

Double-Take

A Revisionist Harlem Renaissance Anthology

Edited by
VENETRIA K. PATTON
and
MAUREEN HONEY



Rutgers University Press
New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London

2001

INTRODUCTION

On March 21, 1924, almost all of the future stars of the Harlem Renaissance gathered at Manhattan's Civic Club to inaugurate what would become known as the New Negro Movement of the 1920s and 1930s. This event was a dinner arranged to honor Jessie Fauset for the publication of her first novel, *There Is Confusion*, just published by Boni and Liveright. Poet Gwendolyn Bennett wrote her poem "To Usward" especially for the occasion and recited it that evening. In the audience receiving a round of applause was the most famous black woman poet of her day, Georgia Douglas Johnson, author of two recent books of poetry: *The Heart of a Woman* (1918) and *Bronze* (1922).

Despite the reason for this gathering, Fauset's prominent role as literary editor of *The Crisis*, the leading African American periodical in the nation, and the spotlighted presence of Bennett and Johnson, the evening was dominated by men. Most notably, the absent Jean Toomer, whose astonishing experimental novel *Cane* (1923) had also recently been published by Boni and Liveright, and Walter White, whose first novel, *The Fire in the Flint* (1924), would soon appear from Alfred A. Knopf, were praised effusively by the stream of male speakers who made up the program. Bennett's single poem was eclipsed by the evening's literary centerpiece, a poetry reading by rising star Countee Cullen. The most influential black power broker of the era, Alain Locke, was master of ceremonies—and known for his cultivation of male writers.

Cross-Currents of Gender, Genre, and Sexuality

The overshadowing of women at the Civic Club dinner (now known as the official beginning of the Harlem Renaissance) emblemizes the gender imbalance in the period. Although most of the male writers present at this event have come down to us in history as heart and soul of the New Negro Movement, the women who were there have been rediscovered only within the last ten or fifteen years. These women and their sister writers dropped out of sight, while their male colleagues' work continued to be

read, studied, and debated. Anthologies of the Harlem Renaissance that followed the era were dominated by male writers; only a handful of contributions by women were included. Even now, with the vast amount of scholarship being done on their works, the prominent role of women in the movement continues to be overshadowed by male-authored texts. Although recent collections on the Harlem Renaissance include the names of Angelina Weld Grimké, Helene Johnson, Jessie Fauset, Dorothy West, Nella Larsen, Georgia Douglas Johnson, Anne Spencer, and others, the gender ratio is still nearly two to one—or greater—in favor of selections by men. With the exception of novelist Zora Neale Hurston (and perhaps Nella Larsen), women continue to be classified among the movement's minor writers.

This anthology attempts to redress the ongoing historical emphasis on male writers from the last century's first flowering of modern literature by African Americans. By including nearly equal numbers of male and female contributors as well as roughly equal contributions by men and women, we hope to restore and underline the importance of women's writings to our understanding of a literary awakening whose primary metaphors were female-centered: fertility, gestation, and birth. In doing so, we realize we are not representing the actual numbers of essays, poetry and short story collections, or novels published by men and women during the era—rather, we try to even out the disadvantages of gender that kept black women from publishing books as widely as their male peers. We emphasize instead the era's periodicals and anthologies as sources for our volume: in these venues, which largely fueled the Harlem Renaissance, women enjoyed greater success.

We intend to foster conversations about women's historically marginalized relationship to the Harlem Renaissance by including noncanonical selections as well as those considered within the canon. By emphasizing multiple genres through the inclusion of drama, song, and visual art, we call attention to the participation of women in all of the period's artistic venues, not just to the poetry for which they were best known. We also illustrate the cross-fertilization that occurred as writers tried their hand at various genres and the conversations that took place among them. By providing biographical sketches of the creative writers anthologized here, we try to suggest ways that gender, class, and sexual orientation informed the careers and writings of Harlem Renaissance participants as a way of extending our understanding of its racial politics.

By including texts with homoerotic themes, such as those by Richard Bruce Nugent, Countee Cullen, Angelina Weld Grimké, Mae Cowdery, and others, we invite attention to the interface between race and same-sex love that existed during the Renaissance. Often these are texts that are left out of Harlem Renaissance anthologies because they do not always conform to the period's focus on race and because the formal models in which they took shape were quite often traditional. Yet same-sex love was an important subject for many of these writers, and the traditional aesthetic framing can be interpreted as a veil covering gay or lesbian subtext.

Some of the questions arising from this gender and genre inclusivity are: To what degree were men and women of the Harlem Renaissance animated by the same racial

subjects and concerns, to what degree by the specifics of gender? How does our inclusion of women, gay men, and lesbians as full partners in construction of the movement complicate and extend our notion of the Renaissance—both its weaknesses and its strengths? Is it a distortion of the historical literary record or an instructive corrective of it to devote equal time to women writers when they were overshadowed by men in their own time? Is it a distortion of history or a truer picture of it to consider as gay or lesbian texts the writings of people who did not openly identify themselves as such, especially those, like Langston Hughes, whose sexual orientation is the subject of continued debate? Can we speak of an overarching African American aesthetic that serves as an umbrella for male and female, gay, bisexual, and straight writers of the Renaissance, or are there separate literary traditions based on gender or sexual orientation running through it?

One thing is clear: when we pay attention to gender issues attached to the Harlem Renaissance, we notice interesting things. One of these is how many women's texts appeared at groundbreaking moments. Georgia Douglas Johnson's poetry collection *The Heart of a Woman*, with its introductory praise from the best-known African American poetry critic of his day, William Stanley Braithwaite, helped begin a new era of self-revelation for black poets. Published in 1918, Johnson's collection of lyric verse departed dramatically from the dialect poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar and Joseph Cotter, Sr., heralding a claim made by African American writers of the twenties to the full range of poetic expression from which they had previously been discouraged. Jessie Fauset's *There Is Confusion* (1924) was arguably the first significant novel of the Harlem Renaissance, if one considers *Cane* a prose poem. It too opened the door to new ways of thinking about black literature and life with its focus on middle-class characters and the absence of the folk vernacular so characteristic of the previous generation. Nella Larsen's novels *Quicksand* (1928) and *Passing* (1929) explored a new psychological territory in African American fiction, and she became the first black woman to win a Guggenheim Fellowship for creative writing. Angelina Weld Grimké's play *Rachel* (1916) was the first serious drama by an African American playwright to be produced on stage and not to be written in dialect. Its characters, like Fauset's, were middle class, urban, northern, college educated, and portrayed in a warm domestic atmosphere. It marked a startling departure from the musicals, comedies, pageants, and minstrel shows depicting happy-go-lucky black people that had preceded it.

