and interests of all types of people.

Tanner's biblical paintings were widely acclaimed for their aesthetic merit and thematic nobility. Among them, his acknowledged masterpieces include *The Annunciation*, which Tanner completed and the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Art purchased in 1899; *Nicodemus*



Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859–1937), *Self-Portrait*, c. 1910; pencil and Conté crayon on paper, 8½ by 8⅜ inches.

(© Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C./Art Resource, N.Y.)

Visiting Jesus, created the following year and awarded the American Lippincott Prize; *Daniel in the Lions' Den*, which won silver medals at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, in May 1901, and three years later at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis; and *Two Disciples at the Tomb* (1906), which won the Chicago Art Institute's Harris Prize in summer 1906 for being "the most impressive and distinguished work of art of the season."

By 1908, Tanner also had earned the right to hold solo exhibits of his own paintings. Numbering between fifteen and thirty at a time, these exhibits took place at prestigious galleries mostly in the United States: New York's American Art Galleries in 1908, Chicago's Thurber Art Galleries in 1911 and 1913, New York's Knoedler's Gallery in 1913, Boston's Vose Galleries in 1921, the Association of Fine Arts (Des Moines) in 1922, and New York's Grand Central Art Galleries in 1924. During these decades—the 1890s and the early twentieth century—Tanner achieved other professional milestones. Most notably, in 1905 the Pennsylvania Academy selected him to judge its annual exhibitions. Three years later, the National Academy of Design elected him an associate member. In 1914, he became a member of the American Negro Academy in Washington, D.C. During World War I he served in the American Red Cross in France. It was

not until near the end of his life that he received the recognition routinely given to his white peers. Finally, in 1927 the National Academy of Design designated him a full academician, and the European chapter of the American Artists Professional League inducted him as a member in 1930.

Despite these successes, however, Tanner could not escape the implications of his race. His frustration with this issue spilled over in his often-cited letter of 1914 to the Anglo-American poet, novelist, and journalist Eunice Tietjens. Tanner assailed an article she had sent him in which she stereotyped paintings by whites as “clean” and “objective” and paintings by blacks as “mystical” and “subjective”—qualities that she thought he would appreciate in association with his work. He was also bothered by certain African American intellectuals and critics who expressed dismay with his shift to biblical images at the expense of progressively nuanced, sophisticated, and uplifting images of the African diaspora.

In spite of such negative commentary, Tanner remained prolific. By the end of his life, Tanner had produced more than one hundred major paintings and innumerable sketches. Only when his wife died after twenty-six years of marriage did Tanner’s productivity decline. A little less than one month from his seventy-eighth birthday, Henry Ossawa Tanner died in Paris.

Biography

Henry Ossawa Tanner was born on 21 June 1859 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to Sarah (Miller) Tanner and Benjamin Tucker Tanner. His formal training in visual art began in December 1879 at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. He enrolled in the Académie Julien in 1891 and returned to Philadelphia in August 1893. Tanner married Jessie Macauley Olssen 14 December 1899; they had a son, Jesse Ossawa Tanner, on 25 September 1903. Tanner’s *The Annunciation* (1899) was purchased by the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Art in 1899. *Nicodemus Visiting Jesus* (1900) was awarded the American Lippincott Prize in 1900. *Daniel in the Lions’ Den* (1895) won a silver medal at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York (1901), and a silver medal at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis (1904). *Two Disciples at the Tomb* (1906) won the Chicago Art Institute’s Harris Prize in 1906. Tanner was a judge for the Pennsylvania Academy in 1905; an associate member of the National Academy of Design

in 1908; a member of the American Negro Academy in Washington, D.C., in 1914; a full academician in the National Academy of Design in 1927; and a member of the European chapter of the American Artists Professional League in 1930. He served in the American Red Cross during World War I. Henry Ossawa Tanner died 25 May 1937 in Paris.

GENE JARRETT

See also Artists; Europe and the Harlem Renaissance: 4—Paris

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Tenderloin

New York City's infamous Tenderloin district was a key location of nineteenth-century African American settlement. The neighborhood was also noted for vice and corruption. A city policeman, Alexander "Clubber" Williams, is said to have given the area its curious name. When speaking with a newspaper reporter after being transferred to the district (already known as "Satan's Circus") in 1876, Williams reportedly stated, "All my life I have never had anything but chuck steak. Now I'm gonna get me some tenderloin." Numerous saloons, brothels, gambling joints, and dance halls led to calls for neighborhood reform.

Elsroad (1995) identifies the Tenderloin as being bounded to the North by Forty-second Street, to the east by Fifth Avenue, to the South by Twenty-fourth Street, and to the west by Seventh Avenue. By 1860 many of the city's black residents lived on the west side of Manhattan between Tenth and Thirtieth streets, and gradually relocated north. New York's nonwhite population moved into the neighborhood from the diverse Five Points district, east of today's Foley Square in downtown Manhattan. By 1890, New York City's African American community lived primarily between Twentieth and Fifty-third Streets.

Changes in infrastructure and new opportunities spurred perpetual migration to Harlem, away from the Tenderloin. In 1873, New York City annexed Harlem, and new elevated rail service was announced. Slow waves of real estate speculation inflated market values and led to commercial and residential construction. Companies like Philip A. Payton's Afro-American Realty offered housing units to interested renters during an era when housing covenants kept blacks out of many apartment buildings throughout the city. Neighborhood stability and safety also stimulated the move to Harlem. On 15 August 1900, turbulent race rioting had erupted in the Tenderloin when hundreds of angry white New Yorkers, attending a wake for a slain police officer, Robert Thorpe, created havoc in the streets. Small gangs attacked black residents. Thorpe had been fatally stabbed by an African American,

Arthur Harris, allegedly for having made unwelcome advances to Harris's wife, May Enoch, at the corner of Forty-first Street and Eighth Avenue. Scores of white policemen are reported to have taken part in the riots, doing virtually nothing to restrain the perpetrators. Houses were sacked and burned, and places that employed blacks were raided.

Residents of the Tenderloin were further displaced during the construction of Pennsylvania Station (1906–1910), increasing the intensity of the migration to Harlem. Business, religious, educational, and cultural institutions followed. The United Colored Democracy moved uptown in 1915, and T. Thomas Fortune's newspaper *New York Age* profiled Harlem as a vibrant, progressive neighborhood during the first decade of the twentieth century. The National Urban League conservatively estimated the black population in New York City to be 183,428 in 1923. Two-thirds of that population resided in Harlem, demonstrating how the migration from the Tenderloin had altered New York.

The former Tenderloin district now includes the site of the Empire State Building, the garment district, and Herald Square. The area is no longer known as the Tenderloin.

R. JAKE SUDDERTH

See also Afro-American Realty Company; New York Age; United Colored Democracy

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Theater

Theater in the United States during the Harlem Renaissance was marked by an incredible self-conscious effort to define a black aesthetic in light of contemporaneous political, social, and economic issues. Heated debates abounded about the definition of black theater. Styles emerged only to become devastating stereotypes. Segregation maintained divisiveness in Harlem's theater scene. Still, African American theater artists attempted to cast off the old stereotypes of the minstrel tradition in order to create a more serious and accurate portrayal of black life. There were many different types of artists, audiences, tastes, issues, and implications. A movement swept across not just the area around 125th Street in Manhattan but major cities all over the country. The major issues concerning theater during this time include musical comedies, serious drama, folk drama, the debate over art versus propaganda, the Negro "little theater" movement, and theater in higher education.

Langston Hughes claimed that the black renaissance began with theater: the black musicals *Shuffle Along* and *Runnin' Wild*, jazz rhythms, and the Charleston. In theaters during the Harlem Renaissance, audience members saw Louis Armstrong, Josephine Baker, Butterbeans and Susie, Duke Ellington, Roland Hayes, Jackie Mabley, Rose McClendon, Florence Mills, Ma Rainey, Paul Robeson, Bessie Smith, Fats Waller, Ethel Waters, and many others. White New Yorkers came to



James Van Der Zee (1886–1983), *Dress Rehearsal I*, 1928, sepia tone print, 8 by 9¾ inches. (Collection Fred Jones Jr., Museum of Art, University of Oklahoma, Norman; Gift of the Richard and Ellen Sandor Family. Collection in honor of Molly Shi Boren, 1999.)

Harlem for the music and the shows, and black New Yorkers capitalized on the opportunity.

According to Alain Locke and James Weldon Johnson, the nation was poised to reevaluate African Americans, and nothing would do more to change attitudes and raise the status of African Americans than the proof of intellectual parity with Caucasians in literature and art. In other words, culture was the key. *The New Negro*, a book-length anthology of essays and creative writing edited by Alain Locke, highlights some of the major issues of the day regarding the arts. Although Locke's omissions (e.g., blues, Marcus Garvey, and radical socialism) are problematic, what he does include are important representations. Locke and others believed that it was through the arts that African Americans would progress socially and politically. Locke argued for fewer rhetorical and overtly race-conscious motives in creating the art of the Harlem Renaissance. Only then, according to Locke, would African American artists be able to speak as individuals and not as representatives of the entire race.

African Americans made significant contributions to the American musical. Singers, writers, and dancers in black musical comedy were influenced by variety acts, minstrelsy, black vaudeville, jubilee singers, dance contests, traveling road shows, cabaret acts at clubs like the Cotton Club and Connie's Inn, and social dancing and music of southern "jook" joints and northern clubs like the Savoy. In these venues, artists shook off the vestiges of minstrelsy and variety, combined the jazz beat and frenetic dance steps with a skeletal plot to create a show, and created less stereotypical black characters. Musical theater helped boost the careers of Louis Armstrong, Josephine Baker, Eubie Blake, Aubrey Lyles, Flournoy Miller, Florence Mills, Noble Sissle, Fats Waller, Bert Williams, Ethel Waters, and many more.

The Cotton Club was a Jim Crow club "for gangsters and monied whites," according to Langston Hughes. Black Harlemites tended to resent the influx of whites into Harlem at night, drawn by cabarets such as the Cotton Club. Tension often existed over the issue of to whom the shows catered, a white audience or a black audience. "Nigger heaven" existed so that black patrons could watch Broadway shows from a segregated balcony. Although black audiences could not go downtown and sit among white audience members in Broadway theaters, the shows that came out of Harlem's cabarets and moved to Broadway did much to combat segregation in the theater. When the shows became commercial successes downtown, the spirit of theater

in the Harlem Renaissance changed. It became a matter of pleasing the tourist. Stages became bigger, and routines became flashier.

In 1898, Bob Cole, one of the major contributors to black musical theater, issued the "Colored Actors' Declaration of Independence of 1898." This was a call to black performers to write and produce shows for a black audience. Cole's ideas were later taken up by W. E. B. Du Bois, who called for an African American theater "by us, for us, near us, and about us." Also in 1898, Bob Cole and his partners Billy Johnson and Stella Wiley presented *A Trip to Coontown*, the first musical written, directed, and performed by black artists.

In 1899, two brothers, John Rosamond Johnson and James Weldon Johnson, moved to New York from Florida with a letter of introduction and the dream of presenting an original operetta on Broadway. They talked to a few producers and finally met Oscar Hammerstein, who opened doors for them and introduced them to many leading figures in musical theater, both black and white. Although "coon songs" (degrading minstrel songs) were the rage, the Johnson brothers refused to write them and composed instead songs that avoided popular stereotypes and sought to elevate the image of African Americans. Their songs grew in popularity, and their achievements helped promote the argument that black artists were equal to white artists. Although white critics complained that the brothers and their collaborator, Bob Cole, were too imitative of white works and should stick to minstrelsy, the Johnson brothers succeeded in challenging assumptions about African Americans in the theater.

Bert Williams, Ada Overton Walker, and George Walker were also important figures in early black musical theater. George and Ada Overton Walker helped increase the popularity of the cakewalk in Harlem, and the comedy team of Bert Williams and George Walker was very popular. These three people also worked to legitimize the role of the black performer. They made moves that we might tend to think of as unfortunate but might actually be recognized as small steps forward. For example, they billed themselves as "real coons" (as opposed to the grotesque and devastating images created by white minstrels). Although we would object to the use of the term "coon," we should applaud the trio for attempting to add dignity to the roles afforded them. The light-skinned, highly trained Bert Williams had to black-up, stoop over, speak with a minstrel accent, and become the slow dim-witted straight man to George Walker's dandy.

Williams was the first black man to star with whites in a large-scale vaudeville sketch, the first to star in the Ziegfeld Follies, and the first to join Actors' Equity. Although classically trained, Williams worked in blackface throughout his entire career, because his producers and fans would accept nothing else.

As far back as 1903, Williams, Walker, and Walker began exploring back-to-Africa themes with *In Dahomey*, the first all-black show to play a major Broadway theater.

Although black musical comedies were in decline for a number of years in the 1910s, they soared in popularity again in the 1920s. The epitome of the genre was *Shuffle Along*, a show created in 1921 about a corrupt mayoral race in the Southern city of Jimtown. The show was a move away from melodramatic sentimentality, but it retained some of the vestiges of the minstrel and vaudeville stages. *Shuffle Along* was an unexpected success that paved the way for many black musicals during the 1920s. It was the model for subsequent black musical theater. Other important shows of this time include *The Chocolate Dandies*, *Hot Chocolates*, *Blackbirds* (with several revivals), *Dixie to Broadway*, *Keep Shufflin'*, *Clorindy*, and *Runnin' Wild*.

With the stock market crash in 1929 and the growing popularity of talkies, many people thought black musical theater would not last, but the genre remained vibrant for a long time. More black musicals and revues appeared in the early 1930s than at any time in the 1920s. This was mostly because they were relatively cheap to produce; certainly, they were cheaper than white shows. Eventually, however, the Depression hit black theaters as well. *Porgy and Bess* marked the end of an era. It is, ironically, remembered by some as one of the best black musicals of the early twentieth century, even though George Gershwin ran the show and whites did all the offstage work. Many black critics found it inauthentic, and many white critics decried the idea of a black folk opera.

Although black musical comedies were an important part of the Harlem Renaissance, many theater people thought they needed to expand from the limited opportunities available to black performers. In June 1925, in an article in *Opportunity*, Willis Richardson, the first serious black writer to have his work performed on Broadway, stated, "One of the first questions every person who is seriously interested in the drama asks is why melodrama, musical comedies and mere shows so far outnumber what [George Bernard] Shaw calls higher dramas."

According to Montgomery T. Gregory, a professor at Howard University, although “serious Negro drama” was in its infancy, it was the field in which black performers had to succeed in order to win real recognition for their contributions to American drama. He considered the ideal national Negro theater one in which the black playwright, musician, actor, dancer, and artist collaborated to create a drama that would earn the respect and admiration of the United States. This must come from African Americans themselves, Gregory argued; only then would the nation get authentic stories. The rhetoric of authenticity was vital. For too long blacks had been inauthentically represented by whites. In April 1924, an article in *Opportunity* stated: “Up to eight or nine years ago it is doubtful if in the entire range of the American drama there was to be found a single authentic Negro character.” Buffoonery, parody, and the grotesque prevailed. Interestingly, the question of whether it is ever possible to represent a race authentically was never debated. Rather, it was assumed that, if given the opportunity, black playwrights and serious performers would do a better job at creating serious authentic works about black life than white artists. Paul Robeson claimed, “I do feel there is a great future on the serious dramatic stage. Directions and training will do much to guide any natural ability one may possess.” So, while black musical comedies flourished, other efforts were in place. The hope for serious portrayals of black characters in what was deemed “higher” art was more than just a desire for better roles. It was inextricably linked to the desire for all African Americans at this time to be taken seriously and admired. It indicated an elevation to the respectable, honorable echelons of society. It helped disprove the myth of black inferiority. Gregory claimed that “until we are willing to have not the exceptional but the average life of the Negro honestly and impartially reproduced in fiction and drama, we might as well wallow in crude and vulgar variety shows or in sickening melodramas where the black man is of course the shining example of all the virtues. Truth is Beauty. Let us have more of it!”

One battle that needed to be fought was against the myth of natural propensity. Proponents of this myth argued that blacks had a natural ability for singing and dancing in the jazz style of the musical comedies, while whites were better at serious drama. Value judgments about the worth of the types of theater surfaced, and a hierarchy from “high” down to “low” developed in which black musical comedies were on a low rung and serious dramas on a high one. As an example of

this myth of natural propensity, James Reese Europe’s band had won over French, Belgian, and British audiences, who were fascinated by the “talking” trumpet. French musicians could not repeat the sound, so they inspected the instrument for a hidden valve or chamber. When they could not find one, they concluded that the ability was a black anomaly. This theme resurfaces throughout the era as the notion that blacks’ achievements in the arts were due not to skill, training, or talent but rather to some natural racial tendencies. This essentialist argument resulted in the simultaneous creation of a black aesthetic and a system that limited black performers to the genre of musical comedy. Reviewers in black newspapers also fell into the rhetorical trap of racial natural proclivity. One review of a young vaudevillian claimed, “Part of [his success] was training, but most of it was the natural expression of his racial instinct for rhythm, music and gesture. His play, or his acting, was so natural that it was hard to distinguish between them.” The review goes on to describe the backstage scene: “Even off stage they [the performers] are minstrels, fun-making actors. A white minstrel off stage would have sat upon a trunk, and glumly cursed the heat.” Rowena Woodham Jelliffe discussed the black performer’s assets in 1928 and claimed that they were “a peculiar quality of motoriness,” an “extraordinary body expressiveness,” a “sense of rhythm, manifest in his movement and his diction alike, and his never failing vitality.”

By April 1923, the All American Theater Association, a national integrated organization, articulated a desire to support black contributions to serious drama, believing that African Americans had as much to contribute to the genre as to musical comedy. They vowed to help organize and support theater for black artists in Chicago’s South Side, with hopes of national expansion and to bring more well-known novelists, poets, dramatists, and artists before audiences in Chicago.

Dismissing notions that they were being too “ambitious,” black actors, writers, and critics set out to uplift black theater. One strategy used to promote the development of high-quality, authentic portrayals of black life surfaced in the form of contests sponsored by black periodicals. Du Bois, who had founded and became editor of the NAACP’s magazine *The Crisis* with Jessie Redmon Faucet, initiated a drama committee in the NAACP to provide a method of using the stage to effect social change. He launched a literary contest, cosponsored by *Opportunity* magazine, that awarded cash prizes and ceremonies for the best writers of short stories, essays, poetry, and one-act plays.

Charles S. Johnson (editor of *Opportunity*) stated that the importance of *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* was that they provided an outlet for young black artists and scholars who were denied a forum elsewhere. They also provided recognition and monetary compensation, both of which contributed to the belief in the endeavor as worthwhile. *Opportunity* was more interested in arts and culture than *The Crisis*, whose focus was more sociopolitical. *Opportunity's* contests and dinners were very successful; although there were only three such contests, they were very influential in defining the era. Writers contributing to the magazine found publishers, and the larger mainstream press started paying attention. Although playwriting was an important component in these contests, the efforts rarely resulted in major productions. The success of these efforts, in terms of playwriting, was called into question in 1927 when the editors of *Opportunity* lamented the fact that the contributions to the drama part of the contests lagged behind the other genres in quality. They thought the majority of contributions were limited to low comedy and propaganda. They perceived a belief, on the part of playwrights, that audiences wanted to see only stereotypes and not authentic characters. Black playwrights, according to the editors, were just beginning to see the possibilities. The entries that did win the contests tended to reject the stereotypes. In 1930, Randolph Edmonds echoed these sentiments when he claimed that the slow progress in drama was puzzling, especially when compared with poetry, music, the novel, and essays. He went so far as to claim that "the so-called 'Negro Renaissance' has been almost a total failure in so far as the development of the drama is concerned."

Followers of Marcus Garvey also advocated variety and dignity in the portrayal of African Americans onstage. The United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) had a dramatic club and was interested in plays that educated, entertained, and promoted morality and racial equality. UNIA called for black actors to reject demeaning roles.

The prevailing belief was that serious black drama must develop from the folk tradition of African American life. According to Gregory, "the highest cultural achievements have emanated from below—from the folkways of society." Professor Frederick H. Koch began an experiment in North Dakota and North Carolina in which his students wrote one-act plays based on the lives of black people in their respective parts of the country. The efforts to document black life in North Carolina resulted in the Carolina Players.

Most of the winning plays in the magazine contests, as well as other attempts to write serious black drama, depicted black folk life. Also known as "native dramas," these folk plays about the black experience are less well known than the black musical comedies but are no less important. Most of these plays were written by middle-class blacks (usually women), the folk themselves, and white playwrights.

Lorraine Hansberry, whose classic play *A Raisin in the Sun* premiered in 1959, is generally recognized as the first major black female playwright. Black women were writing plays long before that time, however, and black women are responsible for many of the early folk plays available. Interestingly, many women won the play contests. Black men often wrote about life in Harlem and other major cities, but black women embraced more diverse subject matter and wrote about both rural and urban life, although plays about rural life prevailed. The main characters in these dramas were usually women in decision-making roles. White characters were absent, partially because of the typical domestic setting, but the effect of racism was a dominant theme. The plays were both dramas and comedies and succeeded in presenting a more realistic and wider spectrum of the black experience than did the plays written by whites about blacks. Many of the folk plays were written from a female perspective. Lynching was an important common theme in these folk plays; other themes included the untrustworthiness of whites, hope in Christianity for salvation, and faith in the legal system. Most of these plays were set in the homes of poor, rural, southern black matriarchs who spent their time cooking, cleaning, sewing, and praying. The patriarchs were either lynched or worked hard to support the family. Whites were not to be trusted, faith in God was tested, and everyone hoped for a better life.

Still other themes of folk plays included poverty, education, superstition, and miscegenation. *Plumes* by Georgia Douglas Johnson won first prize in *Opportunity's* contest of 1927. In this play, a mother of a dying girl must choose between spending money for a white doctor whom she mistrusts and saving the money to pay for a funeral with plumes on the horses. *A Sunday Morning in the South*, also by Johnson, is about the lynching of an innocent, promising black man for associating with a white woman. *Aftermath* by Mary P. Burrill is about a boy who returns from World War I only to discover that, while he was fighting for his country, his father has been lynched. *They That Sit in Darkness*, also by Burrill, concerns the devastating

effects of keeping poor black women ignorant about birth control. The only songs in these plays were spirituals, and most of the characters had nothing to dance about. They were good people who were unjustly suffering yet maintained their pride and respectability. Other important folk playwrights of the era include Marieta Bonner, Alice Dunbar Nelson, Shirley Graham, Angelina Weld Grimké, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, May Miller, Willis Richardson, Jean Toomer, and Lucy White.

Kathy Perkins speculates that one reason why so many contest winners and so many playwrights working with Locke and Gregory were women was that women had no positions of leadership in society. Plays provided an opportunity for their voices to be heard.

Although many of these plays were collected and anthologized by Carter G. Woodson, black folk dramas as represented by the folk themselves are less well known today because they were less supported by the middle and upper classes, who focused more on mainstream models. Theophilus Lewis, drama critic for *The Messenger*, went so far as to accuse the black middle class of ignoring the actual folk while celebrating plays written about them by others. Pageants and what we would now call community theater did not even have the small resources of the “little theater” groups (see the following discussion). Many of the plays were passed down orally and physically, and there were seldom single authors to take all the credit for creating the pieces. For these reasons and others, we do not know much about this aspect of theater during the Harlem Renaissance, and it is a topic ripe for further study.

A number of white playwrights were interested in writing serious drama featuring black characters. Ridgely Torrence was praised for his plays *Granny Maumee*, *The Rider of Dreams*, and *Simon the Cyrenian*, all of which provided better roles for black performers. Paul Green, who wrote *The No 'Count Boy*, *Granny Boling*, and *White Dresses*, received both criticism and praise for his depictions of aspects of black folk life. *The Green Pastures* by Marc Connelly was one of the most successful black folk plays of the era.

The most famous white playwright of black drama was Eugene O'Neill. Like Harriet Beecher Stowe with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, O'Neill introduced sympathetic black characters to white audiences who might never have seen or read other examples of serious black drama. Also like Stowe, O'Neill received mixed reviews from African Americans who saw his portrayal

of black characters as stereotypical and inauthentic. One reviewer feared that O'Neill would be unsuccessful because African Americans would consider his work too propagandistic and white Americans would see it as a personal attack. Paul Robeson defended O'Neill by saying that he had met and talked to O'Neill, and “if ever there was a broad, liberal-minded man, he is one. He has had Negro friends and appreciated them for their true worth. He would be the last to cast any slur on the colored people.” Though many have debated this characterization, we can say that *All God's Chillun Got Wings* and *The Emperor Jones* brought serious black drama to larger audiences and were catalysts for the career of Robeson, one of the most important black performers of the time. Jim Harris, the protagonist in *All God's Chillun Got Wings*, was a particularly sympathetic and positive portrayal. Gregory thought *The Emperor Jones* would “tower as a beacon-light of inspiration.” He thought it marked the “breakwater plunge of Negro drama into the main stream of American drama.” Eric D. Walrond, writing about *All God's Chillun Got Wings*, claimed that “no better study of the relations of whites and colored people in the United States has ever been projected on the American stage.”

In 1928, the writer Eulalie Spence discussed the fact that a number of black performers existed but not many dramatists. White writers, she claimed, were providing most of the material for serious black actors. Some black actors shunned plays by white playwrights, but most were grateful for the vehicles. Spence claimed that the drama was twenty to thirty years behind the novel and short story in subject matter. People were still hesitant to deal with a wider range of topics—and there was also the fact that playwriting was not as respected as other art forms, and many of the plays were not even written to be performed but just to be read. Spence advised against propagandistic drama because she thought that whites were cold and unresponsive and African Americans were hurt and humiliated. “We go to the theater for entertainment, not to have old fires and hates rekindled. . . . Let him [the black dramatist] portray the life of his people, their foibles, if he will and their sorrows and ambition and defeats.”

The degree to which folk plays should promote an overtly political agenda was hotly contested. The major players in the debate were W. E. B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, and Montgomery T. Gregory, among others. Du Bois called for total control of black theater by blacks and saw theater as a powerful political tool in the

larger societal struggle. He thought that theater could serve the cause if plays were written as propaganda illustrating the ills of society and provided didactic solutions to race relations. This theater would be a means for communicating messages to the masses. The primary goal of this theater was to effect social change. In October 1926, in *The Crisis*, Du Bois stated that "all art is propaganda, and ever must be . . . for gaining the right of black folk to love and enjoy."

Locke and Gregory argued that the function of art was not propaganda and argued for the aesthetic enrichment of the community and individual. Locke thought that art used for propaganda assumed the inferiority of the group even while crying out against it. Rather, Locke said, art should be a means of self-expression, self-contained and therefore unsuitable as propaganda. He argued that folk plays should depict the black experience without focusing on oppression by laying blame and calling for change. The main goal was to entertain and educate without offending. Locke wanted drama "with no objective but to express beautifully and colorfully race folk life." Plays with "more of the emotional depth of pity and terror" would prove the worthiness of the race without being heavy-handed.

In an article in *Opportunity* in October 1924, the playwright Willis Richardson discussed the importance of theater as an educational tool. He claimed that the theater had the attention of more reasoning adults than any other institution besides the church. The intelligent patrons of the theater went precisely to be interested and have their ideas challenged. Lamenting the limits of the fool character, Richardson embraced the possibilities of the legitimate stage. He argued that black actors were just as capable as white actors and that audiences should demand the same quality of performance.

In an article in July 1928, reviewer Rowena Woodham Jelliffe claimed that "sociological considerations should be secondary. Nor should the theatre be considered a medium of propaganda. Undue concern about putting the best racial foot foremost should be forgot." These sentiments were part of her call to "escape the bonds of race consciousness."

One consequence of the attitude that drama should be used to promote the image of positive and authentic black folk life was the belief that no negative portrayals of black characters should exist. *The Emperor Jones* received this criticism because the main character was a craps-shooter and an escaped convict. Willis Richardson talked about an audience member at a

production of his play *The Chip Woman's Fortune* who corrected the grammar of the performers and seemed scandalized when an actor took off his shoes. In 1925, Richardson stated: "Playwrights who have depicted unpleasant Negro characters, have gotten very little encouragement from the Negro group. In fact, they have been frowned upon."

An interesting twist in the debate over serious drama versus musical comedy occurred when Max Reinhardt, a prominent German director, exalted black musical comedy in 1924 for its potential to be a great example of modernism, expressionism, and uniquely American drama. In an interview with Charles S. Johnson and Alain Locke, Reinhardt expressed his interest in the genre, much to their initial chagrin. He claimed that musical comedies "are highly original in spite of obvious triteness and artistic in spite of superficial crudeness. To me they reveal new possibilities of technique in drama, and if I should ever try to do anything American, I should build it on these things." Johnson and Locke had hoped to discuss the possibilities of Negro art drama (that is, serious drama). Reading their expressions of dislike, Reinhardt further explained that he meant the genre not as it existed then but for what it would become. Pantomime, he thought, was at the root of dramatic expression, and black performers had that art as their "forte," their "special genius." Though they were relegated to trite comedy, Reinhardt saw masterful technique in "the voices, the expressive control of the whole body, the spontaneity of motion, the rhythm, the bright emotional color." Whether or not Reinhardt's words proved prophetic of an American or African American expressionism is debatable; however, his concluding remarks illustrate a major tenet of the ethos of the Harlem Renaissance: "Be original . . . develop the folk idiom."

The Negro "little theater" movement developed during this time to produce legitimate theater for black artists. In the autumn of 1920, six men and women formed a dramatic social club devoted to "high art" drama. This group became known as the Gilpin Players, after the famous actor Charles Gilpin. Their mission was to use the medium to present the important contributions of the race. Their first performance was in 1921, and by 1928 they had produced sixty-one plays. One of the main challenges the Gilpin Players faced was resisting the urge to cater to the audiences' initial desire for base comedy.

In 1923, Raymond O'Neill founded the Ethiopian Art Theater in Chicago, worked with the All American

Theater Association, developed awards for plays based on black life, and made his way to Broadway. He focused on adaptations of Oscar Wilde's *Salomé* and Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* but was most successful with his production of Willis Richardson's *The Chip Woman's Fortune*. In a review of *Salomé*, Esther Fulks Scott quotes a wealthy patroness as saying, "This performance, so full of gifts of joy, humor and dramatic ability which the actors give and show to their audience should entirely banish all prejudice from the mind of anyone seeing it." Evelyn Preer, who played the title character, Laura Bowman, who played Herodias, and Sidney Kirkpatrick, who played Herod, all expressed their desire to help the race through their talents as serious dramatic performers. Bowman went so far as to assert that the "race problem" might be solved through artistic and cultural avenues.

To further encourage the development of drama written by blacks, Du Bois organized the Krigwa Players in 1926. Krigwa (originally Crigwa) was an acronym for the Crisis Guild of Writers and Artists. The company did not last long, but Du Bois was able to encourage the formation of other small theaters throughout the country.

More than a dozen theater groups existed during the Harlem Renaissance. Companies like the Lafayette Players and Lincoln Players performed works of quality regardless of race. Companies like the Rose McClendon Players and the Pioneer Drama Group wanted to show that blacks and whites were equal. Companies like Krigwa and the Negro People's Theater performed "respectable" black drama.

Theater was also significant in higher education at the time. Black colleges developed theater departments with the goals of creating original race plays. While Du Bois and Krigwa were promoting race or propaganda plays, Gregory, Locke, Marie Moore-Forrest, and others were promoting folk plays at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Gregory brought national attention to the Howard Players when he organized the Department of Dramatic Arts for the purpose of establishing the first National Negro Theater in the United States. It provided professional training in acting, playwriting, and production. Before this endeavor, practically no institution provided professional theatrical training for blacks, especially in playwriting. The African Grove Theater of the early nineteenth century was long defunct. Gregory's philosophy was that, in order for Negro drama to survive, it had to be exposed to the larger society. The institutions of higher education provided a valuable means to achieve that exposure.

Some thought the Harlem Renaissance would mean the end of oppression and that art would solve the "race problem." In reality, at least in terms of theater, it was a time of struggle and progress for a few.

NADINE GEORGE-GRAVES

See also Authors: 4—Playwrights; Blacks in Theater; Bonner, Marieta; Community Theater; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Gilpin, Charles; Grimké, Angelina Weld; Hurston, Zora Neale; Krigwa Players; Literature: 3—Drama; Little Theater Tournament; Locke, Alain; Musical Theater; Richardson, Willis; Shuffle Along; United Negro Improvement Association; Williams, Egbert Austin "Bert"; Woodson, Carter G.; *other specific individuals; specific theater groups; specific works*

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Theater Owners' Booking Association

The Theater Owners' Booking Association (TOBA)—also known as the Toby Circuit or Toby Time—was founded "in order to correct the deplorable conditions then prevalent in the world of black theatre" (Burdex). It was a network of predominantly white-owned theaters in black areas of towns in the South and the Midwest, from Galveston to Jacksonville and from

Cleveland to Kansas City, where black entertainers performed before exclusively black audiences. Although some theaters did attempt to integrate some shows with a limited number of white attendees in the balcony, most of these efforts were undermined by local authorities. With black audiences, however, performers were able to broaden their material. Although many still wore blackface, the emphasis of their performances transcended the one-dimensional representations of black buffoonery that had been characteristic of minstrel shows. Now, jokes about racial injustice—which would have been taboo in other arenas—could dominate the show, depending on the demeanor of the audience during any given performance.

Because segregation made touring with white vaudeville companies impossible for most black entertainers, TOBA was one of the few ways for blacks to enter the profession. For entertainers working in an industry where only top stars considered their career prospects secure, TOBA allowed black artists to plan weeks in advance. Performers typically traveled in touring companies of approximately thirty-five members, performing two or three forty-five-minute shows per night. Because comedy was usually the most important part of the show, the shows with the best comics were generally the most successful.

The TOBA circuit was grueling, and the various difficulties performers faced led many to quip that TOBA actually stood for “Tough on Black Artists” or “Tough on Black Asses.” There was always the possibility that a gig might be canceled less than a week in advance. Additionally, TOBA houses were usually small, having small stages, few props, and house bands with whom company members were usually unfamiliar. Adding to these difficulties was the fact that TOBA audiences were extremely demanding, not being afraid to boo performers offstage. Moreover, entertainers were forced to place themselves at the mercy of racist local authorities as they traveled to the next town after a show, potentially violating local curfew laws that applied only to blacks. As most performers had to provide their own transportation from town to town, most of their earnings were often spent before they were received, just to keep the show on the road. As a result of these conditions, many entertainers failed to last very long on the circuit, giving up on their dreams of stardom and opting for jobs that provided more security.

While comedy was the principal focus of TOBA, many limitations governed what black performers could and could not do onstage. Many white club owners were unabashed racists, so performers could

not present overtly political material. Furthermore, while a few black comedians did adopt a monologue approach, most avoided this type of performance, which might be seen as a declaration of equality and might thus lead white bookers to shun an artist. Performers generally avoided making direct eye contact with the audience and would never just walk out onto the stage and begin a routine; instead, the comedians would come onstage talking to each other in such a way that the audience members felt empowered, as if they were listening in on a private conversation. Black performers' second-class status was reflected in this type of performance, even after white performers such as Jack Benny and Milton Berle adopted the monologue approach. In short, the bulk of comedy that appeared on stage was situational, such as Dewey “Pigmeat” Markham’s routine “Here Come de Judge” (which was resurrected years later when Sammy Davis Jr. performed it on *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In*) and the staged marital squabbles of two husband-and-wife teams: Stringbeans and Sweetie May, and Butterbeans and Susie.

Many of the performers on the TOBA circuit have never received proper credit for much of the material they may have originated. This is because the comedy routines were (and still are) more famous than their writers. (For example, Davis had to tell the producers of *Laugh-In* that “Here Come de Judge” was Markham’s material, so that Markham could collect royalties.) Because jokes cannot be copyrighted, much of the best material from these shows has been pirated, with those who made routines famous receiving credit for them, regardless of who actually wrote them.

With skit comedy dominating most shows and with only so many performers in each troupe, band members, singers, and dancers would often perform roles as needed. For example, legendary film stars such as Eddie “Rochester” Anderson, Stepin Fetchit, and Bill “Bojangles” Robinson (who was perhaps most famous for dancing with Shirley Temple) all danced with TOBA before becoming recognizable as comedians in film, on radio, and on television. Other TOBA-affiliated artists included Count Basie, Jackie “Moms” Mabley, Bessie Smith, and Ethel Waters.

TOBA played a vital role in shaping African American comedy (as well as American comedy in general, as is evidenced by white performers such as Milton Berle pirating jokes from black comics at the Apollo), but it has not received its fair share of coverage in academic or nonacademic media. Although Burdex has developed an excellent annotated bibliography of

the coverage of TOBA in the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *Chicago Defender* from 1921 to 1930, most information about TOBA remains anecdotal. Except for the work of Hill (1996), Stearns and Stearns (1966, 1968), and Watkins (1999), there has been little rigorous cultural criticism. Nor have critics been able to come to a consensus regarding TOBA's history. For example, Watkins says that TOBA was founded in 1907 by F. A. Barrasso, an Italian businessman in Memphis; Hill says that TOBA was actually founded two years later by Barrasso's brother, A. Barrasso, because F. A. Barasso had been so financially successful as a proprietor of black theaters. In contrast, Burdex says that TOBA was founded in 1921, when a feud with the Southern Consolidated circuit ended with TOBA's absorbing it. The one point critics have agreed on is that TOBA was a casualty of the Great Depression; in its wake, the Apollo Theater emerged as the most desirable place for black entertainers to perform.

MICHAEL MIKLOS

See also Apollo Theater; Armstrong, Louis; Baker, Josephine; Ellington, Duke; Fetchit, Stepin; Hayes, Roland; Johnson, James Weldon; Locke, Alain; McClendon, Rose; Mills, Florence; Rainey, Ma; Robinson, Bill "Bojangles"; Smith, Bessie; Waller, Thomas "Fats"; Waters, Ethel; Williams, Egbert Austin "Bert"

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Their Eyes Were Watching God

Zora Neale Hurston wrote her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) while completing anthropological research in Haiti. The novel follows a circular pattern, opening with the protagonist Janie's return to Eatonville after the end of her adventures.

Janie tells the story of her upbringing by her grandmother, Nanny. Nanny raises Janie when her mother is unable to do so after being raped by the local schoolteacher. Nanny dreams of bettering Janie's life, so she has Janie marry, at age sixteen, the elderly Logan Killicks, who owns sixty acres of land. After Nanny's death, Janie becomes restless and leaves Logan for Joe Starks, a Georgian who is heading to Florida. Joe dreams of a town populated by and run by black people. He builds up the town, buying 200 acres of land, opening a store and post office, buying a street lamp for the town, and becoming mayor. Joe's dream of making Janie into a lady—the mayor's wife—isolates her from the community. Joe makes her work in the store and then routinely ridicules her in public. After twenty years, Joe becomes increasingly ill, and Janie uses his illness as an opportunity to publicly challenge his domination over her. This challenge to his authority leads to his death, giving Janie an opportunity to rediscover her childhood self. Janie then meets the incarnation of her dreams in Tea Cake, a blues musician. Janie thinks "he could be a bee to a blossom—a pear tree blossom in the spring. He seemed to be crushing scent out of the world with his footsteps." Janie marries Tea Cake and accompanies him to the Florida Everglades. Their idyllic life comes to a violent end with a hurricane—the Everglades are flooded, and Tea Cake is bitten by a rabid dog. In his delirium, Tea Cake threatens Janie, and she shoots him in order to survive.

In a very influential review in *New Masses*, Richard Wright (1937) criticized *Their Eyes Were Watching God* for having "no theme, no message, no thought." The novel was out of print until a revival of interest in Hurston began in the late 1970s. In 1977, Robert Hemenway wrote *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography*, the first serious treatment of her life and

work. Alice Walker wrote the essays "Looking for Zora" and "Zora Neale Hurston: A Cautionary Tale and a Partisan View" and edited the *Hurston Reader*. Since her rediscovery, Hurston has become a canonical figure in American literature, widely taught in undergraduate courses across disciplines throughout the country.

Since the initial celebration of Hurston's work, a number of questions have arisen about the novel's heroine and its style of narration. Some recent critical essays on *Their Eyes Were Watching God* focus on voice. An especially influential examination of the novel has been Gates's discussion (1988) of free indirect discourse, which strives to account for shifts between an omniscient narrator and Janie's voice, and the merging of the two at different times in the novel. The narrator's voice becomes indistinguishable from the character's voice in the following passage: "The spirit of the marriage left the bedroom and took to living in the parlor. It was there to shake hands whenever company came to visit, but it never went back inside the bedroom again." Awkward (1988) has questions about whether Janie achieves a voice and, if so, whether that voice is based on visual rather than auditory signs. He traces his doubts to the language describing the pear tree: "It had called her to come and gaze on a mystery. . . . It was like a flute song forgotten in another existence and remembered again. . . . This singing she heard had nothing to do with her ears. The rose of the world was breathing out smell." He also questions the desirability of Janie's relationship with Tea Cake, a relationship involving physical abuse.

Critics have raised a variety of questions about the novel, questions that attest to its continued importance and interpretive richness. Carby's discussions (1988, 1990) of the folk in the novel have fueled debates about Hurston's essentialist and ahistorical approach to black culture. Carby asserts that Hurston provides images of unchanging black people who exist without any relationship to historical events. Her work on blues women has also encouraged a number of articles about the importance of blues in Hurston's work. For example, Wall (1995) has a chapter on Hurston's "traveling blues." Hill (1996) situates Hurston's fiction relative to her drama, which is rarely examined. In this regard, Hill is part of a growing group of critics who have examined Hurston's other writings, which include ethnographies, short stories, essays, and dramas, as well as her own reviews and criticism. Lamothe (2000) brings Hurston's anthropological work to bear on the novel by examining Hurston's use of vodou (voodoo)

imagery in the latter. Lamothe interprets the gate in terms of the deity Legba, who is the keeper of the crossroads. Janie "searched as much of the world as she could from the top of the front steps and then went on down to the front gate and leaned over to gaze up and down the road. Looking, waiting, breathing short with impatience. Waiting for the world to be made." Lowe (1994) examines Hurston's comedy. In contrast to Wright, who described Hurston's humor as "the minstrel technique that makes the 'white folks' laugh," Lowe describes it as both cosmic and comic. Such comedy addresses questions of ethnic humor, which has traditionally been confused with ethnic stereotypes.

KIMBERLY J. BANKS

See also Hurston, Zora Neale; Wright, Richard

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There Is Confusion

Jessie Redmon Fauset's *There Is Confusion* (1924) holds the honor of being the first novel published during the Harlem Renaissance. In his review for *Opportunity*, Montgomery T. Gregory mistakenly heralded it as the first novel by a "Negro" woman, comparing Fauset to Phillis Wheatley, whose poetry was the first volume of creative literature published by a black American. Although mistaken, the comparison proved apt in that, like Wheatley's work, Fauset's novel has for many years been dismissed or deplored by black critics and ignored by whites, largely owing to its perceived formal and thematic inability to stand as a representative "black" text.

There Is Confusion interweaves the narratives of three primary characters: Joanna Marshall, who is determined above all else to be a "great" dancer, despite—and, indeed, because of—the overwhelming racial discrimination she faces; Peter Bye, whose inherited "shiftlessness" is countered by a desire to fulfill his beloved Joanna's expectation that he become a "famous" surgeon; and Maggie Ellersley, who supports herself and her mother through her cosmetology business, while longing to marry into the middle-class lifestyle and status the others enjoy. Fauset contextualizes their stories with a generous genealogical background and a vast supporting cast. The novel traces the impact of race, class, and gender oppression on its characters. Ultimately, Joanna sacrifices her struggling stage career for the joys of marriage to Dr. Bye (who eventually is successful), and Maggie discovers, after divorcing one husband and surviving a second, that she is a businesswoman capable of providing financial security and decency for herself.

Initial praise from critics like Gregory and Alain Locke (who called it the "novel that the Negro

intelligentsia have been clamoring for") centered on Fauset's portrayal of ambitious, educated, middle-class blacks, which was greeted as a welcome change from the negative stereotypes that appeared in the white literature of the day. *There Is Confusion* emerged and remained in the shadow of work by younger writers seen as more modern and aesthetically successful, however; as representations of "blackness" (as opposed to emphasis on the commonalities between African Americans and whites) were increasingly valued, Fauset's writing became marginalized. African American literary critics of the mid-twentieth century (predominantly black men, e.g., Bone, Brown, and Gayle) dismissed and even ridiculed *There Is Confusion*, calling Fauset's work "sophomoric, trivial, and dull" and Fauset herself a "sentimental . . . apologist" for the "Negro middle class." Only in the latter part of the century did the novel begun to receive serious critical attention, primarily as a result of black feminist scholarship by critics like McDowell (1985) and Wall (1995), who have reevaluated Fauset's writing in terms of its critique of oppressive gender norms in conjunction with racism.

Most critics, sympathetic or not, have found the form and structure of the novel problematic. From suggestions that its title too aptly describes its sprawling narrative, to arguments that its marriage plot is unfortunately conventional and necessitates a forced, unrealistic ending, *There Is Confusion* is typically deemed a flawed novel reflecting Fauset's limited abilities, her ideological baggage, or the social standards constraining her as a single black woman. Relatively recent criticism (e.g., by Kuenz, McCoy, and Miller), however, has begun to challenge this assessment, arguing that Fauset's sometimes grating stylistic choices are deliberate; they are a compelling means of representing the dilemmas facing her black heroines.

EVIE SHOCKLEY

See also *Civic Club Dinner, 1924*; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; *Literary Criticism and the Harlem Renaissance*; *Literature: 4—Fiction*; Liveright, Horace

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They Shall Not Die

In 1934, the Theatre Guild, a distinguished professional organization, produced *They Shall Not Die*, a play by John Wexley that dramatized a particularly notorious example of American racism known as the Scottsboro case. *They Shall Not Die* opened in New York on 21 February 1934 at the Royale Theater at 242 West Forty-fifth Street and ran for sixty-two performances. The cast on opening night included Claude Rains, Ruth Gordon, Tom Ewell, and Dean Jagger. Philip Moeller directed the production, and Lee Simonson, a major influence in American theatrical design, created the sets.

Wexley's play expressed the outrage that many American citizens felt as a result of the trials of the

nine African American youths, who became known as the Scottsboro boys and whose plight attracted international attention during the early 1930s. The nine, who were riding a freight train near Scottsboro, Alabama, were arrested for vagrancy and disorderly conduct. Later, two white women who also had been riding the train accused them of rape. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, and after only four days of trials, an all-white jury in Alabama convicted all nine of the Scottsboro boys and sentenced eight of them to death. The Supreme Court overturned the convictions in 1932, and a series of new trials began; these too drew national attention, largely through the efforts of the International Labor Defense, an organization that came to the aid of the accused youths and publicized the case. Petitions were sent to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and demonstrations took place in more than twenty-five countries, often involving protests aimed at American embassies. Many prominent individuals protested against the trials and convictions, including Albert Einstein, Maxim Gorky, Sinclair Lewis, Thomas Mann, Edna St. Vincent Millay, George Bernard Shaw, and Virginia Woolf. A "Scottsboro parade" took place in Harlem, and there was a "Free the Scottsboro Boys" march on Washington, D.C. Langston Hughes composed a one-act verse play, "Scottsboro Limited"; Countee Cullen wrote the poem "Scottsboro, Too, Is Worth Its Song"; and John Wexley wrote the play *They Shall Not Die*.

In Wexley's play, the setting is a fictitious town called Cooksville in an unnamed southern state; the defense attorney for the youths, a New Yorker named Nathan G. Rubin (played by Claude Rains), makes a final impassioned speech on their behalf: "We're only beginning . . . and if I do nothing else in my life, I'll make the fair name of this state stink to high heaven with its lynch justice. . . . These boys, they shall not die!" (Wexley 1934, 191). The actual trials continued throughout the 1930s, and although the all-white juries never acquitted the defendants, all of them eventually gained their freedom: four because the charges were dropped, four because of early paroles, and one because of a successful escape. The last of the "Scottsboro boys" did not leave prison until 1950, however.

Wexley's career as a playwright and screenwriter focused on political and social concerns. His play *The Last Mile*, produced in 1930, was released as a film in 1932 and remade in 1959. In 1931, he wrote and directed the play *Steel*. Wexley worked with Anatole Litvak on a number of screenplays for socially aware

film noir productions, including *City for Conquest* (1938), starring James Cagney; *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939); and *The Long Night* (1947), which starred Henry Fonda as a steelworker who is a veteran of World War II. Wexley also wrote or cowrote *Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938) and, with Bertolt Brecht, the screenplay for Fritz Lang's *Hangmen Also Die!* (1942). He worked primarily as a screenwriter during World War II and after the war worked on documentaries and other projects until he was blacklisted during the McCarthy era. In 1955, Wexley published *The Judgment of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg*, an early account of the famous espionage trial, in which he maintained that the FBI had framed the Rosenbergs.

MARTHA AVALEEN EGAN

See also Scottsboro

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Thomas, Edna Lewis

Edna Lewis Thomas made her stage debut in 1920 in a cameo role for a charity benefit at a theater in Brooklyn, the Putnam, affiliated with the Lafayette Players, the leading stock company during the Harlem Renaissance. Before being persuaded to appear at the Putnam, she had no intention of being an actress. She was a socialite and a good friend of A'Lelia Walker, whose lavish lifestyle she coveted.

In Boston, where she had grown up, Thomas had married a much older, very wealthy businessman. After she was widowed, she married again. She and her second husband, Lloyd Thomas, were drawn to Harlem and its cultural and social excitement. What began as a theatrical lark soon became a dedicated pursuit. In 1921, she performed at the Lafayette

Theater in *Turn to the Right*. In her role in a jazz version of *A Comedy of Errors* produced by the Ethiopian Art Theater in 1923, Thomas charmed the critic Percy Hammond, a hard man to please. In 1926, she appeared on Broadway in David Belasco's *Lulu Belle*, about a black prostitute—a role played by Lenore Ulric in blackface. Even during the Harlem Renaissance, Thomas, as an African American actress, rarely had featured roles on Broadway.