All of these female-authored texts were lauded by the black press when they appeared, and three of these women, Johnson, Fauset, and Grimké, would go on to extensive publication in the journals and anthologies of the Harlem Renaissance. They in fact would become some of its most notable figures, for their key roles in the movement as well as for their writing—Johnson for her Saturday night literary gatherings at her home in Washington, D.C., Fauset for her discovery of major black talent in her job as literary editor of *The Crisis* from 1919 to 1926, and Grimké for her anti-lynching organizing and her influence on many young Renaissance writers as a teacher at D.C.'s Dunbar High School. Their pioneering works, along with Larsen's, would be supplanted by the innovative

literature of writers experimenting with urban working-class subjects and a new black aesthetic based on African motifs, but they signaled the creative independence and assault on demeaning stereotypes with which the Harlem Renaissance first identified itself. This pathbreaking role was only dimly outlined in subsequent anthologies, however, which emphasized male-authored texts and New Negro militance.

Another aspect of the Renaissance one notices is how many of its participants are now under discussion as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. New research by Gloria Hull, David Levering Lewis, Arnold Rampersad, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Deborah McDowell, Steven Watson, and others focuses on the same-sex liaisons and/or literary subtexts of Countee Cullen, Angelina Weld Grimké, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Wallace Thurman, Richard Bruce Nugent, Mae Cowdery, Gladys Casely Hayford, and Nella Larsen.¹ Social histories of the period indicate that Harlem was a major center of gay life in the 1920s and 1930s, with its gay cabarets and drag balls attended by thousands, its lesbian blues singers such as Gladys Bentley, Bessie Smith, and Ma Rainey, its gay or bisexual power brokers Alain Locke and Carl Van Vechten, and its proximity to Greenwich Village's own center of gay/lesbian life. A'Lelia Walker's famed parties at her Harlem address in the late twenties were frequented by gays and lesbians. Anthologies of the period have yet to highlight this historical context, however, or the significance of same-sex love poetry, blues lyrics, and fictional representations in the Renaissance. To help do so, we include texts by these writers with possible gay or lesbian subtexts that have been largely left out of the major anthologies: Dunbar-Nelson's "*You! Inez!*"; Grimké's "*El Beso*," "*The Want of You*," and "*A Mona Lisa*"; McKay's "*To O.E.A.*"; Hughes's "*Desire*" and "*Poem [2]*"; Cullen's "*Sacrament*," "*Little Sonnet to Little Friends*," and the frequently reprinted "*Tableau*"; Hayford's "*Rainy Season Love Song*" and "*The Serving Girl*"; Nugent's "*Shadow*," "*Sahdji*," and his well-known "*Smoke, Lilies, and Jade*"; and Cowdery's "*Dusk*," "*Insatiate*," and "*Poem . . . for a Lover*."

Recurring Themes

Placing the texts of men and women, minor and major writers, lesser known and canonized selections, multiple genres, and homoerotic texts side by side, this anthology opens opportunities for new understandings of the Harlem Renaissance. The movement is traditionally viewed as one characterized by generational splits (rear guard vs. vanguard) or divides based on the debate over art versus propaganda; on the contrary, we have made selections that point to the connections shared by this diverse set of writers. Although

1. Gloria Hull, *Color, Sex, and Poetry: Three Women Writers of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981); Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "The Black Man's Burden," in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michel Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Deborah McDowell, *The Changing Same: Black Women's Literature, Criticism, and Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); and Steven Watson, *The Harlem Renaissance: Hub of African-American Culture, 1920-1930* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1995).

women poets are associated with nature poetry, Langston Hughes wrote about nature too, for instance, and Georgia Douglas Johnson, like many male writers, used folk vernacular in her prose. A poem ignored by anthologies, such as Hughes's "Lullaby" (*The Crisis*, 1926), can suggest linkages to women who wrote about babies or motherhood. Similarly, Claude McKay's "Like a Strong Tree" (*Survey Graphic* and *The New Negro*, 1925) echoes Angelina Weld Grimké's often anthologized "The Black Finger" (*Opportunity*, 1923). An aesthetically flawed poem by gifted writer Zora Neale Hurston, "Passion" (*Negro World*, 1922), can illustrate the period's early focus on traditional love lyrics. By including the poetry, prose, or drama not often anthologized or associated with particular writers, we hope to illustrate the multidimensional commonalities that characterize the Harlem Renaissance.

Sterling Brown and others have identified certain themes that reappear despite the gender and generational differences so often commented upon: Africa is a source of race pride, black American heroes or heroines are apotheosized, racial political propaganda is considered essential, the black folk tradition is affirmed, and candid self-revelation is on display.² Nathan Huggins adds to this list an emphasis on the urbanity of the New Negro and joy of discovering both the variety and unity of black people. Much of the literature sought to define this "New Negro" or in some way addressed the issue of identity, according to Huggins: "What did Africa mean? What did the slave and peasant past mean? What could a folk tradition mean to the 'New Negro'? What was color, itself? Blackness, clearly, was not only a color, it was a state of mind. So, what of the mulatto, and what of 'passing'?"³ Huggins and David Levering Lewis point to questions about the important role of art in the Renaissance. These questions are reflected in the debate about art and propaganda, but are also related to the issue of artistic integrity—could black artists avoid mimicking European forms and still produce great art? Other themes that critics have noted in relation to the movement are the prominent role of the Christian church in this very secular artistic movement, anger at racism, and an indictment of Western culture.

In addition to these themes, we have noticed recurring discussions across both genders of migration, domestic servitude, motherhood, children, nature, and passionate love. Because of the new urban identity of the New Negro, discussions of migration from the South or other rural areas are quite frequent. Washerwomen are another frequent subject for both genders, perhaps because they symbolized the exploitation of black labor as a whole and because white soap suds were an apt metaphor for white supremacy. Motherhood was a site of artistic production because it encompassed the past rape of black women by white masters during slavery and because black mothers represented the anticipated better future of the race. The validation of mothers present in the dominant culture had been denied African American women, whose representation as

2. Watson, *Harlem Renaissance*.

3. Nathan Huggins, *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 9. See also David Levering Lewis, ed., *The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader* (New York: Viking, 1994).

mammies caring for white people was a familiar stereotype. Writers of the Harlem Renaissance addressed this erasure by creating images of black women as maternal figures and centered their concept of artistic awakening on birth. Nature was a central source of imagery for both genders as well. Images of night, shadow, trees, dawn, dusk, earth stood for black pride, resilience, awakening, or protection. Finally, love and sensuality were important subjects for all of these writers. As Bernard Bell has noted, African Americans were dehumanized by a racist culture as incapable of romantic love, denied positive identities as sensual beings.⁴ Participating in a larger cultural rebellion against Victorian prudery, writers of the Renaissance proclaimed themselves fully human followers of the heart, celebrants of the flesh.