Thomas met the critic Carl Van Vechten, with whom she and her husband maintained a lifelong friendship, and Olivia Wyndham, an Englishwoman who was a distant relative of Oscar Wilde. Wyndham moved in with the Thomases, and it is believed that the three maintained a *ménage à trois* for the rest of their lives. Thomas worked with some regularity during the 1930s, appearing in *Ol' Man Satan* in 1932, in *Run Little Children* in 1933, and in *Stevedore* in 1934. In 1936, Thomas was cast as Lady Macbeth in the production of *Voodoo Macbeth*, which Orson Welles, then twenty years old, had set in Haiti on the recommendation of his wife. It was a daring production. Percy Hammond, the same critic who had been captivated by Thomas thirteen years earlier, dismissed *Voodoo Macbeth* as “deluxe boondoggling,” but this did not keep audiences from coming.

After its debut in Harlem, which was sold out for ten weeks, the show moved downtown to the Adelphi and then went on national tour to a number of venues associated with the Federal Theater Project. Just before the Federal Theater was shut down, Thomas performed again with the Harlem Unit in 1938 in *Androcles and the Lion*, by George Bernard Shaw. In the 1940s, she performed on Broadway several times. She appeared with Helen Hayes in *Harriet* in 1943, in *Strange Fruit* by Lillian Smith in 1945, and in Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* in 1947, as the Mexican woman, a role she repeated for subsequent revivals and in the film version in 1956.

Biography

Edna Lewis Thomas was born in 1886 in Lawrenceville, Virginia, and grew up in Boston, where she studied in public schools. Thomas acted on the New York stage for several decades and was part of the original cast of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. She died in New York City on 22 July 1974.

BARBARA BREWSTER LEWIS

See also Ethiopian Art Players; Lafayette Players; Lulu Belle; Stevedore; Van Vechten, Carl; Walker, A'Leia

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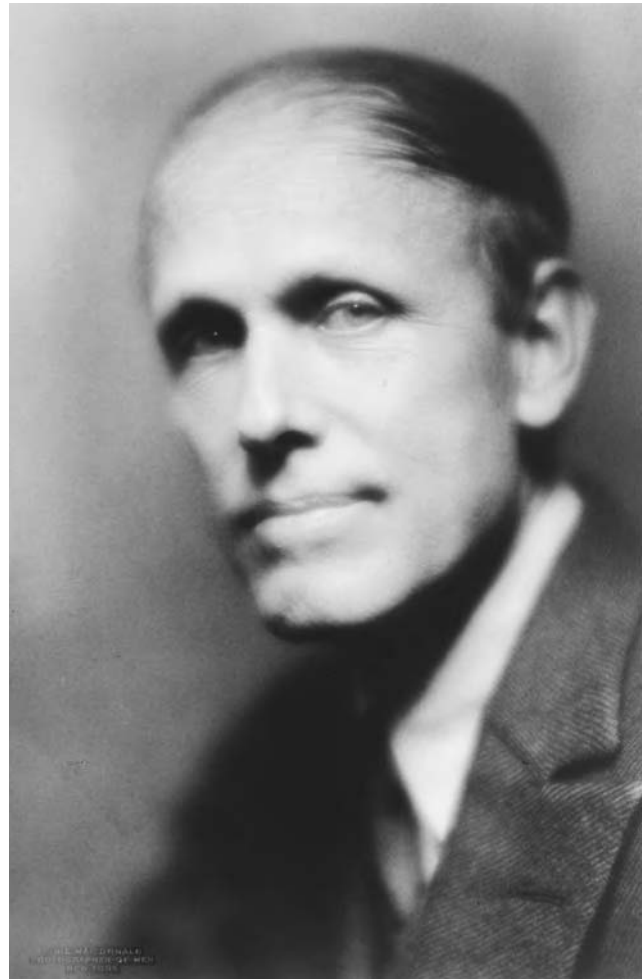
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Thompson, Louise

See Patterson, Louise Thompson

Three Plays for a Negro Theater

Three Plays for a Negro Theater (1917) are works by Frederick Ridgely Torrence (1875–1950). Torrence had established his literary reputation as a poet and journal editor before turning his attention to drama. As a member of the "Judson circle," led by William Vaughn Moody, Torrence first attempted two verse plays—*El Dorado* and *Abelard and Heloise*—which were published but not produced. Spurred on by the success of Moody's prose drama *The Great Divide*, Torrence turned to folk stories and a heightened prose style with which to create "poetic drama in prose" (Clum 1972, 105). He also looked into his own childhood in Xenia, Ohio, a city where a number of white southerners and African Americans had migrated before the Civil War. Xenia had been an important stop on the Underground Railroad, and Wilberforce University, a historically black institution, was located there. Torrence's mother had come from a slaveholding southern family; his father, a farmer, retained several trusted black employees; and Torrence had gone to a high school and church that admitted some African Americans. In addition to these influences on his



Ridgely Torrence, 1933. (Library of Congress.)

playwriting, Torrence had been greatly impressed by performances given in the United States by Ireland's Abbey Theater and especially by the plays of John Millington Synge.

Granny Maumee, the first of Torrence's Negro plays, written in 1914, is often compared to Synge's *Riders to the Sea*. The setting is a cabin occupied by Granny Maumee and her great-granddaughter, Pearl. Granny has waited fifty years for a male heir to avenge the lynching of her son, accused of a crime he did not commit and burned alive in a bonfire; Granny herself was blinded and badly burned when she tried to reach for him through the flames. Pearl's sister, Sapphie, has recently given birth to a son, whom she is bringing for a visit. When Granny holds the child, her sight returns briefly. To her shock, the child is nearly white. Not only must she bear this tainting of her pure African blood, of which she is proud, but she learns that the father of the child is the grandson of the man who lit her son's

bonfire. Granny resorts to voodoo incantation to avenge herself, determined that father and child should die. Before she can carry out her plan, she has a vision in which her son, Sam, counsels her to forgive. Determined to make her peace with God, she dies.

Granny Maumee, with a white cast, was produced for one performance by the Stage Society, a group that mounted small productions in New York's theaters on Sundays (when the theaters were ordinarily dark); these presentations were attended primarily by theater professionals. The play was well received, and it was considered by other producers, including the actress-manager Minnie Maddern Fiske, but it was not produced until the socialite Emilie Hapgood provided backing. She hired Robert Edmond Jones, a purveyor of the "new stagecraft," not only to design the production but also to take on his first professional assignment as a director. To accompany the folk tragedy of *Granny Maumee*, Torrence added two more one-act plays: a folk comedy, *The Rider of Dreams*; and a pageant play, *Simon the Cyrenian*. Unlike the other two plays, which were written in dialect, *Simon the Cyrenian* was written in verse.

In *The Rider of Dreams*, Madison Sparrow and his wife, Lucy, are polar opposites. While Lucy labors assiduously to save money to purchase a home, Madison strums his guitar and simply dreams of prosperity. Duped by a white con man, Madison loses the family's savings. Their landlord, however, has observed the swindle, recovers the money, and accepts it as payment in full for their rented house. Madison, shaken, tries to return to his dreams.

Simon the Cyrenian, which is based on the accounts in the gospels, presents Christ's final hours before the crucifixion from the viewpoint of Simon, a black African. Simon is depicted as a rebel who plots to save Christ and violently attack the Romans. He finds an unlikely ally in Procula, the wife of Pilate, who fears the consequences of the crucifixion. Hearing the voice of Jesus, Simon realizes that Christ is the answer and that the crucifixion is of great moment and purpose. Not only does he help Christ bear the cross, but he also is crowned with thorns and vows to bear the pain until Christ "comes into his own."

Three Plays for a Negro Theater opened with an African American cast at the Garden Theater in Madison Square, on the fringes of Broadway, on 5 April 1917. Much was made of Jones's and Torrence's efforts to assemble the cast, many of whom were veterans of the Lafayette Players. A "singing orchestra" under the direction of J. Rosamond Johnson provided musical

interludes between the plays. *The Rider of Dreams* was performed first, then *Granny Maumee*, then *Simon the Cyrenian*. Opal Cooper's performance as Madison and Inez Clough's as Procula led the critic George Jean Nathan to place them on his lists of the ten best actors and actresses of the year. Critical response was universally enthusiastic. Robert Benchley stated in his review in the *New York Tribune* that he may have witnessed "the beginnings of a new movement on the American stage . . . the first stirrings of a really distinctive American drama" (Clum, 109). Black critics were equally enthusiastic. Years later, in *Black Manhattan*, James Weldon Johnson reprinted the show's program and declared that "April 5, 1917 is the date of the most important single event in the entire history of the Negro in the American theatre; for it marks the beginning of a new era" (1930/1977, 175). Torrence had drawn characters, not caricatures, and the African American actors were given an opportunity to be taken seriously as performing artists. Torrence was credited by W. E. B. Du Bois and others as the harbinger of the theater to come, a new theater that would reflect not the old minstrel images but the "New Negro."

Fate intervened, however. The day after opening night, the United States formally entered World War I, and the nation became focused on the ensuing crisis. Hapgood tried to keep the show alive by moving it to the Garrick Theater, which was closer to the center of the theater district, on 16 April, but *Three Plays for a Negro Theater* closed there after one week.

Later, Macmillan published *Three Plays for a Negro Theater*; and Alain Locke and Montgomery Gregory included *Granny Maumee*, *The Rider of Dreams*, and another play by Torrence, *The Danse Calinda*, in their landmark anthology *Plays of Negro Life*.

FREDA SCOTT GILES

See also Clough, Inez; Johnson, James Weldon; Johnson, John Rosamond; Lafayette Players; Locke, Alain

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Thurman, Wallace

The career of Wallace Thurman, enfant terrible of the Harlem Renaissance, is symbolic of the movement in that it developed speedily and turbulently only to fade away quickly. After trying out medical studies at the University of Utah, Thurman studied journalism at the University of Southern California–Los Angeles in 1922. He never completed his studies in Los Angeles; instead, he undertook what was to develop into a rather short, yet intense and singular literary career.

Thurman described his adolescence as filled with literature in every form, from juvenile books to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Shakespeare, Plato, Hardy, and Freud. He worked his way through literature without any scholarly guidance.

Thurman's career in journalism started in Los Angeles in 1923 when he became an associate editor of the black newspaper *Pacific Defender*. In order to supplement his income, he also worked in the post office, where, in 1924, he first came into contact with the Harlem Renaissance by way of meeting Arna Bontemps. Bontemps published a piece in *The Crisis* in 1924 and left for Harlem. Thurman decided to create his own black literary movement on the West Coast by founding the magazine *The Outlet*, of which six issues were published. As a result of financial difficulties (a recurrent theme in Thurman's life), Thurman left Los Angeles, reaching Harlem in 1925.

Again, Thurman engaged in journalism, first working for the theater critic Theophilus Lewis, a job that did not prove financially profitable but did earn him Lewis's long-lasting friendship. In late 1925, Thurman joined the left-wing magazine *The Messenger*, and in 1926, he became circulation manager at *The World Tomorrow*. Thurman's literary activities during his first year in Harlem are various and indicate his extraordinary status as an African American literary figure: He served as a literary critic; opened up the pages of the publications he worked for to young writers of the Harlem Renaissance; and published poetry, short fiction, and satirical essays in *Opportunity*.

Together with a friend, the artist and writer Richard Bruce Nugent, Thurman moved into a residence at 267 West 136th Street, which became the central meeting point for Harlem's black bohemia. Thurman set out to shock the Harlem Renaissance establishment, represented by such figures as W. E. B. Du Bois and Alain Locke, through his extravagant lifestyle. His life involved sexual transgressions in the form of interracial and intraracial alliances in both heterosexual and homosexual contexts. For example, Thurman lived for a time with a white Canadian friend, Jan Harald Stefansson, with whom he was also sexually involved.

Thurman furthermore sought to be provocative through his literary ventures. He organized the most transgressive literary collaboration of the renaissance, the short-lived journal *Fire!!* (1926). The magazine failed, only a few copies having been sold (later, the remaining copies were accidentally burned), and Thurman was left deeply in debt; yet he continued his literary activities as well as his bohemian lifestyle.

Thurman published articles in major periodicals such as *The New Republic*; wrote reviews; wrote his first novel, *The Blacker the Berry* (1929); joined (for a brief period) the cast of the play *Porgy*; produced a guide to contemporary Harlem, *Negro Life in New York's Harlem* (1928); and wrote a play, *Harlem* (1929), a reworking of the short story "Cordelia the Crude," which he had contributed to *Fire!!*. Thurman collaborated with a white writer, his friend William Jordan Rapp, on the play. He also collaborated with Rapp on the play *Jeremiah the Magnificent* (1935), which was based on the life of Marcus Garvey. Thurman and another white writer, Abraham L. Furman, wrote *The Interne* (1932), set in a hospital. The play *Harlem*, dealing with the struggles of an African American southern family in New York City and involving love, gambling, and murder, was controversial but successful and was even staged on Broadway.

Despite his prominent position within the Harlem Renaissance and his significant literary output, Thurman became increasingly dissatisfied; and he experienced a severe setback when his third attempt at creating a literary magazine, *Harlem: A Forum of Negro Life* (1928), survived for only one issue. Disillusioned with his own work and with the way the movement was developing, and furthermore physically damaged as a result of his personal excesses, Thurman apparently attempted to introduce stability in his life by marrying Louise Thompson. The wedding took place before the premiere of *Harlem*, but the marriage quickly failed. Acrimonious divorce proceedings, including attempts at blackmail, followed, but there was never a legal divorce.

Thurman opted to escape from Harlem, leaving for Salt Lake City and the West Coast shortly after the publication of *The Blacker the Berry* in February 1929. This novel has as a theme the folk saying “The blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice”—a theme it treats with bitter irony. Emma Lou, the protagonist, is subjected to discrimination and rejection because of her dark skin. Significantly, Thurman set himself apart from other writers of the Harlem Renaissance by focusing not on the issue of racism but on the far more controversial subject of intraracial color prejudice: that is, the practice among African Americans of assigning status according to the relative lightness or darkness of a person’s skin. Critics have frequently held that Thurman’s fiction contains strong autobiographical elements; discrimination and social ranking based on color, a reality within the African American community, formed part of Thurman’s own experience, as he was relatively dark skinned.

Thurman’s second novel, *Infants of the Spring* (1932), also has an autobiographical strain. Though it was not published until 1932, this book was apparently near completion in early 1930. *Infants of the Spring* is a satiric account of the Harlem Renaissance, invoking real figures associated with the movement. Thurman’s own stand-in, thinly disguised, is the protagonist Raymond Taylor, who throughout the novel reflects on issues of race and art. Friendship and love are two other major themes. The most famous section of the novel is a scene at a literary salon where all the great figures of the renaissance are gathered. They have a heated discussion about race, art, and the direction the movement is to take, ending in shouting matches and chaos. *Infants of the Spring* appeared on the market after the renaissance had passed its height, and at a time of economic depression, and it never received much critical attention.

Thurman continued his literary work, focusing on the world beyond the black artistic milieu. As indicated in his correspondence, he worked on plays and stories, and from 1932 on he also held two jobs: as “ghost editor” for the magazine *True Story* and as editor-in-chief of a publishing company, Macaulay. He was the only African American employed in such a position at a white publishing company. Meanwhile, though, his dependence on alcohol increased.

In 1934, Thurman signed with Foy Productions in Hollywood, creating two stories for the screenplays of *Tomorrow’s Children*, a movie about sterilization, and *High School Girl*, which centered on abortion and teenage pregnancy. In mid-1934, Thurman returned to New York City with new plans for literary ventures, but these were not realized. He died after a six-month stay in the “incurables’ ward” of City Hospital.

Thurman never quite lived up to his artistic promise, and success often escaped him. Nevertheless, he shaped the Harlem Renaissance from within, proving himself a valuable contributor to, and critic of, the movement. He remains an outstanding figure of the Harlem Renaissance who managed to cross the barriers normally limiting African American writers and artists by working as a writer, editor, and critic not only in a black professional environment but also in the white-dominated publishing and entertainment industry.

Biography

Wallace Henry Thurman was born on 16 August 1902 in Salt Lake City, Utah. He attended West Salt Lake High School, 1914–1919; did premedical studies at the University of Utah, 1920; and attended the School of Journalism, University of Southern California—Los Angeles, 1922–1923. He was associate editor at the black Los Angeles newspaper the *Pacific Defender*, 1923; editor of *The Outlet*, 1924; reporter and writer for *The Looking Glass*, 1925; an editor at *The Messenger*, 1925–1926; editor of *Fire!!*, 1926; circulation manager at *The World Tomorrow*; 1926; editor of *Harlem: A Forum of Negro Life*, 1928; ghost editor and writer for *True Story*, 1932; and editor-in-chief of the Macaulay Company, 1932. Thurman died on 22 December 1934 in City Hospital, Welfare Island, New York.

A. B. CHRISTA SCHWARTZ

See also Black Bohemia; Bontemps, Arna; Douglas, Aaron; Du Bois, W. E. B.; *Fire!!*; *Harlem: A Forum of*

Negro Life; Homosexuality; Hurston, Zora Neale; Infants of the Spring; Lewis, Theophilus; Locke, Alain; Macaulay; Messenger, The; Nugent, Richard Bruce; Porgy: Play

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Tolson, Melvin B.

Melvin B. Tolson was an African American poet, newspaper columnist, and university teacher of literature and drama. His reputation rests largely on two controversial books of poetry: *Libretto for the Republic of Liberia* (1953) and *Harlem Gallery* (1965). Tolson's career as a poet approached success only toward the end of his life, and it is only in recent years that he has been granted critical appreciation as a major literary figure.

Although Tolson is not usually placed in the Harlem Renaissance, as it is generally understood, he consistently and enthusiastically associated himself with it in his writings and public lectures. Tolson often spoke of his personal familiarity with the writers that he referred to as the Harlem group. He is known for his long poem about Harlem in the 1920s, *Harlem Gallery*, Book 1, *The Curator*; this poem is often invoked as a cosmopolitan literary work that captures the revolutionary spirit of the movement. Tolson's idea of what he wanted to write about Harlem evolved over the course of thirty years, and *Harlem Gallery* is but the first of a planned five-volume epic history of black Americans. That his historic poem began with the Harlem poems demonstrates the centrality of Harlem in Tolson's thought.

Tolson, a native Oklahoman who lived in Texas, was in New York during 1931 and 1932 while attending graduate courses in literature at Columbia University. While doing research for his master's thesis, "The Harlem Group of Negro Writers," Tolson interviewed several of the writers who lived in New York at the time, and he also read all the available books and articles covering the twenty-year period of the Harlem Renaissance. For Tolson, the movement began in 1917, and he continued to revise his thesis as late as 1937. Although Tolson's thesis on the Harlem writers was the earliest effort by an African American to study the Harlem Renaissance, his study was overlooked by nearly every subsequent inquiry into this literary movement. This is surprising, given that Tolson's research and methodology were based on written sources and his findings were in line with the subsequent studies of the Harlem Renaissance that began to

appear thirty years after his thesis. As a critic, Tolson was ahead of his time in several ways. With a grasp of the complexity of the artistic production of the Harlem group, he observed that in Countee Cullen's classicism and conservatism and Langston Hughes's experimentalism and radicalism are to be found the "antipodes of the Harlem Renaissance." Even though he limited his discussion to African American writers, he placed Harlemite writing within a culturally pluralistic framework that related black writing to what was happening in the national culture.

Tolson stated that his aims were to give the social background to the literary development of the New Negro, to apply modern criticism to the lives and works of the leading contemporary writers, and to interpret the attitudes and stylistic methods discovered in the Harlem Renaissance. Tolson's 139-page thesis is the first listing of the major Harlemite writers, or canon; it includes Cullen, Hughes, W. E. B. Du Bois, Jessie Redmon Fauset, Rudolph Fisher, Claude McKay, George Schuyler, Eric Walrond, and Walter White. Tolson's evaluation of major writers differs from the canon arrived at in the subsequent seventy years, which elevates Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larsen, and Jean Toomer over any of Tolson's choices. Tolson's thesis also provided two initial chapters that located the Harlem movement historically and socially.

Tolson's relatively brief stay in Harlem was in many ways the formative experience of his life. Tolson had taken a year of leave from his teaching duties at Wiley College in Marshall, Texas, and after completing his coursework he returned to the classroom. Tolson did not hand in his thesis until 1940, though he had a nearly complete draft in 1932.

While in Harlem he conceived an ambition to write an epic poem about Harlem, and this led him to write *A Gallery of Harlem Portraits*, a 340-page manuscript of 200 verse portraits, patterned after Edgar Lee Masters's *Spoon River Anthology*. He completed this work in 1935. Although the setting was the 1920s, the poems were heavily influenced by leftist politics and were written in the proletarian mode of Depression-era social realism. Because of the radical political positions expressed in *Harlem Portraits*, Tolson was unable to publish this manuscript.

Nevertheless, the early epic laid the groundwork for *Harlem Gallery*, the high-modernist long poem for which Tolson has been receiving increased critical attention since Bérubé's study (1992) of the critical reception of Tolson and Thomas Pynchon. The renewed interest in *Harlem Gallery* resulted in a new

edition: "*Harlem Gallery*" and *Other Poems* (1999), edited by Raymond Nelson. Although Tolson adopted the modernist literary style, he continued to affirm his adherence to Marxism.

Harlem Gallery, a sequence in the high-modernist style, is a narrative composed of twenty-four densely allusive Pindaric odes, each titled after a letter of the Greek alphabet. This work has often been compared to T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Stephen Crane's *The Bridge*. However, it is also noted for its faithfulness to Harlem as a milieu; for example, Russell (1980) examines the poem's depiction of Harlem in the 1920s. The subject of much of *Harlem Gallery* is race, although this theme is interwoven with questions about art. The setting is Harlem, chiefly a nightclub and an art gallery, and much of the poem is given to abstract sociological and philosophical questions as they are debated by the poem's two main characters: the curator, the director of the Harlem Gallery; and Dr. Obi Nkomo, an art critic. As an indication of the paradoxes that characterize the poem, the curator is an octoroon (a person with ancestry that is one-eighth black) and brags that he is able to pass for white, while Nkomo is a dark-skinned African. When these two men debate, it is in language that is so allusive and ironic as to give little idea of the positions they are advocating. At times the poem descends from its difficult style and presents passages, in the jazz poetry of Hideho Heights, that celebrate Louis Armstrong and John Henry, and the imagist poems of the composer Mister Starks.

Biography

Melvin Beaunorus Tolson was born on 6 February 1898 (the date is disputed) in Moberly, Missouri. He attended public high school in Kansas City, Missouri; Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee, 1919; Lincoln University, Oxford, Pennsylvania, B.A., 1923; and Columbia University, New York City, M.A., 1940. He taught at Wiley College, Marshall, Texas, 1924–1947; and Langston University, Langston, Oklahoma, 1947–1965. His awards included first place, National Poetry Contest, American Negro Exposition, Chicago, Illinois, 1939; Omega Psi Phi award for creative literature, 1945; Bess Hokim Award, *Poetry* magazine, 1951; doctor of letters, Lincoln University, 1954; Bread Loaf Fellow, 1954; Avalon Chair in Humanities, Tuskegee Institute, 1965; doctor of humane letters, Lincoln University, 1965; and Poetry Award, American

Academy of Arts and Letters, 1966. Tolson died in Langston, Oklahoma, on 29 August 1966.

JON WOODSON

See also Literature: 7—Poetry; Modernism

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Toomer, Jean

Jean Toomer was a poet, dramatist, novelist, essayist, philosopher, and teacher. He was the author of several books, including *Cane* (1923), and was a bridge between two distinct but contemporaneous groups of American writers. The first group consists of authors such as Sterling Brown, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Nella Larsen, whose writings define the scope of the New Negro movement, or Harlem Renaissance. The second group consists of such writers as Sherwood Anderson, Waldo Frank, and Gorham Munson, who dominated the literary scene of Greenwich Village and whose writings are characterized by experimentalism and political liberalism. Toomer was a comrade-in-letters to Frank

and Munson, and a distant but influential figure to Hughes and Hurston, who admired the achievement of *Cane*, the three-part collection of sketches, poetry, and drama that established a standard for writers of the New Negro movement and that conveyed the profound search for meaning at the core of American modernism.

In 1918, Toomer completed "Bona and Paul," the first of several stories in *Cane*. Although he had no firm prospects, his career as a writer was slowly taking on direction and significance. In 1920, during a sojourn in Greenwich Village, where he established friendships with Frank and Munson, he assumed the name Jean Toomer (having been born Nathan Pinchback Toomer). In search of a means to solidify his emerging identity as a writer, Toomer adopted the new name shortly after his immersion in the literary life of Greenwich Village and after reading Romain Rolland's *Jean Christophe* (1904), in whose protagonist Toomer had glimpsed his own potentiality as an artist.

Toomer's acceptance in the summer of 1921 of a two-month appointment as acting principle at the Sparta Agricultural and Industrial Institute in Georgia provided him with experiences that forged a new identity in art. Visiting the South for the first time, Toomer was captivated by the landscape of Georgia; its complex history of displacement, slavery, and segregation; and the impact of African Americans on the development of southern culture. Enthralled by the beauty of African American vernacular culture, Toomer also detected its dissolution in the historic migration of African Americans from the South to the North, and also in the enlarging reach of industrialization.

Returning to Washington, Toomer began writing the masterpiece which he would later reject but on which his reputation as a writer remains secure. By December 1921, he had written "Kabnis," the drama that makes up the third section of *Cane*. One year later he had completed the experimental work that is a record of his discovery of his southern heritage, an homage to a folk culture that he believed was evanescent, and an exploration of the forces that he believed were the reason for the spiritual fragmenting of his generation. With the assistance of Frank, who wrote the foreword to the first edition, Toomer's first and most important book was published in the spring of 1923 by Horace Liveright. Although it was praised by reviewers, *Cane* sold fewer than 500 copies, casting a shadow across Toomer's otherwise triumphant literary debut.

After *Cane*, Toomer did not return to the setting and culture that had inspired the only book of fiction

he published during his lifetime. While the search for wholeness remained a central theme in Toomer's large but uneven canon, African American life was never again the subject. His later writings bear the influence George I. Gurdjieff, a Russian mystic and psychologist whose theories of human development Toomer accepted and promoted as gospel. Beginning in the year of *Cane's* publication and continuing with few interruptions until his death, Toomer's commitment to Gurdjieff's theories had disastrous consequences for his writings. In his unpublished writings, Toomer created situations that were little more than propaganda for Gurdjieff's theories. In these works, one discovers protagonists who bear resemblances to Toomer himself and who function as guides to characters possessing only a vague awareness of their spiritual potentiality. This regrettable mixture of cant and vanity explains Toomer's obscurity after 1923. While Toomer continued to write until a few years before his death, he never again produced a work comparable in power and influence to *Cane*.

Of racially mixed heritage, Toomer defined himself not as an African American but simply as an American. Toomer's lifelong effort to transcend what he regarded as the narrow divisions of race is fully explored in *Essentials* (1931) and the epic *The Blue Meridian* (1936). Toomer's position on race is the principal reason for the absence of racial themes in the writings produced during and after his discovery of Gurdjieff, as well as for his conscious disassociation from *Cane* and from the writers and artists of the Harlem Renaissance.

Biography

Jean Toomer (Nathan Pinchback Toomer) was the only child of Nina Pinchback and Nathan Toomer. He was born on 29 March 1894 in Washington, D.C. Five years later, his mother divorced his father and returned to the home of her parents, Nina Hethorn Pinchback and P. B. S. Pinchback, who had been a lieutenant governor of Louisiana during Reconstruction. After Nina Pinchback's death in 1909, the Pinchbacks assumed full responsibility for the rearing of their grandson. Toomer was encouraged in his literary pursuits by his grandmother, to whom *Cane* is dedicated, and by his uncle Bismark Pinchback. He was educated in the segregated public schools of Washington and graduated from Paul Laurence Dunbar High School in 1914. Between 1914 and 1919 he explored a spectrum of intellectual interests and enrolled at the University of

Wisconsin, the American College of Physical Training in Chicago, the University of Chicago, and New York University; he returned to Washington in 1919 without a degree, however. In 1921, he was acting principle at the Sparta Agricultural and Industrial Institute in Georgia. *Cane* was published in 1923. Toomer became an adherent of the mystic George I. Gurdjieff at about this time; the association had an adverse effect on his writing. Toomer died on 30 March 1967.

RUDOLPH P. BYRD

See also Anderson, Sherwood; Brown, Sterling; Cane; Frank, Waldo; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; Larsen, Nella

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Tree of Hope

The “Tree of Hope” was a large elm outside the Lafayette Theater at 132nd Street and Seventh Avenue, in the heart of Harlem’s club and theater district. The tree became a gathering place for unemployed black entertainers, and it acquired a reputation for bringing work—and good luck in general—to those who rubbed or kissed its bark. Performers of Harlem could often be found socializing and practicing their acts under the tree. Agents and club owners often passed by the tree on their way to entertainment venues, stopping to talk with the entertainers and often bearing news of available or forthcoming jobs and opportunities.

It is unclear whether the tree was cut down in the 1930s to make way for a redevelopment project on Seventh Avenue, or was destroyed in 1941 when an automobile crashed into it. According to one legend, Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, known as the unofficial mayor of Harlem, paid to have it moved rather than see it destroyed. Local people were said to have been distraught at the tree’s demise and to have pulled off pieces of bark as keepsakes and good-luck charms.

The Apollo Theater obtained part of the stump. It was placed beside the stage at the Apollo, where performers continued the tradition of rubbing it for good luck before going onstage. The “Tree of Hope” also returned to the Lafayette Theater; part of the stump was placed at the stage entrance. Robinson also managed to create a memorial to the tree. A plaque at 132nd and Seventh Avenue in Harlem, where the tree once stood, reads: “The Original Tree of Hope Beloved

by Citizens of Harlem. You Asked for a Tree of Hope, So Here ‘Tis and Best Wishes—Bill Robinson.”

VERONDA J. PITCHFORD

See also Apollo Theater; Lafayette Theater; Robinson, Bill “Bojangles”

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Tri-Arts Club

The Tri-Arts Club was part of the “little theater” movement; the three arts referred to in its name are acting, playwriting, and musical performance. In 1923, the Tri-Arts Club presented three one-act plays at the Harlem branch of the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) on West 132nd Street.

During the Harlem Renaissance, African American theater lagged behind the other arts in popularity and in its significance to black culture. There were at least three reasons for this. First, little or no African American tradition of theater had developed by the turn of the twentieth century, and between 1910 and 1930 only about a dozen major theater groups were formed. Second, black actors and dramatists needed work, and they could not commit themselves to serious drama, which simply did not attract paying audiences. Third, theater required the collaboration of many people and involved substantial production costs.

Like most other theater groups of Harlem at this time, the Tri-Arts Club sponsored light plays. In so doing, it offended Theophilus Lewis, who was then the only regular African American drama critic. In February 1924, Lewis lamented in his column in *The Messenger* that the group might have devoted its efforts to subject matter more relevant to African American life. He hoped that the “little theater” movement would serve as precursor to, and a component of, a national black theater. To Lewis’s disappointment, Tri-Arts instead staged three one-act plays: *The Lady of the Hairpins*, a Japanese drama; *The Criminal*, by Leroy N. Jorgeson; and *The Wooing of Frazee*, by Frederick Hogan.

If these works were light, however, they were also notable for having been organized, written, produced, and managed by blacks in an effort to combat the negative image of African Americans that still persisted from traditional minstrelsy. The casts included Rupert Marks, Lillian Mattison, Marie Santos, Arthur Taylor, and John Watson. Details of these productions have been lost to time, but it is possible that a woman wrote *The Lady of the Hairpins*. The little theater movement, significantly, provided opportunities for new women playwrights, who commonly addressed issues of gender in their work.

In relying on the Harlem YWCA as its production facility, the Tri-Arts Club followed a common practice of the little theater movement. Theater groups in this movement lacked the money to create their own production facilities, and so they used venues that were seeking African American audiences for other purposes. The YWCA, for instance, wanted to recruit women members, and it used entertaining events, discussion groups, lectures, light calisthenics, and cooking classes as a draw. The stage for the plays would have been a small one, probably in the basement, with an accompanying minimalist set. Chairs would be set up to accommodate a small audience of fewer than 200 people.

The Tri-Arts Club sponsored no more dramatic productions, and evidently no references to this organization can be found after 1923.

CARYN E. NEUMANN

See also Lewis, Theophilus; Messenger, The

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Tropic Death

Tropic Death (1926) is a collection of short stories by Eric Walrond. It was published eight years after Walrond arrived in New York from the West Indies, and it contributed to a sense of pan-Africanism among foreign-born blacks in the United States.

Tropic Death, often regarded as a literary counterpart and rival to Jean Toomer's *Cane* (1923), contains ten short stories, many of which are broken into various parts as well as being written in varieties of speech. The stories—set in the West Indies, particularly Barbados, Panama, and British Guiana—contain autobiographical elements. They offer insight into black life and the harsh realities associated with these colonized islands and the people who inhabit them, including family struggles and poverty.

Tropic Death was highly influential throughout the Harlem Renaissance. Walrond was especially interested in encouraging and supporting blacks without using the propaganda that was so common at the time. As a black author, he believed it was important for him to write works that did not focus on the "race problem." Rather, he felt that social protest could be ingrained in objective fiction; therefore, his work presented social and cultural dimensions of black life from a black perspective, in order to preserve the richness of that life.

Walrond uses imagery in *Tropic Death* to paint pictures of all aspects of black life, including unfavorable aspects. The themes and ideas in *Tropic Death* are conveyed through the beauty and evil of the earth, through folk traditions and hymns, and through the presence of obeah as revealed in the many lives and stories introduced in each narrative. Some of the themes in Walrond's work were considered controversial during the Harlem Renaissance, and some blacks were outraged that he exposed the harsh conditions of life in the West Indies. His themes include the desire of blacks to rise in society, the desire of blacks and mulattoes for "whiteness," the oppression inflicted by white racism, and the class conflict and adjustments entailed by colonialism and industrialization introduced from the West. In *Tropic Death*, Walrond used private lives to make specific statements about society; the stories provide an outlook on cultural diversity and the ability or inability of diverse cultures to coexist.

The story "The Yellow One," which focuses on racial discord and racial and gender anxiety, takes place aboard a migrant ship filled with passengers of varied cultures and races. "The Palm Porch" is about a mulatto mother who seeks wealth and power and ultimately is upset when her light-skinned daughters marry black men. "Subjection" comes closest to being protest literature: In this story, a white marine searches for and brutally kills a black worker who has spoken out against the marine's violence toward a fellow worker.

Tropic Death was not Walrond's initial connection to the Harlem Renaissance; he was a member of the editorial staff of Marcus Garvey's *Negro World* in the early 1920s. It was *Tropic Death* that bolstered his reputation as a significant author of Caribbean fiction, however, because of his skill in presenting the vivid reality of peasant life in the West Indies and the ability of his work to speak to all humanity

LISA A. CZERNIECKI

See also Cane; Negro World; Walrond, Eric

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Trotter, William Monroe

William Monroe Trotter, a pioneering publisher and activist, was one of the most important figures in the struggle for African American civil rights in the early twentieth century, and an influential predecessor of some of the most strident writers and activists of the Harlem Renaissance.

Trotter was raised in Boston, in that city's abolitionist tradition, and he absorbed a passion for racial equality from his father, James Monroe Trotter, a noted political organizer and scholar of African American music. Trotter graduated with honors from Harvard College in 1895 and earned a graduate degree a year later. He entered the real estate profession, setting up his own business as an insurance agent and mortgage negotiator in 1899, the same year that he married Geraldine Louise Pindell. The Trotters were active in the social and political life of Boston's black elite: Trotter helped found the Boston Literary and Historical Association in March 1901 and the Massachusetts Racial Protective Association (MRPA) later that year; both groups were intended as challenges to the accommodationism of Booker T. Washington.

Trotter soon abandoned real estate for publishing. In November 1901, together with Geraldine Trotter and two fellow members of MRPA, George W. Forbes and William H. Scott, Trotter began publication of the *Boston Guardian*, a weekly paper that sought "to voice intelligently the needs and aspirations of the colored American." Within a year, it had achieved a circulation of 2,500. In every issue, Trotter took on the ideas of his archenemy Booker T. Washington, insisting that political rights and access to a complete academic education were key elements of advancement for blacks. The two faced off on 30 July 1903, when Trotter and a group of associates interrupted a speech by Washington at the Columbus Avenue AME Zion Church in Boston; the meeting degenerated in chaos and near-violence, and Trotter was arrested. Outraged by the episode, Washington saw to it that Trotter was prosecuted to the full extent of the law, but Trotter's sentence of thirty days in prison had the unintended effect of making him a hero to members of the black community discontented with Washington's views. Washington would later secretly finance three weekly papers in Boston in the 1900s to challenge Trotter's influence.

Trotter founded numerous political organizations, although his notoriously difficult personality and his lack of interest in mass political mobilization meant that none of these groups ever achieved popularity at the grassroots level. For a brief period, he worked closely with W. E. B. Du Bois; their collaboration led to the formation in July 1905 of the Niagara movement, which pushed for equal political and educational rights. Trotter headed up the group's committee on the press and public opinion, and he and Du Bois drafted its founding "Declaration of Principles." Trotter soon split with Du Bois, however, resigning from the Niagara movement in 1907; without the *Boston Guardian* as its mouthpiece, the group quickly folded, and most of its members joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Although Trotter attended the NAACP's opening convention in May 1909, he refused to join, on the grounds that the organization was too moderate and was dominated by its white leadership. Instead, he poured his energies into his own group, the Negro-American Political League, later renamed the National Equal Rights League (NERL). Founded in April 1908, NERL was conceived as "an organization of the colored people and for the colored people and led by the colored people," a direct challenge to the NAACP.

Trotter's agenda included the defense of black people's civil rights and resistance to the emerging

segregation and disenfranchisement of the era. Trotter never wavered in his militancy: When he met with President Woodrow Wilson in November 1914 to protest the segregation of the federal government, Trotter was summarily ejected from Wilson's office after uttering some harsh words and shaking a finger at the president. In 1915, Trotter led protests against the racist film *Birth of a Nation*; he and ten others were arrested when the film was screened at the Tremont Theater in Boston. Trotter frequently courted arrest in order to get publicity, long before such an approach was adopted by the postwar civil rights movement.

During World War I, Trotter came under federal surveillance because of his strident demands for civil rights and his cooperation with the radical activist Hubert H. Harrison's Liberty League. He refused to attend a government-sponsored conference of black editors, choosing instead to organize the National Liberty Congress in Washington in June 1918. After the war, Trotter hoped to represent NERL at the Versailles Peace Conference to urge the adoption of a provision outlawing racial discrimination. Certain that the Wilson administration would deny him a passport, Trotter traveled to France as a cook on a transatlantic ship. He arrived after Du Bois's Pan-African Congress had ended; although Trotter made some connections with the Japanese delegation, he had almost no influence on events at Versailles. He later testified against the treaty in the U.S. Congress.

In the 1920s, the emergence of a new generation of political activists emboldened by the war and the expansion of the black press combined to displace Trotter from the national spotlight. He had also lost the editorial and emotional support of his wife, who died in an influenza epidemic of 1918. The circulation of the *Guardian* declined noticeably, and more and more of Trotter's own personal funds were needed in order to publish it. He did continue his activism, speaking out in his paper against the philosophies of Marcus Garvey, and meeting with President Calvin Coolidge in 1926 to protest segregation in the federal government. He engaged in some protest activities in Boston. In 1921, when *The Birth of a Nation* was again released in Massachusetts, Trotter collaborated with the NAACP and the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic fraternal order, in efforts that led to the adoption of stringent legal censorship of motion pictures in the state. He also challenged the segregation of Harvard's dormitories and successfully fought for the integration of city hospital staffs.

In April 1934, almost bankrupt, Trotter either jumped or fell to his death from the roof of his apartment building in Boston. His sister Maude Trotter Steward continued publication of the *Boston Guardian* until her death in 1957.

Biography

William Monroe Trotter was born in Chillicothe, Ohio, on 7 April 1872. He attended Hyde Park Grammar School and Hyde Park High School, Boston, Massachusetts; and Harvard College (A.B., 1895; A.M., 1896). He was an editor, *Boston Guardian*, 1901–1934. He was a founder, Boston Literary and Historical Association, 1901; Massachusetts Racial Protective Association, 1901; National Negro Suffrage League, 1903; Boston Suffrage League, 1903; New England Suffrage League, 1904; Niagara movement, 1905; and National Equal Rights League, 1908. Trotter died in Boston, Massachusetts, on 7 April 1934.

CHRISTOPHER CAPOZZOLA

See also Birth of a Nation, The; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Guardian, The; Harrison, Hubert; Niagara Movement; Washington, Booker T.

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Tucker, Earl "Snakehips"

Earl "Snakehips" (or "Snake Hips") Tucker was a charismatic dancer who set the standard for the "snakehips" dance. Although he was among the celebrities of the Harlem Renaissance, little is known of his family history or early biography. Illiterate, he apparently moved from Baltimore, Maryland, to New York City in the mid-1920s. He

danced in New York nightclubs as an “eccentric” act, working solo at Connie’s Inn and the Cotton Club. Tucker performed to Duke Ellington’s composition “East St. Louis Toodle-oo” (1926), and Ellington, with whom the dancer worked frequently, later composed “Snake Hips Dance” for him. His breakthrough performance in the Broadway revue *Blackbirds* in 1928 solidified his fame and influence. He also appeared at the Savoy Ballroom, the Roseland Ballroom, Small’s Paradise, and the Stork Club.

So-called eccentric dancers emphasized extreme isolation of body parts in rhythmic motion to create mesmerizing dances. These dancers were unfamiliar to most audiences in the United States but reflected African-based dance practices seen in the Caribbean. Many audiences found Tucker’s dance sexually explicit.

Tucker’s stage act varied little in practice during his ten years of celebrity, and its five basic elements can be seen in the short film *Symphony in Black: A Rhapsody of Negro Life* (1935). He typically entered with a sliding step of the feet as his body cascaded, seemingly without the limitation of bones, in abrupt rhythmic accents. He performed the “snakehips” dance itself, moving his pelvis in wider and wider circles as his feet crossed each other, tracing small circles on the floor. He followed this physical exaggeration with a brief pantomime parody of the Charleston dance, and then a sliding “belly roll” segment in which he isolated segments of his torso with great rhythmic control, working upward from the knees, through the pelvis, and into the torso, chest, and shoulders as the feet slid in counterpoint. Tucker also performed a “tremble” segment, in which he held his body as a single unit but allowed a fast inner rhythm to emerge from his feet and vibrate his entire body. His standard costume emphasized his exaggerations: He wore a loose white silk blouse and tight black pants finished with a sequined waist sash and tassel. His performance persona was at once menacing and provocative.

Tucker has been described as “the first male headliner who did not tap.” His influence was profound and far-reaching; and his expertise and charisma drew audiences to consider extravagant isolations of the torso and pelvis, an interest that trickled down to latter-day male dancers including Elvis Presley and Prince.

When Tucker suddenly became ill, Duke Ellington, who treated him like a musician in the Ellington orchestra, paid the hospital bills. Tucker died of unspecified “internal ailments” in 1937.

Biography

Earl “Snakehips” Tucker was born c. 1909 near Baltimore, Maryland. He moved to New York City in the mid-1920s and began performing at Connie’s Inn and the Cotton Club, often with the Duke Ellington Orchestra. His Broadway debut was in *Blackbirds of 1928*. He remained a celebrity for a decade. Tucker died in New York City in 1937.

THOMAS DEFRAntZ

See also *Blackbirds*; *Cotton Club*; *Dance*; *Ellington, Duke*; *Roseland Ballroom*; *Savoy Ballroom*; *Small’s Paradise*

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“Rhythmania.” (Cotton Club.)

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Tuskegee Experiment

The Tuskegee syphilis experiment was a study conducted between 1932 and 1972 in which 399 African American men with syphilis were left untreated in order to study the course of the disease. The study, run in its later years by the Centers for Disease Control, also involved 201 men who did not have the disease; they were used as controls in order to have a group of men with similar backgrounds to compare against the infected men.

Women were not used, because it would have been more difficult to identify their date of initial infection, and it was important to the findings to use subjects who were in the tertiary stage (the last and most damaging phase of syphilis). In this phase, common complications include crust-covered ulcers on the skin, deterioration of the bones, and scar tissue forming in the heart or

the stretching of its vessel walls, causing an aneurysm and possibly an aortic rupture, leading to sudden death. Doctors involved in the study found it convenient to use the term “bad blood” instead of explaining the meaning of “syphilis”; it was not uncommon for the terms to be used interchangeably. To those being tested, the term “bad blood” covered a diversity of ailments, including problems as simple as common headaches and body aches. At the end of the experiment, many did not understand that they had syphilis and were still under the impression that they were being treated.

An important study of syphilis had taken place in Macon County, Alabama, a year before the Tuskegee experiment began. The Julius Rosenwald Fund—a philanthropic organization that set forth as one of its primary goals the financial support of causes and organizations that would improve the conditions of African Americans—joined the U.S. Public Health Service (PHS) to carry out demonstrations of syphilis control in six locations, targeting rural southern areas with a large number of blacks. Among the six areas chosen was Macon County, Alabama, the home of Tuskegee Institute. Of the six areas tested, Macon County was found to have the highest rate of infection, 36 percent.

PHS hoped to continue the study, but state and local health officials seemed unable to contribute any substantial amount of money—and a defining rule of the Rosenwald Fund was that local organizations had to help carry out the programs. Expansion would be necessary if the demonstration continued, and the Rosenwald Fund could not, financially, undertake the task of curing and caring for an entire county. The standard process for treating syphilis in the 1930s took more than a year to administer to each patient and involved several drugs (including two arsenic compounds and mercury). In addition, the program would have had to expand to include other diseases. With regret, the Rosenwald Fund withdrew monetary support.

When the head of PHS, Dr. Taliaferro Clark, finished a report on the syphilis control demonstration, however, an idea occurred to him for a new study that would become “the longest non-therapeutic experiment on human beings in medical history” (Jones 1993, 91). Clark felt that the population of Macon County offered an exceptional opportunity to study the course of untreated syphilis. Only thirty-three of the 1,400 blacks involved in the demonstration had received any type of treatment for the disease, and

none of those thirty-three had received the standard full course of medication. No study using the scientific method had ever proved that syphilis affected blacks and whites differently. This belief—based only on doctors’ observations—was discussed in medical literature; many physicians in the 1930s hypothesized that during the later stages of syphilis the cardiovascular system was more likely to be attacked in blacks and the neural system in whites. An important study on syphilis, the Oslo study, had been completed using white patients in 1929, but it was based on the case records of these patients. Clark felt he could improve the study design by being able to conduct live physical examinations. He appeared to have no ethical conflicts regarding the study; he used “phrases like ‘unparalleled opportunity’ and ‘ready-made opportunity’ in referring to the study. The phrases seemed to equate the absence of obstacles with a mandate. They were not the words of a man who entertained any ethical or moral qualms about what he was proposing” (Jones, 94).

When first conceived, the study was scheduled to last only about six months. Therefore, the ethical implications of not treating these patients seemed unimportant: Medication could be made available afterward. Eventually, as a concession to the state board of health of Alabama, Clark agreed to provide some medication to those who tested positive. It was expected, not unrealistically, that the patients would be cured; in any event, however, it was hoped that they would become noninfectious for some period of time.

Clark placed Dr. Raymond A. Vonderlehr in charge of the study. Vonderlehr’s postgraduate work included an extensive study of cardiovascular syphilis, which was Clark’s main interest with respect to the Tuskegee experiment. During the initial experiment, the men received an extensive physical examination, and on a separate visit most received a spinal tap. At the original end date of the study, Vonderlehr submitted his findings to the American Heart Association and was told that these findings were inconclusive. The Heart Association’s panel believed there was no substantial proof that syphilis was the direct cause of the cardiovascular complications in the subjects. Vonderlehr disagreed and wanted to continue the study in order to find more support for his claim, but PHS was under a financial strain. It was unlikely the experiment would continue.

The Tuskegee experiment was kept alive by the retirement of Clark as the head of PHS. His successor was Vonderlehr, who—with a new, influential position—made sure that the study continued. He expanded the scope of the experiment. The patients

would now be seen through to the time of their autopsy. Much more information about the effects of the disease on the body could then be obtained than were possible with a physical examination. The addition of 200 men as a control group would give a basis for comparison. The men received periodic examinations, placebo drugs, and promises that they were being treated for “bad blood.” It is estimated that by 1969 between twenty-eight and one hundred men died as a direct result of complications from the disease.

By the end of the 1930s, the study moved forward and had a well-established bureaucracy. American health organizations traveled throughout the country targeting syphilis, but the men of the Tuskegee experiment were repeatedly prevented from receiving treatment. In the late 1940s, as penicillin became the standard treatment, PHS would still insist that the experiment was more important.

The story reached national attention on 25 July 1972, when it was reported by the Associated Press. A congressional panel was established, and the study was officially terminated in October. A lawsuit filed by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People provided the survivors with a settlement of more than \$9 million. In addition, the federal government would be responsible for providing free medical care and burial services to the remaining participants and their families. On 16 May 1997, President Bill Clinton publicly acknowledged the wrongdoing of the government with a formal apology.

EBONY Z. GIBSON

See also Harlem: 6—Public Health

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267 House

From 1926 to 1928, 267 House at 267 West 136th Street, known as “Niggeratti Manor,” was the residence of Richard Bruce Nugent and Wallace Thurman, famous members of Harlem’s literati. Nugent and Thurman’s room, where many parties and gatherings took place, became one of Harlem’s bohemian centers. There, black men and women “in the life” (gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people) met, drank bathtub gin, listened to music, watched performances, and discussed black art.

Unlike Harlem’s other bohemian centers, 267 produced a literary journal, *Fire!!—Devoted to Younger Negro Artists*, though it produced only one issue (November 1926). The idea for this journal arose when Nugent met Langston Hughes at one of Georgia Douglas Johnson’s weekly literary salons in Washington, D.C.; however, most of the work for *Fire!!* was done at Niggeratti Manor. Thurman became its editor; at the Manor, he and Nugent tossed a coin to see who would write a story “about homosexuality” and who would write one “about prostitution”—their intention being to obtain free publicity by getting *Fire!!* banned in Boston. Their contributions represented their goal as bohemians, “the cradle of revolt against establishment arts” (Lewis 1979, 193). *Fire!!* was indeed scorching, and it made the Manor widely known, if reviled in genteel company and in print. As a result, the Manor became a magnet for kindred iconoclast spirits.

One of those spirits was the writer Zora Neale Hurston, whom many scholars give credit for helping name 267. “Thurman and Hurston also mocked themselves by calling 267 House ‘Niggeratti Manor,’ and all the younger artists called Thurman their ‘leader’—the fullest embodiment of outrageous, amoral independence among them” (Lewis, 193). Long before the scholarly revival of the Harlem Renaissance, however, Nugent and Thurman were themselves interested in positioning their Manor and staking a claim for its bohemian, avant-garde art. They did so with Nugent’s unpublished novella “Gentleman Jigger” (c. 1930) and Thurman’s novel *Infants of the Spring* (1932). These similar histories of the Manor barely conceal the real

people on whom the characters are modeled, with exaggerations and editorial comment.

"Gentleman Jigger" sidesteps the question of who coined the term "niggerati" but focuses on the Manor, "the meeting place for all Negroes who could even pretend to the greatness that was to be the Negro under the new order." The figures who appear include Nugent (as the character Jerome Stuartt) and Thurman (as the character Raymond "Rusty" Pellman), as well as five others involved in creating *Fire!!*: Gwendolyn Bennett, John Davis, Aaron Douglas, Langston Hughes, and Hurston. They "were the all-in-all to the entire Negro Art Movement. Night after night they met to plan the future, the cultural future of their Race, with the aid of much gin and a Victrola [a brand of phonograph]. And as Stuartt had foreseen, Rusty and he were the nucleus of all this wonderful movement." *Infants of the Spring*, however, removes Thurman from the nucleus, leaving just Paul Arbian (Nugent's character), the most bohemian habitué of the Manor. Arbian coins the term "Niggeratti Manor" and decorates the place with his erotic drawings. The Manor comes alive through Arbian, "his six foot body, graceful and magnetic, his dirty yellow face aglow with some inner incandescence, his short stubborn hair defiantly disarrayed, his open shirt collar forming a dirty and inadequate frame for his classically curved neck" (44).

The Manor offered radical freedom, and it even attracted—as described in "Gentleman Jigger"—"the older school of nincompoops and fogies" whom the "Niggeratti" aimed to usurp. Both this work and *Infants of the Spring* describe how a character called Dr. A. L. Parkes (based on Alain Locke) tries to coordinate a literary salon at 267 and preside over "the outstanding personalities in a new generation [who] are not, as were [their] predecessors, concerned with donning armor, and clashing swords with the enemy in the public square" (233–234). Parkes warns, however, that he is "somewhat fearful of the decadent strain" distracting artists from their work (234). After a silent

pause, pandemonium erupts. The Manor's "outstanding personalities" clash over their different and sometimes glib opinions about the nature and purpose of black art. It is suggested that this lack of unity contributes to the demise of the Manor.

The real Niggeratti Manor officially ended when Nugent and Thurman moved to a rooming house at 128th Street between Lenox and Fifth avenues, where Thurman's friendship with Louise Thompson developed. Soon afterward, Thurman and Thompson were married. According to *Infants of the Spring*, the Manor's patron, Euphoria Blake, wants her indigent bohemians to leave so that she can transform 267 into a dormitory for "young bachelor women." Raymond Taylor (Thurman) moves in with Lucille (Thompson) after the denizens of the Manor have scattered. In "Gentleman Jigger," the demise of 267 is conveyed through Rusty's declining health. Stuartt lands a role as an extra in the New York debut of *Porgy* and then follows the production to London.

SETH CLARK SILBERMAN

See also Black Bohemia; *Fire!!*; Homosexuality; Hurston, Zora Neale; *Infants of the Spring*; Locke, Alain; Niggerati; Nugent, Richard Bruce; Patterson, Louise Thompson; Thurman, Wallace

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United Colored Democracy

Although black populations in New York City requested political appointments during the 1880s and 1890s, their requests were often ignored or mocked by the Republican Party. During the latter years of the nineteenth century, members of the black community were given the lowest offices that white politicians could offer. They were given positions as assistant janitors, street cleaners, and common laborers, with titles such as “street inspector” or “detailed inspector of garbage.” Osofsky (1960) verifies that black New Yorkers often sold their votes for minimal monetary sums on election day.

In 1898, two disgruntled black Republicans in New York, Edward E. Lee and James C. Carr, broke with the party and established the United Colored Democracy (UCD), the first black Democratic organization. Initially the community socially ostracized members of this new organization. For their political support of the New York Democratic County Committee at Tammany Hall, however, they were given greater political power than any blacks had experienced. Edward “Chief” Lee, an illiterate native of Virginia, was a bellman when he was named as the first Negro Democratic leader. Lee was appointed county sheriff for his political patronage and secured many jobs for blacks during his fifteen-year tenure as leader. Many blacks received more lucrative and impressive positions than Lee, however, probably because Lee was uneducated. Edwin Horne, grandfather of singer Lena Horne and secretary general of the United Colored Democracy, was named assistant inspector in the Combustible Division of the New York Fire Department.

Beginning in 1905, a black person was routinely named assistant district attorney.

White Democrats were organized through regional voting districts with individual leaders for each district, whereas UCD represented all black Democrats in the city. Black leadership was appointed, not elected, with black leaders represented by white leaders in the Tammany organization. Blacks were not integrated into the Democratic Party on the city or state level and were not able to organize at a grassroots level. UCD’s leaders benefited greatly from this relationship, while few rank-and-file members received precinct- or district-level positions. Because UCD was so broadly spread, it was ineffective in serving the needs of blacks in Harlem and other areas where blacks lived. Black activists tried to secure additional positions for black nurses and doctors at Harlem General Hospital, which served most of the city’s black citizens, in the 1920s. Unfortunately, the hospital was under white Tammany district control and did not lend its support to an increased black presence.

Although the Democratic affiliates firmly controlled most of the municipal patronage in the city, they faced strong patronage competition from the black Republican leader Charles Anderson on the state level. Anderson, who served as president of the Young Men’s Colored Republican Club of New York County beginning in 1890, supplied state patronage for black Republicans in numerous positions. Beginning in 1915, Ferdinand Q. Morton served as UCD leader; he was successful in getting blacks positions on the state assembly and council of aldermen. He was an ambitious, excellent organizer and orator whose success

surpassed that of Anderson. Morton was named an assistant district attorney from 1916 to 1921 and later was named municipal civil service commissioner in 1922 by Mayor John F. Hylan. When James “Jimmy” Walker later had a successful mayoral candidacy, he rewarded Morton by reappointing him as commissioner in 1927.

In addition to conflicts with black Republicans, UCD also had problems with Caribbean-born Democrats, who under the leadership of J. Raymond Jones sought municipal patronage from UCD. State corruption investigations and the Seabury corruption scandal led to the resignation of Mayor Jimmy Walker in 1932. Morton recognized the power shifting to Republicans. The newly elected mayor, Fiorello La Guardia, offered to reappoint Morton as commissioner if he changed political parties. Morton resigned his UCD leadership and his Democratic Party membership in 1935. To keep his position as commissioner, Morton joined the American Labor party.

Upon Morton’s defection, local blacks gained control over Harlem’s black Assembly District 19 and District 21. UCD lost all its power, and blacks were gradually included in the larger Democratic body.

KAREN COTTON MCDANIEL

See also Anderson, Charles W.; Morton, Ferdinand Q.; Party Politics; Politics and Politicians

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Universal Negro Improvement Association

The Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) was the brainchild of the black nationalist leader Marcus Garvey. Garvey was born on 17 August 1887 in Saint



Parade through Harlem by the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) convention, 1920. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

Ann’s Bay, Jamaica. He learned early—after several failed attempts to organize black workers—about the subtle nature of racism within the English administrative and political system. Garvey traveled to several areas in Central and South America, where he studied the conditions of Africans. In 1912, he traveled to London; there he came across Booker T. Washington’s autobiography *Up From Slavery*. This book transformed Garvey’s life and gave him a vision for building a great African kingdom.

In the summer of 1914, he returned to Jamaica, where, on 20 July, he formed the Universal Negro Improvement and Conservation Association and African Communities League (UNIA). The organization was designed to unite all peoples of color and African heritage. Originally, UNIA worked as a fraternal and benevolent organization dedicated to racial uplift and industrial training for blacks. It followed Booker T. Washington’s Tuskegee model. UNIA struggled in Jamaica but it blossomed when Garvey relocated to Harlem. By 1916, UNIA had headquarters in a small basement room in Harlem. Garvey was a tireless worker preaching racial uplift and self-help, and his efforts paid off as branches of UNIA began to spring up all over the country and several areas in the world.

By 1920, UNIA had spread to Canada, the Caribbean, Africa, and Central America. Garvey organized ordinary African Americans into a small army of loyal independent-minded citizens dedicated to his message of self-help and economic development. Garvey rallied these troops at large gatherings where he preached his positive message of racial uplift and black people’s greatness. He gave his followers a sense of belonging, creating a number of entities that

offered them an opportunity to lead and participate—a right unavailable in the larger society.

UNIA had an African League for young men. African American women had the Black Cross Nursing Corps and the Universal Motor Corps. UNIA also offered a juvenile division, a youth corps for young people who wanted to participate. UNIA had an official flag—red, black, and green. It also developed official poems, slogans, prayers, poetry, and songs to unite its followers.

On 17 August 1918, UNIA began publishing *Negro World*, its official newspaper, edited by Garvey. *Negro World* had a large circulation, reaching not only most major cities of the United States but the Caribbean, Canada, Europe, and Africa as well. In the early 1920s, the paper was made more accessible to its readers by including a women's section and by having French and Spanish editions. Several European countries banned the paper because of a fear of Garvey's call for black independence.

UNIA was supported by its philosophy of economic independence. The Negro Factories Corporation was created to finance black business enterprises. The idea was to create businesses that could support African American workers, produce black goods, sell to black customers, and supply black services. UNIA wanted to create a chain of black factories, retailers, services, and other businesses that could power an independent black economy, which could in turn support the black world. Garvey encouraged local branches of UNIA to own their own buildings and business enterprises. The branches owned such businesses as bakeries, millinery and hat factories, steam laundries, grocery stores, and haberdasheries.

The most celebrated enterprise of UNIA was the Black Star Line, a steamship company modeled after the White Star Line. It was opened on 23 June 1919 to promote commerce among African people worldwide. The company sold stock, allowing ordinary people to invest in the ambitious venture. The stock was sold through agents, rallies, advertisements in *Negro World*, and mailed circulars. UNIA purchased three ships: the *Frederick Douglass*, *Antonio Maceo*, and *Shadyside*.

As a business venture, the Black Star Line was a failure. UNIA was overcharged for the three ships, which all had major structural or engineering defects. Between 1919 and 1922, when the company finally went bankrupt, UNIA lost more than \$1 million. Many people in the African American community chided UNIA for its extravagance in buying the ships and paying the administrators.

The business dealings of the Black Star Line presented an opportunity for the FBI under J. Edgar Hoover to investigate and undermine the organization. FBI agents intensified their ongoing investigation, started in 1919, into Garvey and the organization. In all, Hoover coordinated the efforts of seven governmental agencies investigating UNIA. Early in 1922, the federal government charged Garvey with fraud, when UNIA officials mailed out advertisements for the Black Star Line even though they knew the company was bankrupt.

UNIA received a critical blow when Garvey, its leader and founder, was convicted of fraud and sent to prison in 1925. Membership in the organization declined significantly during the period 1925–1927, when Garvey was imprisoned. The organization was rocked by internal squabbling and outside pressures as it struggled to survive despite Garvey's absence. In 1927, Garvey was released from prison and deported back to Jamaica, setting off a scramble for control of the organization. In 1929, Garvey reincorporated the organization in Kingston, Jamaica. This created two UNIAs: one in New York led by Fred Foote, and a rival organization in Kingston. In 1935, Garvey moved his organization to London, where it remained until his death in 1940. Eventually, James Stewart was elected the leader of the organization, which then had headquarters in Cleveland, Ohio. He relocated the headquarters to Monrovia, Liberia, where UNIA struggled to survive.

ABEL BARTLEY

See also Black Star Line; Garvey, Marcus; Negro World

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Utopia Players

On Sunday, 26 May 1929, the Utopia Players, a theater group composed of students, were scheduled to perform *The Whole Town Is Talking* at the Elks Auditorium in Harlem. Although there is no evidence that the

performance ever occurred, the Utopia Players reflect the synergy of artistic production, location, and communal support that underpinned the Harlem Renaissance and its theatrical branch, the “little theater” movement.

The Utopia Players were directed by Gladys McDonald, formerly a branch librarian for the 135th Street Public Library. The group’s ability to organize and perform demonstrates the possibilities created during the Harlem Renaissance for young artists by other innovative young artists, as well as the importance of the artistic spaces created in public places like the 135th Street Library.

Most scholars agree that the little theater movement began in 1914, when an ambitious young woman named Anita Bush decided that she would found the theater company that eventually became the Lafayette Players. The financial success of the Lafayette Players encouraged the activities of many other troupes, including the Utopia Players. At their peak, the Lafayette Players often had larger crowds than the small theater spaces where they performed could accommodate. Nonetheless, critics began to call for plays performed about black people, decrying the Lafayette Players’ performances of prominent Broadway hits.

In response to both the commercial success of the Lafayette Players and the ideological tension they generated, W. E. B. Du Bois and the magazine *The Crisis* founded the Krigwa Players in 1926. The Krigwa Players (originally Crigwa, an acronym for the Crisis Guild of Writers and Artists) had a performance space in the basement of the 135th Street Library, which was occupied by successive companies of players after the Krigwa group became inactive in 1930. For example, the Sekondi Players and the Harlem Experimental Theater used the library’s basement lecture room (later renamed the Krigwa Playhouse). Artistic production at the 135th Street Brach Library was not limited,

however, to the practice space and performances of these particular troupes. As a matter of fact, the consistent exposition of artistic material and speakers surely had an affect on Gladys McDonald, who would go on to become a student in the drama department of New York University and to found the Utopia Players.

As had happened with both the Lafayette Players and the Krigwa Players (although Du Bois participated in founding the Krigwa Players, Eulalie Spence was a primary force in the troupe’s productions), a young woman decided to start the Utopia Players. This theater company included Helen Depogny, who worked in education; Milton Weston and Gladys Fowlkes, students at Columbia University; Helen Tynes and Joseph Jackson, students at the New York School of Social Work; Mildred Burch, a graduate of Boston University; Frances Jeffers; Mary Smith; Sedalia Ten Eyck; and others.

SOYICA S. DIGGS

See also Anita Bush Theater Company; Community Theater; Krigwa Players; Lafayette Players; Little Theater Tournament; 135th Street Library; Theater

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Van Der Zee, James

James Van Der Zee was the leading photographer of the Harlem Renaissance. His prints, negatives, and glass plates, numbering some 75,000, document the spirit of the movement and were designed to foster pride in being black in the United States between World War I and World War II. Van Der Zee's images combine social documentation and portraiture with an aesthetic sensibility influenced partly by the portraits of the old masters, partly by the soft focus of impressionism, and partly by the Victorian tableau. His photographs constitute a panorama of life in Harlem: marriage portraits, mothers and children, clergymen, members of fraternal orders (he himself was an Elk), politicians, entertainers, artists, athletes, schoolchildren, funerals, marches, political rallies, pool halls, social teas, barbershops, drugstores, and domestic interiors.

Van Der Zee was born on 29 June 1886, in the relatively affluent town of Lenox, Massachusetts, where his father was a sexton at Trinity Episcopal Church. One of five children, he had two brothers and two sisters. His parents—who had worked in New York as maid and butler to the Union general Ulysses S. Grant—were both musical. Van Der Zee himself played the piano and violin, and musical instruments would later become a theme in his photography. At age fourteen, he bought his first camera and a dark-room kit from a mail-order house. Through high school, he took pictures of his family and friends in Lenox and taught himself how to develop them. Nearly all his mature photographs are black-and-white silver prints.

In 1906, at age twenty, Van Der Zee moved to New York City, where he worked as a waiter and elevator operator. He married Kate Brown and moved to Phoebus, Virginia, the following year, again working in a restaurant. They had two children, a boy who died at age two and a girl who died at fifteen. These losses probably contributed to the prominence of death and funerals in Van Der Zee's imagery. While in Virginia, Van Der Zee made a photograph of a blacksmith shop inspired, he said, by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "The Village Blacksmith." The rich dark background of the shop from which figures and objects seem to emerge in light is reminiscent of Caravaggio's tenebrism. The role of memory, which inspired this photograph, would also become a major theme in Van Der Zee's later pictures.

In 1908, the Van Der Zees returned to New York, where James taught piano and violin, and played in various orchestras. His first job in photography materialized in 1914, when he was hired as a darkroom assistant for the Gertz department store in Newark, New Jersey. His salary was \$5 a week. By 1916 he had opened the Guarantee Photo Studio on 135th Street in Harlem.

He became quite successful as a portraitist, and in the early 1930s he opened the GGG Studio at 272 Lenox Avenue. His partner was his second wife, Gaynella Greenlee, whom he married after divorcing Kate Brown. In the 1940s and 1950s, Van Der Zee's income began to decline as the heyday of the Harlem Renaissance came to an end. At the same time, photography was becoming a popular hobby so that fewer people sought out professional portrait photographers—

instead, they began taking their own pictures of family and friends.

In 1960, Van Der Zee lost his house and studio, and by 1967 he was living in poverty. His fortunes did not recover until after 1967, when he met Reginald McGhee. McGhee was doing research to find images for an exhibit called "Harlem on My Mind," to be held in 1969 at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, and he had come across Van Der Zee's work. Van Der Zee had more pictures in the show than any other artist. This brought him renewed recognition, and he was once again in demand as a portrait photographer.

In his later career, he was assisted by his third wife, Donna Van Der Zee. This was a period in which Van Der Zee received a number of awards. In 1970, he became a Life Fellow at the Metropolitan, which acquired sixty-six of his pictures for its permanent collection. In 1971, he had his first retrospective at the Studio Museum in Harlem.

Between the two world wars, Van Der Zee responded to Alain Locke's advocacy of the "New Negro" by photographing the black middle and upper-middle class of Harlem. Although his photographs are documentary, they are also infused with the cultural aspirations of black America during the Harlem Renaissance. His portraits reflect a sense of pride in being black, affluent, and talented. His pictures of Harlem's streets show a bustling, vibrant neighborhood, and a black community proud of its heritage and optimistic about its future. In *Theresa Bar and Grill* (1933), Van Der Zee captures the lively ironwork patterns of the balcony and windows over the entrance. The entrance itself is decorated with lettering and enlivened by interior lights.

Van Der Zee was the official photographer for Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). In this capacity, he photographed the leaders of the movement, their rallies, parades, and funerals. One of his photographs, designed to reflect pride in the contemporary achievements of blacks, shows black Americans being awarded the French Croix de Guerre for military service. Van Der Zee's funeral photographs were collected and published in 1978 as the *Harlem Book of the Dead* (an allusion to the ancient Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, and therefore to black roots in Africa).

Van Der Zee's portraits of local people create the image of a comfortable black lifestyle. His subjects typically wear fashionable clothes, which he himself provided if they arrived to be photographed in less-than-impeccable dress. He might, for example, produce a

fur stole to dress up a female sitter or a new jacket if the one worn by his male sitter was frayed or missing a button. He often arranged his sitters to resemble a tableau, creating a set piece of life in early-twentieth-century Harlem.

In 1929, he photographed a couple against a painted snowy street. Although warmly dressed (the woman is in a fur-trimmed coat and the man is in a suit and overcoat), the figures betray the fact that the snow is only a backdrop. Both hold, rather than wear, their gloves, so that their rings are visible; and rather than boots, they wear shiny leather shoes. In one of his most famous actual outdoor portraits, made in 1932, Van Der Zee shows a couple in raccoon coats and stylish hats. They are posed with a shiny new car on a Harlem street; the high polish of the chrome is repeated in the woman's patent-leather high-heeled shoes. The variations of texture visible in this photograph are generally characteristic of Van Der Zee's style.

When taking pictures in his studio, Van Der Zee used props (often musical instruments) and painted backdrops, improving the photographs in order to improve the image of Harlem. For the same purpose, he also retouched negatives and prints, even though he was a relatively straight photographer. In one portrait of a man smoking, for example, he scratched in a thin, swirling line of smoke emanating from the tip of the cigarette. In a group portrait of musicians, he scratched a musical staff and notes to look as if they were sounds emerging from the instruments.

Van Der Zee's pictures typically convey an atmospheric quality created by a soft-focus technique and diffused lighting. His tendency toward romanticism is evident when he blends negatives in order to evoke different periods of time, to make absent figures seem present, or to suggest an image envisioned by his sitters. He also had a penetrating psychological sense and was able to capture the essence of character.

In a photo of 1925, Van Der Zee reflects the theme of time by showing a family looking at a family photo album. He contrasts the relaxed, pleased expressions of the older generation with the subtle tension visible in the poses and expressions of the younger generation. In *Daydreams* (1925), he uses the technique of photomontage to reveal a woman's inner fantasy. She sits alone on a bench, surrounded by flowers; a beach scene with her absent lover is superimposed so that he seems to be embracing her. In *Memories* (1938), Van Der Zee uses the same technique to show both the passage of time and the fact that in our unconscious mind (the storehouse of memory) there is no time.

Here, a father and his three children are looking at a photo album. The family dog is seated beside them on the floor. The missing, deceased mother is made present by being superimposed in the background. Van Der Zee also uses photomontage to evoke the future in an undated wedding portrait. Here a bride and groom are seated by an elaborate fireplace. On the floor playing with a doll is the superimposed image of the daughter they hope to have. In his many pictures of soldiers going off to war, Van Der Zee suggests a more uncertain future, never knowing if the young men will survive to return.

In a photo of the funeral of Blanche Powell (daughter of Rev. Adam Clayton Powell Sr. of the Abyssinian Baptist Church), Van Der Zee records the scene from above. The pews are filled with mourners dressed in black, facing a white coffin surrounded by patterns of flowers. The choir members wear white robes and are illuminated from behind by imposing windows. At the upper right, Van Der Zee has blended a large, visionary image of the dead girl towering over the scene.

Of Van Der Zee's many pictures of children, one of the most insightful is *Portrait of Young Girl on the Telephone* (1926). The girl is dressed up, with a large bow in her hair that matches her white socks. She stands out from the soft-focus background, which emphasizes her own clarity and precisely rendered contours. She kneels on a chair, with her elbow resting on the back, in a decidedly adult pose. Her delight in being able to talk on the phone like an adult is evident in her radiant smile.

In addition to local members of the Harlem community, the documentation of UNIA, and images of families and soldiers going off to war, Van Der Zee made many portraits of well-known figures. These constitute a comprehensive record of black celebrities who were Van Der Zee's contemporaries. Among the entertainers he photographed are the dancer Bojangles (Bill Robinson), the jazz singer and pianist Hazel Scott, Eubie Blake, Bill Cosby, Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, and Duke Ellington. The literary figures include the poets Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes, and the *salonnière* A'Lelia Walker. Boxers include the fighters Joe Louis and Muhammad Ali; politicians include Marcus Garvey and Lester Walton, the U.S. ambassador to Liberia. Among the clergy, Van Der Zee photographed the Moorish Jew Rabbi Matthews, the evangelist Father Divine, and Daddy Grace of Grace Church (the United House of Prayer for All People), as well as Adam Clayton Powell Sr. In 1981, he photographed



James Van Der Zee, *Couple in Raccoon Coats*, photograph, 1932.
(Copyright ©1996 by Donna Van Der Zee.)

the artist Romare Bearden, and in the following year the graffiti artist Jean-Michel Basquiat, who then painted a portrait of Van Der Zee.

In 1993, Van Der Zee was honored with a retrospective exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery. Today his pictures are in many private collections, and at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the Harlem Studio Museum, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Biography

James Van Der Zee was born on 29 June 1886, in Lenox, Massachusetts. He became the leading photographer of the Harlem Renaissance and was appointed the official photographer of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) by Marcus Garvey. His major body of work documenting the Harlem Renaissance was made from 1918 to 1945. Although his career declined in the 1950s and 1960s, it revived after the exhibit "Harlem on My Mind" of 1969 at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. In addition to recording middle- and upper-middle-class life in Harlem, Van Der Zee is known for his insightful portraits of celebrities in the black community. At the age of ninety-seven, on 15 May 1983, Van Der Zee died in Washington, D.C., where he had gone to receive an honorary doctorate in humane letters from Howard University.

Laurie Adams

See also Visual Arts; specific sitters for portraits

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Van Doren, Carl

Carl Van Doren became familiar with Harlem's literary circles through his friendships with African American writers during the early 1920s. Writer and editor Claude McKay introduced him to colleagues who promoted interaction among black and white authors. On the eve of McKay's departure for Russia in 1922, James Weldon Johnson gave a farewell party in his honor and invited prominent writers of both races, perhaps the first major gathering of the black and white literati of New York on a purely social level. Van Doren was treated to an evening of discussion with the black writers and editors W. E. B. Du Bois, Walter White, Jessie Redmon Fauset, Arthur Schomburg, and John Rosamond Johnson.

At the Civic Club dinner in New York City on 21 March 1924, Van Doren publicly acknowledged the importance and scope of Harlem's writers in an address titled "The Younger Generation of Negro Writers." Charles S. Johnson, editor of the Urban League's monthly magazine, *Opportunity*, had invited Van Doren to speak at this dinner, which was being held, at least nominally, to celebrate the publication of Jessie Fauset's novel *There Is Confusion*. Van Doren told his black listeners that they were uniquely qualified to bring to American literature the "color, music, gusto, the free expression of gay or desperate moods" it sorely needed. Van Doren further observed: "The Negroes of the country [now] are in a remarkable strategic position with reference to the new literary age which seems to be impending. . . . If the Negroes

are not in a position to contribute these items, I do not know what Americans are." Du Bois added legitimacy to Van Doren's comments by acknowledging that previous generations of African Americans had been denied an authentic literary voice. Van Doren was soon invited to judge writing contests sponsored by *Opportunity*, a widely read African American magazine. He judged its short-story contests in 1924–1925 and 1925–1926.

Van Doren viewed the Harlem Renaissance as a new era of American literary and artistic output, but not as a cultural revolution. In his autobiography *Three Worlds* (1936), he wrote, "The best American music had sprung from [black voices], which had gathered power until they flooded America. . . . I was not Negro, but I was American, and these ancient black voices were in some dim way a part of me too" (259). His view was shared by a small group of critics based in New York, including Henry A. Murray; Raymond Weaver, a professor at Columbia University; and Carl Van Vechten, who also championed a shift toward streetwise, secular mass arts in the literary renaissance of the 1920s.

Van Doren identified two representative examples of art as Harlem-style expression: the journalist H. L. Mencken's persistent commentary, and the play *The Emperor Jones*, starring the African American actor Charles Gilpin, which opened in New York's Greenwich Village in 1920. Van Doren was impressed with Mencken's rebellion against the strain of Puritanism in American literature and with Gilpin's ability to eradicate racial stereotypes, making Eugene O'Neill's powerful work come alive.

Van Doren lived his convictions about the importance of new literature. He declined an invitation to win election to the traditional, conservative National Institute of Arts and Letters in November 1924.

In addition to being an editor at two magazines—*The Nation* and *Century*—Van Doren also edited *The Cambridge History of American Literature* (1917–1921). His varied writings include *Many Minds* (1924), *The Ninth Wave* (1926), *Jonathan Swift* (1930), *American Literature: An Introduction* (1933), and a study of Sinclair Lewis (1933). He also wrote *Benjamin Franklin* (1938), which won a Pulitzer Prize; *The American Novel, 1789–1939* (1940); *Secret History of the American Revolution* (1941); and *The Great Rehearsal* (1948).

The Carl Van Doren Papers are available at the William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan. The collection includes 147 items and covers the years 1938 to 1950. Much of the material is

correspondence between Carl Van Doren and members of the Clements Library staff relating to his research in preparation for his *Secret History of the American Revolution*.

Biography

Carl Van Doren was born 10 September 1885 in Hope (Vermilion County), Illinois. He and his four younger brothers lived comfortably with his parents on a farm near town during his first fifteen years. The family moved to Urbana, Illinois, as Carl, the eldest, entered high school. Van Doren's father was a successful physician and landlord who amassed wealth rapidly. His studious mother was an avid reader who encouraged her children to excel in school. Van Doren graduated from the University of Illinois in 1907 and received his Ph.D. from Columbia University in 1911. He married Irita Bradford of Tallahassee, Florida, in August 1912 and began spending his summers in Cornwall, Connecticut, in Litchfield County. The couple had three daughters: Anne (1915), Margaret (1917), and Barbara (1920). Irita and Carl eventually divorced. Van Doren lectured at Columbia until 1916, when he resigned his primary position to become headmaster of the Brearley School in New York City, an elite secondary school for young women. He continued to teach one graduate class in American literature until 1930. After three years Van Doren left Brearley to become literary editor of *The Nation*. He eventually left his position at *The Nation* and became literary editor of *Century Magazine*. In the late 1930s Van Doren married Jean Wright. He died 18 July 1950 in Torrington, Connecticut.

R. JAKE SUDDERTH

See also Civic Club Dinner, 1924; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Johnson, John Rosamond; Nation, The; Opportunity Literary Contests; Schomburg, Arthur A.; White, Walter; *other specific individuals*

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Van Vechten, Carl

Carl Van Vechten—a music critic, novelist, photographer, and collector—was one of the most highly regarded figures who contributed to the Harlem Renaissance, and many of his activities were fundamental to making the movement possible. Because he was white, Van Vechten's contributions are a matter of contemporary debate, not with respect to how much they furthered the movement, but with regard to his motives in relation to such issues as primitivism, stereotyping, and exploitation.

Van Vechten's influence on the Harlem Renaissance came about in several ways. He made direct contributions of funds to cultural activities, such as *Fire!!*, the literary magazine that was briefly the organ of the younger, more experimental members of the Harlem Renaissance (it lasted for only a single issue). He wrote *Nigger Heaven* (1926), a novel that first attracted a white readership to works about blacks in Harlem. Because *Nigger Heaven* contributed greatly to the emergence of Harlem as the center of African American culture, its depiction of African Americans stimulated a discussion concerning the type of literature that blacks should create in response to Van Vechten's novel. Van Vechten saw to it that works of fiction by Rudolph Fisher, Nella Larsen, and Wallace Thurman were published, and he also helped the artist Aaron Douglas find outlets for his graphic designs. Van Vechten extensively archived materials that later composed five major library collections of African American cultural materials. His parties, which gathered accomplished artists, intellectuals, writers, and musicians without regard for race, allowed for important social contacts between blacks and whites. Finally, during his long career as a portrait photographer, he created an invaluable visual record of the personalities of the Harlem Renaissance.

In contrast to the rural provincialism that dominated Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where Carl Van Vechten was born in 1880, his parents were relatively sophisticated and well educated. His mother had been associated with the suffragist Lucy Stone at Kalamazoo College and was responsible for the library in Cedar Rapids. His father, who later went into the insurance

business, was the cofounder of a school for black children in Piney Woods, Mississippi. Van Vechten grew up exposed to books and literary periodicals and at an early age developed a devotion to reading and writing. His family was also musical, and all the children played instruments, Carl being a pianist. Many theatrical companies passed through Cedar Rapids, and Van Vechten was exposed to plays and musical shows.

Van Vechten attended the University of Chicago, graduating in 1903. During the period of his college education, he was exposed to black entertainers of the ragtime era, becoming familiar with Bert Williams, Carrie Washington, and Carita Day. After graduating, he found employment at the *Chicago American* newspaper as a reporter and news photographer. In 1906 he relocated to New York, where he began to work as an assistant to the music critic at the *New York Times*. Moving on to other assignments as a correspondent in Paris for the *Times*, and drama critic for the *New York Press*, he worked as a journalist until 1914. Subsequently, he worked for a year as a freelance critic, contributing articles to several national publications, and he married actress Fania Marinoff in October 1914.

As early as 1917, Van Vechten had begun promoting African American novelists, poets, dancers, singers, and artists by publishing articles in mainstream publications, such as *Vanity Fair* magazine, in which he favorably mentioned blacks even though they were not necessarily connected to the subject at hand. Van Vechten is not generally associated with intellectual movements, yet he fits in well with the American cultural nationalism advocated by Van Wyck Brooks, which in its pluralism recognizes the contribution of blackness to American culture. Van Vechten's publication of articles on black music in *Seven Arts* connects him to the group of romantic nationalists that included Lewis Mumford and Randolph Bourne. The connection may be further evidenced in Van Vechten's efforts to publicize *Moby-Dick* and Herman Melville's later writings, writings that Van Vechten praised at a time when critical regard for those books was not as great as it is today.

Van Vechten published five volumes of his critical essays between 1916 and 1919. Because these books sold poorly, he turned to writing about cats and published *A Tiger in the House* (1920) and *Lord of the House-tops* (1921). Although he had published seven books to good reviews, Van Vechten had not made any money as a writer, and he turned to writing novels as a consequence. In his fiction, he adopted a comic mode that

expressed sophistication and absurdity, and these writings found a ready audience. His first novel, *Peter Whiffle*, a fictional biography, went through eight printings in 1922.

Van Vechten wrote six additional novels, concluding with *Parties* in 1930; although he is remembered now only for *Nigger Heaven* (1926), he was one of the most popular writers of the 1920s. Van Vechten was prompted to begin work on *Nigger Heaven* because he had read Walter White's novel *The Fire in the Flint* and had met White through their joint publisher, Alfred A. Knopf. Through Walter White, Van Vechten gained introductions to the black intelligentsia, and he soon became acquainted with every black person of note in New York. Van Vechten began to socialize with the prominent African Americans of Harlem, and he became a regular attendee at parties and celebrations. His enthusiasm for proselytizing African American culture through magazine articles in *Vanity Fair*, a prominent magazine of the period, soon gained him a reputation as an authority on Harlem, and in Europe it was believed that he was black. Van Vechten is often credited with popularizing Harlem as a playground for white people, and he did become a habitu  of Harlem venues of every kind from upscale cabarets that catered to white clients to drag balls and rent parties. The list of prominent white figures whom he conducted on tours through Harlem is long and included Somerset Maugham and Edmund Wilson. Van Vechten also became active as a philanthropist, funding awards at *Opportunity* magazine for excellence in writing.

One of Van Vechten's most significant contributions to the Harlem Renaissance was his work on behalf of getting black writers into print. An admirer of James Weldon Johnson's documentary novel, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912), which had been out of print, Van Vechten made arrangements for Knopf to revive it. The novel was reprinted in 1927. Van Vechten's appreciation for Johnson's novel was reflected in the documentary characteristics of *Nigger Heaven*, which interjected propagandistic and documentary materials at various points in the narrative. He also prevailed on Knopf to publish Langston Hughes's book of poems *The Weary Blues* (1926), and he helped Hughes to place poems and articles in prominent periodicals such as the *New Republic* and *The Nation*. Van Vechten had met Hughes, the premier poet of the Harlem Renaissance, through Walter White in 1924, and they remained close friends for the rest of their lives. Through Van Vechten's efforts,

Knopf published Nella Larsen's novels *Quicksand* (1927) and *Passing* (1929), and Rudolph Fisher's novel *The Walls of Jericho* (1928).

It is chiefly through Van Vechten's famous parties in his chic apartment at 150 West Fifty-fifth Street that the Harlem Renaissance may be connected to the "roaring twenties." Just before the stock market crash in 1929, Van Vechten inherited \$1 million from his sister-in-law, Fannie Van Vechten, further insulating him from economic necessity. Already well off from his novels, he was able to throw lavish parties that often went on all night. His parties were connected to a particular type of antiracist social engineering that he had invented and that he pursued along with the hostess Muriel Draper. According to Van Vechten's theory, he mixed the races at his parties to demonstrate that prejudice against blacks was a result of ignorance about them, for they were just people. By allowing whites and blacks of the intelligentsia to mingle socially, reasoned Van Vechten and Draper, eventually the realization that no serious difference existed between the races would percolate down to the common man through the efforts of intellectuals in positions of cultural power and through works of art that combated racial stereotypes. Eventually, it was thought, racism would simply dissolve. Van Vechten's guests included such notables as Salvador Dalí, Theodore Dreiser, George Gershwin, Fannie Hurst, Paul Robeson, Helena Rubenstein, Bessie Smith, and James Weldon Johnson, and they might include celebrities from across the entire globe. It was also through Van Vechten that African Americans were able to meet one another, as when Zora Neale Hurston was introduced to Ethel Waters at a dinner that included Sinclair Lewis and Anna May Wong among the guests.

Despite a regimen of continual drinking and carousing and with little sleep for months, Van Vechten wrote his most famous novel rapidly, completing three drafts during the winter of 1925–1926. *Nigger Heaven* became cause for a controversy from the moment of its publication, for its title, used by a white person, offended many blacks. He used the title because he felt that it carried the weight of his view of Harlem as a place that was at once a refuge from the South and an embodiment of the social conditions that remained uncorrected—at once symbolic, ironic, and tragic. On publication in August 1926, the novel sold 100,000 copies, bringing the author \$68,000. In the following two years, the book went through two more printings and translations in nearly a dozen European languages. Through his novel, Van Vechten hoped to

show that African Americans were just people and thereby help to eliminate the foundation for racism. The novel also revealed the social divisions that exist within the black society of Harlem, which showed blacks as individuals. Those black writers who approved of the novel, such as the reviewer Eric Walrond, saw it as expressive of a level of objectivity about African American life that they themselves were not equipped to equal; thus, for some, Van Vechten set the standard for a new type of literature. Those who disapproved of the novel saw it as a continuation of the derogatory depiction of African Americans that they hoped to overcome through the depiction of blacks as agents of uplift and social and professional attainment.

After his last book, *Sacred and Profaner Memories* (1932), Van Vechten began a new career as a photographer. He worked as a photographer for the next thirty-two years. He was resolved to document African American culture; however, he photographed a wide range of subjects from many fields of endeavor, such as the architect Philip Johnson, the novelist William Faulkner, and the dancer Martha Graham. Having begun to work in the area of photographic documentation, he began to establish collections so that the materials he was assembling would have permanent locations. These collections included the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of Negro Arts and Letters at Yale University (1941), the George Gershwin Memorial Collection of Music and Musical Literature at Fisk University (1944), the Rose McClendon Memorial Collection of Photographs of Celebrated Negroes at Howard University (1946), and the Jerome Bowers Peterson Collection of Photographs by Carl Van Vechten of Celebrated Negroes at the University of New Mexico (1954). Following these original deposits, other collections have been established, so that the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., has 1,395 photographs by Van Vechten, and there's a collection at the National Portrait Gallery.

Following James Weldon Johnson's death in 1938, Van Vechten worked with the Memorial Committee to establish a collection documenting Johnson's contributions in arts, literature, education, and public service at Yale University. Beginning in 1950, Van Vechten began the painstaking task of preparing his own papers for deposit in Yale University. The Johnson collection established by Van Vechten now includes the papers of Richard Wright and Jean Toomer, as well as significant holdings concerning other prominent African American writers. Van Vechten also saw to it



Miguel Covarrubias, *Caricature of Carl Van Vechten*. (Library of Congress.)

that the papers of many of his associates, such as Muriel Draper, were preserved at Yale University.

Biography

Carl Van Vechten was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in 1880. He attended the University of Chicago and received a Ph.D. in 1903. He was employed as a journalist by the newspaper *Chicago American* until 1906. He then moved to New York and wrote music criticism for the *New York Times* from 1906 to 1912, and then drama criticism for the *New York Press* from 1913 to 1914. He then worked as a freelance journalist, until becoming a successful novelist. He was awarded an honorary doctoral degree by Fisk University in 1955. Van Vechten died on 21 December 1964 in New York.

JON WOODSON

See also *Nigger Heaven*; *Seven Arts*; *Vanity Fair*; *White Novelists and the Harlem Renaissance*; *White Patronage*; *specific individuals*

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Vanguard

Vanguard was a left-wing political club formed by the sculptor Augusta Savage and the activist Louise Thompson (Louise Thompson Patterson) in 1933. It served as an important link between intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance and the Communist Party of the United States.

Savage, who was born and reared in Florida, emerged as one of the most respected artists in Harlem by the early 1930s. In 1929, she won the Julius Rosenwald Award for her sculpture *Gamin*. In 1932, she returned to Harlem after three years of studying and sculpturing in France. Louise Thompson, although not herself an artist, was a central figure in the Harlem Renaissance. Soon after her arrival in New York in 1928, she was briefly married to Wallace Thurman. She befriended several leading intellectuals of the renaissance, including Arna Bontemps, Aaron Douglas, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Jacob Lawrence, Alain Locke, and Richard Bruce Nugent.

Thompson and Savage, like many young intellectuals in Harlem, became interested in radical politics during the early 1930s, in part because of the devastating effects of the Depression. The success of the American communist movement in building mass support to free the Scottsboro boys (nine African American adolescents who, in 1931, were falsely accused of raping two white women on a freight train in Alabama and then sentenced to death) also drew black intellectuals to the left. A skilled organizer, Thompson joined the Communist Party in 1933, and she quickly emerged as one its leading national spokespersons.

As popular efforts to free the Scottsboro boys gained momentum, and as the New Deal was launched, Savage and Thompson founded Vanguard—an informal group—in 1933. The group's primary goal was to spread interest in radical politics in artistic circles. Savage held parties on Saturday evenings and political forums on Sunday afternoons at her apartment in Harlem. Visual artists such as Romare Bearden, Aaron Douglas, and other close friends of Savage and Thompson attended these events. The group debated continuing developments in the Scottsboro case and mass efforts to free Angelo Herndon, a charismatic nineteen-year-old African American communist who in 1932 was charged with inciting an insurrection for helping to organize an interracial hunger march in Atlanta. The group also discussed the racial implications of the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, an important early piece of New Deal legislation.

Vanguard not only created space for intense political debates about Marxism, the Soviet Union, racial politics, and the New Deal. The group also helped make left-wing politics fashionable in Harlem's artistic circles. These goals seemingly contradicted the communist leaders' desire that Vanguard would serve primarily to recruit Harlemite intellectuals into the party.

Because Vanguard reached only a small audience, however, the party leadership endorsed the organization.

Vanguard disbanded within a few years of its founding, but Louise Thompson and many of its members continued to associate closely with the left for years to come.

ERIK S. McDUFFIE

See also Communist Party; Patterson, Louise Thompson; Savage, Augusta; Scottsboro

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Vanity Fair

The magazine *Vanity Fair*, one of the most popular monthlies in America in the 1920s, was published by Condé Nast between 1913 and 1936. Under the editorship of Frank Crowninshield, it carried a range of material appealing to an upper-middle-class readership, humor by the great wits of the age (P. G. Wodehouse, Dorothy Parker, Robert Benchley), and considerable coverage of the arts, particularly theater. Until the mid-1920s, almost all of this concerned white, often European art and artists (Jean Cocteau, Erik Satie, Paul Manship, etc.). The first area of African American endeavor to gain significant coverage in *Vanity Fair* was musical theater. The spectacular success of the show *Shuffle Along* and the great popularity of the performer Florence Mills were noted with a brief article and a portrait in 1922. An article dealing with this milieu at length, by the popular culture critic Gilbert

Seldes, appeared later in the same year. A photo portrait of Florence Mills, as she appeared in the show *Dixie to Broadway*, occupied a full page of the magazine in February 1925.

Later in 1925, Carl Van Vechten joined the magazine (he had already written a few pieces for it during World War I). By 1925, he had become fascinated with African American music and culture, virtually his only subject by that time and his life's work. Van Vechten introduced *Vanity Fair's* readers to the major new poets, such as Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen, in 1925–1926. He also wrote a series of important articles on black theater and singers of spirituals and art song. In some of these, he took provocative, perhaps presumptuous, liberties in attempting to steer concert singers like Roland Hayes toward what Van Vechten considered sufficiently "Negro" material. Most important, however, was his coverage of the leading "city" or vaudeville blues singers—Bessie Smith, Clara Smith, and Ethel Waters—who had recently become major singing stars on records. During the mid-1920s, *Vanity Fair* also carried numerous drawings of black entertainers, many by the Mexican caricaturist Miguel Covarrubias. The magazine also had photo spreads depicting white stars, such as Bessie Love and Ann Pennington, doing the current jazz dances of black origin such as the Charleston and the black bottom.

Vanity Fair was never particularly devoted to political or racial coverage. The magazine did carry some politically charged pieces, however, such as Sherwood Anderson's article "The South." This article was hardly delicate regarding the racial sensitivities of black southerners (or white ones for that matter), and it was frankly written from the perspective of an outsider. By the autumn of 1926, Van Vechten had again disappeared from the pages of *Vanity Fair*, whereupon coverage of African American life and culture at the magazine vanished almost entirely. There were occasional photos of famous black performers, and some additional caricatures by Covarrubias, but the intense focus shown in 1925–1926 was now over. In keeping with a greatly increased emphasis on movies, however, there was a full-page photo spread of King Vidor's film *Hallelujah*, the first full-length feature film with an all-black cast, in 1929.

In 1936, *Vanity Fair* merged with another magazine, *Vogue*. In 1983, it once again became an independent publication under the name *Vanity Fair*.

ELLIOTT S. HURWITT

See also Anderson, Sherwood; Hallelujah; Mills, Florence; Shuffle Along; Van Vechten, Carl

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Vann, Robert Lee

Newspaperman, lawyer, and politician, Robert Lee Vann built the Pittsburgh *Courier* into black America's most influential and widely read weekly paper.

Vann was born in Ahoskie, North Carolina, on 27 August 1879. His mother, Lucy Peoples, a former slave, worked as a cook and domestic worker; the identity of his father remains uncertain. In a curious echo of antebellum custom, the child received the surname of the white family for whom his mother worked.

Vann received a rudimentary elementary education in a dilapidated one-room schoolhouse, alongside sixty other black students. He spent the next six years working variously as a field hand, fisherman, cook, and janitor. He eventually accumulated the funds to enroll at Waters Training School, an academy run by the Baptists in nearby Winton, North Carolina, from which he graduated as valedictorian. After two years at Virginia Union University, he won a scholarship to the Western University of Pennsylvania (soon to be

renamed the University of Pittsburgh). Although one of only a handful of black students, Vann flourished at the university, winning election as editor-in-chief of the school newspaper. On graduation, he enrolled in the university's law school, working as a night waiter on the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad to pay the tuition. He qualified as a lawyer in 1909.

Vann's early experiences imprinted themselves on his character. While notoriously opportunistic in his partisan affiliations, he remained a deeply conservative man, who believed that progress for blacks would come not through radical agitation but through individual enterprise, thrift, and hard work. A supporter of Booker T. Washington and Washington's successor at Tuskegee, Robert Russa Moton, Vann would fill the columns of his newspaper with tales of African Americans who had risen from penury to become successful businessmen.

Vann earned the lion's share of his income from his law practice, which survived until 1933, but it was as a journalist that he made his historical mark. In 1910, a group of businessmen in Pittsburgh chartered a weekly newspaper, the *Courier*, to serve the needs of Pittsburgh's burgeoning black community, whose existence the city's white newspapers scarcely acknowledged. Vann initially provided legal counsel and occasional copy, but by the end of the first year he had been promoted to editor, a position he would retain until his death thirty years later.

Vann's editorial leadership was characterized by innovation, a keen eye for talent, and a healthy dose of political opportunism, all in the interests of building readership. In 1925, for example, the typically pro-business *Courier* became the first African American newspaper to endorse the efforts by the socialist A. Philip Randolph to create the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. A year later, it became the first black newspaper to sponsor its own radio show, the *Pittsburgh Courier Hour*, which was broadcast weekly on New York's station WGBC.

Vann's most inspired decision, however, was to hire the controversial black satirist George Schuyler, who joined the staff in 1925. For an initial salary of \$3 a week, Schuyler (who remained at the *Courier* for nearly forty years) contributed a weekly column—"Views and Reviews"—as well as all the paper's editorials. Schuyler also undertook a nine-month tour of the American South on the *Courier's* behalf, the fruits of which appeared in *Aframerica Today*, a brilliant weekly series blending detailed sociological analysis with flights of coruscating wit. By the end of the tour,

the *Courier* boasted an unrivaled network of southern agents, as well as 10,000 new subscribers.

Over the course of the 1920s, the *Courier* blossomed into a genuinely national newspaper, with features for every taste—from Alice Dunbar Nelson's weekly column, "From the Woman's Point of View," to the premier sports section in black journalism, devoted almost exclusively to the exploits of black athletes. Vann himself wrote a weekly business column, while Walter White oversaw the influential book reviews section. (White's antilynching novel, *The Fire in the Flint*, was serialized in the paper in 1926.) The *Courier* even had its own African correspondent, Joel A. Rogers, whose articles on the Egyptian and Ethiopian origins of "Nordic civilization" contributed to African Americans' swelling interest in their ancestral continent.