There are key differences between male and female writers, however. As Cheryl Wall, Gloria Hull, Deborah McDowell, Claudia Tate, and others have pointed out, the system of patronage operating during the Harlem Renaissance privileged men.⁵ As a result, it was harder for most women to get the financial and professional support they needed to get into print. While many of them had work published in the period's journals and anthologies, relatively few collections of poetry or short stories were published by women, and not as many of their plays were produced.

Critics also point to women's avoidance of the urban vernacular and "primitivism," particularly in their poetry (with the important exception of the blues singers). This vernacular and associations with "the primitive" of Africa resonated with sexuality, problematic terrain for black women at the time, who were burdened with a stereotype of themselves as prostitutes in the larger culture. To claim their humanity, intelligence, and artistic creativity, therefore, they tended to turn to middle-class subjects and traditional poetic forms even when celebrating their African roots. This tendency was fostered by the fact that most of them came from middle-class backgrounds, even though they were financially strapped. When women did dip into the vernacular, they tended to recuperate the folk dialect of the generation preceding them, a safer discourse in terms of its association with rural family life.

Women addressed gender oppression in their writing as well as racism. Essays by women frequently emphasized gender issues and the double burden of being female and black. Cheryl Wall notes that images of rooms, a symbol of confinement, reappear in women's texts, and allusions to journeys abound. Restricted in their ability to travel, they took imaginative flights instead. Women, like men, wrote about nature, but they infused these natural images with a feminist subtext. Pastoral settings dominated by female allusions are often contrasted with alien manmade urban spaces, for example, or nature is portrayed as a liberating force for women's spirits. Birds and flowers appear as representations of women's imprisonment or freedom. In these ways, women of the Harlem

4. Bernard Bell, *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987).

5. Cheryl Wall, *Women of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); McDowell, *Changing Same*; and Claudia Tate, ed., *Georgia Douglas Johnson: The Selected Works* (New York: G.K. Hall, 1997).

Renaissance responded to the feminist stirrings that resulted in gaining female suffrage in 1920, but they grappled uneasily with the sometimes conflicting imperatives of racial solidarity and feminist revolt.

Contested Periodization

Another issue highlighted by gender awareness, as we will explicate later, is the contested nature of periodization. While there is general agreement about the significance of the Harlem Renaissance, there is less accord on when the movement begins and ends, since it is not marked by a consistent set of aesthetics or recognizable style. Literature from the period covered a wide range of forms from classic sonnets to modernist verse to blues and jazz aesthetics to folklore. The movement is associated with the 1920s, the Jazz Age, but just when it emerged and disappeared is a source of debate. In fact, Nathan Huggins refers to the Harlem Renaissance as a "convenient fiction,"⁶ because there is no clear demarcation separating the old from the "New Negro." Despite this lack of clarity, writers and scholars have sought to impose order and meaning on this rather organic surge in artistic creativity; a brief review of this debate helps define this anthology's contribution.

In *The Harlem Renaissance Remembered*, Arna Bontemps divides the period into two phases: black propaganda (1921–1924) and connection of black writers to the white intelligentsia and publishing establishment (1924–1931), ending with the Depression of the 1930s. Nathan Huggins, in *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance*, follows Bontemps's lead by dating the era's beginnings to the end of World War I and its demise to the Depression. The editors of the more recent *Call and Response* echo these assessments in their preference for two distinct terms: "Harlem Renaissance" and the "Reformation," the latter referring to the post-Renaissance aftermath of the thirties and forties.

However, for others, including ourselves, the 1930s are merely an extension of the Harlem Renaissance. For example, Alain Locke describes the thirties as the "second and truly sound phase of the cultural development of the Negro in American literature and art."⁷ This extension of the movement into the 1930s is embraced by *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Nellie Y. McKay. According to its time line, 1919–1940, the years of the Harlem Renaissance traverse two full decades. David Levering Lewis also uses a more comprehensive time frame. In *The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader*, he ascribes the years 1917–1935 to the movement, from the opening of American theater to black actors with the Broadway productions of Ridgely Torrence in 1917 to the Harlem Riot of 1935, and he places a great deal of importance on World War I and the race riots of 1919 as watershed events ushering in the concept of the New Negro.

6. Huggins, *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance*, 9.

7. Quoted in Patricia Liggins Hill et al., *Call and Response: The Riverside Anthology of the African American Literary Tradition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 791.

Despite general agreement that the 1920s represent its zenith, then, periodization of the Harlem Renaissance is clearly an issue of some debate. Our anthology contributes to that conversation by heeding the observation of Cheryl Wall and Gloria Hull that narrower time and geographical parameters for the Harlem Renaissance work against women, most of whom published in a scattered way across a continuum of time and from regions outside Harlem. In that spirit, we are attaching the movement's parameters to two landmark works, neither of which was written in Harlem nor in the 1920s: the production of Angelina Weld Grimké's play *Rachel* (1916) and the publication of Zora Neale Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). Bracketing the Renaissance with these two texts not only opens up debates about gender and the movement's vast literary range, it pins the period to African American-authored creative literature rather than to political events, economic events, expository prose, or texts generated by whites: all areas dominated by men. Our parameters also underscore the importance of women to the movement, despite the handicaps of gender that limited their ability to get into print.