Vann's forays into politics were less satisfying. As chairman of Pennsylvania's black Republicans, he placed the *Courier* at the service of Republican candidates in local, state, and federal elections, only to be snubbed when patronage was dispensed. In 1932, he stunned observers by endorsing Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Democrats; it was time, he declared in a famous editorial, for African Americans to turn "the picture of Lincoln to the wall." As a reward, he was appointed special assistant to the U.S. attorney general, but it proved a purely token position from which he resigned in frustration in 1935. In 1940, shortly before his death, he returned to the Republican fold, endorsing Wendell Wilkie.

Vann devoted his final years to the *Courier*. Prizing circulation over consistency, he welcomed columns from Marcus Garvey and W. E. B. Du Bois, both of whom the paper had pilloried in the 1920s. With the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, he dispatched Joel Rogers back to Africa as war correspondent; the issue featuring Rogers's interview with Emperor Haile Selassie sold an extra 25,000 copies. Vann scored perhaps his greatest coup when he secured exclusive access to the life story of a rising black prizefighter, Joe Louis. As Louis's fame swelled, so did the circulation of the *Courier*, cresting at a quarter million in 1937.

Biography

Robert Lee Vann was born on 27 August 1879. He studied at Waters Training School, Winton, North Carolina; Virginia Union University, Richmond, Virginia; Western University of Pennsylvania (University of

Vann, Robert Lee

Pittsburgh), B.A., 1906; and University of Pittsburgh Law School, J.D., 1909. He had a private law practice from 1909 to 1933. Vann was editor and publisher of the *Pittsburgh Courier* from 1910 to 1940. He was special assistant to the attorney general, U.S. Department of Justice, in 1933–1935. Vann died on 24 October 1940 of cancer.

JAMES CAMPBELL

See also Abbott, Robert Sengstacke; Black Press; Chicago Defender; Journalists; Pittsburgh Courier; Rogers, Joel Augustus; Schuyler, George S.

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Vaudeville

Developed in the 1880s by a white minstrel, Tony Pastor, vaudeville was offered as a “straight, clean variety show.” By the 1890s, vaudeville was a family entertainment. It brought together touring acts and also featured sketches and short plays. Vaudeville remained a popular form until the 1930s. The demise of vaudeville is generally attributed to the popularity of film, but, in reality, much of what had been effective for African American performers in vaudeville was taken over for musical revues and musical theatre pieces such as *Shuffle Along* by Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle (1921).

The first African American minstrels probably existed as early as the 1850s, although it was not until after the Civil War that African American performers, including minstrels, were prevalent on the American popular stage. As was the case for white minstrelsy, multiple skills were demanded of African American minstrels and vaudevillians. The African American minstrel and vaudeville star Tom Fletcher recalled in

his book *100 Years of the Negro in Show Business* (1954) that “in those days you were not hired or even considered in show business unless you could sing, dance, talk, tumble or play some instrument in a brass band.” Despite the demanding requirements, African Americans clamored for the few paying spots available. In 1894, 2,000 African Americans applied for forty minstrelsy slots in a new troupe. Thomas Riis (1989) suggests that the oral culture elements of “exaggeration and [the] grotesque” integral in minstrelsy and vaudeville appealed to the African-based culture of African Americans. Minstrelsy and vaudeville offered, on a grand scale, opportunities for both trained and untrained musicians and performers.

African American minstrelsy blended into African American musical revues and vaudeville around 1890, and thus a mixed legacy developed. James Weldon Johnson reflected, in *Black Manhattan*:

Minstrelsy was, on the whole, a caricature of Negro life, and it fixed a stage tradition which has not yet been entirely broken. . . . Nevertheless, these companies did provide stage training and theatrical experience for a large number of colored men. They provided an essential training and theatrical experience, which, at the time, could not have been acquired from any other source. Many of these men, as the vogue of minstrelsy waned, passed on into the second phase, or middle period, of the Negro on the theatrical stage in America; and it was mainly upon the training they had gained that this second phase rested. (1930, 93)

A glance at the names of the early African American musical performers and composers, those of Johnson’s “second phase” (Bert Williams, George Walker, Will Marion Cook, J. Leubrie Hill, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Jesse Shipp, Bob Cole, J. Rosamond Johnson, and James Weldon Johnson himself) offers a sense of the creative potential fed by African American minstrelsy and nurtured in vaudeville.

Two important vaudeville circuits that booked African American performers were the Keith-Orpheum and Theater Owners’ Booking Association (TOBA), nicknamed “Tough on Black Actors,” “Tough on Black Asses,” and “Toby.” African American women began performing regularly on the minstrelsy and vaudeville circuits in the 1890s, with both men and women serving as musicians.

During this late stage of minstrelsy and early stage of vaudeville, several African American women performers ran their own companies. Among these, the

best known were the Whitman sisters from Lawrence, Kansas (birthplace of the great vaudevillian George Walker), the daughters of a well-known minister. Despite Walker's efforts with their father, the Whitmans were not allowed to become professionals until they completed their schooling, which included five years at the New England Conservatory of Music. They first began working with their father on an evangelical tour, and then Essie and Mabel formed an act called the Danzette Sisters in 1899–1900. In 1900, the Whitman Sisters Novelty Company began as a group in the Augusta (Georgia) Grand Opera House. They were managed by their mother at that time; by 1904, Mabel took over the management of the group, and they changed their name to the Whitman Sisters New Orleans Troubadours. Their debut in New York was in 1906, with the encouragement of Will Marion Cook. They worked the Keith and Proctor, Poli and Fox, and TOBA circuits, as well as most theatrical houses.

They became truly successful by 1910, occasionally reconfiguring themselves so that several sisters could work independently. Known for their talent and beauty, "these bright, pretty mulatto girls . . . have wonderful voices. . . . The sisters play banjo and sing coon songs with a smack of the original flavor. Their costuming is elegant; their manner is graceful and their appearance striking in a degree as they are unusually handsome," wrote one reviewer in Alabama early in their careers. Oftentimes billed as a "coon" act, the Whitmans added two young male dancers—Willie Robinson and "Pops" Whitman (Alice's son)—in the 1920s, the latter being billed as a child prodigy. One of their acts, "Befoh de Wah," was reviewed in 1907; in it, the Whitmans seem to have parodied the plantation scenes so necessary to early African American minstrelsy.

Aida Overton Walker (also known as Ada Overton, 1880–1914) was one of the greatest performers who defined the dance of black vaudeville, the cakewalk. Walker began her career with the concert singer Sissieretta Jones, known as the "Black Patti," and her Troubadours. She met George Walker, her future husband, and his comedy partner Bert Williams when they all posed for a photograph for a trade-card sponsored by the American Tobacco Company in 1898. Interestingly, before Aida Overton became a partner of the pair, George Walker sometimes played the female in Williams and Walker's comic duets. Williams and Walker were pioneers in introducing ragtime to their vaudeville work, and Aida Overton helped them introduce the cakewalk, a dance reminiscent of slaves' mockery of white society that was then used by the

white minstrels in their frenetic walkarounds. During her short lifetime, Aida Overton Walker became the principal delineator of the cakewalk, but she also was responsible for all the choreography of Williams and Walker's revues. Therefore, she contributed to the changeover from the coon show to African American musical revues, as dance was just as integral to the work of Williams and Walker as the music and the comedy.

Ultimately, black vaudeville is credited with being the incubator for two distinctly African American forms of popular entertainment: the musical revue (defined as an assemblage of musical numbers with a loose plot and usually featuring vaudeville routines) and black humor. The black musical revue *A Trip to Coontown* (1898) was developed by the vaudevillians Bob Cole and Billy Johnson. Then, Cole teamed up with J. Rosamond Johnson to write *A Shoo-Fly Regiment* (1905–1907) and *The Red Moon* (1908). Bert Williams and George Walker went from their vaudeville routine "Two Real Coons" to developing the musical revue *In Dahomey* (1902). Flournoy Miller and Aubrey Lyles formed their own vaudeville act in 1908, and in 1921 they teamed with Sissle and Blake to produce *Shuffle Along*, the first full-length black musical to appear on Broadway. Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle, ragtime pianist and singer-lyricist, had also formed their own vaudeville team, the "Dixie Duo."

As Watkins (1994) recounts, the lasting legacy of black vaudeville is its cultivation of black humor as a genre based in a distinct style. This style, according to Watkins, toned down the exaggerated and grotesque characterization of the black body by white minstrels into something more "cool" (164). Bert Williams, who died in 1919, carried over this style from the early heyday of black musical revues (1898–1910) to their revival in *Shuffle Along*. Williams developed a character, based on slowness and laggardness, that at first served as a contrast to George Walker's highly energized dandy character. He began to study pantomime after Walker became ill, and his comic genius depended less on verbal sparring with a partner. With the retirement of Walker from the stage in 1909 (he died in 1911), Williams further developed his characterizations based on two of his most famous songs, "Nobody" and "Jonah Man." Williams insightfully realized the source of his character's humor. He wrote in 1918:

The character I try to portray is a shiftless darky to the fullest extent, his fun, his philosophy. Show this artless darky a book and he won't know what it is all about. He can't read. He cannot write. But ask him a

question and he'll answer it with a philosophy that's got something. (quoted in Watkins, 178)

Bert Williams was the only black performer in the Ziegfeld Follies from 1911 to 1919. He experienced racism from the cast and crew while he was associated with the Follies; of him, W. C. Fields remarked, "Bert Williams . . . is the funniest man I ever saw and the saddest man I ever knew."

Pioneered by Ernest Hogan, the low-comedy urban trickster was further developed in vaudeville by the team of Miller and Lyles. The trickster character had been a staple of minstrelsy, but Miller and Lyles gave the trickster a new, urban flair. They did not sing or dance, so their interplay was completely based on verbal dueling, resulting in what they called "mutilitatin" black language. Their most famous routine, recounted by Watkins, was "Indefinite Talk," based on two characters talking, and interrupting, each other.

The slow-witted, philosophizing character of Williams and the urban trickster of Miller and Lyles are perhaps the most lasting comedic legacy of black vaudeville. That legacy, coupled with the use of rag-time music in *Shuffle Along* and the introduction of the cakewalk, gave the Harlem Renaissance a smile, a dance, and something to laugh at that was less about imitation and more about the development of distinctly African American styles of performance.

ANNEMARIE BEAN

See also Cole, Bob; Cook, Will Marion; Dunbar, Paul Laurence; Johnson, John Rosamond; Lyles, Aubrey; Miller, Flournoy; Minstrelsy; Shipp, Jesse A.; *Shuffle Along*; Theater Owners' Booking Association; Williams, Egbert Austin "Bert"

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Viking Press

The Viking Press was founded in 1925 by Harold K. Guinzburg and George S. Oppenheimer, two optimistic men in their twenties. Within a few months they merged with B. W. Huebsch, giving the fledgling company an experienced editor and a much-needed backlist that included authors such as Sherwood Anderson, Mohandas Gandhi, James Joyce, and Elizabeth Madox Roberts. The publishers intended to limit the number of books they issued each season and to seek out high-quality authors who had been overlooked by other publishing houses. Viking grew to become one of the largest and most distinguished houses; as of the present writing, it is a division of the Penguin group.

In its first season, Viking published four books, including *The Book of American Negro Spirituals* (1925)

by James Weldon Johnson and J. Rosamond Johnson. Although the house actively sought to recruit other African American writers of the era (including Walter White), Viking was a latecomer to the vogue for all things “Negro.” Nearly all the major writers of the Harlem Renaissance had already developed relationships and contracts with other publishers before Guinzburg and Oppenheimer opened their firm. Viking published six of James Weldon Johnson’s books, however, including most notably *God’s Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* (1927) and *Along This Way: The Autobiography of James Weldon Johnson* (1933).

ERIK BLEDSOE

See also Anderson, Sherwood; *God’s Trombones*; Johnson, James Weldon; Johnson, John Rosamond; Publishers and Publishing Houses

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Villard, Oswald Garrison

The publisher and activist Oswald Garrison Villard was a leading figure in the politics and journalism of the Harlem Renaissance. He was born in 1872 to a wealthy American family then traveling in Germany; his grandfather was the famous abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, and several other relatives were active in support of civil rights for African Americans. After studying at Harvard University, Villard embarked on a career in journalism with a brief stint in 1896–1897 as a reporter for the *Philadelphia Press*.

Villard achieved national prominence as editor and owner of the *New York Evening Post* and its weekly magazine supplement, *The Nation*. He had joined the *Evening Post*, then owned by his father, in 1897, and inherited control of the two publications following his father’s death in 1900. Villard used the publications to speak out in support of liberal causes such as women’s

suffrage and pacifism. Villard maintained a passionate lifelong commitment to racial equality, and he played a key role in the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Villard was one of many Americans outraged by a race riot that took place in August 1908 in Springfield, Illinois, the birthplace of Abraham Lincoln; the riot led to eight deaths and caused more than 2,000 people to flee the city. In early January 1919, the journalist William English Walling and the progressive social workers Mary White Ovington and Henry Moskowitz persuaded Villard to issue, on 12 February 1909 (the hundredth anniversary of Lincoln’s birth), a call for a national conference on black civil rights. The founding document of what would become the NAACP, “The Call” was signed by sixty-five prominent social activists, among them only seven African Americans.

The National Negro Conference gathered leading progressive thinkers and activists in New York City in May 1909; out of the conference grew the Committee for the Advancement of the Negro Race and a smaller Committee of Forty on Permanent Organization. With Villard’s financial backing and meeting space in the offices of the *New York Evening Post*, the organization hired its first full-time employee in February 1910. The NAACP was incorporated under its current name in June 1911, with Villard as chairman of the executive committee and later as chairman of the board of directors. Villard took charge of the NAACP’s information-gathering division and used his journalistic savvy to get publicity for the group and its causes; he also brought writers from the *New York Evening Post* into the organization. Villard was among the first white editors to address the biased coverage of African Americans in the mainstream white press. He denounced the explicit racism in the lurid, sensational stories of tabloid journalism; his influence also led many papers to cease the practice of identifying African Americans by race in all newspaper articles. During this period, Villard also published *John Brown: A Biography Fifty Years After* (1910), a study of the radical white abolitionist leader.

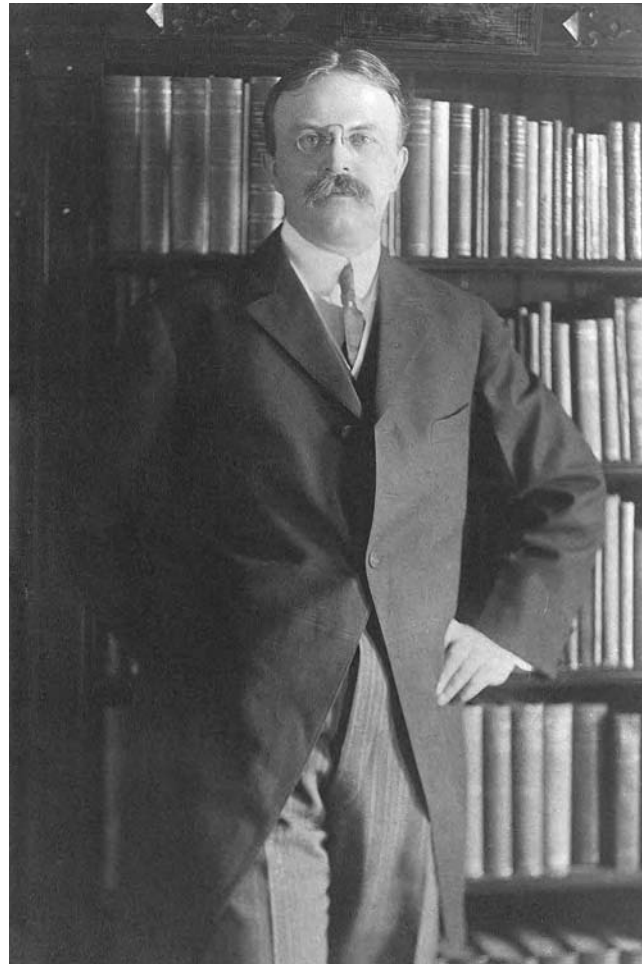
Villard had initially supported Woodrow Wilson for the presidency in 1912, but he was bitterly disappointed by Wilson’s moves to implement segregation in the federal bureaucracy in 1913. At a meeting between the two in May 1913, Villard proposed a government-sponsored National Race Commission, to be organized under the auspices of the NAACP; Wilson later rejected the idea. In 1915, Villard pushed for a commission to study the United States’s occupation of Haiti. The Wilson administration again refused, and

so the NAACP later sent its own representative, James Weldon Johnson, to conduct an investigation.

Throughout his tenure as board chairman, Villard insisted that the NAACP must remain moderate in tone: although he had broken privately with the accommodationist leader Booker T. Washington by 1910, he believed that the NAACP should not criticize Washington publicly, for fear of alienating moderate blacks or arousing antagonism from whites. This stance angered the more strident members of the NAACP, particularly Joel E. Spingarn and W. E. B. Du Bois. By 1913, Villard and Spingarn were no longer on speaking terms, following several public instances in which Villard criticized Spingarn. Villard clashed with Du Bois over the tone and content of *The Crisis*, the organization's magazine, edited by Du Bois. As an editor himself, Villard felt empowered to offer criticisms and suggestions; Du Bois insisted that *The Crisis* must remain independent of the board's control. Their battle prompted Villard's resignation as chairman of the board at the end of 1913; Joel Spingarn replaced him in January 1914.

Villard remained active in the organization over the course of the next few years. In August 1916, he participated in the Amenia Conference, held at Spingarn's farm in upstate New York, a conference designed to bring together supporters and critics of Booker T. Washington following Washington's death a year earlier. Villard, a pacifist, opposed the United States's entry into World War I and argued that the conscription of African American men for a war "to make the world safe for democracy" was an act of hypocrisy by a racist government. He is also credited as the force behind a silent parade in New York City on 28 July 1917, in which 8,000 African Americans marched down Fifth Avenue to protest against a recent race riot in East St. Louis, Illinois. He eventually supported the NAACP's efforts to obtain fair treatment for black soldiers, but he bitterly opposed Du Bois's efforts to obtain a military position during the war, and he even tried to use the episode to push Du Bois out of the leadership of the NAACP. Villard's pacifism also posed problems for his publications during World War I: He fought off an attempt by federal authorities to deny mailing privileges to *The Nation* in September 1918, but public criticism and declining circulation forced Villard to sell the *New York Evening Post* in 1918.

In 1919, thoroughly alienated from the organization that he had founded, Villard resigned from his position as treasurer of the NAACP. During the 1920s, he maintained only distant relations with the NAACP, but he continued his support for racial equality



Oswald Garrison Villard. (Brown Brothers.)

through his writings in *The Nation*. During this decade, the magazine emerged as a leading voice of liberal thought in national politics, and its weekly circulation rose to nearly 38,000. Villard spoke out against the resurgent Ku Klux Klan, against the U.S. occupation of Haiti, and in favor of federal antilynching legislation. He also provided financial support to several of the artists and writers of the Harlem Renaissance. He supported the New Deal policies of President Franklin Roosevelt; later, his pacifism led him to oppose the United States' intervention in the war in Europe, and he broke with *The Nation* over the issue, resigning from the magazine's editorial board in June 1940. A heart attack in 1944 curtailed his activities considerably; he died in New York City in 1949.

Biography

Oswald Garrison Villard was born in Wiesbaden, Germany, on 13 March 1872. He earned an A.B. from

Harvard College in 1893 and an A.M. from Harvard University in 1896. He was president of the Nation Press, 1900–1918; editor, *New York Evening Post*, 1900–1918; and owner and editor, *The Nation*, 1918–1932. He was a founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1909; chairman of the executive committee, 1911–1912; chairman of the board of directors, 1912–1913; and treasurer, 1911–1919. Villard died in New York City on 1 October 1949.

CHRISTOPHER CAPPOZZOLA

See also Amenia Conference, 1916; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Lynching; Silent Protest Parade; Nation, The; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Spingarn, Joel

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Visual Arts

The visual arts of the Harlem Renaissance have long gone without the renown and attention given to the literature of the period. Indeed, the Harlem

Renaissance is most often characterized as a specifically literary phenomenon fueled by racial demographic and cultural shifts from the American South to the North. In fact, the visual arts experienced a distinct and related renaissance beginning in the mid-1920s, inextricably tied to the era's writers and intellectuals, but also rooted in less-developed creative traditions and using an alternative set of inspirational sources. If writers such as Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston were inventing a body of literature that valued black vernacular culture in reaction to a tradition from earlier black writers that had emphasized narratives of tragedy and uplift, then the painters, sculptors, and photographers of the Harlem Renaissance were reacting to a tradition that had been very nearly silent on the subject of black life, even from an earlier generation of black artists. If playwrights and poets of the renaissance mined working-class life for inspiration, visual artists were encouraged to look to African art forms.

The visual arts of the Harlem Renaissance—seen in the work of the painters Aaron Douglas, Palmer Hayden, and Hale Woodruff; the sculptors Meta Warrick Fuller and Augusta Savage; and the photographer James Van Der Zee, among others—represents the earliest moment when significant numbers of black artists turned to black life as legitimate subject matter. This fact distinguishes their achievements from those of their writer colleagues whose work followed and built on earlier race-based literary traditions. Moreover, many visual artists attempted to represent African American life through a prism of African-inspired European modernist art in seeking to define a racially identifiable style of art. The task with which these artists were charged was, therefore, a tremendous one: In a vacuum of “positive” black imagery, they were asked to invent a style that paid homage to a legendary ancestral past from Africa while also representing that which was new, modern, folk-based, urban, and above all honored black life. That some of these artists generated controversy, became disillusioned, were later criticized for mediocrity, were forgotten, or left the arts altogether is not surprising. What is surprising is the considerable success they enjoyed and the degree to which their work was embraced and supported. Their successes are an enduring index of how much their work was needed.

The iconic achievements of the visual artists of the Harlem Renaissance are best understood against the dearth of unsteretyped images of African Americans in the fine arts during the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth. Among the best-known black

artists of the nineteenth century, the painters Henry Ossawa Tanner and Robert Duncanson both worked primarily with nonracial subjects. Duncanson is best known for his landscapes of the Ohio River and his fantasy landscapes painted in the 1850s and 1860s, a time when landscape paintings as visual metaphors for national identity and destiny dominated American art. Whereas Tanner's most famous paintings today are African American genre scenes of the 1890s like *The Thankful Poor* and *The Banjo Lesson*, during his lifetime he was admired for the lion's share of work that represented biblical themes or exotic landscapes. It seems that, during the nineteenth century, the most successful and prominent African American artists were those who eschewed racial subject matter in favor of what were considered more universal themes.

The work of the sculptor Meta Warrick Fuller evidences a change in that view by about 1915. Fuller's work reaches maturity relatively early in the century, between 1914 and 1920, but it is rightly considered a sort of harbinger of the aesthetic priorities that would be explicitly laid out as part of the "New Negro" movement in the mid-1920s. Fuller is one of the first African American artists to choose black subjects for much of her work. *Ethiopia Awakening* (1914), her signature piece, is an allegory of pan-Africanism that ties American slavery to African colonialism in a representation of a female figure emerging from a centuries-long slumber, newly aware of her history and strength. In what would become a recurrent source of inspiration for other artists of the Harlem Renaissance, *Ethiopia Awakening* draws inspiration from African art for its formal vocabulary. The black figure is wrapped from the waist down—an allusion to mummification—and wears a royal Egyptian headdress.

Fuller's background and career development also establish other commonalities with future artists of the Harlem Renaissance. She was from a middle-class family that supported her decision to pursue a career in the arts. She benefited from greater access to formal art training than many of her nineteenth-century predecessors had received; she trained at the Pennsylvania Museum School of Industrial Art (later the Philadelphia College of Art). Even more significantly, Fuller went to Paris, where she met the French sculptor Auguste Rodin while studying at the *École des Beaux-Arts*, gaining the European training considered a prerequisite for a serious career as an artist. The work of Meta Warrick Fuller represents a turning point in the history of African American art—a highly trained artist steeped in formal art historical tradition begins to see in her

own cultural background themes and subjects appropriate to representation in the visual arts. Ten years later, under the influence of many of the same cultural shapers that articulated the intellectual basis for the Harlem Renaissance as a literary movement, a new generation of black artists would also turn to African art and African American culture for creative inspiration.

To a great extent, the intellectual community that cultivated and supported the writers of the Harlem Renaissance did much the same for visual artists. The sociologist Charles Johnson, director of the National Urban League; the activist W. E. B. Du Bois; and the philosopher Alain Locke each nurtured the visual arts as an essential complement to the creative literary achievements of the period. Johnson is often considered a promoter chiefly of the literary arts, but it was Johnson who was directly responsible for bringing the painter Aaron Douglas, the artist most closely associated with the renaissance, to Harlem. And Johnson, as editor of the magazine *Opportunity*, was determined to include illustrations by black artists in its pages; those artists included Douglas, Richard Bruce Nugent, Albert A. Smith, and others. Additionally, in *Opportunity*, Johnson featured sculptures by Augusta Savage and Richmond Barthé in articles intended to highlight the achievements of visual artists. Du Bois, in his capacity as editor of *The Crisis*, the periodical of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), also acted as a patron of the visual arts by commissioning illustrations from black artists. Du Bois would later confess, in the 1930s, that he was more interested than either Johnson or Locke in the uses of art as propaganda. His political interest in cultivating both the visual and the literary arts was described in a speech published in *The Crisis* in October 1926.

It was Locke more than either Du Bois or Johnson who nurtured the visual arts in particular as a vital component of the New Negro movement and who emphasized study of and creative inspiration from African arts. In March 1925, Locke was the editor of a special issue of the magazine *Survey Graphic*: "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro." This issue formalized the movement's creative agenda and is often said to have given rise to the Harlem Renaissance. Though many essays, sociological studies, poems, and other literary contributions in the special issue were written by blacks, virtually all the illustrations were produced by the German artist Winold Reiss, a visual irony that cannot have been lost on the editor, Locke. Reiss was considered by many of the intelligentsia of the Harlem Renaissance to be sympathetic in his portrayals of

African American subjects, an artist who could depict black subjects without using stereotypes. But his wide popularity was also seen as evidence of a need for African American visual artists.

Later in 1925, in *The New Negro*—an expanded volume of essays developed out of the special issue of *Survey Graphic*—Locke wrote “The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts.” In this essay, which was illustrated by photographs of African sculpture, Locke sets out a social agenda that would influence black artists for the next three decades or more. He exhorts black artists to seek inspiration in African art—drawing from that body of work not only formal innovation, in the way that European modern artists were, but cultural meaning and pride of heritage as well:

But what the Negro artist of today has most to gain from the arts of the forefathers is . . . the lesson of a classical background, the lesson of discipline, of style, of technical control pushed to the limits of technical mastery. A more stylized art does not exist than the African. If after absorbing the new content of American life and experience, and after assimilating new patterns of art, the original artistic endowment can be sufficiently augmented to express itself with equal power in more complex patterns and substance, then the Negro may well become what some have predicted, the artist of American life. (256–258)

It is difficult to overstate the impact of Locke’s thinking on this matter. Until well into the 1960s, black artists would struggle with the issue of incorporating elements of African art into their work.

Charles Johnson, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Alain Locke all recognized that the renaissance needed a visual “New Negro” to complement the literary concept that was being constructed through novels, poems, and popular journals. They recognized that a substantial gap existed in the representation of the “New Negro” that they were inventing, and that only through cultivating specific visual artists could this visual lack be addressed. To a great extent, they relied on the work of one artist to begin addressing that visual space: the painter Aaron Douglas.

In 1927, James Weldon Johnson published *God’s Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse*, a volume of poetry inspired by the vernacular sermons of black preachers all over the South, illustrated by Aaron Douglas. Johnson was a respected writer, orator, and statesman in 1927, well into his fifties, with a lifetime of notable achievements behind him. Douglas, not yet

thirty, had recently completed his undergraduate training at the University of Kansas and was at the beginning of his career. He was best known as a magazine illustrator at the time, though one with a promising future. Douglas was already a regular contributor to both *Opportunity* and *The Crisis*. Nonetheless, Johnson, as the more established artist, was taking a chance on Douglas, and the chance paid off. In retrospect, Douglas’s eight illustrations to *God’s Trombones* can be viewed as the perfect embodiment of the visual arts of the Harlem Renaissance. The illustrations fused the era’s aesthetic priorities that emphasized developing a racially identifiable and inspired style in the visual arts with literature that took black cultural phenomena as its subject. Douglas’s work in *God’s Trombones* represented a break from the tradition-bound artistic traditions of the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth, derived inspiration from African and Egyptian art, and provided the much-needed visual complement to the “New Negro” that was described and defined in literature.

In the illustrations for *God’s Trombones*, Douglas’s fully developed painting style is displayed, probably for the first time. Additionally, the illustrations make explicit the tie between visual arts and literature of the period. As part of the text, each black-and-white illustration appears facing the beginning of the one of James Weldon Johnson’s poems. In terms of style, Douglas uses abstract silhouettes of human forms to represent figures, bodies depicted frontally and faces in profile, a convention often seen in ancient Egyptian painting. Pictorial space is flattened and geometrically subdivided in Douglas’s paintings, a style that has been called “geometric symbolism.” The emphasis on subdividing the image geometrically, abstracting human forms, and the hard-edged angularity of Douglas’s style are a direct result of Locke’s insistence that African American artists look to African art styles for inspiration; these African traditions emphasized figural abstraction with symbolic ends.

Beyond the interest in African-inspired aesthetics, Douglas demonstrated a willingness to manipulate art historical convention in this set of illustration. *Crucifixion* represents a clear break with the traditional Christian iconography that conventionally shows Christ nailed to the cross with mourners at his feet. Douglas’s image is constructed around the two primary figures of Christ and Simon, the North African from Cyrene who was pressed into service to carry the cross up to Mount Calvary when the weight became too great for Christ to bear. Christ is a relatively small

figure in the central portion of the lower half of the illustration. Despite his size, Christ is readily identified by the abstracted halo around his head, by his light hue, and in the highlighted geometric design overlaid on the illustration, concentric circles pierced by a cone suggestive of light. The second dominant figure, Simon, is the large, darker-valued figure, represented partially in shadow and partially in the cone of light, and straining under the weight of the cross. A Roman soldier is pressed against the picture plane in the foreground, and other members of the procession recede into a shallow background defined by progressively darker shades of gray and diminishing size. It is a complex composition in which figures are located, sized, and color-valued according to their importance within the context of the story. What is noteworthy is that Christ and Simon are equally important in Douglas's interpretation of the crucifixion. Simon is perceived as significant by virtue of his size and Christ by his location at the focal point of the geometric composition and by the light color value. By making Christ and Simon equally important, Douglas forces the viewer to reevaluate the story of the crucifixion and question the role of the relationship between the two dominant figures.

Douglas's primary focus in *Crucifixion* on the relationship between Simon and Christ may be interpreted as a metaphor for American society's treatment of African Americans. The moment of crucifixion is, for Christ, the moment of both his defeat and his triumph. He is the persecuted savior. Douglas chooses to represent a moment just before this triumph, however, when Christ passes the symbol of his burden and his victory to Simon, a black man. Douglas uses this image to proclaim African American contributions to western society, and specifically to American society. Simon's gesture, his assumption of the "weight of the world," represents the forgotten contributions of all black people. The crucifixion itself represents an established history and a civilization that refuses to acknowledge the value and merit of its own citizenry. That notion of unrecognized and unappreciated communal contribution appropriately dovetails with the cultural strategies of the "New Negro" movement in the emphasis on artistic achievement as a means to achieve societal enfranchisement.

In another illustration, *Prodigal Son*, Douglas constructs an urban genre scene, possibly from Harlem itself. He incorporates elements of contemporary African American culture in the interpretation of a biblical story. The composition centers on three

figures—a man and two women, one on each side; again represented only as facially profiled silhouettes. All three appear within a cone-shaped ray of light emitted from a ceiling lamp and are dancing and drinking. At the top of the illustration is the silhouetted image of a band, or more specifically trombones, and a record. Pressing in from the sides in the foreground are oversized representations of vice: a dollar bill, cards, dice, and a gin bottle. In the postures of his figures, the symbols of vice, and the representation of a jazz band Douglas is referring to African American social life and culture in Harlem during the 1920s. He is transforming the Old Testament parable of fall and redemption into an African American genre scene. And in describing the scene, he uses specific elements of the urban culture that characterized Harlem.

Rent parties, held to raise rent money for the hosts, and nightclubs or cabarets were vital components of the social life of Harlemites in the 1920s. Both were popular because of the presence of jazz musicians, the availability of liquor (an important attraction during Prohibition), and gambling. Douglas's illustration may be a composite image of both types of event. The typical rent party, like the scene represented in *Prodigal Son*, was a jam-packed event, complete with food, liquor, and card playing. The compressed and congested space of Douglas's illustration, conveyed by the restricting cone of light and the intrusive symbols of vice, implies the crowded space of a rent party. The trombones at the upper edge of the illustration, however, suggest a larger, more permanent establishment: a nightclub.

Nightclubs featured the same types of entertainment as rent parties but on a grander scale. Both whites and blacks frequented nightclubs (though some, like the famous Cotton Club, were exclusive to whites), and all featured black entertainers. It was these clubs that would have featured a full band. The representation of trombones in the *Prodigal Son* is almost certainly a reference to nightclubs and their prominent role in Harlem's social life. The trombones also refer to the significance of music and jazz in African American culture generally, and in Harlem specifically. At the same time, they foreshadow the prodigal son's return to his family and to a moral, upright lifestyle by referring back to "God's trombones," the African American preachers whom James Weldon Johnson is celebrating.

Aaron Douglas's reputation as the "official" artist of the Harlem Renaissance was established by works like those he created for *God's Trombones*. He invented a graphic style that incorporated elements of African

art traditions in describing the appealing and frequently ennobling aspects of African American culture. Like the work of the writers whom his illustrations support, he transforms what is commonplace in rapidly emerging black urban life, making that culture fit subject matter for high art. And while Douglas's achievements are significant, so too is the cultivation of his talent by important individuals and institutions.

By way of comparison, the pan-Africanist nationalist Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) operated as a sort of working-class alternative to the more academic and elite organizations of the Urban League and the NAACP. Garvey, through UNIA, emphasized economic independence for the African American community and eventually formed the Black Star shipping line and developed two periodical publications. Although UNIA was not particularly focused on advancing opportunities for black artists generally, it did contribute significantly to the success of the best-known African American photographer during the Harlem Renaissance era. James Van Der Zee was Marcus Garvey's personal photographer and the official photographer for UNIA and is probably the most famous African American artist to emerge during the Harlem Renaissance years. His photographs document an emerging and increasingly prosperous black middle class during the 1920s and into the 1930s. His *Couple with a Cadillac* (1932) reflects the material wealth and status that upwardly mobile Harlem residents sought. The exquisitely attractive couple sit in a polished new car, lavishly attired in fur coats. The figures are posed, but not in an overly formal way. It is an image intended to project the illusion of capturing the beautiful and prosperous in a moment of leisure.

Van Der Zee, like many photographers, taught himself his craft. He operated a series of photographic studios in Harlem for nearly fifty years, becoming the photographer of choice for many of the community's residents. Unlike many of his competitors, however, Van Der Zee honed his craft as an art form rather than treating the medium simply as livelihood. He experimented with special effects and retouching techniques long before such methods were commonplace, photographed subjects in or out of the studio in order to achieve a desired effect, and was generally committed to photography as image making rather than as a documentary record. In addition to his formal studio portraits, Van Der Zee recorded the life of Harlem as a community through photographs of important events, funerals, social organizations, and street scenes.

In addition to the support offered by African American organizations like UNIA, the Urban League, and the NAACP, the visual artists of the Harlem Renaissance received substantial patronage and educational support from white sponsors, especially through philanthropic organizations like the Harmon Foundation and the Barnes Foundation.

The physician Albert Barnes formed his philanthropic foundation in 1922 to "promote the advancement of education and the appreciation of the fine arts." It was based outside Philadelphia and operated in conjunction with its founder's assembly of a major collection of both modern European paintings (from artists like Picasso, Modigliani, and the Impressionists) and traditional African art. From the outset, Barnes was concerned with providing opportunities for arts education to African American artists and collectors. He was associated with Alain Locke and contributed an essay to a special issue of *Survey Graphic* entitled "Negro Art and America." The Barnes Foundation sponsored fellowships for African American artists to study its collection; one of these fellowships was awarded to Aaron Douglas. Notably, Alain Locke, himself a collector of African art, chose to illustrate his own essay "The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts" with works from the Barnes collection. Outside its educational mandates, the most significant contribution of the Barnes Foundation is the opportunity it provided for developing artists to view modernist paintings along with their African sources; no separation existed between the two types of work in the foundation's installations. Such a display would have underscored for new artists the African aesthetic vocabulary being manipulated in European modernist painting, elucidating new methods to achieve Alain Locke's prescribed African-inspired African American art.

Even more important than the Barnes Foundation, in terms of patronage, was the Harmon Foundation, formed by the philanthropist and real estate tycoon William E. Harmon in 1922. This foundation sponsored five juried exhibitions of work by African American artists between the years 1928 and 1933. During those years, the foundation also awarded cash prizes to artists whose work was shown in the exhibitions. These related programs represent one of the earliest efforts to organize and exhibit the work of African American artists, and to provide a reliable source of income for those artists. Many notable young painters and sculptors would first exhibit their work through the Harmon Foundation and would use the cash prizes to further their studies and begin long-term

careers in the visual arts. They include the painters William H. Johnson, Lois Mailou Jones, Archibald Motley, and Hale Woodruff, as well as the sculptors Sargent Johnson and Richmond Barthé.

In 1926, the first recipient of a Harmon Foundation prize for achievement in fine arts was the painter Palmer Hayden, who had been trained more informally than either Fuller or Douglas. Hayden won the award for a seascape produced during a summer at the Commonwealth Art Colony in Boothbay, Maine. He was based in New York, however, and at the time he won the prize he was working as a janitor at the offices of the Harmon Foundation. Hayden used the prize money to travel to France to continue his studies; he lived there from 1927 to 1932. In 1933, after his return to the United States, Hayden won a second Harmon Foundation award for his most famous painting, *Fétiche et Fleurs*, a still life composed of a vase of flowers juxtaposed with a Fang reliquary head sculpture and Kuba textile, both traditional African art forms. Although Hayden did not undertake the same formalized art training as many artists of the Harlem Renaissance and did not make the same sort of literary connections, he was clearly aware of the emerging interest in African art both in the United States and abroad. As evidenced by *Fétiche et Fleurs*, he, too, was seeking ways to incorporate those artistic traditions into his own work. Hayden's work of the 1930s was more figurative; he turned to African American genre scenes, many of which were controversial because they played with stereotypical representations of black subjects. In fact, an early historian of African American art, James Porter, would later censure Hayden sharply for using stereotypical images. The changes in Hayden's work and the controversy around his shift to figurative styles suggest the degree to which black artists struggled to find appropriate and critically acceptable means of representing their own culture. Moreover, they demonstrate that critical responses could be complicated and unpredictable. Hayden, the African American artist who had been embraced by a white-dominated philanthropic institution, found himself condemned by a later black arts establishment for producing images that were undignified and not sufficiently positive.

The Harmon Foundation also supported the work of emerging sculptors, an important area for cultivation, given that sculptors did not have the audience for mass-produced graphic art that two-dimensional artists might rely on. Among the sculptors whose work was shown at the Harmon Foundation exhibitions

was Augusta Savage, an artist who was connected to many of Harlem's cultural and political institutions and who was an insider in its arts community. Few of Savage's works survive; the work most often reproduced is a 9-inch bust of a boy, possibly the artist's nephew, entitled *Gamin*. The piece captures the aloof posturing and charm of boyhood. The subject is represented with his hat cocked to one side, a disaffected expression on the face. It is a sympathetic, ennobling, and truthful depiction of an African American boy. That Savage left the subject's identity in question by calling the piece *Gamin* pushes what is taken for an informal portrait into a scene from everyday life. The boy becomes a sort of stand-in for the many other boys like him in Harlem.

Augusta Savage arrived in Harlem in 1921; although she did not come from a privileged background, she managed to enroll in the sculpture program at Cooper Union, completing her four-year program in only three years. She was a contributing author for UNIA's publication *Black World* when she came to the attention of W. E. B. Du Bois, who arranged a scholarship for her to study abroad. Savage was unable to accept the scholarship, but her studies in France were later supported by the Urban League in combination with grants from the Julius Rosenwald Fund and the Carnegie Foundation. Savage associated with many other writers and artists of the Harlem Renaissance, including Aaron Douglas, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Richard Bruce Nugent. In short, Savage was an artist of tremendous talent, supported by a considerable array of individuals and institutions. Although the vast majority of her work has been lost, her career encapsulates the spirit of possibility and community of support that existed for black artists associated with the Harlem Renaissance.

The opportunities that appeared so easily and abundantly for this first generation of racially focused African American visual artists were rapidly declining by the mid- to late 1930s and had all but evaporated by World War II. Their creative and critical successes would be tempered by later revisions of the initial critical acclaim. Aaron Douglas, after expanding his geometric symbolist style into mural paintings for the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library in the 1930s, left New York to continue his career as a teacher at Fisk University in Nashville. He and Palmer Hayden were both later criticized for work that was seen as a caricature or pastiche of African art forms. James Van Der Zee would be forced to close his studio by 1960 after seeing a slow twenty-year decline in demand for

his services due to the advent of personal cameras. In the 1940s, Augusta Savage retired to a farm in upstate New York; with the loss of most of her own work, her greatest legacy became largely the success of those to whom she was a mentor.

The Harlem Renaissance as manifested in highly motivated individuals and cultural institutions was, for a time, viewed as encouraging mediocrity rather than excellence in the arts. A subsequent generation of African American artists, notably Romare Bearden, would chafe at the subject matter prescribed and defined by Alain Locke and others in the “New Negro” movement. To a great extent, the achievements of the generation of “New Negro” visual artists must be understood as a product of networks of influence and social engineering on the part of a circle of black intellectuals and their white patrons. But those achievements also reflect a sort of daring spirit on the part of the artists who emerged from that period. In the face of histories of art and artists that had ignored them and been silent, the “New Negro” artists made their mark.

NICOLE GILPIN HOOD

See also Artists; Barnes, Albert C.; Barthé, Richmond; Bearden, Romare; Douglas, Aaron; Fuller, Meta Warrick; Garvey, Marcus; God’s Trombones; Harmon Foundation; Hayden, Palmer C.; House-Rent Parties;

Locke, Alain; Johnson, Charles Spurgeon; Nugent, Richard Bruce; Porter, James Amos; Reiss, Winold; Savage, Augusta; Survey Graphic; Tanner, Henry Ossawa; United Negro Improvement Association; Van Der Zee, James; Woodruff, Hale; *other specific artists*

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Walker, A'Lelia

A'Lelia Walker—Lelia McWilliams or Walker, depending on the biographical source—was born on 6 June 1885 in Vicksburg, Mississippi, to Sarah Breedlove and Moses McWilliams. Sarah Breedlove claimed a unique space in African American social, cultural, and entrepreneurial history as the millionaire Madame C. J. Walker, the “empress” of hair-care products for blacks, particularly straightening chemicals and irons. A'Lelia Walker (she gave herself the name A'Lelia) attended Knoxville College in Tennessee. When she was thirty-five years old, with an adopted daughter, she found herself the sole heiress of her mother's enterprise and fortune; this success story presented certain social challenges in her life as a black American.

A'Lelia Walker was caught between two worlds. On the one hand, she was among the richest black women of her time. On the other hand, her wealth did not entirely disguise or compensate for the fact that she had emerged from a poor black rural background and had acquired at best a limited liberal arts education. Moreover, her extravagance and her “fast” life made her something of a social outcast, and she had none of the intellectual or artistic ambitions that were so highly valued during the Harlem Renaissance as the best means of social amelioration. Because of her wealth, she moved in exalted social circles, where she was perhaps regarded as an exotic entertainment. She is, then, an example of the social struggle experienced, in the early twentieth century, by African Americans caught between a disparaged past and the modernity of the future, which held out the promise of a black “American dream.”

Walker was a social anomaly—upwardly mobile, but often snubbed and rejected by a black elite that was itself operating within a dominant white social class structure. She proceeded to carve out her own unique space, and fortunately for her she had enough money to be independent of the usual social mores. She was clever and innovative, and she was able to meet challenges by adapting various social styles presumably befitting a young, ambitious black heiress in the 1920s. The strategies she applied are suggested by the descriptions her contemporaries—such as Langston Hughes, Richard Bruce Nugent, and Carl VanVechten—offered of her: a “joy goddess,” a “mahogany millionairess,” a “patron of the arts,” a “literary salon hostess,” a “shrewd businesswoman,” a “gorgeous dark Amazon,” and “the de-kink heiress,” to mention just a few.

Because of Walker's “transgressive” public behavior, her image in most people's minds was that of a party-throwing, sexually savvy, spoiled African queen. In fact, though, she had profound experience of ordinary life and considerable acumen as a businesswoman. She had been born into poverty, the child of a single mother (reportedly, her biological father had fallen victim to a lynch mob when she was two years old); she had lived in households that lacked windows, running water, and heat. By the age of twenty-three she was managing her mother's offices in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and she participated consistently in the phenomenal growth of the hair-care business. When her mother died in 1919, A'Lelia Walker became the company president, and in that capacity she accomplished some important firsts in the history of black businesses. For example, in 1928 she constructed the Walker Building in Indianapolis,



A'Leia Walker, photographed by R. E. Mercer, 1920s. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

Indiana; this was the first enterprise of its kind owned and managed by blacks. It contained a Walker College of Beauty Culture offering both barbershop and beauty salon services, a grocery store, a pharmacy, professional offices, and the Majestic Walker Theater.

Evidently, Walker felt most deeply about her patronage of African American arts; as a generous patron she became an intimate of a bohemian black avant-garde that was challenging the expectations of the black “old guard” and of dominant whites. For Walker, it would seem, throwing luxurious, elaborate parties that aroused gossip and scandal was a way of developing a modern persona, cultivating her reputation, and reigning supreme. Her guest lists always included a wide range of people, from European dignitaries to artistic deviants. The parties were held either at her splendid mansion, Villa Lewaro, or at her town house, which was on a smaller scale but was nonetheless very well appointed and renowned as the “Dark Tower”—it was named after a column by Countee Cullen column and a poem by Hughes. The

settings for her parties were sensuously, excitingly decadent, and she presented herself equally excitingly: turbaned, bejeweled, and elegantly booted. Her four marriages added to her scandalous mystique.

A'Leia Walker died, in 1931, as extravagantly as she had lived—after consuming an entire lobster, a chocolate cake, and a bottle of champagne in the middle of the night. Through her financial power and her personal eccentricities, she had positioned herself at center stage and had become perhaps the most famous hostess of the Harlem Renaissance. In retrospect, this has been her most acknowledged contribution to black history.

Biography

A'Leia Walker (Leia McWilliams, or Walker) was born on 6 June 1885 in Vicksburg, Mississippi. She studied at Knoxville College in Knoxville, Tennessee. She was a manager in the hair-straightening enterprise of Madame C. J. Walker (her mother) and became an heiress in 1919. During the Harlem Renaissance, she was a patron of the arts and held a salon during the mid- to late 1920s. Walker died in 1931 in Long Branch, New Jersey.

LAURA ALEXANDRA HARRIS

See also Salons; Walker, Madame C. J.

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Walker, Madame C. J.

Madame C. J. Walker was an early exemplar of the "New Negro," encouraging African Americans to take pride in their appearance and enhance their self-respect. She also embodied the new mood of militancy in the African American community after World War I, as well as the renewed race-consciousness and pride that was at the heart of the Harlem Renaissance. Through both her business enterprise and her philanthropy, she promoted equal rights, supported black education, and expanded the economic horizon for thousands of African Americans.

Sarah Breedlove McWilliams Walker, better known as Madame C. J. Walker, was the first self-made African American female millionaire. She made her fortune from her own line of cosmetic and hair-care products, starting with a homemade formula for softening hair. Madame C. J. Walker's "Wonderful Hair Grower" was intended for use with a heated iron comb that would enable African American women to create "long, styled hair" without resorting to the harsh techniques of pulling or ironing their hair widely used in the late nineteenth century. She did not approve of skin bleaching or hair straightening as such. Instead, she saw her products as enabling black women to enhance their appearance while affirming their self-worth and dignity. The use of the Walker System by the dancer Josephine Baker attracted the attention of a French firm, which produced a pomade called "Baker-Fix."

As a young widowed mother without much formal education, whose own parents had been slaves, Sarah McWilliams supported her daughter Lelia by working as a laundress and a domestic in St. Louis, Missouri. When she began to lose her hair, she devised both an ointment and a method for grooming hair and promoting hair growth. Her first tentative steps in business were to sell the "Walker System" by traveling around the black neighborhoods of St. Louis, knocking on doors. In 1905, she went to live with her widowed

sister-in-law in Denver, Colorado, and from there soon expanded her operations, traveling throughout the southern states and promoting her system to women at their homes, in clubs, and in churches. She hired and trained agents to sell her products and to do demonstrations on skin and hair care, while also developing the manufacturing side of her business. In 1908, Walker opened a second office in Pittsburgh; then, in 1910, she established the headquarters for her fast-growing enterprise in Indianapolis. Not only did she set up a manufacturing company, she also founded the Walker College of Hair Culture, employing some 3,000 people, in addition to the many thousands of sales agents throughout the country. Women beauticians purchased a franchise from Walker in which they used both the Walker products and the Walker system. In this way, Madame C. J. Walker facilitated business opportunities for thousands of black women throughout the United States, extending their work options at a time when the labor market was racially segregated and few occupations were open to women.