Although flawed aesthetically and outside the militant and vernacular discourse that has come to be identified with the Harlem Renaissance, there are sound reasons for tracing the period's beginnings to *Rachel* and for scrutinizing Grimké's play more carefully than we have done in the past. The play's groundbreaking nature is rooted in the fact that it was the first serious drama by an African American playwright to be performed on stage with an African American cast. It was performed in both Washington, D.C., and in New York. Subtitled "A Play of Protest," *Rachel* anticipated Du Bois's call to combine art with propaganda since the play centers on the evils of racism and lynching. It was seeing *Rachel* that persuaded the Renaissance's premier playwright, Willis Richardson, to devote his creative life to drama and directly led to his first play, *The Chip Woman's Fortune* (1923), the first serious African American-authored play to be produced on Broadway. We can see in *Rachel*'s foregrounding of racism's devastating impact on mothers and children glimpses of a major theme of women in the Harlem Renaissance: the equation of motherlessness with protest against racism. Finally, we see in this play some of the seeds about racism and family life sown for contemporary women writers, particularly Toni Morrison in her novels *The Bluest Eye* (1970) and *Beloved* (1991).

Hailed in its own day as the first drama to portray black people positively, a corrective to ubiquitous plantation stereotypes, *Rachel* was produced by the NAACP as a counter-narrative to D. W. Griffith's blockbuster film *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). Griffith's racist narrative glorified the Ku Klux Klan at a time when record numbers of black people were being lynched (by some estimates nearly two thousand in the century's first three decades alone). The propaganda function of *Rachel* was overtly theorized by Grimké, who aimed it at a white audience to gain support for anti-lynching legislation, although it was actually seen by mainly African American audiences. This was in part why it eschewed the folk vernacular that would become a hallmark of much Renaissance writing.

More importantly, *Rachel*'s urban and middle-class characters constituted a dramatic change from the minstrel stereotypes to which American audiences were accustomed,

and its language was a departure from the dialect art forms of Paul Laurence Dunbar, Joseph Cotter, Sr., and Charles Chesnutt, who had dominated the first decades of the twentieth century. In this way Grimké's play was an important step toward expanding the limited forms in which black artists were trapped. It inaugurated the literature from Georgia Douglas Johnson, Countee Cullen, Jessie Fauset, Claude McKay, and others that would illustrate Du Bois's contention that African Americans should lay claim to the high art forms of the dominant culture in order to advance their acceptance as first-class American citizens and end segregation.

Ending the Harlem Renaissance with Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) conforms to critical consensus about the death of the movement, which is anywhere from 1935 to 1940. It also signals the devastating impact of the Depression on publishing opportunities for black writers and points to the coming ascendancy of urban realism and naturalism in African American letters with the publication of Richard Wright's *Black Boy* (1939) and *Native Son* (1940). Indeed, it was Wright's highly critical review of Hurston's novel in *New Masses* that helped bury the Renaissance. Wright's perspective sounded the death knell for rural folk vernacular as the basis of an authentic African American aesthetic and for women writers of the Harlem Renaissance—even the gifted Hurston, whose now-acclaimed novel went out of print for thirty years after its first run.

Drama Ushers in the Harlem Renaissance

While Zora Neale Hurston has been revived as a major writer of the twentieth century and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as one of its most beautiful novels, *Rachel* continues to be largely ignored. This is in part due to its dated sensibility, but it also stems from the fact that drama of the Harlem Renaissance is overshadowed by the genres of poetry, fiction, and expository prose in contemporary anthologies. Yet drama was an important part of this era, and we include plays here to underline that historical significance. The period did not produce nearly as much good drama as it did poetry and fiction, but in many ways, plays ushered in the movement, and many writers specializing in other genres wrote plays. In addition to the impact of *Rachel*, produced in 1916 and published in 1920, it was the success of white writer Ridgely Torrence's *Three Plays for a Negro Theatre* that propelled mainstream interest in African American life. Produced in the fall of 1917 by Torrence's wife, Emily Hapgood, at the Garden Street Theatre, *The Rider of Dreams*, *Simon the Cyrenian*, and *Granny Maumee* were considered daring for the time not only because the cast was all black, but the parts were dignified. These successful plays were followed by several dramas, musicals, and novels about African Americans throughout the following decade.

Notable among these was Richardson's 1923 production of *The Chip Woman's Fortune*, the astounding Broadway run of *Harlem* (1929), coauthored by Wallace Thurman and white writer William Jourdan Rapp, and the 1921 musical *Shuffle Along*, written by African Americans Aubry Lyles and Flournoy Miller with songs by Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle. The first all-black musical, *Shuffle Along*, had an immediate and long-lasting

impact on the Harlem Renaissance; its imitators helped to promote the "Talented Tenth"⁸ notion of the arts as a new approach to race relations. The era's most famous black star, Josephine Baker, was in the play along with the celebrated Florence Mills. Tellingly, songwriter Eubie Blake composed the musical's central number, "Love Will Find a Way," with some trepidation, because he feared white audiences would not accept a romantic lyric sung by black actors. Yet he was determined to break out of the buffoon straitjacket of minstrel shows and to portray African Americans as capable of operating within the full range of dominant culture art forms.

Many key figures of the Harlem Renaissance were involved in the production and promotion of drama. For example, Langston Hughes was among *Shuffle Along's* many admirers and said he came to Harlem in large part to see the production. He became seriously involved with drama during the 1930s; his record-breaking *Mulatto* was performed on Broadway in 1935, enjoying the longest run of any African American-authored serious play. Demonstrating the importance he attached to the stage, Hughes established several people's theaters: the Suitcase Theatre in Harlem, the Negro Theatre of Los Angeles, and the Skyloft Players in Chicago. In 1926 Du Bois originated the Krigwa Little Theatre movement in response to the lack of serious drama in New York about blacks, with its four principles of "About us, By us, For us, and Near us." Montgomery Gregory, a drama professor at Howard University, established the first National Negro Theatre in the United States when he organized the Department of Dramatic Arts at Howard University in 1921, which brought national attention to the Howard Players. Du Bois advocated "race" or "propaganda plays" on the order of Grimké's *Rachel*, while Gregory and Locke promoted "folk plays" such as Richardson's *The Chip Woman's Fortune* or Georgia Douglas Johnson's prize-winning *Plumes* (1927).

We have tried to indicate the important role of drama in creating the Renaissance by including dramatic pieces that are typically included only in specialized drama collections. The work of important dramatists Willis Richardson, Eulalie Spence, and May Miller are represented as well as the plays of writers who are better known for other genres, such as Hurston, Hughes, Johnson, and of course Grimké herself. The centrality of drama to African American artistic and social advancement during the Harlem Renaissance can best be appreciated, we feel, by placing dramatic texts alongside the more familiar works of poetry and prose.

Music and Visual Art: Neglected Genres

Two other neglected genres we include in this collection are music and visual art, although music is gaining ground with the inclusion of lyrics in *The Norton Anthology*,

8. The phrase "Talented Tenth" first appeared in W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Negro Problem* (1903). This concept espoused by Du Bois emphasized the importance of higher education, particularly in the liberal arts, for the most able ten percent of African Americans. Du Bois feared the overemphasis on industrial training advocated by Booker T. Washington and exemplified by the Tuskegee Institute would permanently confine African Americans to second-class citizenship. A percentage of the population would have to be educated to uplift the race.

Call and Response, and other recent anthologies. Some argue that music was at the heart of the Renaissance, particularly blues and jazz. Certainly it functioned as social glue to the movement's movers and shakers in cabarets and speakeasies while providing inspiration for the most innovative poets of the era. The blues of the Harlem Renaissance grew out of the spirituals and work songs of the South, borrowing their harmonic and structural devices and vocal techniques. Unlike these earlier forms, however, blues were sung by a single person and played on one or more instruments, rather than emerging from a chorus. The blues were also secular. There was no promise of heaven—only complaints about earthly troubles with an occasional promise of a good time or fine loving. During the Great Migration of African Americans from the South to cities of the North from 1910 to 1930, the blues evolved from country blues to classic city blues. By 1920 the recording industry in Tin Pan Alley in New York City made blues the latest craze, replacing ragtime. For example, Mamie Smith's "Crazy Blues" sold 75,000 copies in one month in 1920. Most of the city blues were sung by women, with Mamie Smith, Ma Rainey, Gladys Bentley, and Bessie Smith being the most well known.

Jazz was another music idiom that had a tremendous effect on both blacks and whites during the Renaissance. Jazz was a blending of the rhythm and melodies of Africa with the harmonic forms of Europe. Joel A. Rogers describes jazz as African Americans' "explosive attempt to cast off the blues and be happy, carefree happy, even in the midst of sordidness and sorrow" (see "Jazz at Home" in the essay section). Rogers describes jazz as "atavistically African. . . . In its barbaric rhythm and exuberance there is something of the bamboula, a wild, abandoned dance of the West African and the Haytian Negro." African American jazz differed from African music in that it was faster and more complex: "With its cowbells, auto horns, calliopes, rattles, dinner gongs, kitchen utensils, cymbals, screams, crashes, clankings and monotonous rhythm it bears all the marks of a nerve-strung, strident, mechanized civilization." Jazz and blues, as well as their predecessor, ragtime, came to be considered quintessentially American music, and the genesis of all three was African American. We have sought to indicate the influence of this music on writers of the Harlem Renaissance by including sample lyrics from such popular performers as W. C. Handy, Jelly Roll Morton, Bessie Smith, and Ma Rainey, as well as poems reflecting its rhythms.

The central role of visual art in writings of the Harlem Renaissance is another consideration of this multigenre anthology. Its importance is revealed by the large number of photographs of African art and illustrations inspired by it dispersed throughout the pages of periodicals and anthologies of the period; several of the latter we include here. One of the reigning influences of art was what African intellectual Léopold Senghor termed "Negritude," the "soulful and artistic qualities of native peoples."⁹ This was a concept that described the impact of African sculpture on abstract impressionist European artists, such as Picasso and Matisse, in a movement that came to be known as "primitivism." In his 1925 essay "The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts" (see the essay section), Alain

9. Quoted in Huggins, *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance*, 7.

not just an African American concept, in other words, but a worldwide expression of black self-assertion. This grew out of the atrocities of World War I, which undermined Western society's claim to a higher standard of civilization and encouraged people of African descent to reject a white supremacist ideology. We have included diasporic writers such as the Jamaican-born Claude McKay, Eric Walrond, of Barbadian and Guyanese parentage, and Sierra Leone resident Gladys May Casely Hayford (a.k.a. Aquah Lualaba) to emphasize this global aspect. We have also included the back-to-Africa writing of Jamaicans Marcus Garvey and W. A. Domingo, as well as Jessie Fauset's reflections on the Second Pan-African Congress of 1921 organized by W.E.B. Du Bois.

Despite the global nature of the New Negro movement and the variety of locations inhabited by its writers, particularly the women, we are in accord with other anthologies that have identified Harlem as its ideological center. The Great Migration between 1910 and 1930 entailed massive population shifts as southern blacks migrated North in hopes of better social and economic opportunities—most of them came to Harlem, where housing was relatively good. By 1930 one million African Americans were believed to have left the South, but only 333,000 were shown to have migrated to places other than Harlem, and by the end of the 1920s it was the most densely populated black area in the world. Thus, according to Patricia Liggins Hill, "Harlem became both center and symbol of black culture and thought."¹⁰

The Arts as Civil Rights

Because of the large and growing black population and the city's history of African American excellence in the arts, New York was a natural center for the Harlem Renaissance. New York was America's cultural capital, and it was the center of publishing, drama, music, and painting. It was also the headquarters of the three biggest civil rights organizations: the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) founded by W.E.B. Du Bois (publisher of *The Crisis*) in 1909; the NUL (National Urban League) founded by Charles S. Johnson (publisher of *Opportunity*) in 1910; and the UNIA (Universal Negro Improvement Association) founded by Marcus Garvey (publisher of *Negro World*) in 1914.

These periodicals played a significant role in the development of the Harlem Renaissance because the organizations to which they were attached viewed support of the arts as the primary means to access civil rights. As David Levering Lewis notes: "The Harlem Renaissance was a somewhat forced phenomenon, a cultural nationalism of the parlor, institutionally encouraged and directed by leaders of the national Civil Rights Establishment for the paramount purpose of improving race relations."¹¹ Leaders of the movement believed that whites would be persuaded to accept the humanity of African Americans if blacks could achieve artistic equality and that such equality would lead to

10. Hill et al., *Call and Response*, 773.

11. Lewis, *Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader*, xv.

the achievement of civil rights. The NAACP and the NUL sought to encourage interracial collaboration between liberal whites and Du Bois's "Talented Tenth," the best and brightest of African American artists and intellectuals. They worked actively to connect black writers with white publishers.