From the outset, Walker worked through existing institutions in African American communities in order to promote her business. Cosmetics and hair care were frowned on by the clergy, but Walker extolled the virtues of personal care and donated generously to Baptist and African Methodist Episcopal churches. Black women's clubs and colleges were additional venues for the promotion of her message about beauty care. She succeeded in setting up beauty parlors in some women's colleges while promoting industrial education for women. She was a major donor to Bethune-Cookman College, established by the prominent black activist Mary McLeod Bethune, and she funded scholarships for women at the Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Walker was an active member of the National Association of Colored Women, established in 1896, seeking to act as a bridge between the African American communities of workingwomen and clubwomen. While the political import of African American beauty culture may not have been obvious to contemporaries or even to later generations, Walker saw her work in the context of racial uplift. Physical appearance was central to issues about identity, economic mobility, and social acceptance in a racially segregated society. By encouraging self-esteem through the use of beauty products, Walker contributed to the enhancement of the status of black women, and, thereby, the status of all African Americans.

In 1916, at the instigation of her daughter, A'Lelia, Madame C. J. Walker moved to Harlem, where she



Madame C. J. Walker (at wheel of car), c. 1910. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.)

bought two houses, at 108 and 110 West 136th Street, one as her home and the other as a salon and a college. She became increasingly active in African American politics and participated in the organizing committee for the Silent Protest Parade of July 1917. A few days later she was part of a delegation, along with James Weldon Johnson, to present President Woodrow Wilson with a petition seeking his support for antilynching legislation. Wilson declined to see the delegation personally and sent his secretary to meet them. In 1918, Walker was invited to address fund-raisers organized by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) as part of the organization's antilynching campaign; also in 1918, she was honored by the National Association for Colored Women for her generous donation to the campaign to save the home of Frederick Douglass, a leading abolitionist. Walker was a member of the International League of Darker Peoples, founded in 1919. Her business was an international one, and she had made promotional tours to Jamaica, Cuba, Haiti, Costa Rica, and Panama. At her country mansion—Villa Lewaro in Irvington-on-Hudson, New York, designed by the black architect Vertner Woodson Tandy—Walker hosted gatherings of black leaders. Just before her death in 1919, she donated \$5,000 to the NAACP's antilynching campaign, its largest donation to that date, and requested that Villa Lewaro be left to the organization after her daughter's death.

Biography

Sarah Breedlove McWilliams Walker was born on 23 December 1867 in Delta, Louisiana. She married

Moses McWilliams in 1871 and had one daughter, A'Leila, in 1885. She was widowed in 1887; she married Charles J. Walker in 1905. She was a laundress from 1887 to 1905 and an entrepreneur from 1905 to 1919. She was owner and president of Walker College of Hair Culture and the Walker Manufacturing Company, Indianapolis, Indiana, from 1910 to 1919. Walker was an activist for civil rights and human rights and a philanthropist. She died in New York City on 25 May 1919.

MAUREEN MONTGOMERY

See also Antilynching Crusade; Baker, Josephine; Bethune, Mary McLeod; Lynching: Silent Protest Parade; Walker, A'Leila

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Walker, Margaret

Margaret Walker—a poet, author, essayist, lecturer, and educator—dedicated seven decades of her life to writing about the black experience in America, which she chronicled in poetry and prose, centering on such themes as time, racial equality, love, and freedom. In Walker's *This Is My Century* (1989), she credits her

parents—Sigismund C. Walker, a Methodist minister, and Marion (Dozier) Walker, a music teacher who played ragtime—for inspiring her to write early in her life. Her mother also introduced her to the poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar, John Greenleaf Whittier, and William Shakespeare. Between the ages of eleven and fourteen, she read the poetry of Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen, and she launched her writing career with her first poems while attending the Gilbert Academy in New Orleans. By the age of sixteen, she had met Hughes, who was a family friend and who became her literary mentor. He read her poetry, recognized her talent, suggested she strive for musicality in verse, and encouraged her parents and her teacher, Miss Fluke, to provide the necessary climate conducive for an aspiring writer outside the South. During her undergraduate studies at her father's alma mater, Northwestern University, she met the editor, scholar, and author W. E. B. Du Bois, who was influential in publishing her poetry in *The Crisis* in 1934. Her creative writing teacher, Edward Buell Hungerford, admitted her to the Northwestern chapter of the Poetry Society of America.

After graduating from Northwestern, Walker lived in Chicago for four years, working first as a social worker and later as a member of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which allowed her to shape her writing craft. It was when she joined the South Side Writers' Group, initiated by the author Richard Wright, however, that her own poetic talent emerged. Between 1936 and 1939, Walker associated with such artists and scholars as the novelists Nelson Algren and Frank Yerby; the poets Arna Bontemps, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Frank Marshall Davis; the artists Katherine Dunham and Margaret Taylor Goss Burroughs; and the playwright Theodore Ward. Her most valuable literary experience was perhaps with Richard Wright, who, while sharing their work, broadened her vision of literature, in particular, as a vital part of political action. After he moved to New York in 1937, she continued to assist him with materials to compose *Native Son*. Two years later, her friendship and mentorship with Wright ended rather abruptly and painfully; she would write about this in her detailed biography of him (1988). Her tenure with the Federal Writers' Project also expired; Walker then entered the University of Iowa, where she completed her master's degree thesis with her first collection of poems, *For My People*, in 1942.

Walker's vision reached fruition in her award-winning collection of twenty-six poems. Through

rhythmic verses and strong imagery, the work affirms the proud heritage and integrity of black Americans. For the most part, critics, reviewers, and peers praised her work. Some critics found fault with her use of lyrical sonnets, while others seemed impressed with the ballads and the long-line free verse punctuated with short lines. In her title poem, her best-known and most anthologized work, her form captures what Richard Barksdale calls "the source of the Black people's blues" and "it radiates the promise of our future" (Collier 1984).

While writing poetry, teaching when possible, and marrying and raising four children with her husband Firnist James Alexander (1943), Walker returned to the University of Iowa in 1962 to pursue a doctorate and to complete *Jubilee*, which she had begun at Northwestern. In 1965, she finished both the degree and her dissertation, which was published in 1966, becoming her second most popular work. Described as an "ambitious," "neo-slave narrative" that incorporates actual and historical events from slavery to Reconstruction, the novel chronicles the life of the daughter of a slave and a white plantation owner. When the novel was first published, it had a mixed reception, but over the years the novel has been given more favorable criticism, focusing specifically on Walker as an important historian, her characterization, and the use of music.

After she published her novel, Walker's creative energies flourished. She returned to writing poetry, and her next volume to receive high acclaim was *Prophets for a New Day* (1970). This slim volume, unlike *For My People*, reveals an even more expansive political consciousness and includes her civil rights poems influenced by the turmoil of the 1960s. Walker published *October Journey* (1973), followed by two books—*A Poetic Equation: Conversations between Nikki Giovanni and Margaret Walker* (1974); and a definitive biography, *Richard Wright: Daemoniac Genius* (1988). A year later Walker published her last volume of poetry, *This Is My Century: New and Collected Poems* (1989), a culmination of her collective political vision. A few years before Walker died, she published, with editorial assistance from Maryemma Graham, *How I Wrote Jubilee and Other Essays on Life and Literature* (1990). Her final published work was *On Being Female, Black, and Free: Essays by Margaret Walker, 1932–1992* (1997).

Walker bridged the generations of the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and the black arts movement of the 1960s. She was one of the United States' foremost poetic historians for the African American race.

Biography

Margaret Abigail Walker was born on 7 July 1915 in Birmingham, Alabama. She completed her high school education at Gilbert Academy in New Orleans, Louisiana; attended New Orleans University (now Dillard University) for two years; then attended Northwestern University (B.A., English, 1935). She worked with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) from 1936 to 1939. She attended the University of Iowa (M.A., 1940; Ph.D., 1965). She taught at Livingstone College, 1941–1942; West Virginia State College, 1942–1943; Jackson State University, 1946–1979; and Northwestern University, as a visiting professor, spring quarter, 1968–1969. She was founder and director, Institute for the Study of History, Life, and Culture of Black People (now the Margaret Walker Alexander National Research Center), 1968–1979. She received a D.F.A., Denison University, 1974; and D.H.L., Morgan State University, 1976. She was professor emerita at Jackson State University, 1979–1998. Her awards included Yale Younger Poets Award, 1942; Rosenwald Fellowship, 1944; Ford Fellowship, 1953; University of Iowa Fellowship, 1963; Houghton Mifflin Fellowship, 1966; a Fulbright fellowship to Norway, 1971; Senior Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities, 1972; the Living Legacy Award, the Lifetime Achievement Award of the College Language Association, 1992; the Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in the Arts, 1992; the White House Award for Distinguished Senior Citizen; and six honorary degrees. She was inducted into the African American Literary Hall of Fame in October 1998. Jackson, Mississippi, designated 12 July “Margaret Walker Day.” Walker died in Chicago of breast cancer on 30 November 1998.

LORETTA G. WOODARD

See also Hughes, Langston; Literature: 7—Poetry; Wright, Richard; Yerby, Frank; *other specific individuals*

Selected Works

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For My People. 1942.

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Waller, Thomas "Fats"

Although famous for his larger-than-life personality, onstage antics, risqué wit, and numerous popular song standards, Fats Waller was among the greatest jazz musicians and songwriters to emerge from Harlem. To many leaders of the Harlem Renaissance, jazz represented one of several African American idioms useful in classical forms, but it was not considered high art. Therefore, his important contributions to jazz and popular song of the era have rarely been noted alongside those of composers such as William Grant Still. Yet in connecting stride piano of the 1910s and 1920s (featuring vigorous and challenging left-hand technique) with the increasingly complex jazz styles of the 1920s, Waller influenced Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Fletcher Henderson, Art Tatum, and countless others. Moreover, Waller was the first jazz organist, and his songs, such as "Ain't Misbehavin'" and "Honeysuckle Rose," have become American classics.

Waller was born on 134th Street in Harlem to Edward and Adeline Waller. A religious family, the Wallers had been members of the Abyssinian Baptist Church before converting to the Pentecostal faith. After the conversion, Edward Waller became a street-corner preacher on Lenox Avenue, and young Thomas Waller accompanied the services by playing hymns on a portable reed organ. He began piano lessons at age six and played in his school band, but most of his early training was informal—imitating music he heard in church, theaters, and vaudeville houses during the 1910s. His first job in music came at age fifteen, accompanying movies at the Lincoln Theater on 135th Street, drawing crowds among local teenagers and eventually young musicians. His parents were upset at Fats's performing in the "devil's workshop" and rejected outright any forays into jazz. Edward Waller even took his son to see the concert pianist Ignacy Paderewski to encourage a more respectable musical career. Although Fats was quite impressed with Paderewski, the lure of Harlem's culture, nightlife, and music was too strong.

After his mother's death in 1920, Waller moved in with the pianist Russell Brooks, who introduced him to

James P. Johnson, dean of Harlem stride "professors" and the idol of anyone aspiring to the craft. Johnson became Waller's mentor, teaching him stride technique, introducing him to fellow pianists such as Willie "the Lion" Smith, and helping him obtain a contract with the QRS piano roll company.

During the early 1920s, Waller began to gain a local reputation. With the help of Johnson and his own burgeoning skills, he became a regular performer on the "rent party" circuit. These socials not only helped tenants make rent payments, but they also served as tournaments for stride pianists, who were responsible for keeping dance music going all night. Rent parties featured "cutting contests," in which pianists would challenge each other, playing as many as 100 choruses of a solo piano piece. These events, more than formal lessons, served as the "school" for young pianists such as Waller.

This period also saw Waller emerge as a songwriter and recording artist. Through his association with Clarence Williams, he cut his first solo 78 rpm records in 1922, published his first songs in 1923, and served as a sideman for singers including Alberta Hunter. Throughout, he maintained his organ work at the Lincoln Theater, and he performed in vaudeville shows on tour and in New York, including the first featuring black performers at the Lafayette Theater in 1925. Recordings with several groups, including "Fats and His Buddies," put him in contact with a widening circle of elite jazz performers, and numerous Tin Pan Alley composers recognized his skill as a songwriter.

By the end of the decade, although Waller was regarded as the preeminent stride pianist by his peers and his music was enjoyed by many jazz fans, he had yet to sing on record or develop the buoyant stage presence that would earn him fame. Moreover, he was constantly in debt, and he was jailed twice for non-payment of alimony. His fortunes began to change in 1928, when James P. Johnson recommended that Waller and his sporadic lyricist-collaborator Andy Razaf cowrite a new vehicle for the vaudeville team of Flournoy Miller and Aubrey Lyles (*Keep Shufflin'*, 1928). The popularity of *Keep Shufflin'* led to completion of another review (*Hot Chocolates*, 1929) introducing two of their biggest hits: "Ain't Misbehavin'," which helped propel the careers of Cab Calloway and Louis Armstrong, and "Black and Blue." The latter tune was originally commissioned as a comical look at conflicts between light- and dark-skinned blacks, but the songwriters saw no humor in the conflict and wrote a

poignant statement on racism instead. The pair attempted to parlay their success into financial security, but they often sold compositions anonymously for quick money, a fate common to many black songwriters. This cost them large payoffs after the songs were recorded, and it has led to credible speculation that some works by Irving Berlin and the white songwriting team of Fields and McHugh were actually the work of Waller and Razaf.

After his manager and Razaf encouraged him to sing his own material, in 1931 Waller overcame his earlier shyness, and an exuberant, clowning, rakish stage personality emerged during the early 1930s. At the same time, a series of radio broadcasts from New York (WABC) and Cincinnati (WLW) and consistent touring gained him a widening audience, more attracted to his sly and mischievous wit than his musicianship. In 1934, a contract with Victor to record Waller's quintet "Fats Waller and His Rhythm," and his own CBS radio show, earned him fame and, for the first time, financial security. His traveling increased, including three tours of Europe and several trips to Hollywood after 1935 to make films. By World War II, his international renown was second only to that of Louis Armstrong among jazz musicians.



Fats Waller. (© Bettmann/Corbis.)

The rigorous schedule, including overseas performances for black soldiers during wartime, as well as a lifelong overindulgence in food and whiskey, had taken its toll on the 300-pound Waller, and his health began to fail in the early 1940s. While returning from a 1943 trip to California to film *Stormy Weather*, he died, probably of pneumonia, on a train near Kansas City, Missouri, at age thirty-nine.

Biography

Thomas Wright "Fats" Waller was born in New York City on 21 May 1904. He was educated at New York City public schools until age fourteen. He studied piano with James P. Johnson and (probably) Leopold Godowsky; and he studied composition (probably) with Carl Bohm (at Juilliard). He was the organist at the Lincoln Theater in New York (1919–1926), the Lafayette Theater in New York (1925–1927), and the Royal Grand Theater in Philadelphia (1928). His significant recording contracts included QRS (piano rolls, 1923); Okeh (1922–1924); Columbia (1931); Victor (1926–1930, 1934–1943). He performed during the 1920s and 1930s with Henry "Red" Allen, Una Mae Carlisle, Fletcher Henderson, Ted Lewis, McKinney's Cotton Pickers, the Mills Brothers, Don Redman, Erskine Tate, Jack Teagarden, and Clarence Williams; and he was accompanist for the singers Rosa Henderson, Alberta Hunter, Sara Martin, Hazel Meyers, and Maude Mills. Groups under his own name were Fats Waller and His Buddies (1927–1929) and Fats Waller and His Rhythm (1934–1943). Important songwriting collaborators were Andy Razaf, Clarence Williams, and Spencer Williams. Waller had radio broadcasts from Fox Terminal Theater (Newark, New Jersey) and WHN (New York), 1923; WOR (New York), 1928–1929; WABC "Paramount on Parade," 1930–1931; "Radio Roundup" 1931; WLW "Fats Waller's Rhythm Club" and "Moon River" (Cincinnati, Ohio), 1932; and CBS (New York) "Rhythm Club" and "Columbia Variety Hour," 1934. His significant engagements included performing as "Ali-Baba, the Egyptian Wonder" with the Ellington Orchestra at the Kentucky Club and New Amsterdam Theater, New York (1924); at Carnegie Hall, as pianist in James P. Johnson's *Yamekraw* (1928); his first solo jazz concert at Carnegie Hall (1942); and with the Les Hite Orchestra at the New Cotton Club, Los Angeles (1935). His European tours included Paris, with performances at Bricktop's (1932),

England, the continent, and Scandinavia (1938, 1939). Waller died near Kansas City, Missouri, on 15 December 1943.

WILLIAM J. NANCARROW

See also Calloway, Cabell "Cab"; Columbia Phonograph Company; Henderson, Fletcher; Hot Chocolates; House-Rent Parties; Hunter, Alberta; Jazz; Johnson, James P.; Lafayette Theater; Lincoln Theater; Musical Theater; Razaf, Andy; Smith, Willie "the Lion"; Williams, Clarence

Selected Songs and Compositions

- "Ain't Misbehavin'." 1929. (With Andy Razaf.)
 "Anybody Here Want to Try My Cabbage." 1924. (With Andy Razaf.)
 "Fractious Fingering." 1938.
 "Honeysuckle Rose." 1929. (With Andy Razaf.)
 "Lenox Avenue Blues." 1927.
London Suite. 1939.
 "My Feelin's Are Hurt." 1929.
 "Squeeze Me." 1923. (With Andy Razaf.)
 "Stealin' Apples." 1936. (With Andy Razaf.)
 "Valentine Stomp." 1929.
 "Viper's Drag." 1930.
 "Whiteman Stomp." 1927.
 "Wildcat Blues." 1923. (With Clarence Williams.)
 "(What Did I Do to Be So) Black and Blue." 1929. (With Andy Razaf.)
 "Your Feet's Too Big." 1939.

Musical Theater

- Hot Chocolates (Connie's Inn Hot Chocolates).* 1929. (With Andy Razaf and Harry Brooks.)
Junior Blackbirds. 1926.
Keep Shufflin'. 1928. (With Andy Razaf, James P. Johnson, Harry Creamer, and Clarence Todd.)
Load of Coal. 1929. (With Andy Razaf.)
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- Hooray for Love.* 1935.
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Walls of Jericho, The

The Walls of Jericho (1928) is a novel by Rudolph Fisher. By 1928, Fisher was already a respected author of numerous short stories. Nevertheless, the publication of this seriocomic novel solidified his status as a writer of the Harlem Renaissance and revealed him to be an accomplished social satirist. The novel resulted from a wager by a friend that Fisher could not construct a novel that would successfully blend Harlem's "high" and "low" cultures. *The Walls of Jericho* succeeds masterfully in this regard and was well received by most reviewers, thanks precisely to its evenhanded portrayal of the full range of society in Harlem. Fisher's balanced treatment was a timely balm, too, for those critics who lamented the "primitivism" of Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem* (1928) and Carl Van Vechten's controversial *Nigger Heaven* (1926). Yet despite good reviews and the added respectability of being published by Alfred A. Knopf, the commercial success of the novel was undoubtedly hindered by its being branded a "light" work, as well its print run being limited to 5,000 copies without the benefit of major publicity.

The Walls of Jericho has two parallel intertwining plots. The first involves Joshua "Shine" Jones, a piano mover whose pride and comfortable pretense of indifference are threatened by his romance with Linda Young, a sensitive, intelligent woman with ambitions beyond her employment as a maid. Ultimately Linda succeeds in making Shine understand that the walls

they each have erected around themselves serve only to prevent their being happy together. The second plot involves the lawyer Fred Merrit, an avowed hater of whites who, by virtue of his wealth and light skin, purchases a house in an all-white neighborhood strictly for the purpose of causing trouble. Trouble follows when Merrit's house is burned down; however, it turns out that the black owner of a pool hall who holds a grudge against Merrit is the culprit rather than the supposed white neighbors. Considered as a whole, the novel eschews propaganda while ambitiously tackling numerous serious racial issues, including class consciousness, color consciousness, racial uplift, inter- and intraracial relations, miscegenation, passing, white flight, white philanthropy, and the black urban experience—all the while still succeeding as a satire and comedy.

Critical reaction to the novel has been largely positive, with most attention focused on Fisher's deft handling of the white philanthropist Agatha Cramp and the balcony scenes at the General Improvement Association's costume ball. Singh (1976) claims that the work "stands alone among Harlem Renaissance novels as a high comedy"; Gloster (1948) lauds Fisher as "the first Negro author skilled in comic realism." Others cite Fisher's objective dual criticism of black and white cultures as one of the novel's chief strengths, while more recent treatments by de Jongh (1990) and Balshaw (2000) highlight the novel's value as a critique of the early black urban experience. Nevertheless, *The Walls of Jericho* has always proved of less interest to scholars than Fisher's short fiction, a condition likely to be furthered by the growing critical popularity of Fisher's landmark detective novel, *The Conjure Man Dies*.

CRAIG GABLE

See also *Conjure Man Dies, The*; Fisher, Rudolph; *Home to Harlem*; *Nigger Heaven*; McKay, Claude; Van Vechten, Carl

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Walrond, Eric

In 1918, Eric Walrond, a young, unknown West Indian journalist, arrived in New York. Less than a decade later, he was heralded as an influential essayist, editor, and short-story writer of the Harlem Renaissance.

Initially Walrond was disappointed in his efforts to further his writing career in the United States. Unable to gain employment with a newspaper, he held various jobs that did not tap into his experiences as a former reporter for the *Panama Star and Herald*. Walrond eventually resumed his career as a journalist with the *Brooklyn and Long Island Informer* as well as the *Weekly Review*, a publication of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Walrond's prize-winning sketch "A Senator's Memoirs," along with his appointments as assistant editor and then associate editor of UNIA's *Negro World*—a literary journal that counted among its contributors Zora Neale Hurston, Alain Locke, Claude McKay, Arthur Schomburg, and Walrond—marked his literary entrance into Harlem. Walrond's tenure with *Negro World* from 1921 to 1923 was significant for his career. *Negro World*, with its circulation of 200,000, provided greater exposure for Walrond's talents. While Walrond performed his editorial responsibilities at *Negro World*, his prose began appearing in other publications; he wrote articles, reviews, and short stories for

more than thirty-seven national and international periodicals including *Current History*, *The New Republic*, *The Crisis*, *The Messenger*, *Forbes*, *Vanity Fair*, *Chicago Defender*, *New York Herald Tribune*, *Saturday Review of Literature*, *Lectures du Soir* (Paris), *Voilà* (Paris), *Ahora* (Madrid), *Spectator* (London), and *Black Man* (London). In "The New Negro Faces America" (1923), which may be Walrond's most important article, he boldly excoriates black leaders (Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Marcus Garvey) and offers characteristics of a new black identity. In addition, Walrond wrote about racism in the United States and abroad, migration (Caribbean men and women to the United States and blacks to the North), reactions of blacks in the United States to West Indians, pan-Africanism, racial pride, literature versus propaganda, and Harlem. Walrond also reviewed books by contemporaries including Countee Cullen, Jessie Redmon Fauset, Rudolph Fisher, Claude McKay, and Walter White, as well as art exhibits and theatrical productions.

Another periodical figured prominently in Walrond's career. *Opportunity*, the National Urban League's monthly magazine edited by Charles S. Johnson, awarded Walrond's short story "Voodoo's Revenge" third prize in 1925. That same year, Walrond became *Opportunity's* business manager. According to Parascandola (1998), Walrond's two-year stint with *Opportunity* was important for at least three reasons: (1) He adeptly handled the magazine's finances, maintaining solvency; (2) he spearheaded a special issue in November 1926 that focused on the Caribbean and increased the journal's international appeal; and (3) he recommended other young writers of the Harlem Renaissance for publication in *Opportunity*.

Walrond's accomplishments at *Negro World* and *Opportunity* were impressive; however, *Tropic Death* (1926), a collection of ten short stories, was his greatest literary success. While a number of figures in the Harlem Renaissance advocated uplifting the black race by writing only about the elite, Walrond believed that less-than-flattering aspects of black life should also be depicted and that literary expression was more important than propaganda. Some members of the black literary establishment were less than pleased with *Tropic Death's* grim Caribbean settings rampant with poverty, famine, and death as well as racism, but *Tropic Death* was recognized as a stellar achievement for Walrond and a major work of the Harlem Renaissance. Langston Hughes, W. E. B. Du Bois, Benjamin Brawley, and Sterling Brown, along with the anonymous authors of reviews in the *New York Times*

Book Review and *New York World*, commented favorably on *Tropic Death*. Decades later, *Tropic Death* is an infrequent recipient of critical attention, yet recent studies by Agatucci, Bogle, Berry, Parascandola, Wade, and others have acknowledged the book's literary merits. Walrond skillfully blended realistic, naturalistic, impressionistic, gothic, autobiographical, and avant-garde elements in his collection. *Tropic Death*, unlike most fiction of the Harlem Renaissance, did not use Harlem or other locations in the United States as its setting. Walrond's portrayal of Caribbean life added a new perspective to renaissance literature.

Walrond was held in high regard by his peers. He is immortalized in Wallace Thurman's satirical novel of the renaissance, *Infants of the Spring* (1932). Thurman, another young member of the Harlem Renaissance, praises his West Indian character Cedric Williams (Walrond) as one of the rare authors of the period with a message and a writing style. Indeed, after *Tropic Death* was published, expectations were high concerning Walrond's literary future. It was generally assumed that his writing career would continue to thrive long after the Harlem Renaissance ended.

Walrond's most productive years were concurrent with the Harlem Renaissance, however. In the late 1920s, Walrond began working on a book about the Panama Canal tentatively titled *The Big Ditch*, and he sent a letter to the Guggenheim Foundation in 1960 announcing his intent to finish the book. He never completed it, however. *Tropic Death* and *Black and Unknown Bards: A Collection of Negro Poetry* (1958), a book he compiled with Rosey E. Pool, are Walrond's only published full-length works. A perusal of Parascandola's bibliography of Walrond's published prose, the most comprehensive list to date, reveals that from the 1930s to 1954 he continued to write for periodicals (primarily European), including Marcus Garvey's publication in London, *Black Man*. Scant details are known about Walrond's life after he left Harlem. Walrond traveled to various Caribbean locations in 1928 as well as Paris, from 1929 to 1932; and he moved to England in 1932. His death in 1966 leaves two unanswered questions: Why did Walrond, a well-known writer of the Harlem Renaissance, live in relative obscurity during his later years? And why did he fail to produce additional major works after *Tropic Death*?

Although Eric Walrond remains a rather mysterious figure, his contemporaries and subsequent generations have corroborated his status as an innovative and influential participant in the Harlem Renaissance.

Walrond, Eric

Biography

Eric Derwent Walrond was born 18 December 1898 in Georgetown, British Guiana (now known as Guyana). He studied at Saint Stephen's Boys' School in Black Rock, Barbados; public and private schools and with tutors in Colón in the Panama Canal Zone; City College (now known as City University of New York), 1922–1924; and Columbia University, 1924–1926. He was a clerk in the health department of the Canal Commission in Cristobal, Panama; reporter, *Panama Star and Herald*, 1916–1918; porter, janitor, secretary, and stenographer, New York, 1918–1921; co-owner, editor, and reporter, *Brooklyn and Long Island Informer*, New York, 1921–1923; associate editor, *Weekly Review*, New York; assistant editor, then associate editor, *Negro World*, New York, 1921–1923; business manager, *Opportunity*, New York, 1925–1927; contributing editor, *New Masses*, 1926–1930; and freelance writer. His awards included the Harmon Award in Literature, 1927; being named a Zona Gale scholar at the University of Wisconsin, 1928; and Guggenheim Award, 1928. Walrond died in London, England, in 1966.

LINDA M. CARTER

See also *Infants of the Spring*; *Negro World*; *Opportunity*; *Tropic Death*

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Walton, Lester

Lester Walton was a journalist, diplomat, entrepreneur, and songwriter. His career in journalism began before he reached the age of twenty, first with the *St. Louis Globe Democrat* and then, from 1902, with the *St. Louis Star*. Walton worked primarily as a sports reporter. He also had ambitions as a songwriter and a publisher. In an effort to achieve these goals, he founded the Douglas Music Publishing Company with Richard D. Barrett. Four of their songs were registered for copyright in 1905. In 1903, Walton had written lyrics for several songs by Ernest Hogan, a leading black entertainer. These were purchased by Joseph Stern and Company, a major Tin Pan Alley concern. The connection with Hogan bore fruit in 1907, when Walton wrote lyrics to Hogan's successful show *The Oyster Man*. Walton continued to write songs, some of which he published himself, and he attempted to interest publishers in his work into the 1950s. His last effort in this area was the song "Jim Crow Has Got to Go!"

In 1908, Walton became the theater critic of *New York Age*, retaining this post until 1914. He reviewed the important black entertainers of the day, and his columns are a major firsthand source for contemporary opinion on Bert Williams, the Clef Club, and others. His

stature within the theater community led to his gaining membership in “The Frogs,” an association of top black entertainers of the day, including Williams and Walker, Cole and Johnson, and James Reese Europe.

As this second stint in journalism wound down, Walton became seriously involved in theater. In 1914, the firm of Walton and Morgenstern leased the Lafayette Theater and brought over the Anita Bush Company from the Lincoln Theater. Renamed the Lafayette Players Stock Company, they became the leading theater troupe of the Harlem Renaissance, and Walton remained associated with them until 1923. In 1915, he also produced a musical show, *Darkydom*. Despite a great array of talent (with lyrics by Henry Creamer and music by James Reese Europe and Will Marion Cook), the show was a costly failure. In 1921–1922, Walton worked for Black Swan Records as tour manager for their leading act, Ethel Waters’s Black Swan Troubadours. Later, Walton was active in the Coordinating Council for Negro Performers.

In the 1920s, Walton returned to working primarily as a journalist. He wrote editorials and features for *New York World* from 1922 to 1931, possibly the first African American to gain such a high-profile position at a major white daily. He also wrote for *Literary Digest*, *Outlook*, and other major magazines. Walton had developed political consciousness early in his career, and he nted reform campaigns even in his entertainment columns. In 1913, he spearheaded a movement demanding that the word “Negro” always be printed with a capital “N.” During the late 1920s and early 1930s, he rose through the ranks of the New York Democratic Party, serving on the National Democratic Campaign Committee (1924, 1928, 1932), and the New York Commission on Civil Rights.

In July 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt named Walton envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to Liberia. Walton served in this capacity until 1946. He assisted in the construction of the port of Monrovia, crucial to America’s wartime operations in the eastern Atlantic. Walton worked for the restoration of territories seized by France, and he criticized Liberia’s use of forced labor, corruption among high officials, and other abuses. After his term of diplomatic service, he returned to the United States, where he became active in business, politics, and charity. He served as arbitrator in a labor dispute between the Newspaper Guild and *New York Amsterdam News*, 1957–1959. Walton also worked with the Commission on Intergroup Relations during this period, focusing his efforts especially on fair housing practices.

Biography

Lester Aglar Walton was born on 20 April 1882, in St. Louis, Missouri. He had a career as a journalist, diplomat, entrepreneur, and songwriter. He married Gladys Moore, daughter of Frederick Randolph Moore, longtime publisher of *New York Age*. They had two daughters, Marjorie and Gladys. Walton’s awards included honorary degrees from Lincoln University in 1927, Wilberforce University in 1945, and the University of Liberia in 1958. Walton died on 16 October 1965.

ELLIOTT S. HURWITT

See also Anita Bush Theater Company; Black Swan Phonograph Company; Lafayette Players; Lafayette Theater; Lincoln Theater; Moore, Frederick Randolph; *New York Age*

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Wanamaker Award

The Wanamaker Award—its full name is the John Wanamaker Masonic Humanitarian Medal—was created by the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania at the December Quarterly Communication of 1993, under the leadership of Edward H. Fowler, who was grand master at that time. This award is presented to a male or female non-Mason who supports the ideals and philosophy of the Masonic fraternity. It is a prestigious award, and only five people have received it as of this writing. In 2001, the award was presented to Joseph V. Paterno, coach of the Pennsylvania State University

football team, who was widely acclaimed as one of the greatest college football coaches.

John Wanamaker, after whom the award was named, was a well-known merchant. He was born in South Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on 11 July 1838. His ancestors were early settlers, his father of German and Scotch ancestry and his mother of French Huguenot descent. At age thirteen, he worked as an errand boy for a publishing house. In 1856, he began a job in Barclay Lippincott's clothing store in Philadelphia, and later he became a salesman in Bennett's Town Hall on Market Street.

Gradual success in his career also brought health problems. In 1857, he took a long journey to the western United States to restore his health. He returned to become a paid secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)—its first paid officer in the country. His success in promoting the organization was so great that he was named national secretary by his supporters. In 1858, he founded the Bethany Sunday School. He backed temperance and Pennsylvania's "blue laws." Owing to his strong support for the Republican Party, however, he did not succeed in his bid for various political offices.

Wanamaker created a modest menswear business, Oak Hall, with his brother-in-law Nathan Brown in 1861. A year after Brown's death in 1868, Wanamaker opened John Wanamaker and Company, but he turned it over to his brothers in 1876 when he converted the old freight depot of the Pennsylvania Railroad into a huge store that contained a number of small specialty shops. The "Grand Depot," as it was known, initiated the department store phenomenon; later, after several expansions, it became one of the largest department stores in the United States.

Wanamaker's business success reflects a humanistic attitude in all his undertakings. The effective use of advertisements and a money-back guarantee brought customers to his stores, and he treated his employees like family members. In 1881, he set up an employees' mutual benefit association, with training classes for clerks, and continuation classes for boy and girls. This association later became the John Wanamaker Commercial Institute.

Apart from his mercantile activities, Wanamaker also devoted time to religious and patriotic work. In 1888, he raised funds to help in the election of Benjamin Harrison, and he was made a Postmaster General in 1889. During his term of office, he experimented with rural free delivery, advocated parcel post and postal savings, and made several other improvements to the system.

John Wanamaker was made a "Mason-at-sight" by the grand master William J. Kelly in March 1898, at age sixty-two. Two years later he was elected to become a member and a senior warden of the Friendship Lodge in Jenkintown, Pennsylvania, a rural community, and he served as worshipful master of the lodge the following year. Later he was appointed to serve the Grand Lodge as chairman of the library committee. At the end of his tenure as chairman, the library had collected more than 17,000 volumes, and more than 7,400 works of art and Masonic relics.

Wanamaker died after a long illness in December 1920.

AMY LEE

See also Social-Fraternal Organizations

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Ward, Aida

Aida Ward, a notable performer at the Cotton Club, was known for her humor as well as for her talent as a singer. She achieved some early notoriety when she embarrassed a young songwriter, Dorothy Fields, by substituting off-color lyrics in one of Fields's songs during a performance at the Cotton Club while Fields's parents were in the audience.

Ward emerged as a star in musical theater when she replaced the popular Florence Mills in the cast of the 1928 version of *Blackbirds*, following Mills's death. In the extended run of *Blackbirds* at the Liberty Theater downtown, Ward's costars were Adelaide Hall and Bill "Bojangles" Robinson. Ironically, the lyrics of Ward's hit song in *Blackbirds*, "I Can't Give You Anything but Love (Baby)," were by Dorothy Fields. Writing about the production in *Black Manhattan*, James Weldon Johnson attributed its success to the strength of the "whole company and the very excellent band,"

but he singled out two performers—Adelaide Hall and Aida Ward— as “very clever girls.”

Blackbirds was an important boost to Ward’s career. After she left the show she continued to perform at the Cotton Club and in other venues in Harlem. In 1932 she was associated with another hit song, “I’ve Got the World on a String,” which she performed in the musical revue *Cotton Club Parade*.

In the mid-1930s, Ward’s popularity earned her a starring role at Harlem’s new Apollo Theater on 125th Street. She was one of the headliners in its opening-night program, “Jazz à la Carte,” on 26 January 1934, along with Ralph Cooper, Benny Carter and his Orchestra, and sixteen dancers billed as the “Gorgeous Hot-Steppers.” Ward continued to perform in Harlem and elsewhere in New York during the rest of her career, appearing onstage and, more frequently, on the radio.

As a performer, Ward contributed to the flowering of African American music and musical theater that was a major component of the Harlem Renaissance. Most of her acclaim came from her engagements at the Cotton Club, where she brought a bluesy jazz flavor to the works of songwriters like Dorothy Fields and Fields’s partner Jimmy McHugh. Ward was accompanied by some of the best musicians of the period, including the bands of the great Duke Ellington and Cab Calloway.

Biography

Aida Ward was born on 11 February 1903 in Washington, D.C. She was one of the noted singers and performers during the Harlem Renaissance, best known for her appearances at Harlem’s famous Cotton Club in the 1920s, her starring role in *Blackbirds of 1928*, and her headliner role at the Apollo Theater when it opened in 1934. She was also a featured performer on radio programs during the 1930s and 1940s. Ward died on 23 June 1984 in New York City.

FRANK A. SALAMONE
CARY D. WINTZ

See also Apollo Theater; *Blackbirds*; Cotton Club; Fields, Dorothy; Hall Adelaide; Robinson, Bill “Bojangles”

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Waring, Laura Wheeler

Laura Wheeler Waring was born in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1887. She was the daughter of Reverend Robert Wheeler, the college-educated pastor of the Talcott Street Congregational Church. Her father had created Connecticut’s first black congregation, and his ties to the black community were impressive. Robert Wheeler’s church had been built in 1826 and had housed fugitive slaves during the Civil War. It also served as a school for black children, where they were taught African history. Waring was raised in a home deeply committed to the black community, the black church, and the value of education. Her parents encouraged her early on to pursue her art, and they loved to watch her draw and paint, sometimes drawing with her.

Waring graduated from Hartford High School in 1906 and went on to study at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, where she would spend the next six years immersing herself in every aspect of studio art. She graduated in 1914 and received the Cresson Traveling Scholarship to study in Europe. Like many artists of the Harlem Renaissance, she sought in Paris an opportunity for the finest training and a free environment in which to improve her craft. She was also able to visit the finest galleries of Europe. This was the first of several trips Waring made to Europe. She returned to Paris in 1925 and stayed for eighteen months, studying painting with Boutet de Monvel and Prinnet at the Académie de la Grand Chaumière, a private academy in the Montparnasse district with an excellent reputation and some of the finest teachers in Paris. She returned home when her funds were exhausted.

Because there were other children to support in her family, Waring had to work to help educate them. She taught at the Cheyney State Teachers College in Pennsylvania, where she became the director of the



Laura Wheeler Waring (1887–1948), *Anna Washington Derry*, 1927; oil on canvas, 20 by 16 inches. (© Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C./Art Resource, N.Y. Gift of the Harmon Foundation.)

music and art departments. She had little time for her own work during the school year. In the summers she received training at Harvard and Columbia on how to teach drawing. In 1928, she was awarded the First Prize Medal from the Harmon Foundation.

Although Waring is known for her portraits, most notably those of Marian Anderson (1944) and W. E. B. Du Bois (n.d.), perhaps her greatest contribution to the Harlem Renaissance was as an illustrator for the magazine *The Crisis*, edited by Du Bois. She received numerous commissions to provide *Crisis* with both cover and interior illustrations. She created illustrations in black-and-white silhouette, delicate and detailed, flat and dramatic in their simplicity. She often contributed fantastic images of Africa, special covers for the annual Christmas issues, as well as a variety of other subjects. She was one of the most active illustrators of *The Crisis* during Du Bois's editorship, along with Albert Alex Smith and Aaron Douglas.

Waring remained at Cheyney State Teachers College until her death in 1948. Her work is included in numerous museums and private collections, including the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

Biography

Laura Wheeler Waring was born in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1887. She graduated from Hartford High School in 1906 and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1914. She received a Cresson Traveling Scholarship. She attended Harvard University Summer School in 1918, Columbia University Summer School in 1920, and Académie de la Grande Chaumière, Paris, in 1924–1925. She received a first-place Harmon Foundation Medal in 1928. She was an instructor in the art department of Cheyney State Teachers College, Cheyney, Pennsylvania, from 1906 to 1925; and its director from 1925 to 1948. Waring died in 1948.

AMY KIRSCHKE

See also Artists; Crisis, The; Douglas, Aaron; Harmon Foundation

Major Exhibitions

Galerie du Luxembourg, Paris, 1929.
Howard University, Washington, D.C. 1940, 1949.
National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 1944, 1997.
Brooklyn Museum, New York, 1945.
Newark Museum, Newark, New Jersey, 1989.

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Washington, Booker T.

Booker T. Washington prefigured many of the economic, cultural, and political themes of the “New Negroes” of the Harlem Renaissance. At the same time, he was a political foil for many people in the movement who detested his conciliatory rhetoric. Washington was born in West Virginia; was a former slave; imbibed the purported virtues of the Protestant ethic from General Samuel Chapman Armstrong during his years as a student at Hampton Institute; and founded Tuskegee Institute in 1881. Later, Tuskegee became a major center for technical and industrial training of blacks in the

United States and the central locus of Washington's famous (or infamous) Tuskegee political and patronage machine. On 18 September 1895, at the opening of the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition, Washington delivered a speech to a mixed audience that catapulted him into both national and international eminence as the leading black spokesman of his generation.

Washington's speech is often pejoratively referred to as the "Atlanta compromise" because it represented an accommodation regarding blacks' civil and political rights; at the same time, though, it was an aggressive assertion of the potency of self-reliance and a commitment to progress. African Americans, Washington argued, would eventually achieve equality, not by agitation for social equality, but by a "severe and constant" struggle in the marketplace. In keeping with his advocacy of technical and industrial training for blacks, in 1900 Washington founded the National Negro Business League in order to promote the business achievements of African Americans and to promulgate his economic and nationalist worldview.

In addition to significantly influencing the development and racial composition of Harlem, Washington and his "machine"—that is, Monroe Nathan Work and Robert Ezra Park in particular—contributed to a nuanced portrait of Africa and Africans that contrasted starkly with those of evolutionary anthropologists. Washington, who during the period before 1905 was influenced by nineteenth-century racist concepts of Africans, initially conceived of black people's African ancestors as barbarians. As he became more involved in African affairs and came under the influence of Work and Park, Washington modified his position to acknowledge the contribution of Africans to world civilization.

Work, who had become familiar with contributions and achievements of the so-called savages during his courses with William I. Thomas, a prominent member of the department of sociology and anthropology at the University of Chicago at the turn of the twentieth century, eventually published *A Bibliography of the Negro in Africa and America* (1928) in the midst of the Harlem Renaissance. Robert Ezra Park, along with Work, was a ghostwriter of the two-volume *Story of the Negro* (1909), a work that Harlan considers "significant for its consciousness of Africa" (1972, xxxviii).

Park, who held a German doctorate in sociology and who went on to establish himself as the leading sociologist of race relations in 1920s and 1930s, acknowledged his intellectual debt to Washington when he wrote: "I think I probably learned more about human nature and society, in the South under Booker

Washington than I had learned elsewhere in all my previous studies" (1950, vii). Like many patrons of and participants in the Harlem Renaissance, Park embraced a variant of racial romanticism and attributed the "race-consciousness" of the New Negro to a peculiar race temperament: he thought that black writing was "the natural expression of the Negro temperament under all the conditions of modern life" (294).

The artists and writers of the Harlem Renaissance tended to find fault with Washington's educational, political, and social policies, labeling them conservative. Although the disagreements between W. E. B. Du Bois and Washington were mainly superficial, the "New Negroes" nevertheless found Du Bois's ideas more appropriate for their temperament than those of Washington. They did, however, embrace his ideas in reference to black self-help, racial solidarity, and racial pride. Marcus Garvey, for example, was attracted to Washington's messages of self-help and racial independence, transforming those ideas into a radical political and economic nationalism.

Over the past thirty years, an intense dispute has arisen among literary critics, as well as among historians, over the issue of whether or not there is continuity between the "age of Washington" and the Harlem Renaissance. Historians such as Meier (1966) and literary critics such as Baker (1987) present the case for continuity. Baker, for example, argued that the Harlem Renaissance was a literary awakening during a continuous period between Washington's "Atlanta compromise" in 1895 and the publication of Richard Wright's autobiography, *Black Boy*, in 1945. Meier has argued, on the basis of his close examination of the relevant history, anthropology, and creative literature, that, as Alain Locke implied, "the roots of the New Negro, both as an artistic movement and as a racial outlook, were in the age of Washington" (259). For Huggins (1971) and Wall (1995), however, the Harlem Renaissance was a distinct period that bore little relationship to Washington's years of ascendancy. "To my mind," Wall has observed in reference to the proponents of continuity in general and Baker in particular, "Washington is at most a precursor of the Renaissance and one against which a number of authors write" (208–213).

Splitting the difference between those scholars who argue for continuity and those who argue discontinuity are Lewis (1981), Wintz (1988), and Hutchinson (1995). For Lewis, African American intellectuals, such as the sociologist and promoter of the "New Negroes" Charles S. Johnson, tended "to modify



Booker T. Washington, c. 1890–1900. (Library of Congress.)

Booker Washington to suit the tactics of the Talented Tenth" (49). Wintz has written: "While the accommodationist approach to racial problems associated with Washington was scorned by the new generation of black intellectuals, the New Negro accepted his doctrine of self-help and racial pride." More precisely, he concludes, "The 'New Negro' was never a simple or comfortable blend of ideologies; it was rather a dynamic ideology filled with internal conflicts and even contradictions whose fundamental questions remained unresolved" (47).

Finally, Hutchinson has argued that as early as 1928, Charles S. Johnson perceived continuity between Washington and the Harlem Renaissance:

The latter movement, Hutchinson surmises, would not have been possible . . . without Washington's success at precipitating a subjective transformation of a small but important segment of *white* American while simultaneously building up an educational, economic, and social foundation for black advancement. (179)

Suffice it to say, Washington's ideas about black self-reliance, racial pride, and interracial tolerance have been sufficiently potent to persist not only through the New Negro movement but to this day.

Biography

Booker Taliaferro Washington was born in the spring of 1856 (the year is disputed) in Hales' Ford, Virginia. He studied at the Hampton Institute from 1872 to 1875 and at Wayland Seminary, Washington, D.C., in 1879. Washington taught at Hampton Institute, 1879–1881; and at Tuskegee Institute, 1881–1889. He was principal, Tuskegee Institute, from 1881 to 1915. He founded the National Negro Business League in 1900. Washington died in Tuskegee, Alabama, on 13 November 1915.

VERNON J. WILLIAMS

See also Du Bois, W. E. B.; National Negro Business League; Scott, Emmett Jay; Work, Monroe Nathan

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Washington, Fredi

The actress Fredi Washington was a star onstage and in films, but her career never overcame society's focus on skin color. Her most memorable role was in the film *Imitation of Life* (1934), playing an uneasy, troubled, fair-skinned black woman, Peola Johnson, who decides to pass for white. This film, based on the novel by Fannie Hurst, brought Washington lasting fame but confined her to the narrow cinematic space of the racially adrift "tragic mulatto" figure. Washington, an assertive, self-identified black woman, found that neither Hollywood nor the black community knew how to handle her as an actor. Nevertheless, she earned respect and admiration for her work on the stage, in front of the camera, and as a crusader for racial justice.

Fredericka Carolyn Washington was born 23 December 1903 in Savannah, Georgia, the oldest girl in a family of five children. When her mother—who nicknamed her "Fredi"—died, the eleven-year old took care of her younger siblings. Following her father's remarriage, Washington, with her sister, Isabel, entered Saint Elizabeth's, a Catholic convent run by white nuns in Cornwell Heights, Pennsylvania. Washington later left the convent and moved to New York to live with her grandmother and aunt. There she finished high school and took additional courses in dramatic writing and languages. "I have had no formal training whatever in dramatics," Washington once wrote. However, her background and her natural talent impelled her toward the stage. While working as a bookkeeper at the Black Swan Record Company, she auditioned for a role in the musical that some historians say marked the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance: Eubie Blake, Noble Sissle, and Flournoy Miller's *Shuffle Along* (1922). She earned \$35 a week as a chorus dancer, performing an "Apache dance specialty."

The decade of the Harlem Renaissance, the 1920s, was one of rising expectations for Fredi Washington. She established herself on stage and screen with a series of performances. In addition to her role in *Shuffle Along*, Washington danced at New York's Alabam' Club, where she earned \$300 a week. She later formed a dance troupe and toured Europe with Charles Moore, her dance partner. In 1926, she obtained her first dramatic role, opposite Paul Robeson in *Black Boy*, a

Broadway drama based on the life of the prizefighter Jack Johnson. Washington received positive reviews, although the reaction to the play itself was tepid. Her character, a light-skinned black woman trying to pass for white, led to her being typecast as the "tragic mulatto"—a role that she deepened, enlivened, but never escaped. Her first film appearance was as a dancer in *Black and Tan Fantasy* (1929), which was primarily a showcase for Duke Ellington's music. She also had roles in other musicals including *Sweet Chariot* (1930), based on the life of Marcus Garvey. An impressed talent scout advised her to pass for white, but she refused.

Fredi Washington reached the height of her film career in the 1930s. The eight films she made during this decade are essentially her complete film oeuvre. In 1933, she was again paired with Paul Robeson, in a film adaptation of Eugene O'Neill's play *The Emperor Jones*, about a railroad porter who becomes a Caribbean king. Washington played a prostitute. The studio insisted on reshooting a love scene between her and Robeson, fearing that audiences would mistake Washington for a white woman making love to a black man. She was forced to wear dark makeup for the remainder of the filming. The next year she starred in the film with which she is most identified, the controversial *Imitation of Life*. She again played a tragic mulatto—in this case, one who denies her mother and lives to regret her racial transgression. The film was a great commercial success and earned Washington critical praise, but her performance was perhaps too convincing: Some blacks suspected, erroneously, that the character's feelings about race were Washington's own feelings. Washington was forced to defend herself in personal appearances following the film's release. This film also generated criticism on other levels. Sterling Brown, a poet and professor at Howard University, gave the film a very bad review in the magazine *Opportunity*, saying that its portrayal of the female characters, especially the overly loyal mother, Delilah (played by Louise Beavers), was dishonest. He concluded that the defiant daughter, Peola (Washington's character), was more self-respecting and believable than the mealy mouthed, servile mother. Despite the success of *Imitation of Life*, Washington's career did not soar. By the end of the decade, it was taking another direction.

Convinced that black actors would not receive fair treatment in Hollywood until they had more artistic and financial clout, Washington became dedicated to improving conditions for black performers. In 1937, she was one of the founders of the Negro Actors Guild, and she served as its first executive secretary.



Fredi Washington. (Photofest.)

The guild's purpose was to educate black performers about their legal and professional rights, and to agitate on their behalf. From 1942 to 1947 she joined the staff of the newspaper *People Voice*, published in New York by her brother-in-law, Congressman Adam Clayton Powell Jr. She was a columnist and theater editor. She was also active in special events sponsored by the Urban League, and she served as administrative secretary for a Joint Committee of Actors Equity and Theater League that investigated hotel accommodations for black performers. Washington continued to act in theater. Her last screen role was in 1937, in *One Mile from Heaven*.

Biography

The actress Fredericka Carolyn Washington (Fredi Washington) was born on 23 December 1903 in Savannah, Georgia. She attended Saint Elizabeth's convent in Pennsylvania and public schools in New York City. Washington was married twice. Her first husband, Lawrence Brown, was a trombonist with the Duke Ellington Orchestra. They married in 1933 and divorced in 1951. In 1952, she married Dr. Hugh Anthony Bell,

a dentist in Stamford, Connecticut. She appeared in *Shuffle Along* in 1921, and in many other productions, as well as at clubs; her most memorable role was in the film *Imitation of Life* (1934). She was inducted into the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame in 1975. Fredi Washington died on 28 June 1994 in Stamford.

AUDREY THOMAS MCCCLUSKEY

See also Beavers, Louise; Black Swan Phonograph Company; Brown, Sterling; Emperor Jones, The; Johnson, John Arthur; Robeson, Paul; Shuffle Along; Washington, Isabel

Broadway Theater

Sweet Chariot. 1930.

Run, Little Chillun. 1933.

Mamba's Daughters. 1939–40.

How Long Till Summer. 1949.

Films

The Emperor Jones. 1933.

Imitation of Life. 1934.

Mills Blue Rhythm Band. 1934.

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Washington, Isabel

Isabel Washington was born in Georgia; her family moved to Washington, D.C., and then Harlem, while she was young. She was educated partly at a Catholic convent school. Her father, Robert T. Washington, was in charge of packing and shipping at Harry Pace's

Black Swan Records (1921–1924), and Isabel Washington did chores in the Black Swan office after school. The pianist Fletcher Henderson overheard her humming at her desk and felt she showed musical promise. They went into the studio around March 1923 and recorded two songs, “I Want To” by Willy M. Grant (a pseudonym for Black Swan’s music director, the classical composer William Grant Still), and “That’s Why I’m Loving You” by the team of Murray and White. The record was released as Black Swan 14141 in May 1923. A light “pop” record, it is stylistically related to show music of the kind heard in the musical *Shuffle Along*.

Isabel Washington’s sister Fredi Washington began working in theater in the early 1920s, and Isabel, eager to follow, began hanging around theaters during her sister’s rehearsals. She eventually broke into show business, becoming a chorus member, then star, of several shows, including *Harlem* (1929), *Bombolla* (1929), and *Singin’ the Blues* (1931). She made a memorable appearance in the film *Saint Louis Blues* (1929), playing the “other woman” in a love triangle with characters played by Bessie Smith and the dancer Jimmy Mordecai. The only film made by Smith, it is a crucial document of the Harlem Renaissance.

Isabel Washington married the charismatic preacher Adam Clayton Powell Jr. in 1933; the wedding was a major event in Harlem. This marriage put an end to her career as an actress: Powell, who had overcome family objections to his marrying a showgirl, insisted that Isabel leave the stage. She made frequent appearances at church events and became Powell’s constant companion in Harlem affairs. They organized boycotts of white-owned stores on 125th Street that refused to hire blacks, and they fought tirelessly for Harlem’s residents. Over the next decade, Isabel Powell was among the best-known women in black America, often appearing in the front pages of the black press.

In 1944, Powell was elected to Congress, and he began commuting between Washington and his parish in Harlem. He and Washington then divorced, although she retained his name, which her son and grandson also bore. As Belle Powell, she became a fixture in Harlem. She found employment as a female barber—something of a novelty at the time—and remained active in the Democratic Party and in community affairs.

Biography

Isabel Washington (Isabelle Marion Marie Theodore Rosemarie Washington) was born on 23 May 1908 in

Savannah, Georgia. She was the younger sister of the actress Fredi Washington and had three other siblings and half-siblings; she was a showgirl and was the first wife of Rev. Adam Clayton Powell Jr. The Powells had no children, but Isabel’s son Preston, by a previous liaison, adopted the name Powell. In her later years Washington took particular delight in entertaining young children with storytelling. Her ninetieth birthday was celebrated with a gala dinner at the restaurant Chez Josephine; the guests included Congressman Charles Rangel (Adam Clayton Powell’s successor in Congress) and Bobby Short, who sang “Happy Birthday” at the restaurant’s piano. Washington—or Belle Powell—is still living in Harlem at the time of this writing, and maintains a summer home in Oak Bluffs on Martha’s Vineyard.

ELLIOTT S. HURWITT

See also Black Swan Phonograph Company; Henderson, Fletcher; Saint Louis Blues; Still, William Grant; Washington, Fredi

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Waters, Ethel

Ethel Waters’s career as a singer, stage performer, and actress coincided with dramatic changes in twentieth-century American popular entertainment. Waters emerged as one of the most popular stage performers during the Harlem Renaissance. Her career continued to flourish throughout the 1930s and was followed by featured appearances on stage and screen. In her later years, Waters made an occasional television appearance and toured with the Billy Graham Evangelical Association.

Waters got her first professional opportunity in 1917, when the black vaudeville team of Braxton and Nugent saw her perform in an amateur show in

Philadelphia and invited her to tour with them. Singing and dancing under the stage nickname “Sweet Mama Stringbean,” Waters quickly became a favorite with audiences. What distinguished her from the other singers who also toured on the black vaudeville circuit was her low-key approach to singing the blues.

During the 1920s, Waters flourished as a recording artist and stage performer. In this decade, a prolific group of black female singers—including Waters, Alberta Hunter, Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, Mamie Smith, and Sippie Wallace—cornered the market in black popular music. The classic blues singers brought a variety of styles and techniques to their performances. Improvisation, altered phrasing, and vocal dramatics consisting of groans, shouts, wails, and moans were common stylistic techniques. Waters differed from many of her contemporaries and established herself as a different kind of blues singer by using her smoother vocal tone, unique phrasing, and an exacting, if not theatrical, delivery to great effect. Although she could sing in the more dramatic fashion, she relied more on characterization, mimicry, parody, and crisp enunciation in place of vocal dramatics to sell a song.

It was an offer to appear in a stock show at the Lincoln Theater that brought Waters to Harlem. After she finished her engagement at the Lincoln Theater, she remained in Harlem and took a regular booking at Edmond’s Cellar, a nightclub. Over time, Waters began drawing larger audiences. She also started experimenting with new material and broadened her repertoire to include the type of popular standards that were sung by white stage stars such as Fannie Brice. The careful articulation, opened vowels, and a speech-like delivery that she used in her blues worked well with this material. Waters herself was keenly aware that her singing was something different for both black and white audiences:

I found that I could characterize and act out [popular ballads] just as I did with my blues. That I not only was able to please that brass knuckle crowd of regulars but began to draw the sporting men and downtown white people I credit to the fact that I had spunk and was also an enigma. (1950, 129–130)

In 1926, Carl Van Vechten, a white patron of the Harlem scene, wrote an article for the magazine *Vanity Fair* in which he skillfully described why he thought Ethel Waters stood out from her contemporaries: “She refines her comedy, refines her pathos, refines even her obscenities. . . . She never shouts. Her

voice and her gestures are essentially Negro, but they have been thought out and restrained” (106). Waters’ style was also appealing to African American audiences for many of the same reasons. James Weldon Johnson described Waters’s performances in this way: “Miss Waters gets her audiences through an innate poise; through the quiet and subtlety of her personality. . . . She never overexerts her voice; she always creates a sense of reserved power that compels the listener” (1968, 240). In Johnson’s opinion, Waters had indeed appeared to master a new way to communicate as a performer. She derived her presence not through an unrestrained voice but through a skillfully created interpretation and firm control of her material.

Mamie Smith’s rendition of “Crazy Blues” (1920) showed recording companies that there was an untapped market in African American communities and set off a boom in the production of “race records.” Other recording companies were anxious to capitalize on this new market. Black Swan Records, founded by Harry Pace, advertised itself as “the only company using racial artists in making high class records.” Black Swan’s mission was to bring a measure of sophistication and artistry to black music. It was in search of a blues singer who would fit its standards, and—after rejecting singers like Bessie Smith (who seemed to sound too gritty)—it turned to Waters. At this point, Waters had already made two recordings in 1921 for Cardinal Records, “New York Glide” and “The New Jump Steady Ball,” and her voice and image matched up perfectly with Black Swan’s ideals. Waters’s first recordings for Pace were “Down Home Blues” and “Oh Daddy.” The recordings enhanced her reputation and broadened her audience beyond the small vaudeville circuits. In the wake of this success, Pace arranged for Waters to tour with Black Swan’s musical arranger, Fletcher Henderson.

By the time Waters finished her tours for Black Swan in July 1922, she was a well-established performer. The theater was the next logical step in her career. Waters continued attracting larger crowds to Edmond’s Cellar and made featured appearances at places like the Lafayette Theater. Her growing popularity and success on records had caught the attention of theater producers, who were eager to cast her as a headliner in their shows. Waters appeared in such productions as *Oh Joy!* (1922) and *Africana* (1927); she also continued to do select engagements with Fletcher Henderson’s Jazz Masters, and she performed as a headliner on the newly organized black theater circuit of the Theater Owners’ Booking Association (TOBA).

Critics continued to be impressed by her performances, and they referred to her in laudatory terms as the black equivalent of some of the great white vaudeville stars of the time. One reviewer described her as the “ebony Nora Bayes,” because she matched the famous vaudevillian’s talents in gesture, poise, delivery, and facial work in dramatizing a song.

Waters’s career reached another milestone in 1924 when she introduced the new song “Dinah” during a performance at Sam Salvin’s Plantation Club. “Dinah” became an international hit and was also used as Waters’s signature song in the production *Plantation Revue* (1925). The success that Waters had with “Dinah” enhanced her reputation and popularity and continued to bring her offers to star in black musical theatrical productions. Waters’s first Broadway show, *Africana* (1927), opened at Daly’s Sixty-Third Street Theater. It was a star vehicle for Waters because it was a compilation of all the shows that she had performed touring on the TOBA circuit. *Africana* was made up primarily of plantation scenes and swindles, standard features in many black revues. Waters was able to transcend this material, however, chiefly through her interpretation of the pieces she performed, such as the sentimental plantation song, “I’m Coming Virginia.” Despite the plantation sentimentality, the stereotypes, and the lifestyle that the song promotes, Waters’s recording of it is an artful and stately interpretation, with carefully cultivated words.

Although *Africana* had only a short run, it did manage to establish Waters as a star and as a performer who could carry a Broadway show on her own. On 19 September 1927, a few weeks after *Africana* closed, she made her debut as a headliner at the Palace on a bill that included Blossom Seeley, Jack Benny, and the Eddie Foy family.

In 1929, having made her mark in vaudeville, recordings, nightclubs, and revues, Waters appeared in Twentieth-Century-Fox’s first all-talkie film musical, *On with the Show*. Waters was hired as a specialty act to play herself and perform two songs, “Am I Blue” and “Birmingham Bertha.” Waters’s artistic choices as a singer and entertainer broke through racial barriers and opened up a way for African American entertainers to perform and be perceived onstage. It was a model that popular entertainers would continue to follow for generations to come.

Waters’s career continued to flourish throughout the 1930s. In 1931 she starred in *Rhapsody in Black*, and she continued to perform in other black popular shows and nightclubs. In 1933, Waters—accompanied

by the Duke Ellington Orchestra—introduced Harold Arlen’s torch song “Stormy Weather” at the Cotton Club in Harlem. This highly publicized and well-received appearance at the Cotton Club led to a featured role in Irving Berlin’s musical revue *As Thousands Cheer* (1933). By 1935, Waters commanded star billing as a headliner in shows such as *At Home Abroad*; and she would end the decade with her dramatic debut on the legitimate stage in *Mamba’s Daughters* (1939).

Waters made the biggest transitions of her career in the 1920s: from the sultry blues singer of suggestive lyrics to a more seasoned, sophisticated interpreter of popular song. She went from vaudeville and nightclubs, to recordings and the legitimate stage. In understanding what audiences expected of her, Waters presented herself as a performer who could master the demands and expectations of her own culture and the prerequisites for mass acceptance. Waters’ sense of artistic freedom, creativity, and cultural savvy in developing her own performance style positioned her as one of musical theater’s most popular performers throughout the 1920s and 1930s.



Ethel Waters, photographed by Carl Van Vechten, 1938.

(Library of Congress.)

The momentum Waters built up in her career during the Harlem Renaissance narrowed the divide between black and white styles and enabled her to achieve great success and popularity in the mainstream. Her performances onstage and on records represented a commingling of musical and theatrical styles of various genres, including elements of black cultural expression and the stylistic techniques of the American stage. She played a pivotal role in redefining black performance, while at the same time bringing a new level of complexity and sophistication to American popular performance styles. As a result, she was instrumental in creating new avenues for other artists, black and white, to follow.

Biography

Ethel Waters was born on 31 October 1896 in Chester, Pennsylvania. She was in *On With the Show* in Technicolor, Warner Brothers, in 1929; *As Thousands Cheer*, 1933; and *At Home Abroad*, 1935. Her first dramatic performance on Broadway was in *Mamba's Daughters*, 1939. She had a starring role in the Broadway production of *Cabin in the Sky*, 1940; and the film version of *Cabin in the Sky* (MGM), 1943. She earned an Academy Award Nomination as Best Supporting Actress for *Pinky*, 1949. Waters played Berenice in the original Broadway production of Carson McCuller's *The Member of the Wedding*, 1950; and starred in the film production of *The Member of the Wedding*. She starred in the television series *Beulah*, 1950–1951. Waters toured with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in the late 1950s. She died in Chatsworth, California, in September 1977.

DWANDALYN REECE

See also Black Swan Phonograph Company; Blues; Blues: Women Performers; Lafayette Theater; Lincoln Theater; Singers; *specific individuals*

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Weary Blues, The

With *The Weary Blues* (1926), his first collection of poems, Langston Hughes immediately established himself as one of the signal voices of Harlem's literary renaissance, as well as one of the most innovative and important writers of his generation to emerge out of American literature as a whole. For Hughes, the book's publication by Alfred A. Knopf marked a coming-out of sorts. He had steadily ascended through the ranks of black literature, beginning with the inclusion of early work in W. E. B. Du Bois' series for juveniles, *The Brownies' Book*; continuing with the 1921 publication of "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" in *The Crisis*; and escalating in 1925 when he won a prize in *Opportunity's* literary contest for what was to become the collection's title poem, "The Weary Blues." Early on, Hughes exhibited a talent for image and assonance,

and an astute understanding of the development of modernist American literature. Hughes was well read in white antecedents like Walt Whitman, Amy Lowell, and Carl Sandburg, and he combined a respect for influence and tradition with a forward-looking sense of experiment. As a result, his early poems assert their place within America's broad literary heritage, even as they express African American experience in novel ways. For example, Lewis (1981) writes of Hughes's poem "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" that it is "Sandburgesque in its cadence," but "distilled" from Hughes's own specific sadness over America's insensitivity to the hardships of the black working class.

Hughes' sense of experimentation in this early poetry, though, was most recognizable in his commitment to modern African American music—jazz and "classic blues," the polished stylization of folk blues that attained mass popularity in the 1920s through recordings by artists like Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith. The most innovative lyric poems in *The Weary Blues* are those that try to capture the rhythmic play and improvisational thrust of the new black music, through either "nonsemantic" language or typographical play. In "Negro Dancers," for example, Hughes suggests the sound of music through the repetition of the syllable, "Da!"; in the "The Cat and the Saxophone (2 A.M.)"—whose title alludes to a Harlem nightclub—Hughes interrupts the flow of dialogue between two speakers with lyrics quoted in high-caps from Spenser Williams's jazz hit of 1924, "Everybody Loves My Baby." This suggests both Hughes's dedication to marking African American expressivity, a crucial component of the New Negro's political aesthetics, and his responsiveness to stylistic developments in modernist poetry. The multivocality of "The Cat and the Saxophone (2 A.M.)" seems irrefutably influenced by T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1921), but Hughes's poem moves beyond its stylistic antecedent by underscoring the importance of jazz and black vernacular expressivity to modernist aesthetics. While Hughes's experimentalism through jazz clearly seems, in retrospect, to have invigorated American poetics, however, the music poetry of *The Weary Blues* was not always received so favorably at the time of the book's release. For example, when Countee Cullen reviewed *The Weary Blues* for *Opportunity* in 1926, he was impressed by the more "conventional" lyrics and decried the "jazz poems as interlopers in the company of the truly beautiful poems in other sections of the book" (quoted in Dace 1997). With regard to "The Cat and the Saxophone (2 A.M.)," Cullen remarked, "I can't

say *This will never do*, but I feel that it ought never to have been done."

Later critics have defended Hughes's progressiveness in *The Weary Blues*, both aesthetically and socially. For instance, Hansell (1978) argues that Hughes's appeals to black music fostered the African American community and attempted to redress its historical struggles by giving them voice. Hansell emphasizes the social importance of the poet's focus on the vernacular; this emphasis corresponds with Hughes's own arguments in his famous essay, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1925), in which he says: "Jazz to me is one of the inherent expressions of Negro life in America . . . the tom-tom of revolt against weariness in a white world . . . the tom-tom of joy and laughter, of pain swallowed in a smile."

While *The Weary Blues* encompasses Hughes's aesthetic innovation and social awareness, the collection also displays the poet's responsiveness to, and ambivalence toward, the cult of primitivism that was so prevalent in Harlem during the 1920s. In *The Big Sea* (1940), Hughes recalled uneasily that "ordinary Negroes" did not like "the growing influx of whites toward Harlem after sundown, flooding the little cabarets and bars where formerly only colored people laughed and sang, and where now the strangers were given the best ringside tables to sit and stare at the Negro customers—like amusing animals in a zoo." This ambivalence over the economy of white voyeurism in Harlem manifests itself in a number of poems in *The Weary Blues*. For example, in "To Midnight Nan at Leroy's" Hughes accents this in the lines "Strut and wiggle, / Shameless gal" and suggests primitivist notions with an exaggerated refrain in dialect: "Hear dat music . . . / Jungle night." While Hughes is ironic in his invocation of primitivist tenets, Chinitz (1997) argues that the poet does not dismiss primitivism altogether. As Chinitz argues, Hughes attempted to "rescue elements of primitivism that he continued to find meaningful—especially those pertaining to African American jazz." Similarly, Reini-Grandell (1992) suggests that Hughes's occasional turns to a primitivist ideology balanced criticism and recuperation, and they were intended to preserve jazz from being too easily dismissed by the Harlem intelligentsia as "low-rate." Although this conscious gesturing toward the problematic stereotypes that black intellectuals wished to avoid may appear reactionary in hindsight, it nevertheless suggests Hughes's conviction as a poet and his unwavering

engagement with the paradoxes and potential controversies of American racial politics.

MICHAEL BORSHUK

See also Blues; Hughes, Langston

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Wells, Ida B.

See Barnett, Ida B. Wells

West, Dorothy

Dorothy West's work as a novelist and journalist played an important role in shaping the aesthetics and ideology of the Harlem Renaissance. Although West was one of the youngest writers of the era and was often regarded as the "little sister" of the Harlem Renaissance, she was behind two of the era's most important journals, *Challenge* and *New Challenge*. Her work with these two journals made a crucial intervention in the aesthetics of the period. Likewise, her first novel, *The Living Is Easy*, particularly in its complex

depiction of the mother-daughter dyad, made a significant contribution to black women's writing.

West's literary talent was apparent at an early age. At the age of seven, she wrote her first short story, which was published by the *Boston Post*, as part of a contest for the best story of the week. A second short story, "The Typewriter," proved to be of signal importance to the West's career. "The Typewriter" won second place in a literary contest sponsored by *Opportunity* magazine, an honor that West shared with Zora Neale Hurston. In 1926, West moved to New York City to further her career. While in New York, West lived with her cousin, the poet Helene Johnson, and soon befriended the Renaissance luminaries Langston Hughes, Hurston, and Wallace Thurman.

Although West continued to write short stories, she worked briefly as an actress and had a small role in the 1927 production of *Porgy*, directed by Rouben Mamoulian. Notably, West got the role in the production by writing the Theatre Guild to ask for a position as a writer. Although she had no previous experience, she was hired as an extra in the production. West's weekly earnings of \$17.50 helped sustain her in New York during the Depression era. In 1929, West accompanied the production to London, where the play was set to run for a year, after which the company planned to go to Paris. Audiences in London evidently did not understand the actors' speech, however, and the production returned to New York after only three months.

West's growing interest in acting did not end with *Porgy*, and in 1932 she and Langston Hughes traveled to Russia with a group of American actors. The group was scheduled to film a movie (called *Black and White*) about American race relations. The film was never completed, but she got a contract with another filmmaker and stayed in Russia for eleven more months.

When West returned to New York, she did so with a renewed commitment to writing. She quickly began work on a new project, and in 1934, with only \$40, she founded and edited a new literary magazine, *Challenge*. This journal was dedicated to publishing fiction, without the propaganda characteristic of other journals of the era. It included pieces by Hughes, Hurston, and Countee Cullen, and operated until 1937. Later in 1937, West founded *New Challenge*, which dealt more explicitly with political issues. The inaugural issue of *New Challenge* was coedited by West, Richard Wright, and Marian Minus, and it heralded the emergence of the "Chicago renaissance," a period of cultural and political activity led by African American writers

from Chicago. The journal included pieces by Ralph Ellison and Waters Turpin, as well as Wright's groundbreaking manifesto, "A Blueprint for Negro Writing." Despite a promising beginning, financial difficulties and creative differences between West and Wright contributed to the journal's dissolution after only one issue. Importantly, West's tenure as editor of *Challenge* and *New Challenge* placed her in a rich tradition of black female editors, including Ida B. Wells and Pauline Hopkins.

After *New Challenge* folded, West worked for eighteen months as a welfare investigator in Harlem. West's experiences as an investigator most likely inspired her short story "Mammy," which depicts the trials faced by a Depression-era caseworker. The story appeared in *Opportunity* in October 1940. Later in 1940, West joined the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Federal Writers' Project; she worked for it until the program ended in the mid-1940s. While working for WPA, West also began writing short stories for the *New York Daily News*. She became a regular contributor and published more than twenty-five stories between 1940 and 1960.

In 1945, West settled on Martha's Vineyard, where she began work on her first novel, *The Living Is Easy*, which was published in 1948. The novel examines the conflicts in Boston's burgeoning black middle class. At the center of the novel is Cleo Judson, the manipulative protagonist, who seeks to control the lives and fortunes of her husband, daughter, and sisters. In many ways, the novel is autobiographical and reflects West's own upbringing as a part of Boston's black elite. Generally speaking, the novel received favorable reviews when it was released. It was reprinted by the Feminist Press in 1982, and it has since been praised for its stinging critique of Boston's black middle class as well as for its engrossing depiction of mother-daughter relationships.

While living on Martha's Vineyard, West continued to write short stories and articles. She became a weekly contributor to the *Martha's Vineyard Gazette*; her weekly column, "Oak Bluffs," covered activities of interest to local residents. West's second novel, *The Wedding*, was published in 1995. Like *The Living Is Easy*, *The Wedding* critiques the black middle class and examines issues of class and caste in an elite community. Interestingly, West began writing this novel in the late 1920s after she received a grant from the Mary Roberts Rinehart Foundation. She stopped working on the novel during the "black power" movement of the 1960s, however, for fear that the novel's middle-class

focus would be rejected by readers and critics. Three decades later, the novel received favorable reviews. West published a second collection of short stories and essays, *The Richer, the Poorer*, in 1995.

West remained on Martha's Vineyard until her death in 1998. As perhaps the last surviving member of the Harlem Renaissance, West occupied a special position in the African American literary tradition. Throughout her long career, West witnessed the changing landscape of African American literature, ranging from the Harlem Renaissance and protest eras to the black arts movement and black feminist cultural production. Thus, her impact on the Harlem Renaissance, as well as her impact on black women's writing, is receiving increased critical attention. Importantly, West's body of work provides a unique perspective on the creative tension at work during the Harlem Renaissance, as well as on the complexities inherent in the African American experience in New England.

Biography

Dorothy West was born on 2 June 1907 in Boston, Massachusetts. She received private lessons from Bessie Trotter and Grace Turner; attended the Farragut School, the Martin School, and the Girls Latin School; and studied journalism and philosophy at Columbia University. West acted in *Porgy* in 1927. In New York City she was founder and editor of *Challenge* and *New Challenge*; was a welfare investigator; and was a writer for the Works Progress Administration. She died at Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, on 16 August 1998.

MICHELLE TAYLOR

See also Black and White; Challenge; Cullen, Countee; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; Johnson, Helene; New Challenge; Opportunity Literary Contests; Porgy: Play; Thurman, Wallace; Works Progress Administration; Wright, Richard

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White, Clarence Cameron

Clarence Cameron White was a renowned music educator, violinist, and composer. He was born on 10 August 1880 in Clarksville, Tennessee. His maternal grandfather was a member of the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue Company, an Underground Railroad action advocacy organization. His mother was an accomplished violinist and a member of Oberlin's graduating class of 1876; his father, James W. White, was a physician. Following the death of his father, he spent the early part of his life in Oberlin, Ohio, where he lived with his maternal grandparents. At age nine, White moved with his mother, Jennie Scott White, to Chattanooga, Tennessee, where she taught in the public school system. During that period, the young White became acquainted with his neighbors Anita Patti Brown and Roland Hayes, both of whom became accomplished vocalists. White's mother married William H. Conner and in 1890 the family relocated to Washington, D.C., after Conner accepted the position of medical examiner in the Government Pension Office. One year before their relocation, White began violin lessons with a violin given to him by his grandfather.

White continued his lessons in Washington under the tutelage of the violinists Will Marion Cook and Joseph Douglass. He also attended Howard University from 1894 to 1895. In 1896 White was admitted to

the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. He remained at Oberlin until 1901, at which time he accepted a teaching position at the newly founded Washington Conservatory of Music (1903–1907). One of his earliest students was the poet Paul Laurence Dunbar. White continued his own musical education, receiving instruction from the celebrated African-British composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and the renowned Russian violinist Michael Zacherewitsch. He studied with Coleridge-Taylor in London during the summer of 1906 and returned to continue his studies from 1908 to 1911, at which time he received lessons from Zacherewitsch. White's extensive training led to his varied accomplishments not only as an instructor but also as an advocate for musicians, a performer, and a composer.

From 1912 to 1923, White, toured extensively, with his wife, Beatrice Warrick White, as his accompanist. In 1912, White had relocated his family to Boston, where he opened a studio. In 1916, White forwarded letters to various musicians with the intention of developing a National Association of Negro Music Teachers. This idea ultimately served as the foundation for the creation of the National Association of Negro Musicians. After a decade of touring, in 1924 White served as director of music at West Virginian State College, but he later left to study in Paris with Raoul Laparra, a French opera composer (1930–1932), on a Rosenwald fellowship. From 1932 to 1935, White served as chair of the music department at Hampton Institute in Virginia. In addition to teaching, White oversaw the production of various musical compositions.

White's works were reflective of African diasporic folk expressions and historical experiences. *Bandanna Sketches* (1919) was popularized when the noted violinist Fritz Kreisler recorded a piece from the work entitled "Nobody Knows the Trouble I See." Other works by White that won acclaim include *From the Cotton Fields* (violin, 1921), *Forty Negro Spirituals* (1927), *Dance Rhapsody* (orchestra, 1955), and *Elegy* (1955)—for which White won the "Tranquil Music" Benjamin Award.

Clarence Cameron White lived his final years in New York City with his second wife, Pura Belpré White. He died of cancer on 30 June 1960 in Sydenham Hospital in New York City.

Biography

Clarence Cameron White was born on 10 August 1880 in Clarksville, Tennessee. He studied at public schools in Washington, D.C.; Howard University, 1894–1895;

and Oberlin Conservatory of Music, 1896–1901. He had private instruction with Will Marion Cook, 1892; Joseph Douglass, c. 1892; Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, 1906, 1908–1911; Michael Zacharewitsch, 1908–1911; and Raoul Laparra, 1930–1932. He held positions as violin teacher; vice president, and registrar at Washington Conservatory of Music, 1903–1907; director of music at West Virginian State College, 1924–1930; and chair of the music department at Hampton Institute in Virginia, 1932–1935. White conceptualized the Nation Association of Negro Music Teachers, 1916, which later evolved into the National Association of Negro Musicians. His awards included an honorary master of arts degree from Atlanta University, 1928; an honorary doctorate of music from Wilberforce University, 1933; a Rosenwald Foundation award, 1930; a David Bispham award, 1932; a Harmon Foundation award, 1928; and a Benjamin Award for tranquil music, 1954. He was a member of the National Association of Negro Musicians; American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP); and Composers Guild; and he was an associate of the American Music Center. White died in New York City on 30 June 1960.

LELA J. SEWELL-WILLIAMS

See also Cook, Will Marion; Dunbar, Paul Laurence; Hayes, Roland; National Association of Negro Musicians; Rosenwald Fellowships

Selected Works

Bandanna Sketches. 1919.
Dance Rhapsody. 1955.
Elegy. 1954.
Forty Negro Spirituals. 1927.
From Cotton Fields. 1921.
Ouanga. 1932.
Symphony in D Minor. 1952.
Tambour. 1930.
Traditional Negro Spirituals. 1940.

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White Novelists and the Harlem Renaissance

White novelists served the goals of the Harlem Renaissance in several tangible ways, although their involvement brought complications and controversy, the legacy of which continues today. Among their positive contributions, these novelists helped bring the writing, themes, and concerns of the renaissance to white audiences nationwide; in several key instances, they facilitated the publication of black writers' work and promoted that work by providing forewords and prefaces addressed to white readers. White and black writers often guided and advised each other in fruitful and significant interracial exchanges that served the interests of both parties.

Increasingly more white writers embraced modernist ideology in the early twentieth century, shunning the technological developments and industrial spirit of the age as soulless and alienating. These modernists often looked to supposedly primitive peoples (Native Americans and African Americans in particular) as sources of spiritual and artistic renewal. They traveled through black communities to collect "authentic" material for their work, and they depicted black characters as "the perfect symbol of cultural innocence and regeneration" (Lewis 1981, 91).

Because white interaction in Harlem tended to be temporary, self-serving, and somewhat voyeuristic, however, whites who depicted black experience have been accused of perpetuating negative or reductive stereotypes. Brown notes "how obviously dangerous it is to rely upon literary artists when they advance themselves as sociologists and ethnologists" and argues that "the Negro has met with as great injustice in American literature as he has in American life" (1933, 179, 180). Novels by whites about black characters incited conflict because they undermined the goals of those activists who, like W. E. B. Du Bois, sought racial uplift through literature that illustrated

African Americans' best potential. Yet, as Hutchinson has pointed out:

... many critics have rung charges on Du Bois's comment that the writing of the Harlem Renaissance was "written for the benefit of white people and at the behest of white readers," but have failed to notice that he himself heartily praised and encouraged some of the same white readers and authors whom some critics would now make prime examples of his point. (1995, 20–21)

Hutchinson's important observation illustrates the complicated dynamics at work here.

Several important contributions to the Harlem Renaissance came from writers affiliated with the "southern renaissance" movement at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In particular, T. S. Stribling's *Birthright* (1922) inspired Harlem's most important literary efforts. Stribling's novel attempted a realistic depiction of Negro characters by focusing on a Harvard-educated mulatto who struggles against racial oppression in the South. While its attention to an educated, sensitive black protagonist, the physician Peter Siner, does distinguish *Birthright* from earlier fiction by whites about blacks—*Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) is often cited in this context—the black critical response to *Birthright* set the tone for reactions to novels by whites about blacks throughout the renaissance. The novel failed so utterly in the opinion of Jessie Redmon Fauset that it propelled her and other black writers to action. She recalled, "We reasoned, 'Here is an audience waiting to hear the truth about us. Let us who are better qualified to present that truth than any white writer, try to do so'" (quoted in Lewis 1981, 123). As a result, Fauset's novel *There Is Confusion* (1924) and Walter White's *The Fire in the Flint* (1924) offered fictional responses to Stribling's work, and inspired other black writers to similar efforts. Not all black writers addressed their white counterparts in such adversarial terms, but a sense of competition—for commercial success, for authenticity, for critical acclaim—clearly animates the exchanges between the races.

Dorothy Scarborough, who was also affiliated with the southern renaissance, found her way to Negro themes through an interest in folklore that dated back to 1910, when she was in Texas. By 1916, she was living in New York and teaching at Columbia University and was, therefore, geographically close to Harlem. Scarborough's attention to poor, rural farm women appears in many of her novels, and her novel

In the Land of Cotton (1923) has been included in at least one chronology of the Harlem Renaissance. Set in Waco, Texas, and deriving from her firsthand experiences among black and white sharecroppers and tenant farmers, the novel depicts the harsh demands of cotton farming. Scarborough herself was active in Harlem, having been invited to the Civic Club dinner held to honor Fauset's *There Is Confusion*; she was a judge for the *Opportunity* literary awards; and she later taught writing at Columbia, where one of her students was Dorothy West.

Another southerner, Julia Peterkin, focused on the Gullah natives of South Carolina in three of her novels, the best-selling *Black April* (1927), the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Scarlet Sister Mary* (1928), and *Bright Skin* (1932). Peterkin came to know black culture as the wife of a plantation manager in South Carolina and, although she was well aware of black society's diversity and range, her novels never depicted distinguished or educated characters; she preferred instead to romanticize the downtrodden. The essentially primitive and sensual nature of her characters can be best seen in the title character of *Scarlet Sister Mary*, a mother of nine children, eight of whom are illegitimate. (A commercial and critical success, *Scarlet Sister Mary* fared poorly when adapted for the stage, although it will be remembered for having featured Ethel Barrymore in blackface.) Harlem's opinion was divided about whether Peterkin's novels depicted its black folk characters sympathetically, and her own response to the symposium in *The Crisis* on "The Negro in Art" did little to assuage race-conscious critics. As Turner explains, "Julia Peterkin asserted that Irish and Jewish people were not offended by caricatures, so Negroes should not be. She used the occasion to praise the 'Black Negro Mammy' and to chastise Negroes for protesting against a proposal in Congress to erect a monument to the Mammy" (1997, 57). Many critics also cite *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (1933) as further evidence of Peterkin's racial myopia. This collection of photographs (for which she wrote the text) documents the lives of black workers on her plantation, and the whole endeavor, whether intentionally or not, celebrates the very plantation life through which the most degrading aspects of slavery are most clearly remembered.

DuBose Heyward, perhaps the best-known writer to emerge from the southern renaissance, also focused on the South Carolina Gullah. The popularity of his best-selling novel *Porgy* (1925) led Heyward and his wife Dorothy to collaborate on its dramatization (1927),

which won the Pulitzer Prize; it led Heyward and George Gershwin to collaborate on the opera *Porgy and Bess* (1935). Like the folklorist Scarborough, Heyward immersed himself in the culture of Charleston's Catfish Row to learn its dialect, attitudes, and conventions. *Porgy*—the title is the name of a crippled and impoverished gambler—is peopled with drug addicts and criminals, and it repeatedly depicts these characters as driven by primitive urges beyond their control. Still, the novel's drama emerges from Porgy's struggle to find and maintain human dignity in the face of an overwhelmingly tragic fate. Following *Porgy's* successful evolution, Heyward published *Mamba's Daughters* in 1929, and this, too, was dramatized in collaboration with his wife in 1939 (the play starred Ethel Waters). Far more diverse in its range of characters than *Porgy*, *Mamba's Daughters* chronicles black America's social, intellectual, and cultural multiformity.

Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* (1926) stands as the representative example of commercial success. A runaway best-seller that sold out its initial run of 16,000 copies, the novel eventually ran through nine printings and appeared in several languages, thereby bringing to Harlem not only unprecedented attention but also a wide white reading audience's interest in its culture. Though the central plot focuses on a rather clichéd love triangle among three black residents of Harlem, the novel's opening and closing chapters offer seedy cabaret scenes that depict black life as alternately exotic, dangerous, and primitive. In one such tawdry scene, Van Vechten depicts two lovers: "Kiss me, Byron, she panted. I love you. You're so strong! I'm your slave, your own Nigger! Beat me! I'm yours to do with what you please!" Still, *Nigger Heaven* shows its central characters, the librarian Mary Love and her fiancé, the would-be writer Byron Kasson, in numerous conversations that amount to frankly pro-black propaganda interspersed with social criticism. The passage from which the title emerges best illustrates Van Vechten's didactic aspirations. In it, Byron rails against the segregationist logic that prohibits him and other educated blacks from reaching their full potential. "Nigger Heaven!" he complains,

That's what Harlem is. We sit in our places in the gallery of this New York theatre and watch the white world sitting down below in the good seats in the orchestra. Occasionally they turn their faces up toward us, their hard, cruel faces, to laugh or sneer,

but they never beckon. It never seems to occur to them that Nigger Heaven is crowded, that there isn't another seat, that something has to be done.

Van Vechten was closely allied with numerous black writers, artists, musicians, and other Harlemites, and he encouraged his friend Alfred A. Knopf to publish works by Nella Larsen, Langston Hughes, and Rudolph Fisher, as well as to reissue James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, for which he wrote an introduction. Motivated by a genuine appreciation for and fascination with black culture, Van Vechten and his wife, the actress Fania Marinoff, held numerous interracial parties where they tried to promote racial integration through social celebration and cultural exchange. At the Van Vechtens', white writers and artists like H. L. Mencken, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Theodore Dreiser, and Sherwood Anderson mingled and socialized with blacks like Ethel Waters, Paul Robeson, Langston Hughes, and Nella Larsen.

While a great deal of the attention given to *Nigger Heaven* came from controversy over its title, Van Vechten was not the first white writer to broadcast the epithet: Clement Wood wrote a novel called *Nigger* (1923). While it, too, focused on black characters, Wood's fictional chronicle of several generations chronicled all manner of degradation as it traced one family's evolution from slavery onward. Indeed, Charles S. Johnson's review of the novel in *Opportunity* promoted it as a "step forward" in its ability to be "serious, honest, and tremendously impressive—a real tragedy" (in Hutchinson 1995, 198). A year after Wood's novel appeared, Van Vechten advised the British writer Ronald Firbank to retitle his novel *Sorrow in Sunlight* as *Prancing Nigger* for its New York reissue with Brentano's. Van Vechten also wrote the introduction to that edition. Although the former title was the novel's original, the latter continues to be the title under which the novel is reissued, even in England. *Prancing Nigger* focused on a family of West Indian blacks and the racial discrimination they faced in response to their social ambitions. Eric Walrond recommended the novel as "a work of haunting, compelling beauty" (in Hutchinson, 198). It was Firbank's most commercially successful novel, a fact which illustrates the appeal of black themes for ambitious white writers.

Sherwood Anderson also found financial success previously unknown to him by using black characters in *Dark Laughter* (1925). Anderson's novel celebrates its

characters' capacity for primitive spirituality, and its essentialist celebration counterposes black identity to the sterile and soulless industrial age. Yet *Dark Laughter* seems to romanticize blackness as the central character, the white John Stockton, re-creates himself by assuming an identity as Bruce Dudley. As Dudley travels South in search of some meaningful connection to life, he hears a chorus of "dark laughter" that represents the spiritual essence he seeks. Like Van Vechten, Anderson was personally and socially involved in the lives of notable Harlemites, although for a much shorter time. And like Van Vechten, Anderson believed that black culture contained beauty and meaning that simply was not present among whites: "If some white artist could go among the negroes and live with them," he wrote, "much beautiful stuff might be got. The trouble is that no American white man could do it without self-consciousness. The best thing is to stand aside, listen and wait. If I can be impersonal in the presence of black laborers, watch the dance of their bodies, hear the song, I may learn something" (in Davis 1991, 410). After *Dark Laughter*, however, Anderson abandoned this "beautiful stuff."

Waldo Frank's novel *Holiday* (1923) represents his only fictional engagement with black culture; Frank's friendship with Jean Toomer served the novel well, because the two men traveled to Spartanburg, South Carolina, together as they researched their respective works (Toomer was writing *Cane* while Frank worked on *Holiday*). Indeed, with Toomer's assistance, the Jewish, dark-complexioned Frank passed as a black "professor" from the North while the two stayed in the black South. Frank drew on his friendship with Horace Liveright to encourage Boni and Liveright to publish Toomer's *Cane*, and Toomer himself encouraged the firm to advertise and promote the two books together. Frank's impressionistic novel depicts a horrific lynching by following the events of a single day in the fictional southern town of Nazareth. Rich in allegory, *Holiday* pays attention to how differently blacks and whites view John Cloud, its central character. "He is the color of dusk on the shadowed road he walks. White folk call him 'Lank.' They do not see how his height sings, they do not see how frail and hungry he is behind the pine. 'Big nigger' they see." Frank writes in rich, lyrical prose, and the novel examines the psychological, social, and cultural dimensions of lynching in the broadest possible terms. An innovative attempt to critically examine whiteness as a racial category, *Holiday* offers powerful and original insights about the psychological origins of mob action.

The literary output of the Harlem Renaissance (from both black and white novelists) waned following the stock market crash of 1929. Still, Fannie Hurst's *Imitation of Life* (1933) was published to commercial success and was subsequently adapted for two highly successful movie productions. Hurst had long been involved in Harlem and was a judge for the *Opportunity* literary awards in 1925, after which she hired Zora Neale Hurston as her secretary and traveling companion. Like other white novelists before her, Hurst undertook research of a sort when she and Hurston traveled by car through rural New York to Canada in 1931. Along the way, the two repeatedly encountered segregation and racism, although Hurston, obviously, suffered the more for it. *Imitation of Life* follows two widowed mothers: the nineteen-year-old white Bea Pullman and her housekeeper, the black Delilah Johnson, whose daughter, Peola, is light enough to pass for white. Bea builds a successful business by marketing not only Delilah's waffle recipe but also Delilah herself: Her jovial image becomes the trademark of B. Pullman and Company's products. Bea offers Peola comfort and care equal to that of her own daughter; she insists on paying Delilah handsomely and on sharing company stock with her. Nevertheless, Delilah's characterization fails to move beyond subservience and self-sacrifice; ultimately, she evokes the mammy.

Ironically, white authors seemed better able to capitalize on the commercial possibilities of novels about black folk than were black authors depicting their own experience. In an often-cited passage responding to the symposium in *The Crisis*—"The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed?"—Carl Van Vechten captured the dilemma precisely: "Are Negro writers going to write about this exotic material while it is still fresh or will they continue to make a free gift of it to white authors who will exploit it until not a drop of vitality remains?" (quoted in Lewis 1981, 177). Many of the white writers who contributed to the symposium, such as Sherwood Anderson, DuBose Heyward, and Julia Peterkin, also answered its question by writing novels. The legacy of these novels continues to unfold. As Hutchinson argues, "while many of the participants in the Harlem Renaissance complained about white exploitation of the movement, they often did not agree on *which* whites were exploiters." In the end, virtually no black authors, except perhaps Claude McKay in *Home to Harlem*, were able to capitalize on their own popularity as subjects.

KATHLEEN PFEIFFER

See also Anderson, Sherwood; Birthright; Crisis: The Negro in Art—How Shall He Be Portrayed? A Symposium; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Frank, Waldo; Heyward, DuBoise; Hurst, Fannie; Nigger; Nigger Heaven; Peterkin, Julia Mood; Porgy; Porgy and Bess; Stribling, Thomas Sigismund; Van Vechten, Carl; *other specific individuals and works*

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White Patronage

"White patronage" refers to the complex, and at times artistically conflict-ridden or financially driven, symbiotic relationship between African American artists and wealthy white benefactors such as Carl Van Vechten, Charlotte Osgood Mason, the Spingarns, and others, who either were genuinely interested in promoting and showcasing African Americans' artistic accomplishments or were desirous of exploiting the black race as an example of the "primitive exotic." The impact of white patronage on the fledgling literary careers of Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and other writers of the era, and even on the Harlem Renaissance itself, is, to varying degrees today, questionable and controversial. It is not clear if the Harlem Renaissance could have flourished without assistance from or access to white power and money. Nor is it always clear how much of the creative output of the era is truly a reflection of the black artist's needs and aspirations; W. E. B. Du Bois remarked that much of it was actually written for whites. African American writers, consequently, were torn between their need to write about their own experiences while negotiating the demands placed on them by philanthropic patrons who had their own agenda for the artistic future of the "New Negro" in modern society. Nevertheless, white patronage played a crucial role in the careers of many artists, and in the Harlem Renaissance itself. Without the presence and influence of white patronage, the Harlem Renaissance, as it is known today, may not have existed.

The intrigue, mystery, and exoticism surrounding the image of the "New Negro" quickly captured the imagination of many of Manhattan's leading white residents. These "Negrotarians," a term coined by Zora Neale Hurston that refers to white Americans who championed the cause of black racial uplift, began to flock to Harlem in droves. The "New Negro" was in vogue, and the "Negrotarians" opened their homes and their wallets to the newly discovered black artists of the era. Lavish parties and creative writing contests, such as the ones sponsored by the magazines *Opportunity* and *Crisis*, became all-important forums

for white patrons to shower their black protégés with attention, financial opportunities, and, most important, access into the once-closed offices of major publishing houses.

The motives of white patrons were quite varied. Some patrons, such as Joel, Arthur, and Amy Spingarn, were earnestly devoted to the cause of racial uplift through their support of abolitionist causes and the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In fact, the Spingarn Medal was awarded to well-known African American artists such as Langston Hughes, Walter White, and Paul Robeson as recognition for “the highest and noblest achievement of an American Negro.” Some black critics and intellectuals, including W. E. B. Du Bois, took issue with the Spingarns’ generosity, however, believing that a white presence was too strongly entrenched within black social, political, and artistic institutions. Nevertheless, the practical necessity of the Spingarns’ involvement with racial causes could not be ignored, given the importance of the Spingarns’ money and social status as a means of promoting current issues.

On the other hand, the motives of patrons such as Charlotte Osgood Mason, also known as “Godmother,” illustrate the precarious nature of the patron-artist relationship. Mason is a prime example of a patron who had specific ideas about African American art, particularly as it pertained to primitivism or folk culture. She wanted these notions reflected in the art of her protégés, specifically the works of Aaron Douglas, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Alain Locke. The end result was a controlling, confining relationship between Mason and the young African American artists, often shrouded in secrecy because “Godmother” insisted on anonymity while she financially supported artists. For example, in exchange for financial and materialistic support, “Godmother” controlled Hughes’s life, dictating to him what books he could read or how he should write a literary work. Eventually, Hughes would find his relationship to his patron stifling, but he commented in several letters that his relationship with “Godmother,” at least initially, was an exhilarating time.

Similarly, “Godmother” also subsidized Hurston’s anthropological ventures; however, she stipulated that any artifacts Hurston collected would ultimately belong to Mason. Hurston, determined to present an accurate view of black folklore, manipulated the patron-artist relationship by secretly sharing her fieldwork with Hughes while presenting to Mason the

persona of a loyal protégée who willingly obeyed her patron’s wishes. Like Hughes, Hurston recognized Mason’s important role as a financial supporter. She saw the necessity of maintaining this support if she hoped to pursue her career successfully.

Mason even controlled the actions of the black intellectual critic Alain Locke, who served as a middleman between the patron and the artists. In this instance, Locke received the financial support from “Godmother” necessary to fulfill his artistic vision realized in the publication of *The New Negro* (1925). In exchange, Locke relayed messages between Mason and her charges and occasionally monitored her protégés activities, especially if their loyalty to her was questionable.

Some black artists, such as Claude McKay, managed to avoid becoming too deeply entrenched in the patronage system. McKay’s patrons, in particular Max and Crystal Eastman of *Liberator*, espoused leftist political views and were generally supportive of McKay’s literary aspirations. Charlotte Osgood Mason also financially supported McKay. Despite these connections, McKay keenly observed that white patrons were “searching for a social and artistic significance in Negro art which they could not find in their own society.” The actions of Charlotte Osgood Mason certainly illustrate this interest.

In Mason’s view, as long as her charges veered away from artistic expressions of social protest and focused only on primitivism, they would always have her support. Unsurprisingly, Mason chronically severed her ties to “disloyal” artists. Once she did so, Mason made it clear to her former associates that they could never survive without her. At times, the price to pay for a patron-artist relationship was too costly on a personal and artistic level, for “this arrangement stigmatized Negro poetry and prose of the 1920s as being an artistic effort that was trying to be like something other than itself.” (Huggins 1971).

The controversial impact of white patronage on the Harlem Renaissance is best illustrated through the contributions of Carl Van Vechten. Scholarship surrounding Van Vechten’s contributions to the movement is divided, and some scholars have accused him of being a “literary voyeur who exploited his Harlem connections for profit” (Lewis 1997). His actual role as a patron, despite his seemingly good intentions, cannot be ignored; yet he epitomized the role of the patron as “teacher, guide, and judge” whose “search for authentic Negro voices was dictated by his own needs” (Huggins 1971).