The relative paucity of African American literature produced before the launching of the Harlem Renaissance pointed to the lack of a cultural agenda for African Americans, in the view of civil rights leaders. According to David Levering Lewis, between 1908 and 1923 only a handful of significant literary works by black writers appeared: Sutton Griggs's *Pointing the Way* (1908), W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1911), James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912), Du Bois's *Darkwater* (1920), McKay's *Harlem Shadows* (1922), and Jean Toomer's *Cane* (1923). We would add to that list Angelina Weld Grimké's *Rachel* (1916), Willis Richardson's *The Chip Woman's Fortune* (1923), Georgia Douglas Johnson's two books of poetry published in 1918 and 1922, and Joseph Cotter, Jr.'s, poetry collection, *The Band of Gideon* (1918). Leaders like Du Bois and Locke felt there was an opportunity to convince white America that African American writing was worthy of publication and that the race had the intellectual fortitude necessary to create such work. According to Du Bois, "until the art of black folk compels recognition they will not be regarded as human."¹² James Weldon Johnson also argued that the arts were a useful means for asserting the cultural dignity of African Americans: "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."¹³ These were the core beliefs that fueled the Harlem Renaissance.

The NAACP membership rolls included a number of scholarly writers who contributed frequently to *The Crisis*. Foremost among these were James Weldon Johnson, whose landmark anthology, *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922), brought many new writers to the fore; editor Du Bois; field organizer and novelist Walter White; and Jessie Redmon Fauset. In 1919 Du Bois appointed Fauset as literary editor because he wanted to nurture the best African American talent in the nation. Fauset was not only an excellent editor, but a talented writer in her own right, whose exceptional literary career flourished during the 1920s. Fauset has been frequently described as midwife to the Harlem Renaissance because she discovered and encouraged so many new writers: Gwendolyn Bennett, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Georgia Douglas Johnson, Claude McKay, and Jean Toomer. Fauset mined this talent in such a way as to make *The Crisis* the premier African American magazine of the era. As early as 1919, its circulation had reached 104,000, whereas the circulation of *Opportunity*, the closest competitor, reached only 11,000 by 1928.

12. Quoted in Lewis, *Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader*, xvi.

13. James Weldon Johnson, ed., *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1922), vii.

Although *Opportunity* did not enjoy the same level of success as *The Crisis*, its editor, Charles S. Johnson, was another key figure of the Harlem Renaissance. According to Langston Hughes, Johnson "did more to encourage and develop Negro writers during the 1920s than anyone else."¹⁴ This point is affirmed by Zora Neale Hurston, who believed that the Renaissance was Johnson's doing, but "his hush-mouth nature has caused it to be attributed to many others."¹⁵ Johnson was particularly frustrated by the lack of respect and visibility accorded to black writers who did not write in dialect, and he used *Opportunity* to break down the stereotypes that confined African American writers to that form. According to Robert Hemenway, Johnson "single-handedly made *Opportunity* an expression of 'New Negro' thought, and 'New Negroes' made it clear that they would not accept a subordinate role in American society."¹⁶ However, Johnson needed the proper means of getting this point across; it was not sufficient merely to bring these great artists to a black audience.

This was the motivation behind Johnson's organization of the March 21, 1924, Civic Club dinner to celebrate Jessie Fauset's new novel, although it was Regina Anderson of the 134th Street Branch of the New York Public Library in Harlem and Georgia Douglas Johnson who had urged him to honor her. He wanted to bring white literary giants shoulder to shoulder with black writers. The dinner proved to be a tremendous success, with black artists securing financial support or the promise of future support. Among the carefully selected white editors, writers, and publishers whom Johnson invited was Paul Kellogg, editor of *Survey Graphic*. Kellogg was so impressed with what he saw that he decided to commission a special issue devoted to Harlem and selected as editor Alain Locke, whom Johnson hailed as "dean" of the New Negro movement. This special issue was later revised and expanded into Locke's landmark anthology, *The New Negro* (1925).

Shortly after this momentous dinner, *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* instituted award ceremonies to recognize black artists, which also helped solidify collaboration between them and the white publishing industry. In 1924 *The Crisis* announced the Amy Spingarn Prizes in Literature and Art. Amy Spingarn, wife of NAACP board member Joel Elias Spingarn, funded the program. She also served as a judge along with a racially integrated group of popular writers: Edward Bok, Witter Bynner, Charles Waddell Chesnutt, Sinclair Lewis, Robert Morss Lovett, Van Wyck Brooks, Carl Van Doren, Zona Gale, James Weldon Johnson, and Eugene O'Neill. The first *Opportunity* prizes were dispersed in May 1925 at an elaborate ceremony with approximately three hundred participants. The prizes were funded by the wife of National Urban League board chairman and Fisk University trustee, L. Hollingsworth Wood. A week after the ceremony *The New York Herald Tribune* predicted that the country was "on the edge, if not already in the midst of, what might

14. Quoted in Arna Bontemps, ed., *The Harlem Renaissance Remembered* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1972), 215.

15. Quoted in Bontemps, *Harlem Renaissance Remembered*, 215.

16. Robert E. Hemenway, *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography* (Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 9.

not improperly be called a Negro renaissance."¹⁷ A second *Opportunity* awards banquet was followed by donations for future prizes and the establishment of other prizes related to African American arts and letters.

It is this interracial cooperation that sparked the influential anthology *The New Negro* in 1925 which grew out of the special issue of *Survey Graphic*, "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro." Reaching a record number of 42,000 readers, the issue's sales persuaded Albert and Charles Boni to publish a revised and expanded collection of its poetry and prose, along with winners of the first *Opportunity* contest. In his foreword to the anthology, Locke set the terms that have come to be identified with the Harlem Renaissance: "There is a renewed race-spirit that consciously and proudly sets itself apart. Justifiably then, we speak of the offerings of this book embodying these ripening forces as culled from the first fruits of the Negro Renaissance." In the collection's first essay, his own "The New Negro," he sought to define this spirit: "[T]he younger generation is vibrant with a new psychology; the new spirit is awake in the masses."

Despite its limitations, *The New Negro* continues to hold a place of significance because it both alerted the world to the emergence of an international cultural revolution and attempted to define it. Although the text was held in high regard by its original audience, it is important to note the controversy surrounding it, strains of which run through the material here. Hailed as a definitive anthology, it was at the same time immediately critiqued by some contributors and even repudiated by others. These different responses appear to be rooted in Locke's attempts to smooth over important differences between the writers brought together in the collection, who differed in terms of ideology and aesthetics. For example, Jean Toomer would later write that Locke "tricked and misused" him because he did not consider himself a black writer despite his African American ancestry,¹⁸ while Bruce Nugent was at least as concerned with his sexual identity as with his racial one. Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen were at opposite ends of the aesthetic spectrum, with Hughes preferring jazz- and blues-inspired poems over Cullen's lyrical verse. In fact, Cullen would later be the object of a veiled attack in Hughes's "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1926) in which Hughes disparaged him for wishing to be known as a poet who "happened to be Negro," not as a "Negro poet" (see the essay section).

The New Negro did not address these important differences regarding aesthetics, politics, sexuality, and other pertinent issues dividing the younger and older generations of the movement. Indeed, Locke sought to gloss over these tensions. He omitted some of socialist Claude McKay's most militant poems, such as "If We Must Die" (see the creative writing section) and "Mulatto," and toned down a McKay poem he did include, "The White House," by changing the title to "White Houses," something McKay bitterly

17. Quoted in Lewis, *Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader*, xxviii. According to Lewis, this statement gave the movement its name.

18. Quoted in Arnold Rampersad, introduction to *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Alain Locke (New York: Atheneum, 1992), xxii.

denounced. Despite A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen's important contribution to the movement through their editing of *The Messenger*, they were not included. Locke also ignored Garveyism, which has been characterized as the most important mass movement in black America of the 1920s. Garvey's *Negro World*, with a circulation of 200,000 at its peak, made literature readily available to the black masses. However, Locke's exclusion of Garveyism was probably in deference to Du Bois, whose integrationist philosophy clashed with Garvey's more radical separatism. Locke's rather conservative and elitist view of culture seems to stem from what Lewis describes as his Eurocentric definition of culture, a limitation that has since come to be blamed for many of the Renaissance's failures.¹⁹

The ideological and artistic differences that Locke attempted to minimize in his anthology could not be contained. This is particularly true of the very public ongoing debate between Locke and Du Bois regarding the role of literature and whether black writing should be art or propaganda, a debate worth summarizing here. Locke had spent his career developing a particular theory of African American art, which he articulated and defended through the duration of the Harlem Renaissance. As literary critic for *Opportunity*, he urged black writers to make their work "universally" relevant. In an early essay, "The Colonial Literature of France" (1923), he argued that the black artist should embrace "art for its own sake, combined with that stark cult of veracity—the truth whether it hurts or not."²⁰ Thus, in editing *The New Negro*, he sought to show that the new Renaissance writers should create "art for art's sake," which distinguished them from the previous wave of African American writers, like Grimké and Fauset, who addressed social issues in their creative work, explicitly using it as a propaganda tool.

This distinction did not sit well with many members of the civil rights establishment, particularly Du Bois, who was not only a writer, but a sociologist and political leader. Although he and Locke both looked at literature as a way to advance the race, they differed sharply over what constituted propaganda: "Mr. Locke has newly been seized with the idea that Beauty rather than propaganda should be the object of Negro literature and art. His book proves the falseness of this thesis. . . . If Mr. Locke's thesis is insisted upon too much, it is going to turn the Negro Renaissance into decadence. It is the fight for Life and Liberty that is giving birth to Negro literature and art today and when turning from the fight or ignoring it, the young Negro tries to do pretty things or things that catch the passing fancy of the really unimportant critics and publishers about him, he will find that he has killed the soul of Beauty in art."²¹ Locke responded by arguing that art as propaganda perpetuated notions of black inferiority.²²

Although Du Bois and Locke were the primary figures in this debate, they were outdone by a group of young writers who took Locke's position much further than he had

19. See Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue*.

20. Quoted in Hill et al., *Call and Response*, 788.

21. Quoted in Hill et al., *Call and Response*, 789.

22. See Hill et al., *Call and Response*, 790.

intended. Langston Hughes spoke for them in his 1926 essay, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (see the essay section), which appeared in *The Nation*: "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. The tom-tom cries and the tom-tom laughs. If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves."

Following this manifesto of artistic freedom, Hughes and Richard Bruce Nugent envisioned a new magazine, which they named *Fire!!* They, along with Zora Neale Hurston, Gwendolyn Bennett, Aaron Douglas, and John Davis, selected the multitalented writer Wallace Thurman as editor. The editorial board members were determined to express their own sensibilities and to break free of the notion of art as politics to express instead the multiple dimensions of being African American. *Fire!!* promised "to burn up a lot of old, dead conventional Negro-white ideas of the past." The foreword to the first and only issue of November 1926 proclaimed to weave "vivid, hot designs upon an ebon bordered loom and . . . satisfy pagan thirst for beauty unadorned." In other words, this would be a daring and controversial journal. In fact, in order to underline its radical nature, Thurman decided that they needed to include at least one piece on homosexuality and another on prostitution. He and Nugent flipped a coin to determine who would write which story. Nugent's "Smoke, Lilies, and Jade!" about homoerotic attraction, and Thurman's "Cordelia the Crude," about a young prostitute, were the result (see the creative writing section).

Both pieces outraged middle-class African American sensibilities. Rean Graves of the *Baltimore Afro-American* was incensed by the magazine and wrote in his review, "I have just tossed the first issue of *Fire!!* into the fire." Benjamin Brawley went so far as to say that if the U.S. Post Office found out about Thurman's "Cordelia the Crude," the magazine might be barred from the mail.²³ Locke, although more balanced in his review, disapproved of the "effete echoes of contemporary decadence" he found throughout the issue.²⁴ For a time the writers associated with the project were ostracized by the black community. However, the real source of the magazine's demise was financial. The magazine was expensive to buy (one dollar), expensive to produce (one thousand dollars), lacked institutional support, and was poorly distributed. Ironically, hundreds of unsold copies burned in an actual apartment fire.

In many ways *Fire!!* was the antithesis of *The New Negro*, and it is telling that Alain Locke was not among its nine editors. Less than a year after appearing in his anthology, the younger writers had moved on without Locke. Symbolizing their upstart independence from the NAACP and NUL was Zora Neale Hurston's impudent dubbing of the influ-

23. Quoted in Trudier Harris and Thadious M. Davis, eds., *Afro-American Writers from the Harlem Renaissance to 1940*, vol. 51 of *Dictionary of Literary Biography* (Detroit: Gale, 1987), 263.

24. Quoted in Harris and Davis, *Afro-American Writers*, 220.

ential whites that supported their contests and attended their parties as “Negrotarians,” and her referral to prominent Harlem writers as the “Niggerati.” In hopes of ironing out the differences between the younger and older generations, in late 1926 Du Bois organized a symposium entitled, “The Criteria of Negro Art” (see essay of the same name in the essay section). He feared that politics were disappearing from the Renaissance and that whites would point to the success of a handful of writers as evidence that there was no color line. However, the fissure remained, and the rebelling younger artists gained momentum, particularly with the publication of Claude McKay’s *Home to Harlem* in 1928. This first bestseller of the Renaissance embodied the values of the younger generation.