Van Vechten was originally a music critic, and his preoccupation with black culture and arts preceded the advent of the Harlem Renaissance and soon consumed his time. As the first “Negrotarian,” Van Vechten immediately found himself in the company of Harlem’s literati, such as Countee Cullen, Zora Neale Hurston, and Wallace Thurman. He used his influence at *Vanity Fair* magazine and other publishing outlets to arrange for the first publication of literary works by Langston Hughes and Nella Larsen. Additionally, Van Vechten wrote several articles and reviews about African American music, literature, and culture.

As a permanent fixture of Harlem’s nightclub scene, Van Vechten unabashedly shared his interest and passion in African American culture. His extravagant parties created a “melting pot” atmosphere for black artists and white patrons to freely engage in a discourse regarding the arts and politics of the times. In many ways, Van Vechten’s role in the Harlem Renaissance helped bridge the racial divide and was instrumental in presenting the “New Negro” to the world.

However, Van Vechten’s generosity also contributed to heated discussions regarding the presence of whites, and specifically patrons, in the Harlem community. Van Vechten’s less-positive impact on the Harlem Renaissance is best seen in the publication of his novel *Nigger Heaven* (1926), a sensational account of Harlem’s residents and nightlife. *Nigger Heaven* confirmed the critical belief held by many that Van Vechten’s forays into African American culture were simply an excuse for him to exploit the black race for personal and financial gain. Ironically, the popularity of this novel heightened white readers’ awareness of African American literature, firmly established Harlem as a cultural mecca, and aided in the influx of revenue to the neighborhood’s clubs and speakeasies. Still, many readers could not move past the novel’s offensive title or its depiction of Harlem’s sordid nighttime activities. As a result, there was a split among black intellectuals and critics over the book’s merit and Van Vechten’s true intentions.

Some critics, for instance, see *Nigger Heaven* as Van Vechten’s attempt to present Harlem society to a mainstream society presumably already curious about the “New Negro” vogue. The black novelist Wallace Thurman thought that *Nigger Heaven* had artistic merit, but W. E. B. Du Bois said he felt that he needed to take a bath after reading it. Van Vechten himself viewed his actions as sincere, because he wanted to present varieties of Harlem life. His novel can be seen as an expression of his deeply personal

interest in African American people and their culture, despite its questionable title.

Despite the controversy surrounding *Nigger Heaven*, Van Vechten maintained his role as a leading patron of Harlem Renaissance artists. He sustained a lifelong friendship with Langston Hughes and persistently collected artifacts on black culture. Carl Van Vechten’s popularity and influence undeniably shaped perceptions of the Harlem Renaissance and has facilitated society’s access to the artistic achievements of the era.

Although the Spingarns, Charlotte Osgood Mason, and Carl Van Vechten were three of the most noteworthy patrons of the Harlem Renaissance, other white Americans generously contributed to the cause. These include William E. Harmon, Fannie Hurst, Robert C. Ogden, Dorothy Parker, and George Foster Peabody, to name just a few. A few patrons supported black artists in their belief that it was their “Christian duty to contribute to the training of Afro-Americans”; others pursued patronage as a means of “Christian charity and guilt, social manipulation, and politically eccentricity” (Lewis 1997). Some lavished money on African Americans’ cultural interests solely as a means to acquire a profit.

Regardless of the reasons, the influence of white patronage clearly determined the widespread critical reception of the artists, then and now. The presence and financial connections of the “Negrotarians” created an opportunity for African Americans to pursue their artistic endeavors. This, in turn, fostered competition among black writers who sought recognition as premier artists who had the unwavering approval of mainstream society.

However, the quest for this recognition often came with a price, for in order to obtain a patron’s approval black artists frequently had to compromise their artistic vision. This conflict is especially relevant because the “New Negro” was envisioned as a means to uplift the race through a positive self-promotion and recognition of the race and its accomplishments. As previously noted, one cannot help speculating about how much of the creative art of the renaissance might have been designed to appeal to the white mind.

Finally, the white patronage system illustrates how the nation’s power structure forced writers of color to seek financial support from mainstream society. African Americans lacked access to the necessary political, social, and economic connections, but white patrons possessed, and in many cases willingly shared, these links. The relationship between white patrons and black artists, although not always amicable, was

an essential union if the creative participants in the Harlem Renaissance hoped to achieve acknowledgment of their art.

LARNELL DUNKLEY JR.

See also Hurst, Fannie; Mason; Charlotte Osgood; Spingarn, Arthur; Spingarn, Joel; Spingarn Medal; Van Vechten, Carl

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White, Walter

Walter White's work for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), his efforts on behalf of black writers, and his own literary production all attest to his importance as a central figure of the Harlem Renaissance. White also wrote

dozens of articles and reports in newspapers, journals, and NAACP publications. Like the pages of journals such as *The Crisis*, where poems and lynching statistics could appear side by side, White's career demonstrates that the cultural productions of the Harlem Renaissance cannot be separated from the important political battles that were concurrently being fought.

When James Weldon Johnson invited White to move to New York and work for the NAACP, the organization employed only two officers and two clerical workers and did not know from month to month if their salaries could be paid. White, who began as assistant secretary in 1918 and became general secretary in 1931, deserves much of the credit for the success of the organization. White was directly involved in virtually every major initiative of the NAACP through the Harlem Renaissance. He traveled extensively, promoting the organization and attracting new members; fought numerous battles to allow blacks access to adequate schools and health care; petitioned against restrictive housing covenants; organized defense funds for both high- and low-profile black defendants; and lobbied lawmakers about topics ranging from voting rights to Supreme Court appointments to opportunities for black veterans. White particularly devoted his attention to publicizing the horrors of lynching and to attempting to have antilynching legislation approved by Congress. White was very light skinned and on several occasions "passed" in the South in order to obtain information about lynching directly from those involved. White's nonfiction study *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch* was one of the first extended studies of the causes of lynching and one of few to directly address aspects of sexuality that earlier studies had avoided confronting. The book places lynching within the economic structures of the American South. It remains one of the most significant nonfiction works of the Harlem Renaissance.

White's first novel, *The Fire in the Flint*, also directly addresses lynching. The book tells of a successful and virtuous black doctor named Kenneth Harper who is ultimately killed by a lynch mob. The melodramatic book caused a stir, and the controversy concerning whether it was a fair or accurate portrait of the South led to much publicity and substantial sales. The novel is uncompromising in its portrayal of the dangers every black person faced in the South, but at times allows its political purpose to detract from the story itself. Many of the characters remain two-dimensional representatives of racist attitudes or cardinal virtues, and only the protagonist is truly individualized.

White's second novel, *Flight*, did not sell as well but is in many ways a superior literary achievement. *Flight* tells the story of Mimi Daquin, a Creole born in New Orleans to light-skinned parents; as a child she moves to Atlanta and has several experiences that lead her to develop racial awareness. Shortly after finishing high school, Mimi finds herself orphaned, unmarried, and pregnant. Outcast, she eventually passes for white, marries a blatantly racist husband, and at the end of the novel is contemplating a return to "her own people." *Flight* fits into a subgenre of "passing" novels published during the Harlem Renaissance and, like the novels of Jessie Redmon Fauset and Nella Larsen, explores the subtle interconnections between race and class that were most fruitfully examined through the creative writing of the period. *Flight* also explores the issues of prejudice based on skin color within the black community. Mimi feels at times ostracized by black society because she is "too light" and yet she is utterly unable to identify herself with the oppressive white society. Her experiences in the Atlanta riots had utterly convinced Mimi that she is black, regardless of how anyone might interpret her physical experience. In his autobiography, *A Man Called White*, written more than two decades after *Flight*, White recounts his own experiences of the Atlanta riots, which strikingly parallel those of his fictional heroine. White received a Guggenheim fellowship for a third novel exploring three generations of a black family, but because of his increasing responsibilities with NAACP the novel was never written. Suggs (1999) uncovered a partial manuscript for White's other unfinished novel, *Blackjack*, which is the story of a prizefighter and was clearly envisioned as a much more stylistically ambitious work than his earlier novels.

At some point, White seemed to realize that his genius did not lie in creative writing, but that he could continue to do much to further the careers of other talented black writers. White's role as a promoter of black writers was vigorous, but not uncontroversial. Indeed, Scuggs (1980) argues that White engaged in a battle with Alain Locke for control of the Harlem Renaissance. Both men were enthusiastic promoters of black writers, but they had differing attitudes toward which artists should be promoted and what constituted appropriate relationships with publishers and patrons. Scuggs characterizes White as ultimately self-serving and unforgiving of those who did not agree with him. White's letters show he did make several rather prescriptive suggestions to young writers but also that he was often more dedicated to helping them negotiate the complex

world of New York publishing houses; others, like Locke, were often more concerned with artistic merit than with practical matters. White particularly promoted the poet Countee Cullen (White's letters make it clear that he considered Cullen superior to Langston Hughes); Claude McKay, for whom he raised money on more than one occasion; and the fiction writer Rudolph Fisher, whom White encouraged to move to New York. White's relationship with Hughes is instructive. White certainly was very encouraging of the young poet's early work but felt that Hughes's move into the blues idiom was restrictive and that Hughes should move back to the personal sketches that he had written earlier. When Hughes disregarded White's advice, the relationship seemed to grow more distant. Still, White's frequent letters and his ability to gain numerous private audiences with publishers allowed him to aid the careers of many other writers, while perhaps promoting himself as well. Waldron refers to him as "an important



Walter White, c. 1920–1930. (Library of Congress.)

catalyst who helped make the Harlem Renaissance possible" (1973); White's contributions as writer, promoter, and activist are inextricably linked.

Biography

Walter White was born on 1 July 1893 in Atlanta, Georgia. He studied at Atlanta University (A.B., 1916). He was an office worker, Atlanta Life Insurance Company, 1916; assistant secretary to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), 1918; and executive secretary of the NAACP, 1931. His awards included a Guggenheim Fellowship grant, 1926; Spingarn Medal from NAACP, 1937; Honorary doctorate of law, Howard University, 1939; Sir James Jeans Award from New London Junior College, 1943; honorary doctorate of law, Atlanta University, 1943; Haitian Order of Honor and Merit, 1950; and Star of Ethiopia, 1953. He died in New York City on 21 March 1955.

NEIL BROOKS

See also Antilynching Crusade; Cullen, Countee; Fire in the Flint, The; Hughes, Langston; Johnson, James Weldon; McKay, Claude; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

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Williams, Clarence

Because of his wide range of musical activities and collaborations with major early jazz instrumentalists, classic blues singers, and record companies, Clarence Williams ranks among the most important and influential musical figures of the jazz age. After moving to New Orleans in 1906, the largely self-taught pianist became active in the local jazz scene. Early attempts at songwriting led to Williams's decision to found a music publishing company in 1913 with the violinist A. J. Piron. The national success of Williams's composition "Brown Skin" prompted his move to Chicago in 1917.

When he saw the opportunities presented by the new "race record" market, Williams moved to New York in 1920. The next year, he married the popular vaudeville entertainer Eva Taylor, who remained his lifelong partner and musical associate. During the 1920s and early 1930s, Williams served in various capacities, including songwriter, pianist, publisher, bandleader, vocalist, vaudeville performer, record producer, talent scout, booking agent, promoter, and radio personality. He published some 1,500 songs, more than any other black publisher of the day. Williams is also credited with writing about 200 songs, many in collaboration with other songwriters, including Spencer Williams and Fats Waller. Although generally well respected, Williams was sometimes accused of claiming authorship of several songs written by others. It is impossible to determine to what degree he actually composed, cowrote, arranged, or refined much of the material with which he is credited, since it was common practice at the time for publishers and purchasers of songs to list themselves as full or part composers.

Williams became a leading figure in the "classic blues" boom of the 1920s, having written, published, and recorded hundreds of songs with popular, primarily

female, blues artists. Between 1921 and 1941, Williams directed, played, or both on approximately 700 recordings, more than any black musician of the day except Fletcher Henderson. Every major record company of the time, including Okeh and Columbia, used his skills for finding talent and organizing recording sessions. Williams was partly responsible for the discovery and early success of the legendary singer Bessie Smith. He was the solo accompanist on her first recordings, including "Downhearted Blues," which became a hit in 1923. He also played on several of her best-remembered recordings, such as "Gulf Coast Blues." and "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out." He also organized small jazz bands to accompany Smith, Sarah Martin, Victoria Spivey, Eva Taylor, Sippie Wallace, and other popular blues singers on records.

Williams's recording bands made dozens of instrumental jazz classics under various names, including the Blue Five and the Washboard Five. These recordings often featured the most important musicians of the day, such as Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet, King Oliver, Don Redman, and Bubber Miley. Rather than explore the emerging big band style, Williams continued to experiment mainly within the smaller New Orleans ensemble jazz format, shifting instrumental roles and using more "down home" rhythmic instruments like washboards and jugs.

Although the technically demanding new Harlem stride piano style was beyond his rather modest abilities as a pianist, Williams recognized its commercial and artistic potential. He assisted in the success of leading stride pianists, like James P. Johnson, Willie "the Lion" Smith, and Fats Waller, by publishing, recording, and promoting their works. He published Johnson's notable stride piece "Carolina Shout."

After the popularity of "classic blues" and early jazz recordings diminished, along with the careers of many black artists, Williams continued to prosper into the 1930s by continuing to compose and publish songs, producing music instruction books, promoting stride pianists, and regularly performing on radio with his wife.

In 1943, Williams sold a large portion of his published song catalog to Decca records and retired from the music business. Often overlooked by historians, the quiet and unassuming Williams must ultimately be remembered for his outstanding contribution in the areas of recording, songwriting, and promotion of major black musical styles and artists of the Harlem Renaissance era.

Biography

Clarence Williams was born on 8 October 1893 (the date is disputed) in Plaquemine, Louisiana. He was a pianist, composer, band leader, music publisher, record producer, and promoter in early jazz, "classic blues," and vaudeville styles. Williams died on 6 November 1965 in Queens, New York City.

MICHAEL WHITE

See also Armstrong, Louis; Bechet, Sidney; Blues; Jazz; Johnson, James P.; Oliver, Joseph "King"; Smith, Bessie; Smith, Willie "the Lion"; Waller, Thomas "Fats"

Selected Songs

- "Baby Won't You Please Come Home." 1919. (With Charles Warfield.)
- "Everybody Loves My Baby." 1924. (With Spencer Williams and J. Palmer.)
- "I Ain't Gonna Give Nobody None o' This Jelly Roll." 1919. (With Spencer Williams.)
- "Right Key, but the Wrong Keyhole." 1923. (With Eddie Green.)
- "Royal Garden Blues." 1919. (With Spencer Williams.)
- "Squeeze Me." 1925. (With Thomas Waller.)
- "Sugar Blues." 1919. (With Lucy Fletcher.)
- "'Tain't Nobody's Business If I Do." 1920. (With P. Grainger, G. Prince, and E. Robbins.)

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Williams, Edward Christopher

Until the publication of his novel *When Washington Was in Vogue* in 2004, Edward Christopher Williams (1871–1929) was remembered chiefly as the first professionally trained African American librarian. In addition to being a librarian and novelist, he was a novelist, essayist, playwright, and professor of languages; and in the 1920s he participated in the literary and social life of black Washington, D.C.—a world he describes with great clarity and wit in his novel.

Williams was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1871 to a mixed-race couple. After attending public schools in Cleveland, he enrolled in Western Reserve University (now Case Western Reserve University), where he was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa. In 1892, he was valedictorian of his graduating class. In the same year, he accepted a position as first assistant librarian at Western Reserve. In 1894, Williams was promoted to head librarian of the university's Hatch Library, a position he held for eleven years. He left Cleveland temporarily in 1899–1900 in order to study at the New York State Library School in Albany. He married Ethel Chesnutt, the daughter of Charles W. Chesnutt, in 1902; they had one son, Charles.

In 1909, Williams moved to Washington, D.C., to become principal of the M Street School (now Paul Laurence Dunbar High School). In Washington, his literary life blossomed. Shortly after arriving, he joined the Mu-So-Lit club, a men's organization that often discussed literature, and in 1916 he helped form a drama committee for the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In 1916, Williams became head librarian at Howard University, where he also taught classes in library science and foreign languages. In 1918, he helped form the Literary Lovers club. In Washington, Williams came into contact with a number of significant figures of the era, including Mary Burrill, Carrie Clifford, Angelina Weld Grimké, Zora Neale Hurston, Georgia Douglas Johnson, and Jean Toomer.

Williams produced a small but significant amount of written work in the 1920s. Three of his plays were performed at Howard: *The Exile* (1924), a two-act drama set in Renaissance Italy; *The Chasm* (1926), written in collaboration with Willis Richardson; and *The Sheriff's Children* (n.d.), an adaptation of Chesnutt's short story. Williams also contributed a number of anonymous pieces to little magazines affiliated with the Harlem Renaissance, some perhaps under the pseudonym "Bertuccio Dantino."

Williams's most important work, however, is his novel, *When Washington Was in Vogue*. Most likely the first African American epistolary novel, it originally ran serially and anonymously under the title *The Letters of Davy Carr: A True Story of Colored Vanity Fair* in A. Philip Randolph's magazine, *The Messenger*, from January 1925 through June 1926. The novel consists of a series of letters from Davy Carr, a fair-skinned veteran of World War I, to a friend in Harlem. In Washington to do research on the slave trade, Davy describes the world of the black bourgeoisie and eventually falls in love with Caroline Rhodes, who is younger, darker, and more socially adventurous.

Williams left Washington to pursue a Ph.D. in Library Science at Columbia University. While in New York, he succumbed to a sudden illness and died on December 1929.

Biography

Edward Christopher Williams was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1871. He graduated from Western Reserve University in 1892 and then became first assistant librarian at the university library. In 1894, Williams was promoted to head librarian, leaving Cleveland temporarily in 1899–1900 to study at the New York State Library School in Albany. He married Ethel Chesnutt, the daughter of Charles W. Chesnutt, in 1902. In 1909, Williams resigned his position and moved to Washington, D.C., where he became principal of the M Street School (later the Paul Laurence Dunbar High School); he joined Washington's Mu-So-Lit club that year. Williams was hired as head librarian and professor of languages at Howard University in 1916, and he also helped form a drama committee for the local NAACP. In 1918, he was involved in organizing the Literary Lovers club. Three of Williams's plays were performed at Howard in the 1920s: *The Exile* (1924), *The Chasm* (1926), and *The Sheriff's Children* (n.d.). In 1925–1926, his novel, *The Letters of Davy Carr*:

A True Story of Colored Vanity Fair (republished as *When Washington Was in Vogue*), ran in *The Messenger*. Williams moved to New York City in 1929 to pursue a Ph.D. in library science but died there shortly after his arrival.

ADAM MCKIBLE

See also Chesnutt, Charles Waddell; Harlem Renaissance in the United States: 9—Washington, D.C.; Messenger, The; Richardson, Willis

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Williams, Egbert Austin “Bert”

Egbert Austin Williams was born 12 November 1875 in Antigua, British West Indies. His parents, Frederick and Julia Moncuer Williams, moved to Riverside, California, in 1885. There he attended public schools, with the hope of studying civil engineering at Stanford University. He began performing as a minstrel along the coastline to make money for tuition, but he did not raise the necessary funds and decided instead to focus on minstrelsy as a permanent career. He joined Lew Johnson’s musical company in the spring of 1893, as a minstrel playing lumber camps for \$12 a week and “cakes with an occasional chunk of pie.”

The positive responses he received as a performer led Williams to craft a unique style by elaborating the so-called Negroisms in his dialects and movement. He was not a talented dancer, but he actually used this to his advantage, awkwardly tripping over his own feet and slouching. He wore a kinky wig, blackface, and black gloves, all of which helped conceal his actual heritage—he had a Danish grandfather. Williams developed a recitative (semi-recited) singing style and excellent comedic timing, which contributed to his success as a vaudevillian.

In the summer of 1893, Williams began performing at the San Francisco Museum for \$7 a week in front of the curtain while sets were being changed for the next act. That autumn, Williams joined the Martin and Seig’s Mastodon Minstrels of San Francisco. Sent to find an actor to play the end man for the lineup, he came upon George Walker from Lawrence, Kansas. In 1894, having become dissatisfied with the company, they formed their own team, Williams and Walker.

Williams and Walker’s performance in John Isham’s *The Octoroons* at the Pekin Theater in Chicago in 1895 before an unreceptive audience resulted in their being dropped from the bill. Throughout the first half of 1896, Williams became Walker’s sidekick in their act, “Two Real Coons,” which mocked white minstrels who wore blackface. By 14 September 1896, they found themselves in New York performing in Glen McDonough and Victor Herbert’s musical farce *The Gold Bug*, which was well received.

By 1898 Williams and Walker were master cakewalkers and were performing in London, Boston, and San Francisco. In July 1898 they opened in Will Marion Cook and Paul Laurence Dunbar’s operetta, *Clorindy, or the Origin of the Cakewalk*. Its failure brought them back to New York, where they changed agents and began to move from first-rate theaters to bookings in cheaper theaters that drew larger crowds and gave them greater recognition; in fact, they became known as the nation’s major Negro performers.

Williams’s marriage to Lottie (Cole) Thompson was kept a secret from all, including Walker, until it was announced before the opening of the *Sons of Ham* on tour. It was then, in 1900, that Williams wrote, “I’m a Jonah Man” with Alex Rogers, chronicling the hard times of an unlucky man. By 1901, Williams’s recording career had begun; he had a five-year stint with Victor Records, and from 1906 to 1911 he produced seventeen titles with Columbia.

In 1903 the young Prince of Wales celebrated his birthday with Williams and the company of *In Dahomey*, an all-black musical playing on Broadway. *Theatre Magazine* recognized Bert Williams as a superior comedian, more talented than most contemporary white comedians. Williams made history when he joined the international Masons while in Europe, although his membership was never recognized in the United States.

In 1905, Williams’s songwriting continued with “I’d Rather Have Nothin’ All of the Time, Than Somethin’ for a Little While” and “Nobody,” which would become his signature song. In 1908 he opened in *Abyssinia* at the Majestic Theater.

Williams went solo in 1909, after sixteen years of performing with Walker. *Bandana Land* had to be revised for him and Ada Overton Walker (George Walker's wife). The absence of Walker proved a problem, though. After a year of performing in *Mr. Lode of Koal* (with lyrics and book by Alex Rogers and Jesse Shipp and music by John Rosamond Johnson), Williams gave up the company and joined the *Ziegfeld Follies*. After visiting a sanitarium and observing a mentally ill patient who was a former gambler, Williams developed another signature act, "The Poker Game." He performed this routine in his silent movie *A Natural Born Gambler*. Southern cinemas would not show a film with a black star, but the shorts (one-reel films) Williams made in 1914 with Biograph Film Studios were eventually shown as television specials in 1961 and 1963.

Williams starred in the *Ziegfeld Follies* until 1918, with Gene Buck, Will Rogers, Eddie Cantor, and W. C. Fields; but then he had a falling-out with Ziegfeld and left the revue. In 1919, he performed in *Broadway Brevities* at the Winter Garden theater. In August of that year, W. C. Fields petitioned the Actors' Equity Association to allow Williams to join the union. Bert Williams died in 1922.

Biography

Egbert Austin Williams was born 12 November 1875 in Antigua, West Indies. His vaudeville tours included Lew Johnson's Minstrels (1893); Martin and Seig's Mastodon Minstrels (1895); "The Real Coons" (1896); Keith Circuit (1897, 1914, 1919); Hyde's Comedians (1897); Koster and Bial's (1898); Procter's Theater (1900); and Midnight Frolics (1919). His stage credits included *The Octoroons* (1896); *The Gold Bug* (1896); *Clorindy, or the Origin of the Cakewalk* (1898); *A Lucky Coon* (1899); *The Policy Players* (1899); *Sons of Ham* (1900); *In Dahomey* (1902); *In Abyssinia* (1908); *Bandana Land* (1909); *Mr. Lode of Koal* (1909); *Ziegfeld Follies* (1909, 1910–1912, 1914–1917, 1919); *The Broadway Brevities* (1920); and *Under the Bamboo Tree* (formerly known as *The Pink Slip*, 1922). His songs (some with Alex Roger or George Walker) include "I Am a Jonah Man" (1903); "Nobody" (1905); "I Don't Like No Cheap Man!" (1897); "The Medicine Man" (1899); "The Fortune Telling Man" (1901); "When It's All Goin' Out, and Nothin' Comin' In" (1902); and "I'd Rather Have Nothin' All of the Time, Than Somethin' for a Little While" (1908). He made films for Biograph:

Darktown Jubilee (1914), *Fish* (1916); and *Natural Born Gambler* (1916). He was a member of the International Masons, the Promoters of High Art in Music and Literature (formerly known as Colored Actors Benevolent Association), The Frogs (he was chair of the art committee in 1908 and later president, in 1910), and the Actors' Equity Association. On 25 February 1922, Williams collapsed in Chicago during *Under the Bamboo Tree*, a production written for him, in which he starred and was the only black cast member. On Saturday 4 March 1922, he died at age forty-seven in his home in New York City.

SHIRLEY BASFIELD DUNLAP

See also Minstrelsy; Musical Theater

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Wilson, Arthur "Dooley"

"You must remember this. . . ." Arthur "Dooley" Wilson is best known for his role as Sam in Michael Curtiz's film *Casablanca* (1942), which starred Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman. Wilson portrayed a pianist and singer, and his rendition of "As Time Goes By" in this role has helped *Casablanca* keep its hold on audiences. However, Wilson was also associated with, and

contributed to, the Harlem Renaissance, primarily in the realms of music and theater.

Wilson was born in Texas in 1894, and he developed an affinity for African American entertainment through attending minstrels and other shows that toured East Texas. At age twelve, he began showcasing his own acting and musical talents as a minstrel in vaudeville shows. Wilson received the nickname "Dooley" from an Irish song that he performed as a (whiteface) minstrel. By age sixteen, Wilson had formed the first of several musical groups that he would lead for more than two decades: Primarily a drummer and singer, he played alto saxophone as well. Ultimately, he would perform in settings as famous as New York City's Clef Club and, for nearly the remainder of his life, Wilson would combine his explorations of music and acting in a number of different venues.

Bands with Wilson in front would tour England and the continent during the 1920s and the early 1930s, a period during which Europeans were as thirsty for jazz as the American public. Wilson's "Red Devils" also played in *Casablanca* (years later, it would be noted that Wilson was the only member of the cast of *Casablanca* who had ever actually been there). In the mid-1930s, Wilson returned to the United States and, although he did not forsake his musical career altogether, he once again pursued his interest in acting, a talent that had been showcased, albeit briefly, before his foray into jazz.

On 14 March 1908, Wilson had been featured in the musical *Two-Dollar Bill* at Robert Mann's Pekin Theater in Chicago. The Pekin, the first permanent black theater in the United States, was a springboard for a number of noted African American entertainers, including Wilson, Charles Gilpin, Flournoy Miller, and Aubrey Lyles. These and other talented showmen (and women) constituted the Pekin Stock Company, a group of resident actors, playwrights, musicians, and comedians.

Wilson was also a member of the Anita Bush Players, a critically important but short-lived acting troupe that opened at Harlem's famous Lincoln Theater on 15 November 1915, with *The Girl at the Fort*, and then made the transition to the more famous Lafayette Theater, where they opened on 27 December 1915. In 1916, the Anita Bush Players took their now better-known name: the Lafayette Players.

Years later, after his international travels as a jazz musician had ended and during the depths of the Great Depression, Wilson participated in the Roosevelt administration's Federal Theater Project, appearing

with screen giants such as Orson Welles. On 11 March 1936, at the Lafayette Theater, Wilson appeared in *The Conjure Man Dies*, a stage adaptation of Rudolph Fisher's novel. This production had shortcomings—in part because Fisher had died before he was able to revise the script for the stage—but the audiences consistently loved the performances. Four years later, Wilson portrayed Little Joe Jackson in a stage production of the immensely popular *Cabin in the Sky*. The critics in New York noted that remarkable performances by Wilson and Ethel Waters may have prevented the play from being just a parody of African American life and culture. Wilson would appear in one final Broadway production, *Bloomer Girl*, in 1944.

The heyday of the Harlem Renaissance had passed by the time Wilson began his film career with a part in *Keep Punching* (1939), a biography of the African American boxer Henry Armstrong. Over the following twelve years, Wilson appeared in nearly twenty films, the most notable of which was *Casablanca*. As was typical for African Americans in the 1930s and 1940s, most of Wilson's roles were minor supporting characters, and many of them fit the racially disparaging formulas of the era: waiter, butler, chauffeur, Pullman



"Dooley" Wilson in *Seven Days Ashore*, 1944. (Photofest.)

Wilson, Arthur "Dooley"

porter. A notable exception was his performance in *Stormy Weather* (1943), a film with an all-black cast that featured Bill "Bojangles" Robinson and Lena Horne. Wilson's last film appearance was in 1951, but he then appeared on the "small screen" as a major character in a popular television comedy, *Beulah*. Wilson died in 1953, shortly after his retirement.

In 2003, the Texas Film Hall of Fame honored Wilson, noting that its newest inductee had attempted to bring a level of dignity to African American acting in an age marked by consistent resistance to such attempts.

Biography

Arthur "Dooley" Wilson was born in Tyler, Texas, on 3 April 1894. At age twelve, he began his career as a minstrel and musician in vaudeville shows. He would later lead jazz groups that performed in venues as famous as the Clef Club; in the 1920s and early 1930s, his bands would make popular tours of Europe and North Africa. As an actor, Wilson performed in both Federal Theater productions and Broadway plays; he would become a member of famous acting troupes in Chicago and New York. His film career, which began in 1939 and lasted for a dozen years, was highlighted by his memorable performance as the pianist and singer Sam in *Casablanca*. Late in life, Wilson entered the world of television acting with a stint in a hit situation comedy, *Beulah*. He died on 30 May 1953, in Los Angeles, California.

C. C. HERBISON

See also Blacks in Theater; Bush, Anita; Clef Club; Conjure Man Dies, The; Film: Actors; Film: Black Filmmakers; Film: Blacks as Portrayed by White Filmmakers; Harlem Renaissance in the United States: 3—Chicago and the Midwest; Jazz; Lafayette Theater; Lincoln Theater; Muse, Clarence; Race Films; Theater

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Wilson, Edith

Edith Wilson was a blues singer and entertainer. Beginning in about 1919, she performed in a trio with the pianist Danny Wilson and his sister Lena Wilson, also a singer. They appeared in small clubs in the Chicago area until 1921, when they relocated to Washington, D.C., performing there and in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

By mid-1921, Wilson was appearing in the Broadway revue *Put and Take*. For the next two decades she worked in numerous shows, mostly revues, particularly those produced by the prolific Lew Leslie. Her shows in the 1920s included Leslie's *Plantation Revue* (1922), *Creole Follies* (1924), and *Dixie to Broadway* (1924–1925). Two revues of this period paired her with great jazz musicians: She worked with Duke Ellington's Orchestra in *Jazzmania* (1927), and with Louis Armstrong and Fats Waller in *Hot Chocolates* (1929–1930).

Wilson's recording career began in 1921. Her first record was Perry Bradford's "Nervous Blues." Her sessions in September of that year, with a band that included Johnny Dunn on trumpet, were the first by a black blues singer on Columbia Records. She remained with Columbia through 1925, working with Fletcher Henderson and Don Redman, among others. Her final recordings for Columbia featured "Doc" Straine, her regular stage partner from 1924 to 1926. Wilson recorded for Brunswick with Bubber Miley and Wilbur de Paris in 1929, and she made several records for Victor in 1930. At this point, she took a long hiatus from recording.

Beginning with *From Dover Street to Dixie* (London, 1923, with Florence Mills), Wilson performed a great

deal overseas. She undertook a long tour with Sam Wooding's Orchestra in the revue *Chocolate Kiddies* in 1925, traversing England, much of Europe, Russia, and finally South America. She appeared with Florence Mills again, in Lew Leslie's *Blackbirds of 1926* in London (1926) and Europe (1927). She toured again in Europe with Sam Wooding and his Chocolate Kiddies in *The Black Revue* in 1928. She worked in theaters in Berlin and clubs in Paris until 1929.

Edith Wilson did extensive stage work in the 1930s, including the run of *Shuffle Along of 1932–1933*, *Blackbirds of 1933–1934*, and many other shows. She continued to perform frequently in Europe, appearing in Parisian nightclubs in 1931–1932, and in the London run of *Blackbirds of 1934*. Wilson also toured Europe with Sam Wooding's band in *Rhapsody in Black*, 1935. She sang with leading big bands in the mid-1930s, including those of Cab Calloway, Noble Sissle, Jimmie Lunceford, and Lucky Millinder.

In the 1940s, Wilson appeared in several Hollywood films, usually in nonsinging roles. The first of these was *I'm Still Alive* in 1940; her most notable film was the *To Have and Have Not* (a vehicle for Lauren Bacall and Humphrey Bogart) in 1944. She returned to Broadway in *Memphis Bound* (1945), a swing version of Gilbert and Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore* that starred Bill "Bojangles" Robinson.

From the mid-1940s through the mid-1960s, Edith Wilson worked extensively in radio, often in nonsinging roles. She played the Kingfish's wife in *Amos 'n' Andy* for many years beginning in the early 1940s. She signed a deal with the Quaker Oats company to play the character of Aunt Jemima on radio and in numerous personal appearances, many of them for charitable causes. She drew criticism from civil rights groups for these appearances, however, and Quaker Oats terminated her contract in 1965.

In the last five years of her life, Wilson enjoyed a career revival. She made a blues record for the Delmark label in 1976, backed by an old-timers' band led from the piano by Eurreal "Little Brother" Montgomery. She performed with Montgomery during the late 1970s, and also appeared with Eubie Blake. Her final appearances were made in 1980; these included the Bobby Short show *Blacks on Broadway*.

Edith Wilson was never a blues shouter in the mode of Bessie Smith, let alone a country blues singer. Rather, she was firmly in the cabaret blues category, along with such contemporaries as Ethel Waters and Alberta Hunter, and she was among the leading practitioners of this style for almost sixty years.

Biography

Edith Goodall Wilson was born on 6 September 1896 (some sources give 1906 as the year) in Louisville, Kentucky. She began singing in church, at talent contests, and at other local events, then worked at Louisville's Park Theater. In about 1919, she began performing in a trio with the pianist Danny Wilson (whom she married c. 1919) and his sister Lena Wilson. She was in the Broadway revue *Put and Take* in 1921; for the next twenty years she was in many shows and revues, particularly those produced by Lew Leslie. Also in 1921, she began a recording career. She toured extensively in Europe; in the 1930s, she sang with the leading big bands; in the 1940s, she appeared in films; she later performed on radio, notably in *Amos 'n' Andy*. Wilson died on 30 March 1981 in Chicago.

ELLIOTT S. HURWITT

See also Amos 'n' Andy; Armstrong, Louis; Blackbirds; Bradford, Perry; Blues: Women Performers; Calloway, Cabell "Cab"; Ellington, Duke; Henderson, Fletcher; Hot Chocolates; Leslie, Lew; Mills, Florence; Singers; Sissle, Noble; Waller, Thomas "Fats"

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Wilson, Frank

Frank Wilson (1886–1956) was an actor and playwright. He was inspired to seek a career in theater when he saw Bert Williams and George Walker's *In Dahomey* in 1903. He gained his first recognition through organizing a vaudeville act, the Carolina Comedy Four, in 1908. In order to supplement his income, Wilson entered the postal service. From 1914 to 1917, he wrote, directed, and performed in dramatic

and comedic sketches at the Lincoln Theater. In 1917, he began working as an actor with the Lafayette Players; he also studied in a theater course for black actors at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. By the 1920s, Wilson had become prominent in Harlem's professional theater and "little theater." Among his plays, *Confidence*, *Pa Williams' Gal*, and *A Train North* were particularly popular, the last being optioned by the Ethiopian Art Theater.

Wilson worked with the Provincetown Playhouse in a supporting role in the original production of Eugene O'Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings* (1924) and in revivals of *The Dreamy Kid* and *The Emperor Jones* in 1925, winning the admiration of the downtown theater critics. When Jules Bledsoe was dropped from the cast of Paul Green's *In Abraham's Bosom* in 1926, Wilson took over the leading role. He was then cast in *Porgy* by DuBose and Dorothy Heyward in 1927.

In 1927, in the playwriting contest sponsored by *Opportunity*, Wilson took first prize for *Sugar Cain*, a melodrama; it was reprinted under the title *Sugar Cane* in *Plays of Negro Life*, edited by Alain Locke. In 1928, Wilson became one of only four African American nonmusical playwrights to have a commercial production on Broadway during the 1920s, with *Meek Mose*. Set in Mexia, Texas, the play tells the story of members of a black community and their leader, who suffer after being evicted from their property but prevail in the end, when oil is discovered in the swampland to which they have moved. The play was considered weak; it opened 6 February 1928 at the Princess Theater and closed on 3 March. The play was retitled *Brother Mose* and produced in 1934 by the Works Progress Administration. Wilson's *Walk Together Chillun* became the first legitimate production by the Federal Theater's Negro Unit at the Lafayette Theater in 1936.

In 1935, Wilson joined the cast of *The Green Pastures* in the role of Moses. Other major stage credits include *Watch on the Rhine* (1941), *Anna Lucasta* (1946–1947), and *The Big Knife* (1949). A featured role in *Take a Giant Step* (1953) was his last appearance on Broadway. His numerous film credits include *The Emperor Jones* (1933), *The Green Pastures* (1936), *Watch on the Rhine* (1943), and other Hollywood productions, as well as films by Oscar Micheaux. Wilson wrote the screenplays for *Paradise in Harlem* (1939), *Murder on Lenox Avenue* (1941), and *Sunday Sinners* (1941) for the producer Jack Goldberg. Although Wilson's acting career continued to flourish, his work as a playwright appears to have ended with the 1930s.

Biography

The playwright and actor Frank H. Wilson was born in Manhattan on 4 May 1886. Orphaned at the age of eight, he grew up in a "waifs' home." He put himself through high school, graduating at the age of fifteen. He organized a vaudeville act, the Carolina Comedy Four, in 1908. By 1911, Wilson had married Effie King, and became the father of Emmet Barrymore Wilson, as well as of two stepchildren. In 1914–1917, he was at the Lincoln Theater; in 1917, he began acting with the Lafayette Players; in the 1920s, he worked with the Provincetown Playhouse. Notable dramas in which he appeared include *The Emperor Jones*, *Porgy*, and *The Green Pastures*. In 1927, he won first prize in *Opportunity's* playwriting contest. During the 1930s, he was associated with the Federal Theater Project; he also appeared in films and wrote screenplays. After a debilitating stroke, Wilson died in Queens, New York City, on 16 February 1956.

FREDA GILES

See also *Emperor Jones*, The; *Ethiopian Art Players*; *Green Pastures*, The; *Green*, Paul; *Lafayette Players*; *Lincoln Theater*; *Micheaux*, Oscar; *Opportunity Literary Contests*; *Pa Williams' Gal*; *Porgy*: Play; *Williams*, Egbert Austin "Bert"; *Works Progress Administration*

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Wise, Stephen Samuel

Rabbi Stephen Samuel Wise was an advocate of liberal religion and a leader in building Jewish-American support for African American civil rights in the early twentieth century. Born in Hungary, Wise emigrated with his family to the United States and was raised in New York City. He followed his father into the rabbinate;

after study at the College of the City of New York and Columbia University, he attained his first appointment as a rabbi in 1893. He married Louise Waterman in 1900 and moved that year to Portland, Oregon, where he served as rabbi of Temple Beth Israel and developed a national reputation for support of liberal social causes. He returned to New York in 1907 to found the Free Synagogue, devoted to social service and what Wise called “civic religion.”

Wise’s commitment to racial equality was part of his broader social vision. He signed “The Call” of February 1909 that led to the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and served on its governing board, the Committee of Forty. Although he maintained a lifelong membership in the NAACP, he was not particularly active in the organization in later years. He wrote a personal letter to W. E. B. Du Bois protesting against the anti-Semitic passages in Du Bois’s *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903); in a later edition, Du Bois removed the offending sections. Wise spoke at Atlanta University in 1910, at Du Bois’s invitation. Wise also maintained close ties with Booker T. Washington; he delivered a passionate eulogy at the Free Synagogue after Washington’s death in 1915.



Rabbi Stephen Samuel Wise, c. 1920–1940. (Library of Congress.)

Although Wise was never at home in a political party, he lent his support to the presidential candidacy of Woodrow Wilson in 1912. Like many other racial progressives, Wise was disappointed by Wilson’s discriminatory policies and protested them widely. In 1915, the lynching of Leo Frank, a Jewish man accused of murder in Georgia, further convinced Wise that the concerns of all social minorities were related. Wise also protested the explicitly racist film *The Birth of a Nation* (1915); when the National Board of Censorship in Moving Pictures reversed its policy and approved the film’s distribution, Wise led protests in the office of the mayor of New York.

In the 1920s, Wise continued to connect blacks’ civil rights with the rights of other ethnic groups. At the Democratic national convention of 1924, Wise sought unsuccessfully for the adoption of a resolution condemning the Ku Klux Klan, then in resurgence and a powerful force in the Democratic Party. He spoke out against restrictions on immigration and denounced the religious and ethnic bigotry that surrounded the trial of the accused anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti and the presidential candidacy of Alfred E. Smith.

Wise’s organizational home in the second half of his life was the American Jewish Congress, which he headed in its various forms between 1916 and his death. The group’s prime concern was support for a Jewish homeland in the Middle East; at the Versailles Peace Conference after World War I, Wise testified on behalf of Zionist concerns. His leadership also put the American Jewish Congress on record in opposition to racism against African Americans; the organization’s efforts for open university enrollments and against restrictive covenants intersected with similar drives by African American organizations.

In the 1930s, Wise and the American Jewish Congress did much to publicize the anti-Semitism of Adolf Hitler; beginning in 1942, when Wise learned the full extent of the Nazis’ persecution of European Jews, he called for greater intervention by the Roosevelt administration. Through his leadership of the Jewish Institute of Religion, Wise also instilled his vision of liberal religion into a rising generation of rabbis, several of whom played key roles in the postwar civil rights movement. Wise died in New York City in 1949.

Biography

Stephen Samuel Wise was born in Erlau, Hungary, on 17 March 1874. He studied at College of the City of New York, 1887–1891; earned an A.B. at Columbia

College, 1892; and earned a Ph.D. at Columbia University, 1901. He was ordained in 1893. His rabbinates were Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, New York City, 1893–1900; Congregation Beth Israel, Portland, Oregon, 1900–1906; and Free Synagogue of New York, 1907–1949. He was the founder of Federation of American Zionists, 1897; and its secretary, 1898–1904. Wise was also a founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909. He was a founder, American Jewish Congress, 1916; revived, 1920; vice president, 1921–1925; and president, 1925–1949. He was president, Zionist Organization of America, 1918–1920 and 1936–1938. Wise was a founder, Jewish Institute of Religion, 1922; and president, 1927–1948. He was an editor, *Opinion*, 1936–1949. He was a founder, World Jewish Congress, 1936; and president, 1936–1949. Wise died in New York City on 19 April 1949.

CHRISTOPHER CAPOZZOLA

See also Birth of a Nation, The; Du Bois, W. E. B.; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Washington, Booker T.

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Within Our Gates

Within Our Gates (1920) is the earliest surviving film feature by an African American. It was the second film of the pioneer Oscar Micheaux. Two of his other films from the silent era also survive: *Symbol of the Unconquered* (1920) and *Body and Soul* (1925), which starred Paul Robeson. During a thirty-year career that began in the silent era and extended through the 1940s, Micheaux made more than forty films with black casts. As he did for most of his films, Micheaux wrote, directed, and produced *Within Our Gates* himself. Its star, Evelyn Preer, as Sylvia Landry, played one of the strong but conventional female roles that Micheaux favored. The film also starred Jack Chenault, Flo Clement, James D. Ruffin, and William Smith; it had numerous minor characters as well. *Jasper Landry's Will* (1923) is believed to be the sequel to *Within Our Gates*, but that film has not survived.

Within Our Gates was completed at the dawn of the Harlem Renaissance and only a few months after one of the bloodiest seasons of race rioting in America, later called the “red summer” of 1919. For that reason and because of Micheaux’s unflinching depiction of white racists’ violence against black people, the film was banned in some places and excised in others.

Some critics have called *Within Our Gates* a rebuttal of D.W. Griffith’s hugely successful and influential race-baiting film, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). Its purposeful exposé of the reality of the southern horror is an indictment of the entire system of white supremacy, however, not just a single representation of it. The film stripped away the anonymity provided by the hood-wearing nightriders by showing that racist violence against black people was a communal activity engaged in by ordinary white people.

Within Our Gates is the story of a woman, Sylvia Landry (played by Evelyn Preer), who wants to start a school for black children. Sylvia is the adopted daughter of the education-loving Landry family, who are despised by the white townfolk after a black neighbor, seeking to please wealthy whites, tells them that Jasper Landry (played by William Starks), a sharecropper,

“owns a mule,” is “buying land,” and is “eddicating” his children. A dispute occurs with the landowner when Jasper comes to settle his account after his educated daughter, Sylvia, has made some bookkeeping corrections. When an irate white man who was also cheated by the landowner later kills the landowner, it is Jasper who is accused of the murder and brutally lynched, seemingly by consensus of all the white folks in town.

A potent theme in the film is Sylvia’s susceptibility to sexual violence at the hands of a white man, which Micheaux presents as a corrective to the myth of white women being attacked by black male rapists. That charge, as the activist and journalist Ida B. Wells Barnett had argued in her antilynching pamphlets years earlier, was a subterfuge, but it nevertheless fueled the deadly work of white lynch mobs. With a plot twist that revealed Sylvia’s would-be attacker to be her unknown white father, Micheaux uncovers the taboo subject of miscegenation and the myth of racial purity. Micheaux also documents the threat that many whites of that era and region read into black people’s desire for education and property—a reading that could spark violent reactions.

The subtitle of the film, *A History of the Life of Blacks of the United States*, shows the director’s concern with historical documentation. In fact, the original title of the film was *Circumstantial Evidence*; this was changed when it opened in Chicago and Detroit in January 1920. The graphic lynching scene caused censorship boards in several cities to ban the film, fearing an outbreak of race riots. Notably, the board of censors in Chicago excised several scenes. Micheaux, whose promotional abilities equaled his abilities as a filmmaker, used the resulting controversy to stir up interest in his film. As he accompanied the film to different cities, his advertisements in the local newspapers mention that “it took two solid months to get by the censor board” in Chicago. Another advertisement bearing his signature states: “Please Note! The Photoplay *Within Our Gates*, was passed by the Censor but, owing to a wave of agitation on the part of certain Race people (who had not even seen it), 1,200 feet was eliminated during its first engagement. The 1,200 feet have now been restored and the picture will positively be shown from now on as originally produced and released—no cut-outs.” With such shrewd tactics, Micheaux was able to reach his targeted black audience and overcome a negative press. The black press, specifically the nationally circulated *Chicago Defender*, helped energize an audience of blacks ready to see images that were

reflective of their realities and aspirations. In an editorial in the *Chicago Defender*, the film is praised as

a favorable argument against southern mobocracy, peonage, and concubinage. The picture is a quivering tongue of fire, the burn of which will be felt in the far distant years. The spirit of *Within Our Gates* is the spirit of Douglass, Nat Turner, Scarborough, and Du Bois rolled into one, but telling the story of the wrongs of our people better than Douglass did in his speeches, [and] more dramatically transcendent than Du Bois in his *Souls of Black Folk*.

Critics and historians have built an important body of criticism of Micheaux’s films—and of his literary works, which include eight novels—yet *Within Our Gates* remains one of the most scrutinized.

AUDREY THOMAS MCCCLUSKEY

See also Barnett, Ida B. Wells; Birth of a Nation, The; Film: Black Filmmakers; Micheaux, Oscar; Preer, Evelyn; Riots: 2—Red Summer of 1919

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Witmark, M., and Sons

M. Witmark and Sons was a music publishing company active from 1886 to 1929. It played a crucial role in the publishing of music by African Americans for several decades during two crucial periods in the development of American music, in the years around 1900 and 1920.

Witmark’s publication of African American songs began early in its history. Among its earliest hits were three songs by Gussie Lord Davis (1863–1899), who made his reputation writing tearjerkers rather than stereotypical minstrel numbers. “Baby’s Laughing in

Her Sleep," "Irene, Goodnight," and "Up Dar in De Sky" were all published by Witmark in 1892. Lesser successes written by Davis and published by Witmark included "Wedded at Last" (1894), "Honey, Don't You Shake Me" (1895), "The Bright Side of Life" (1896), and "The Night Father Sent Kate Away" (also 1896).

In 1896, Witmark also became heavily involved in the publication of ragtime songs, especially "coon songs," a genre that combined minstrel stereotypes with a rough, newly syncopated urban musical style. These songs, and their cover art, were among the most egregious exploitations of the African American image in the history of American culture. Nonetheless, black composers created this genre, and Witmark published some of the most popular examples, including "All Coons Look Alike to Me" by the comedian Ernest Hogan (1896), the progenitor of the form. Hogan's "The Congregation Will Please Keep Their Seats" was a smaller hit for the firm in 1900. Witmark also picked up republication rights for two blockbusters by Ben Harney, a light-skinned black passing for white: "Mr. Johnson, Turn Me Loose" and "You've Been a Good Old Wagon but You've Done Broke Down" (both 1896), as well as another hit by Harney, "The Cake-Walk in the Sky" (1899) and some of his lesser numbers.

In 1898, Witmark published the music from the successful show *Clorindy, or the Origin of the Cakewalk*. This musical—with lyrics by Paul Laurence Dunbar, the foremost black poet of the day; and music by Will Marion Cook (1869–1944), a leading musical talent of his generation—was a landmark in the history of American theater. *Clorindy* included three major hits, "Darktown Is Out Tonight," "Hottest Coon in Dixie," and "Who Dat Say Chicken in Dis Crowd." Other songs from the show included "Jump Back, Honey, Jump Back" and "Love in a Cottage Is Best." Witmark also published two instrumentals from the show, "Clorindy March and Two Step" and "Creole Dance."

Once the songs from *Clorindy* became hits, Cook decided he had made a poor publishing deal with Witmark. A hot-tempered genius, proud of his European training and high musical standards, Cook often quarreled with colleagues of both races. Accompanied by his white attorney, he appeared in the Witmark offices one day, without an appointment, demanding a favorable change in his contract. This gained him nothing; on the contrary, Witmark declined to have any further dealings with him.

Over the next two decades Witmark published only a few pieces by African Americans. These included "In

the Pyramids," cowritten by Cecil Mack for the show *Mrs. Black Is Back* (1904), and "I Think an Awful Lot of You," written by Joe Jordan for the show *The Shoo-Fly Regiment*. Witmark also published a classic song from the show *In Dahomey* in 1903: "I'm a Jonah Man" by Bert Williams and Alex Rogers. It was through the music for another important musical that Witmark made its great impact as a publisher during the Harlem Renaissance, however. The show was *Shuffle Along*, with a book by the comedians Aubrey Lyles and Flournoy Miller, and with songs by the ragtime pianist Eubie Blake and his lyricist, the singer and entertainer Noble Sissle. This show, which premiered in 1921, was the high-water mark of the African American musical, an immense success both in New York and on tour. Among the smash hits Witmark published were two of Blake's most famous compositions, "I'm Just Wild about Harry," and "Love Will Find a Way." Other songs from the show included "Bandanna Days," "Daddy Won't You Please Come Home," "Everything Reminds Me of You," "Gypsy Blues," "I'm Craving for That Kind of Love," "I'm Just Simply Full of Jazz," "In Honeysuckle Time," "Kentucky Sue," "My Vision Girl," "Oriental Blues," "Pickaninny Shoes," and the title song, "Shuffle Along." Witmark also published the instrumental "Baltimore Buzz," a hit in Blake's band recording.

The business relationship between Blake and the Witmark firm during the years 1919–1923 was quite close. The firm had published some of his collaborative work of the World War I era, such as "On Patrol in No-Man's Land" and "All of No-Man's Land Is Ours" (both 1919, cocomposed with James Reese Europe); and "Good Night, Angeline" (also 1919, cocomposed with Europe and Noble Sissle). Witmark also published the songs for another (unsuccessful) Sissle–Blake show, *Elsie*, in 1923. Songs from this show included "Baby Buntin'," "Elsie," "Everybody's Struttin' Now," "I Like to Walk with a Pal Like You," "Jazzing Thunder Storming Dance," "Jingle Step," "Love Chile," "My Crinoline Girl," "A Regular Guy," "Sand Flowers," "Two Hearts in Tune," and "With You." In addition to his songs, the firm published some of Blake's solo piano works, such as "Sounds of Africa."

During the Jazz Age, Witmark gradually stopped publishing work by African American composers. The firm was purchased by Warner Brothers in 1929—a desirable acquisition for a Hollywood studio, given the advent of sound films. By this time, Witmark's heyday as a publisher of African American talent was behind it.

ELLIOTT S. HURWITT

See also Blake, Eubie; Cook, Will Marion; Dunbar, Paul Laurence; Europe, James Reese; Mack, Cecil; Minstrelsy; Shuffle Along

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Woodruff, Hale

Hale Aspacio Woodruff, a leading painter of the first generation of the New Negro movement, was born in 1900 in Cairo, Illinois. His mother encouraged him to draw from an early age, so he copied newspaper cartoons and illustrations from the family Bible. He first worked as a cartoonist and graphic artist. Woodruff studied art at the Herron Art Institute in Indianapolis, where he was given a German book on African sculpture. This made a great impression on him, and he became one of the first black American artists influenced by African art. While studying in Paris on a Harmon Foundation award (1927–1931), he was also influenced by cubism and by Monet, Cézanne, and Picasso. During this period, Woodruff met Henry Ossawa Tanner, a leading American black artist in Paris.

On his return to the United States in 1931, Woodruff taught art at the Atlanta University Center. In the midst of the Depression, he adopted the artistic modes of regionalism and social realism, and he worked as an assistant to Diego Rivera in Mexico during the summer of 1936. At that time, he also saw works by Jos, Orozco, and David Siqueiros. In the watercolor entitled *Poor Man's Cotton* (1934), Woodruff combines social realism with a geometric quality and flattened space derived from cubism. He depicts cotton-workers as if they are dancing as they swing their hoes in a series of criss-crossing diagonals. And he punctuates their rhythmic movements with patterns of white cotton balls. A similar animation of space and form characterizes his graphic work.

Interested in black history, Woodruff participated in 1935 in an exhibition organized by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) entitled "An Art Commentary on Lynching." He also organized an exhibition of work by black artists, held every year from 1942 to 1970, in Atlanta.

In 1943, Woodruff went to New York on a Rosenwald fellowship; in New York, he came into contact with the abstract expressionists and critic Clement Greenberg. He then turned to abstraction and, in 1950, painted *Afro Emblems*, which shows the influence of nonwestern art and the surrealism of Jackson Pollock.

Among Woodruff's best-known works are his murals. He collaborated with Wilmer Jennings on *The Negro in Modern American Life: Literature, Music, and Art* for the David T. Howard High School in Atlanta. *The Amistad Mutiny* is a mural in three panels (the mutiny, the trial and defense of the mutineers by John Quincy Adams, and the return to Sierra Leone) for the Talladega College Slavery Library in Alabama. *The Art of the Negro*, for the Trevor Arnett Library of Clark Atlanta University, is a series of six panels. Commissioned by the then president of Atlanta University, this work combines influences from African, pre-Columbian, Oceanic, and surrealist art. There is also a reclining figure in the style of Henry Moore. All the murals are characterized by exuberant, linear dynamics; bright colors; and spatial crowding.



Hale Woodruff (1900–1980), *Red Cross Nurse*, from the front cover of *Vogue* magazine, May 1918; color lithograph. (Bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, France/Bridgeman Art Library. Archives Charmet, CHT176050.)

Biography

Hale A. Woodruff was born in Cairo, Illinois, in 1900. He was attracted to art at an early age; his first jobs were as a cartoonist and graphic artist. He studied in Indianapolis and Paris before accepting a teaching post in Atlanta. After a summer working for Diego Rivera, he turned to murals, which occupied him for several years. Struck by the artistic possibilities of African sculpture, he was strongly influenced by the avant-garde, especially cubism and abstract expressionism. He combined an interest in African American themes with a thorough knowledge of mainstream developments in modernism. He taught at New York University until his retirement as a full professor in 1968; he died in 1968 at the age of eighty.

Laurie Adams

See also Artists; Harmon Foundation; Rosenwald Fellowships; Tanner, Henry Ossawa

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Woodson, Carter G.

Born in 1875, the son of slave parents, the historian Carter G. Woodson grew up poor in rural Virginia. A thirst for education led him on a long journey of discovery, through high school (after working for several years in mines and railroads); to Berea College in Kentucky, where he graduated just one year before segregation barred all blacks; to the University of Chicago; and on to Harvard University, where he was the second black American to earn a Ph.D. in history (W. E. B. Du Bois was the first). Interspersed with his long and difficult path to the highest academic achievements were years spent teaching high school in Huntington, West Virginia; Washington, D.C.; and the Philippines. He was twice a school principal and went on to become dean at Howard University and West Virginia State College. At Howard, Woodson was also the first director of the graduate history program and presided over the establishment of the history department.

By 1915, Woodson reached the conclusion that blacks' enlightenment about history was fundamental to overcoming economic and political powerlessness and that the development of black history required organization. That year, Woodson and four associates founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH). The following January, Woodson edited the first edition of the *Journal of Negro History*. By 1920, he realized that he could not recover African American history for black Americans by being an academic administrator. Moreover, he was tired of being answerable to bureaucracy and bureaucrats. Black colleges and universities, he concluded, were not conducive to the development of black history. Their leaders tended to be white, finances tended to be in white hands, and thus black history that threatened to instill concepts of racial pride was considered controversial or dangerous, even by black bureaucrats.

In 1922, Woodson founded Associated Publishers to produce books and pamphlets on black history for

an academic audience. The publishing house was also intended to provide materials for high school teachers and for children in elementary through high school, as little black history was taught even in segregated black schools. Denied access to the public through white publishers, and wishing to counter the racism of what was published about black people, Woodson and his associates investigated the black experience from colonial times through their own time. Woodson was interested in the black experience generally and also collected and published materials on Latin America, Africa, and the Caribbean. In addition, pioneering sociological studies were undertaken and published. Woodson's efforts thus predated, but also powerfully complemented, the cultural upsurge of the Harlem Renaissance.

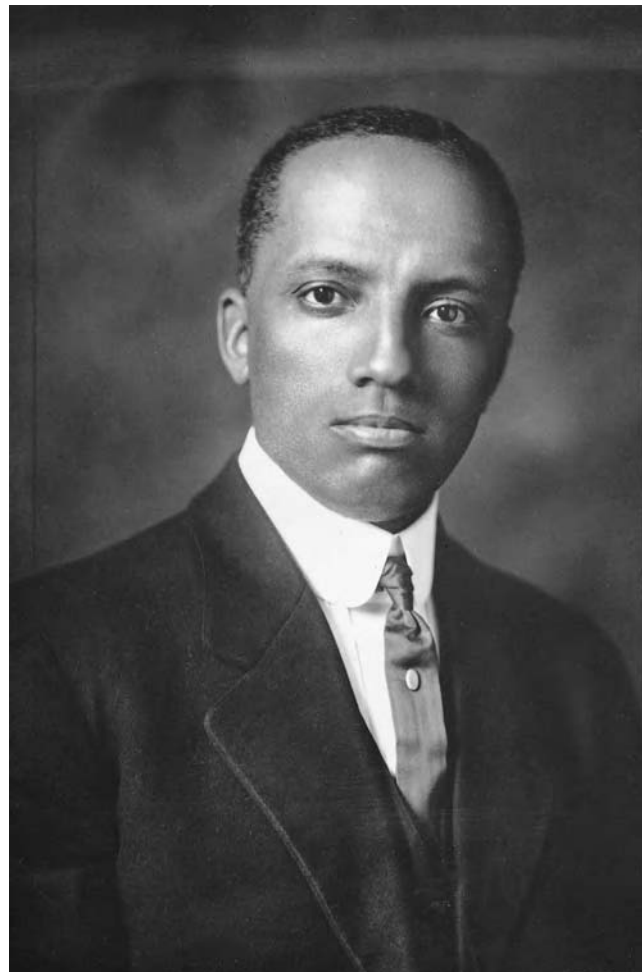
To further extend his message of black pride, in 1926 Woodson established Negro History Week, which was a significant success. It was timed to coincide with the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln; branches of the ASNLH across the country and other black groups held parades, dances, banquets, lecture series, and numerous other activities to celebrate the African American experience. Woodson provided increasingly sophisticated materials and suggestions for such groups extolling the African American achievement. By 1940, in *Dusk of Dawn*, W. E. B. Du Bois was ready to proclaim that Negro History Week was the greatest single achievement to arise from the artistic movement of the 1920s (the Harlem Renaissance). In 1976, the event was renamed Black History Month, a reflection of changed times and the success of African Americans in claiming for themselves more prominence in American society.

During the 1920s and early 1930s, Woodson hired a number of figures in the Harlem Renaissance to help in his work. From 1924 to 1925, Langston Hughes worked with Woodson on a study of free blacks in the antebellum South. Similarly, Zora Neale Hurston was hired to collect black folklore and interview former slaves in Florida and Alabama. Her article "Cudjo's Own Story of the Last African Slaves" was published in 1927 by Woodson in *Journal of Negro History*. Woodson was also able to give funds to Alain Locke for a two-year study of African art.

The 1920s proved to be the peak of Woodson's scholarly output. He was not silenced by the effects of the Depression; however, whereas he had been extremely successful with white philanthropists in the 1920s, he found it increasingly difficult to obtain funding once the Depression arrived. He also chafed under

the philanthropists' instructions to affiliate with a black college or university. After 1935, Woodson lost all white funding for his work and became solely dependent on the black community. Although the volume of publishing by the ASNLH declined as a result, throughout the 1930s it became a clearinghouse for research assistance in black history to scholars and the general public. The change was to Woodson's liking and led to greater outreach to the mass of black Americans and to even more concentration on heightening community racial pride and cultural consciousness. To further this strategy, Woodson founded the *Negro History Bulletin* in 1937. Its wide appeal was testimony not only to the editorial trajectory but also to the vastly increased appeal of black history.

In his lifetime, Woodson was a controversial figure. To achieve his remarkable vision, Woodson was



Carter G. Woodson, c. 1911. (Photographs and Prints Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.)

single-minded to a degree that often made others uncomfortable. He jealously guarded his control of ASNLH, *Journal of Negro History*, *Negro History Bulletin*, every research project, and the running of the office. Colleagues described him as a stern taskmaster, overbearing, acid-tongued, yet completely unpretentious. He devoted his life to black history, crossing the country as a speaker very much in demand for his dynamic presentations and charismatic delivery. His public service included research for the Chicago Commission on Race Relations (1920) and membership on advisory boards for various New Deal projects related to the black community. He was a founding member of the Washington, D.C., branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the nation's largest and most active; he was a strong supporter of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and of A. Philip Randolph; he was active in antilynching campaigns; he urged an economic boycott of white-owned businesses in black areas of Washington in 1915, long before the later "Don't buy where you can't work" campaigns; and he attacked the failure of black education and the leadership of the black community by its middle class. Like Du Bois, Woodson became more radical as he grew older. During the 1930s, he wrote regular columns in black newspapers urging black economic nationalism and black cultural nationalism.

After his death in 1950, Woodson was largely forgotten. It was only in the wake of the civil rights movement and the growth of black studies that his work has been more fully appreciated.

Biography

Carter Godwin Woodson was born on 19 December 1875 in New Canton, Virginia. He attended public schools in Buckingham County, Virginia; and Huntington, West Virginia. He then studied at Berea College, Kentucky (Litt.B., 1903); University of Chicago (B.A. and M.A., 1908); and Harvard University (Ph.D., 1912). He taught high school in Winona, West Virginia, 1898–1900; was principal, Douglass High School, Huntington, West Virginia, 1900–1903; was supervisor of schools in the Philippines, 1903–1907; taught at M Street (now Paul Laurence Dunbar) High School, Washington, D.C., 1909–1918; was principal, Armstrong Manual Training School, Washington, D.C., 1918–1919; was dean, school of liberal arts,

Howard University, 1919–1920; and was dean, West Virginia Collegiate Institute, 1920–1922. He established the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) in September 1915 and published *Journal of Negro History* under the auspices of the ASNLH in January 1916 (first issue). Woodson was an editor, 1916–1950. He established Associated Publishers in 1922. He established Negro History Week in 1926 (renamed Black History Month in 1976). He founded *Negro History Bulletin* in 1937 and was an editor from 1937 to 1950. Woodson was awarded the Spingarn Medal in 1926 and doctor of laws, West Virginia State College, in 1941. He died 3 April 1950 in Washington, D.C.

STEPHEN BURWOOD

See also Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and Journal of Negro History; Black History and Historiography; Greene, Lorenzo; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale

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Work, Monroe Nathan

A little-known social scientist of the Jim Crow era, Monroe Work pioneered the collection of bibliographical and statistical data on the black experience. Trained at the University of Chicago in the early twentieth century, Work, after a brief flirtation with W. E. B. Du Bois’s Niagara movement (the precursor of the National Association for the advancement of Colored People, NAACP), joined the staff of Tuskegee University in 1908. He quickly established himself as an integral part of Booker T. Washington’s “Tuskegee machine,” providing important statistical information about various

aspects of the black experience and serving as a researcher and ghostwriter for Washington. Work was a major contributor to Washington’s two-volume history, *Story of the Negro* (1909), and established the department of records and research at Tuskegee. He also published the highly regarded *Tuskegee Lynching Report*, which eventually appeared in more than 2,000 papers, and inaugurated the wide-ranging *Negro Yearbook*, published annually through the 1940s. One of the most widely circulated sources of the period, *Negro Yearbook* served as a model for subsequent compilations.

By the 1920s, the wide circulation of *Negro Yearbook* led to the expansion of his work and much-deserved recognition. Not only did Tuskegee’s department of records and research expand from a staff of two to six, but Work received grants from various organizations. In 1921, he received a Carnegie Corporation grant of \$8,500 over five years to complete a bibliography on blacks in the United States. Additional support materialized for the project in 1926. At the annual Founder’s Day celebration at Tuskegee, Anson Phelps, director of the Phelps-Stokes Foundation, examined the work and suggested that the bibliography be extended to cover Africa. The following year, with support from the Phelps-Stokes foundation, Work traveled to several European capitals to collect bibliographical information. His work netted an additional 1,100 references for the study. The final product, *A Bibliography of the Negro in Africa and America* (1928), included more than 17,000 references in seventy-four chapters and represented one of the most comprehensive bibliographies on the African experience to date. In 1929, Work received a \$400 award from the Harmon Foundation for his efforts with *Negro Yearbook* and *Bibliography of the Negro*.

In addition to bibliographical and statistical studies, Work also participated in a number of other projects. For example, he initiated a National Health Initiative in 1922 to highlight African Americans’ health concerns. This project was later taken over by the federal government, eventually becoming an annual initiative known as the National Negro Health movement. Given the vast statistical resources available to him, Work also served as a consultant to various groups such as the National Urban League, Social Science Research Council, and the Southern Sociological Society. He also worked closely with programs to improve the agricultural prospects of farmers in Savannah, Georgia. Some people also give credit to several meetings between Work and the historian Carter G. Woodson for the establishment

of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915.

Work's contributions to the social sciences were innumerable. Both the University of Chicago and Howard University awarded him honorary degrees. His *Negro Yearbook*, *Bibliography of the Negro*, and *Tuskegee Lynching Report* provided accurate and reliable information about African Americans in the Jim Crow era. Most important, his work at Tuskegee, long considered the site of accommodationist black thought, suggests the complexity of Booker T. Washington's legacy as well as the role of black institutions as centers for the promotion and application of social science techniques to the black experience.

Biography

Monroe Nathan Work was born in Iredell County, North Carolina, in 1866. He was educated in Arkansas City, Kansas; at Chicago Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois (B.D., 1898); and at the University of Chicago (A.B., 1902; M.A., 1903). He taught at Georgia State Industrial College in Savannah from 1903 to 1907. He was director of records and research, Tuskegee Institute, Alabama, 1908–1941. Work died in Tuskegee, Alabama, on 2 May 1945.

STEPHEN G. HALL

See also Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and Journal of Negro History; Niagara Movement; Washington, Booker T.; Woodson, Carter G.

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Workers' Dreadnought

Edited by Sylvia Pankhurst, a radical suffragette and socialist, *Workers' Dreadnought* was a Communist Party and trade union newspaper based in London, England.

The publication's first incarnation was as *The Woman's Dreadnought*, a free weekly newspaper that Pankhurst started with the East London Federation of the Suffragettes (ELFS) in March 1914. The name "dreadnought" reflected the fearlessness required of women fighting for the vote. The paper advocated and reported on the struggle for women's suffrage and the plight of workingwomen in general. Pankhurst was editor, writer, proofreader, and fund-raiser. Women from the East End section of London also wrote for the publication. Its circulation reached 20,000 soon after it was published. In July 1917 the name of the paper was changed to *Workers' Dreadnought*, and it became an organ of the Communist Party British Section of the Third International (CP-BSTI).

The *Dreadnought's* closest tie to the Harlem Renaissance was the poet and journalist Claude McKay, who contributed to the newspaper as a writer and editor. McKay traveled to England in 1919 at the invitation of a European couple who admired his work. He settled in London and frequented the International Socialist Club, a meeting place for socialists, communists, and many radical foreigners. Influenced by the people he met and the lectures he heard at the club, McKay delved into reading the work of Karl Marx.

McKay admired Sylvia Pankhurst, who had lectured at the International Socialist Club. Unlike most socialists and communists of the time, Pankhurst realized that the struggle for racial equality was as important as the class struggle. McKay was invited to work at *Workers' Dreadnought* in 1920. He contributed poetry, reviews, and articles to the publication. His

topics included international communism, the race situation in the United States, British imperialism, and the use of socialism as a link between white and black workers. McKay also wrote articles about his experiences in London for African American newspapers such as *Negro World*.

At Pankhurst's direction, McKay covered the dock area in London and reviewed foreign-press stories for articles of interest to the *Dreadnought's* readers. McKay often used pseudonyms for his work in the *Dreadnought*. He was cautious because police suspicions were aroused by Pankhurst's radical views and the paper's subject matter. This police scrutiny came to a head in 1920, after the paper published an English sailor's article criticizing the Royal Navy, voicing enlisted sailors' dissatisfaction with low pay, and supporting the working-class struggle. Police raided the *Dreadnought's* offices, and McKay narrowly avoided arrest by denying any involvement with the paper. Pankhurst was arrested, charged with and tried for sedition, and sentenced to six months in jail.

The *Dreadnought's* association with the Communist Party ended in 1921, and Pankhurst was expelled from the party because the paper was less focused on the Communist Party and trade unions and more concerned with literary criticism and poetry as well as theoretical writing. After this break with the Communist Party, Pankhurst received funding from former suffragette colleagues for the publication of the *Dreadnought*. The paper continued publication until 1924.

McKay's involvement with *Workers' Dreadnought* ended when he returned to the United States early in 1921. Although he traveled to Russia in 1922, he was disillusioned by the racism of the majority of communist and socialist groups in England. Pankhurst campaigned for British support in defeating fascist Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. She met the Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie several times and interviewed him for her newspaper *New Times and Ethiopia News*. Pankhurst lived in Ethiopia until her death in 1960.

HEATHER MARTIN

See also Communist Party; McKay, Claude

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Works Progress Administration

The Works Progress Administration (WPA), an employment relief agency, began during the Great Depression in 1935 as part of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal and was formally ended in 1942 by presidential proclamation. WPA was headed by Harry Hopkins, a former social worker; its philosophy was to create jobs for the unemployed by supporting public works including the arts and cultural programs. Roosevelt maintained that employment, rather than direct financial relief, would lift people's spirits and ultimately do more for the country's overall good. WPA was the largest and most expensive of the New Deal agencies; it funded a variety of programs including malaria control; street construction; the destruction of slums; tree planting; and construction of schools, parks, bridges, and hospitals. It is, however, probably best known for Federal Project Number One, an organization made up of the Federal Arts Project, the Federal Theater Project, the Federal Music Project, the Federal Writers Project, and the Historical Records Survey.

The Federal Arts Project (FAP) encompassed a wide range of art forms including photography, sculpture, painting, architecture, set design, and graphic arts. Photographers (such as Sid Grossman, in his *Harlem* series) documented local life; graphic artists made posters for WPA offices, theater productions, art exhibits, and health and educational programs; sculptors created monuments for parks and other recreational facilities; and painters made murals in schools,

hospitals, airports, and other public buildings. Other artists were employed as teachers in community centers, classrooms, art galleries, and newly created art centers. Several later famous artists, like Jacob Lawrence and Jackson Pollock, were sustained during the Depression by FAP.

Like FAP, the Federal Music Project (FMP) employed artists as music teachers in rural and urban areas, providing free music instruction, history, and appreciation to children and adults. Orchestras, bands, operas, and chamber music groups were organized in cities that before WPA had none. Other employees traveled the country recording examples of American folk music—spirituals, bluegrass, ballads—or cataloged the life, work, and performances of hundreds of composers for the Index of American Composers. Along with the index, FMP created the Composers Forum Laboratory, inviting composers to submit new pieces, which, if selected, would be rehearsed and performed. After a performance, the composer would invite comments and questions from the audience.

FMP sustained musicians who were suffering not only because of the Great Depression but also because of increased competition from radio. Likewise, the Federal Theater Project (FTP) sustained an art form that was under siege from the Depression, radio, and the rise of cinema. It used radio to introduce the public to new playwrights in *Federal Theater of the Air*, and it brought live theater, circuses, puppet shows, and dance performances to millions of people who would otherwise not have been able to afford them. In some cases, WPA theaters were built; in others, WPA workers formed traveling troupes. Additionally, FTP financed productions in Yiddish, French, German, Italian, and Spanish, as well as sixteen African American theater units. One of the more noteworthy productions by the African American theater in Harlem set an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in Haiti.

Like these other projects, the Federal Writers' Project (FWP) also employed soon-to-be successful artists including Arna Bontemps, Ralph Ellison, Robert Hayden, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Margaret Walker, and Richard Wright. Many of them worked on the American Guide Series, a series of guidebooks replete with collections of oral history, folklore, biographies, and essays about local life and ethnological history, as well as the more expected descriptions of historic and tourist sites. The 150-volume *Life in America* series chronicled the history of different ethnic groups in the United States. For the American Life History Interviews, employees collected the oral

histories of former slaves, black and white farmers in the South, Jewish garment workers, and Chicago steel miners, among others. Other products of the Federal Writers' Project include collections of folklore from the bayou country, labor histories, and analyses of the influence of African arts and languages on American culture.

The Historical Records Survey was originally created under the auspices of the Federal Writers' Project, but in 1936 it became an independent part of the Federal One Project. Workers cataloged inventories of local government records—census returns, school records, and maps—as well as newspapers, church records, cemetery burials, and any manuscripts that could be of historical significance to the area. Their work initiated a flurry of microfilming across the country and has proved invaluable to historians as well as genealogists.

The Federal One projects supported and encouraged professional artists, funded the development of a national art rooted in local culture, and put art “within reach” of the public. Critics on the left, however, charged the organization with censorship (objectionable material was edited from guidebooks, and plays deemed inappropriate were banned). Critics on the right called the programs politically biased and accused them of “boondoggling”—wasting time or money on unnecessary projects. Toward the end of the 1930s, the House Committee to Investigate Un-American Activities went further, formally inquiring into the WPA's communist activity. In 1939, the House Appropriations Committee, objecting to governmental support of plays with radical messages, barred future use of WPA funds for the theater activities of the FTP. The other four appendages survived for a few more years, but the full-employment economy of World War II put a definitive end to the Works Progress Administration. Its legacy, however, continues to be felt in programs such as the National Endowment for the Arts.

VALARIE MOSES

See also Bontemps, Arna; Ellison, Ralph; Federal Programs; Federal Writers' Project; Hayden, Robert; Hughes, Langston; Hurston, Zora Neale; Lawrence, Jacob; New Deal; Walker, Margaret; Wright, Richard

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World War I

The involvement of the United States in World War I had an enormous impact on African Americans and on Harlem and influenced a number of developments in African American culture and the Harlem Renaissance. The war divided the African American community, especially the leadership. It certainly affected the lives and the men and women who went to war as well as those who remained behind, and it intensified issues of race and race relations and precipitated racial violence.

From the beginning, the war generated conflict among African Americans regarding their appropriate response to it. Most—including leaders like Robert

Moton, Emmett J. Scott, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and W. E. B. Du Bois—urged blacks to set aside their racial grievances and rally behind the flag. Du Bois enunciated this position most clearly in July 1918 in an essay in *The Crisis*: “Let us, while this war lasts, forget our special grievances and close our ranks shoulder to shoulder with our own white fellow citizens and the allied nations that are fighting for democracy.” Other African Americans, especially those affiliated with the socialist left, disagreed, and argued that leaders who ignored racism and oppression in order to embrace patriotism and the war were betraying their race. One element of this group, the “new crowd Negroes,” included young radicals like Hubert Harrison, Wilfred A. Domingo, A. Philip Randolph, and Chandler Owen. Writing in *The Messenger* (May–June 1919), Randolph asserted that Du Bois’s “close ranks” essay would “rank in shame and reeking disgrace with the ‘Atlanta Compromise’ speech of Booker T. Washington.”

Among the issues that concerned African Americans was the policy of the U.S. armed forces to assign black troops to segregated units, and to place these segregated units under white officers. The matter of segregated units was not seriously addressed, but early in the war the NAACP lobbied to provide training for African American officers. Joel Spingarn led the struggle, which resulted in the establishment of a segregated officers’ training camp at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. Because the camp was segregated, this victory was bittersweet and generated opposition from many of the more militant black leaders; but the NAACP and Du Bois endorsed it as a necessary evil. More



Post School, Thirty-fifth Division, Commercy, Meuse, France, 7 February 1919. (Brown Brothers.)

significantly, in October 1917—in a move generally applauded in the black community—the secretary of war appointed Emmett J. Scott as special assistant and confidential adviser in matters affecting the interests of African American troops.

All together, 367,000 African Americans served in the U.S. armed forces during the war. Most served with the Army; African Americans were excluded from the Marines and were restricted to menial jobs in the Navy. Black troops faced discrimination during their military training. Most training facilities were in the South, and most southern communities did not welcome the presence of black trainees. Friction was widespread. The most serious incident occurred in Houston in August 1917: Violence erupted when black troops from the Twenty-fourth Infantry, inflamed by news of riots in East St. Louis and by ongoing discrimination in Houston, took up their weapons and marched on the city, killing nineteen people, including four black soldiers and four local police officers. In the aftermath of this episode, nineteen black soldiers were executed and ninety-one received prison sentences. Scores of less violent incidents occurred. One fairly typical example involved the Fifteenth New York Infantry (which became the 369th Infantry): In October 1917, members of this unit became involved in an altercation in Spartanburg, South Carolina. The incident began when Noble Sissle, the drum major of the infantry band, was humiliated and then assaulted in a downtown hotel. The bandmaster, Lieutenant James R. Europe, restored order; later that evening, however, the base commander barely averted an armed assault on the town like the one that had taken place in Houston. To prevent further violence, the unit was quickly shipped overseas.

In France, black troops faced a mixed reception. Mostly they were well received by the French—an experience that contrasted sharply with their experiences in the United States. Although some black troops saw combat, many others were frustrated by being assigned to work crews, construction crews, or stevedore battalions. Nevertheless, a number of African American units participated in combat, including the 369th, 370th, 371st, and 372nd U.S. infantry regiments. Perhaps the most notable was the 369th, called the “Hell Fighters” by the Germans. The French awarded the entire unit the Croix de Guerre for its action at Maison-en-Champagne, and 171 individuals received the Croix de Guerre and the Legion of Honor for exceptional gallantry in action.

In spite of their military record, African American troops could not escape controversy. Accusations circulated that African American troops in France were continually involved in rapes and attempted rapes, that the relative absence of discrimination in France threatened the social structure of the United States, and that the relationships African American men had enjoyed with Frenchwomen would lead to rape and violence in the United States. Another problem was the systematic removal of black officers from most black units, and the discrimination that black troops faced in terms of food, facilities, recreation, and entertainment. The problems facing black officers began as early as 1917, when Colonel Charles Young, the highest-ranking African American in the military, was removed from the service. As the war came to an end, many black officers were removed from their commands, and white officers began denigrating black troops as rapists and cowards.

In December 1918, Robert Moton traveled to France to investigate the charges against black troops and to assess the conditions that black soldiers faced in France. He found that the accusations of rape were seriously exaggerated and that the accusations of cowardice were untrue. Moton himself generated controversy, however, when he publicly urged blacks to behave well when they returned to the United States and, according to some reports, warned them that when they returned home they should not expect the freedom they had enjoyed in France. Du Bois also investigated the treatment of black troops in France in the months following the war; he presented his findings in *The Crisis* in May 1919. He reported on the allegations of misconduct made by white officers and white politicians and exposed the infamous “Secret Information Concerning Black American Troops,” reportedly circulated in France by the American military command, warning that French people’s attitude toward blacks was a threat to the American social order. Like Moton, Du Bois found the charges of rape among black troops greatly exaggerated. He pushed his investigation further, however, and documented biased reporting of black troops; he concluded that blacks were regularly subjected to racist white officers and noncommissioned officers, that they had been poorly led, and that they had frequently been sent into battle with inadequate equipment. Du Bois castigated Moton for not investigating the depth of discrimination in the American military in France, and he attacked Emmett J. Scott for largely ignoring these problems.

The reception of black troops on their return to the United States was also mixed. Most blacks were proud of their service and expected a hero's welcome. This certainly happened in New York, where the 369th paraded up Fifth Avenue to Harlem to the cheers of the throngs who lined the route. Homecoming celebrations such as this parade honored black soldiers and reinforced their accomplishment. However, such celebrations were often overshadowed by violence and racism. The "red summer" of 1919, with its race riots and lynchings, convinced many people that military service had changed nothing—that racial conditions were the same or had become even worse. If there was change, it was not in the greater acceptance of blacks by whites, but in the growing impatience and militancy among blacks, especially those who had served in France. This strengthened pride and determination to force change was embodied in the New Negro movement of the postwar years. It was expressed by the young radicals who had opposed the war, it was found in the nationalist movement established by Marcus Garvey, and it was enunciated most powerfully by the poet Claude McKay who responded to the mob violence of 1919 with the warning "If we must die . . . Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack, / Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!" Du Bois, too, dropped his "close ranks" philosophy; in May 1919, he wrote an essay for *The Crisis*—"Returning Soldiers"—in which he warned:

We return.

We return from fighting.

We return fighting.

Make way for Democracy! We saved it in France,
and by the great Jehovah, we will save it in the
United States of America, or know the reason why.

The war also had a significant social and cultural impact on African Americans. The "black migration" that had begun before the war accelerated as thousands of blacks left the rural South for jobs in urban industry. This movement continued through the 1920s, spreading the black population into the North, and to a lesser extent into the West, and urbanizing African Americans. The war, and especially the racial pride and black militancy that came out of the war, created an intellectual and cultural environment that gave rise to the Harlem Renaissance. Although few artists associated with the renaissance had served in the military during the war, and although the war

produced no great African American war novel, there was a connection between the war and the art of the period. The black musicians who accompanied James Reese Europe and the 369th Infantry are credited with popularizing jazz in France. The musicians from other African American military bands also brought their music to the French and the British. The war also played a small part in several African American novels. Jake, the main character in Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem*, had volunteered for military service but deserted when he became frustrated with his assignment to a labor battalion in France; and the war altered the lives of Peter Bye and several other characters in Jessie Redmon Fauset's novel *There Is Confusion*.

Finally, the war helped internationalize African American consciousness, at least among political and intellectual leaders. Du Bois, Garvey, and others saw the war and the peace conference that followed as an opportunity to end colonialism in Africa; although this effort failed, it did revitalize the pan-African movement. The Bolshevik revolution also internationalized politics, especially among black radicals, and influenced McKay, Langston Hughes, Paul Robeson, and many other black writers and artists. Even for those less politically inclined, Europe especially, but Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America as well, became part of the African American world.

CARY D. WINTZ

See also Domingo, Wilfred Adolphus; Du Bois, W. E. B.; Europe, James Reese; Fauset, Jessie Redmon; Fifteenth Infantry; Garvey, Marcus; Great Migration; Harrison, Hubert; Home to Harlem; Hughes, Langston; McKay, Claude; Moton, Robert Russa; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; New Negro Movement; Owen, Chandler; Pan-Africanism; Randolph, A. Philip; Riots: 2—Red Summer of 1919; Robeson, Paul; Scott, Emmett Jay; Sissle, Noble; Spingarn, Joel; There Is Confusion

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Wright, Louis T.

The physician, hospital administrator, and surgeon Louis Tompkins Wright was born in Georgia in 1891. His father—who died when Wright was four years old—was a doctor, a graduate of Meharry Medical School (1881), and may have inspired Wright's interest in medicine. Wright's stepfather, William Fletcher Penn, whom his mother married in 1899, was also a doctor; Penn nurtured Wright in academic pursuits and encouraged him to pursue medicine.

During his early education in Atlanta, Wright excelled in science, mathematics, and English. In 1911 he graduated from Clark University in Atlanta; in the autumn of 1911 he entered Harvard Medical School, from which he would graduate cum laude, fourth in his class, in 1915. He held an internship at the Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, D.C., from 1 July 1915 to 30 June 1916.

On 18 August 1918, he entered active duty with the U.S. Army as a first lieutenant in the Medical Reserve Corps. While serving in France, he was wounded in a gas attack; as a result, he was discharged from combat service and appointed an officer in charge of surgical wards at Field Hospital 366, Ninety-second Division. Wright also served as a member of the divisional blood transfusion team. He was promoted to captain on 11 November 1918. He received the Purple Heart and was discharged on 2 April 1919.

In 1919, he worked on the venereal diseases staff in New York City's department of health. Also in 1919, the board of Harlem General Hospital agreed to allow

African Americans to serve as visiting surgeons and physicians. Wright was considered for such a position and four white physicians resigned in protest, even though his assignment was only as clinical assistant to the outpatient department. He was promoted to assistant adjutant visiting surgeon at Harlem General Hospital in June 1926, then to surgical director in August 1929. He was also the first African American police surgeon in New York City, a position he took in 1929.

Wright pursued professional excellence and interracial harmony through various means, such as working with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and establishing medical societies throughout New York's hospital community. In the New York medical community, Wright withdrew from the all-black North Harlem Medical society. He formed the Manhattan Medical Society in 1930.

Wright was the first African American doctor to be appointed to the staff of a hospital in New York City.



Louis T. Wright, c. 1930–1940. (Library of Congress.)

Over the course of his career, he published more than eighty papers. Some of his research methods broadened the medical community's understanding of the transmission of infectious diseases, racial bias medical testing, and bone-setting techniques.

Biography

Louis Tompkins Wright was born to Ceah Ketcham and Lulu Thompson Wright in La Grange, Georgia, on 23 July 1891. In 1911 he received a B.A. from Clark University, Atlanta, Georgia. In 1915, he graduated from Harvard Medical School. After an internship at Freedman's Hospital, Washington, D.C., he practiced with his stepfather, Dr. William F. Penn, in Atlanta. In 1917 Wright was commissioned as a first lieutenant in the Medical Physicians Reserve Corps of the U.S. Army and entered the training camp for medical officers at Fort Des Moines, Iowa; he actively served in the Army during World War I. In May 1918, he married Corinne M. Cooke; they had two children (Jane Cooke and Barbara Penn Wright). In May 1919, he began working in the state surgical clinic at Harlem General Hospital, the first African American to be appointed to a hospital staff in New York. In 1929, he was appointed surgeon of the police department of New York City. In 1930, he founded Manhattan Medical Society. From 1932 to 1939, he served as president of Crisis Publishing Company. He was elected a fellow of the American College of Surgeons, 1934; was chairman of the board of directors of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), 1935–1952; founded Harlem Surgical Society, 1937; and received an honorary doctor of science degree from Clark University, 1938. He was certified by the American Board of Surgery, 1939; awarded the NAACP's Spingarn Medal, 1940; and elected a fellow of the New York Surgical Society, 1948. The Louis T. Wright Library of Harlem Hospital Dinner Testimonial was held in April 1952. Wright died of a heart attack on 8 October 1952, at age sixty-one.

IDA JONES

See also Harlem General Hospital; Spingarn Medal

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Wright, Richard

Richard Wright rose from poverty on a plantation outside Natchez, Mississippi, to become one of the major writers of the twentieth century, one of the first internationally celebrated black American authors, and an early African American best-selling novelist. Wright's success, like his politics, offered a radical break with the past, and his work is often viewed as the fulcrum on which African American literature turned. According to Gates (1993), "If one had to identify the single most influential shaping force in modern Black literary history, one would probably have to point to Wright and the publication of *Native Son*."

Throughout his youth, Wright endured deprivation and racism. His father abandoned the family when Wright was five years old, and for the next ten years he was raised by a series of family members in various places in Mississippi and Arkansas. Eventually he graduated from high school, but with only a ninth-grade education.

Moving to Memphis in 1925, Wright supported himself through a series of menial jobs in which he regularly encountered the humiliation and hatred that characterized the racially divided South—experiences he would later write of in his autobiography, *Black Boy* (1945). By the time Wright moved to Chicago in 1928 and took a job with the postal service, he had developed a love of

books and was ready to begin his career as a professional writer. He joined the John Reed Club in 1933 and became a member of the Communist Party; consequently, he published radical poetry in left-wing journals such as *Left Front*, *Anvil*, *Midland Left*, and Mike Gold's *New Masses*. Wright was increasingly influenced by Marxist ideology, and in his "Blueprint for Negro Writing" he emphasized the need for a more aggressive political literature that would directly address the debilitating effects of racism on the black psyche. Wright believed that Negro writers of the past had been merely "prim and decorous ambassadors who went a-begging to white America . . . dressed in the knee-pants of servility" ("Negro," 1937) and that contemporary black writers should use their "words as weapons" in the desperate struggle for racial equality. His first novel, *Lawd, Today!* (published posthumously), attempted to address these issues by combining elements of a bleak urban naturalism with experimental modernist structures that highlighted the Negro's fundamental position as an outsider in mainstream American society. Detailing the events of one day in the life of black postal workers, Wright developed ironic and penetrating contrasts between the indignities suffered by his struggling black protagonists and the patriotic aphorisms espoused by a society honoring Lincoln's birthday.

In 1937, Wright moved to Harlem, became involved with the New York Writers' Project, worked as editor of the communist newspaper *Daily Worker*, and continued to write short stories, essays, and poems. In 1938, Wright's first major work, *Uncle Tom's Children*, a collection of four novellas, appeared to much acclaim (a fifth story, the communist-inspired "Bright and Morning Star," was added in a subsequent edition). Set in the South, these stories dramatized the harsh, often violent, conditions blacks were forced to endure in a society pervaded by fear and suspicion. Despite his attempt to write a radical social document that would expose the brutal and debilitating effects of racism, however, Wright found that he had written such a lyrical work that "even bankers' daughters could read and weep and feel good about" it ("How Bigger Was Born," 1940).

His *Native Son* (1940) was a phenomenal success, and its sales were sustained by a white middle-class readership that kept it perennially in the Book-of-the-Month Club—a surprising outcome, considering the novel's excoriation of the injustices imposed on blacks through institutionalized white power structures. *Native Son* made Wright a celebrity status; and the sales of this book and his next—*Black Boy* (1945)—allowed

Wright to make a living by writing. In the character Bigger Thomas in *Native Son*, Wright also discovered new truths about social reality, for he came to realize the ubiquity of Bigger, that "there were literally millions of him, everywhere," whites as well as blacks ("How Bigger Was Born," 1940). This realization led to Wright's dissatisfaction with and ultimate rejection of Marxist ideology; he considered it overly dogmatic and said that it "had oversimplified the experience of those they sought to lead" and as a result "had missed the meaning of the lives of the masses" by conceiving of them in "too abstract a manner" (*Black Boy*).

Wright eventually rejected the United States as well; in 1947 he moved permanently to France. Under the influence of French existentialism, especially the works of Albert Camus, Wright explored further the conditions of human reality as a cosmic malaise. In works such as *The Outsider* (1953) and the posthumously published *Eight Men* (1961), Wright attempted to answer the existential question "What is man?" by reaffirming the conscientious act of moral idealism. As Cross Damon, the hero of *The Outsider*, puts it, "Existence was not perpetrated in malice or benevolence,



Richard Wright, photographed by Carl Van Vechten, 1939. (Library of Congress.)

but simply is, and the end of our thinking is that here we are and what can we make of it."

Wright's life as an expatriate led him to become "a citizen of the world" (Fabre 1993). In his last works, he not only moved away from Marxist ideology and the Marxists' concern with the proletariat, but he also adopted a more universal approach to the problems of identity and origins outside of the boundaries of race and nationality. Regardless of external circumstances, Wright's characters contain a vital spark of transcendent selfhood that, despite social and political oppression, offers to determined individuals a vision of hope and possibility. Thus Wright's work can be seen as the fruition of a radical militant literature that had its inception in works of the Harlem Renaissance such as Claude McKay's "If We Must Die." Brutal, brooding, and foreboding, Wright's work has been described (Gates 1993) as possessing "an artistry, penetration of thought, and sheer emotional power that places it into the front rank of American fiction."

Biography

Richard Nathaniel Wright was born 4 September 1908 near Natchez, Mississippi. He studied at schools in Natchez; Memphis, Tennessee; and West Helena, Arkansas. He graduated in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1925. That year he relocated to Memphis, where he worked at a series of menial jobs. In 1928, he moved to Chicago and worked for the postal service. Between 1930 and 1934, he began writing; joined the John Reed Club and the Communist Party; and published radical poetry in left-wing journals. Wright joined the editorial board of *Left Front* in 1934. He worked for the Federal Writers' Project, researching the history of blacks in Chicago, and participated in the Federal Theater Project, in 1935–1936. In 1937, Wright moved to Harlem, became editor of *Daily Worker*, and joined the New York Federal Writers' Project. He joined the editorial board of *New Masses* in 1938–1939. In Paris, he helped found the journal *Présence Africaine* in 1948. Wright played Bigger Thomas in a screen version of his book *Native Son* in 1949. He was involved with the Congress for Cultural Freedom in 1958. Wright was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1939 and NAACP's Spingarn Medal in 1941. Richard Wright died in Paris on 28 November 1960.

RANDALL SHAWN WILHELM

See also Federal Writers' Project; Literature: 4—Fiction; New Masses, The; Spingarn Medal

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Yerby, Frank

Few writers have received such a mixed response to their work as Frank Yerby. He became famous with his first novel, *The Foxes of Harrow* (1946), which sold 2 million copies and was widely compared to Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936); all together, his thirty-three novels sold more than 55 million copies. His novels were appreciated not only in the United States but also—and possibly more so—overseas; Yerby was particularly popular in Germany. Like many other black writers of the 1940s and 1950s, however, Yerby was sometimes criticized for ignoring the black experience in his novels; moreover, despite his reputation as a writer of historical fiction, and despite the fact that he helped deconstruct myths about the antebellum South, he was sometimes grouped with romance writers. Still, regardless of this criticism, and regardless of how the critics felt about the quality of his work, they all seemed to agree that Yerby's attention to historical detail was unmatched. Furthermore, he did sometimes depict the horrors of slavery and the appalling lives of slaves (even in *The Foxes of Harrow*, which he claimed to have written for the popular market, there is more than one attack on slavery as an institution), although on the whole his books containing such descriptions did not sell well.

Yerby was the son of Rufus G. Yerby and Whilemena Smythe Yerby. Yerby's father was an itinerant hotel doorman; it was his mother who was the primary caregiver for Yerby, his sister, and his two brothers. Yerby once remarked that, as a child, he would rather read than eat. He married Flora Helen Claire Williams on 1 March 1941 in New Orleans, Louisiana; they had four children (Jacques Loring, Nikki Ethlyn, Faune Ellena,

and Jan Keath) but were later divorced. In 1952, Yerby married Blanca Calle-Perez in Spain. Yerby taught for several years. During World War II, he contributed to the war effort by working at the Ford Motor Company in Detroit, Michigan, and at Cohen Fairchild Aircraft on Long Island. It was during this time that he wrote *The Foxes of Harrow*, his best-known work.

Typically, a novel by Yerby is set in an earlier historical period; has a strong hero; has a fast-paced plot filled with action, romantic intrigue, and violence; and includes a large cast of characters from diverse ethnic backgrounds. He often drew on his own experiences for inspiration. For example, while he was working for the Federal Writers' Project he joined a quasi-Islamic religious cult to obtain information about religious practices; years later, he wrote his acclaimed novel *The Dahomean* (1971). Some critics have described Yerby's characters as one-dimensional, but in general the only truly stock or stereotyped characters in Yerby's novels are the Caucasians.

Yerby includes some politically tinged themes, but he was not really a political writer. He once stated: "The novelist hasn't any right to inflict on the public his private ideas on politics, religion, or race. If he wants to preach, he should go on the pulpit." Yerby also felt strongly that writing—a craft he loved—should not become propaganda for any political cause. This philosophy may explain why he wrote escapist historical stories instead of chronicling the African American experience of his time. It cannot be denied, though, that Yerby was criticized for avoiding the civil rights movement, and that at times he insisted he was not black.

Because of the racism he experienced in the United States, Yerby became an expatriate in Madrid in 1955.



Frank Yerby. (Library of Congress.)

There, he led an apparently carefree life devoted to automobile racing and to frequenting beaches, but he also wrote the bulk of his work in Spain. In exile, Yerby continued to arouse controversy, partly because of his lifestyle and partly because of his work. Relatively recently, Yerby has gradually achieved more recognition as a literary figure—the first African American writer to produce a series of best-sellers—and he has come to be included in more and more books and articles about African American culture.

Yerby died of heart failure in Madrid, Spain, on 29 November 1991; as he was dying, he asked his wife to keep his death a secret for several weeks.

Biography

Frank Garvin Yerby was born on 5 September 1916 in Augusta, Georgia. He studied at Haines Institute in Augusta; Paine College (A.B. 1937); and Fisk University (M.A. 1938). He did postgraduate study at the University of Chicago. Yerby worked on the Federal Writers' Project of WPA. He taught at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College, Tallahassee, Florida, from 1939 to 1940 and at Southern University, Baton

Rouge, Louisiana, from 1940 to 1941. During World War II he worked at Ford Motor Company in Detroit, Michigan, and at Cohen Fairchild Aircraft in Long Island. He received the O. Henry award for a first published short story for "Health Card" (1944). *The Foxes of Harrow* was made into a film, translated into twelve languages, and published in Britain, New Zealand, and Australia. *The Golden Hawk* (1948) also was made into a film. Yerby exiled himself in Madrid, Spain, in 1955 and died there on 29 November 1991.

ELLEN M. TSAGARIS

See also Federal Programs; Federal Writers' Project; Works Progress Administration

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