Presenting and Assessing the Harlem Renaissance

The tensions surrounding issues of art and politics during the Harlem Renaissance point to continuing fault lines in the presentation of the Harlem Renaissance: How should it be assessed? What lessons can we draw from its meteoric heights and rapid descent? Did African American writers escape the ghetto of plantation dialect and the colonization of Eurocentric art forms only to fall into another trap of essentialized Western fantasies about primitive sensual Africa? Were black women betrayed by their male mentors and colleagues? Which texts should we privilege for study—those considered artistically superior, those advancing positive images of black people, or those representing concerns of the time? How do we sort out the thorny tangle of aesthetics and voice when it comes to women’s texts and those by gay, lesbian, or bisexual writers? Should we dispense with the categories of “major” and “minor” writers? If not, how do we judge the accomplishments of black women in an era when so many opportunities were unavailable because of the double disadvantages they faced?

These are some of the questions we hope an anthology of this sort can raise. In constructing it, we began with Alain Locke’s touchstone text *The New Negro* as an important reflection of the ideology of the movement. However, we recognized the limitations of relying solely on Locke’s interpretation, particularly since he included only one essay by a woman, Elise Johnson McDougald’s “The Task of Negro Womanhood” (see the essay section). Although critics have commented on the representativeness of Locke’s contributors—whites, blacks, men, women, older and younger artists and intellectuals were included—the volume is bound by his philosophy of racial cooperation and the celebration of art for art’s sake as well as marred by a degree of sexism, elitism, and political conservatism. Although women were included in the volume, they are outnumbered almost three to one, for instance, and the male writers had far more pieces included than the women, a gender imbalance that was repeated in succeeding anthologies. Locke’s conservatism is reflected in his appeal to a white audience, his hopes that whites would gain a new understanding of black humanity through the display of the race’s intelligence and artistic talents. He hoped to generate social change, but he did not want to ruffle too many feathers and avoided including radical social protest or material with a socialistic bent. Locke’s elitism is evident in his favoring of the spirituals over the blues and his distancing

himself from the largely working-class Marcus Garvey movement.²⁵ Locke's "New Negro," in other words, was clearly a proper middle-class African American, most often male.

Thus, to round out our picture of the movement, we have turned to the periodical literature of the period. We relied heavily on the *The Crisis* and *Opportunity*, as these journals and their contests honed much of the talent of the Harlem Renaissance, and their editors, W.E.B. Du Bois and Charles S. Johnson, were initially quite welcoming to women. Even in the later part of the 1920s, after Jessie Fauset had left *The Crisis* in 1926 and Gwendolyn Bennett had departed *Opportunity* in 1928, these two journals continued to publish large numbers of poems and stories by women. We have also looked to such journals as A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen's *The Messenger*, Marcus Garvey's *Negro World*, Max Eastman's *The Liberator*, Dorothy West's *Challenge*, and of course the single issue of Wallace Thurman's *Fire!!* as important venues for African American writers. Along with central anthologies of the period, such as James Weldon Johnson's *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922), Countee Cullen's *Caroling Dusk* (1927), and Charles S. Johnson's *Ebony and Topaz* (1927), we have utilized a variety of sources to provide a sense of what was published during the 1916–1937 period covered by our anthology. Cullen's volume was especially significant because it included roughly equal numbers of poems by women and men.

Despite the contested nature of the movement, there are writers who are repeatedly anthologized in collections such as ours and who constitute a nucleus of the Harlem Renaissance: Alain Locke, W.E.B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, and Nella Larsen are clearly canonical writers of the period. There are also signature literary pieces that are wedded to the era and are thus also included here: McKay's "If We Must Die," Hughes's "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," Cullen's "Heritage," Hurston's story "Sweat," and sections of Toomer's *Cane* among them. Thus, despite disagreements regarding aspects of the Harlem Renaissance, there is a nucleus of agreed upon texts and writers.

It is time, however, to consider the next group of core texts and writers. Perhaps Bruce Nugent's "Sahdji," the first African American-authored story with a homoerotic subtext, or his "Smoke, Lilies, and Jade" the first openly gay prose text penned by an African American and an astonishing example of modernist literature, should be elevated to the Harlem Renaissance canon. The poetry of Angelina Weld Grimké furnishes other possible

25. Marcus Mosiah Garvey (1887–1940), a native of St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica, in the British West Indies, founded the first important Pan-Africanist nationalist movement, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). He established UNIA in Jamaica in 1914, moving the headquarters to Harlem in 1916. The movement flourished after he began publication of the newspaper *Negro World*. He used the newspaper to spread his message of racial pride, economic self-sufficiency, and black nationalism. He founded the Black Star Line, a steamship company, to allow blacks to move to Liberia. Garvey is generally associated with the phrase "Back to Africa"; however, his company did not actually transport anyone back to Africa. In 1923, in a thinly veiled move by the U.S. government to nullify his impact, he was indicted for mail fraud in connection with a mail campaign to sell stock in his fledgling Black Star Line. Garvey served two years of his five-year sentence before President Calvin Coolidge commuted his sentence and had him deported. Garvey moved his headquarters to London but was never able to revive the movement.

texts for inclusion, particularly the lesbian sensibility and subtle race pride evident in poems like "El Beso" or "Dusk." The cerebral verse of Anne Spencer is another possibility, with its complex nature analogues to gender and race issues. Jessie Fauset's *Plum Bun* (1928) (although not included here), when viewed against the context of her uphill battle to be editor, mentor, teacher, and writer with few supports, shimmers with unexpected force, and the impressive prose of her many essays is only now being reviewed. Georgia Douglas Johnson's short but luminously spare and haunting play *Plumes* is yet another overlooked text of lasting value.

By bringing these and other frequently omitted texts into dialogue with the more familiar nucleus of Harlem Renaissance writings, we hope to encourage not only a more gender-balanced view of this remarkable literary awakening, but to emphasize its continual unfolding. Indeed, excavation of lost literature from the period is still taking place. We have included, for instance, unreprinted stories by Dorothy West ("The Black Dress"), Gwendolyn Bennett ("Tokens"), and Anita Scott Coleman ("Two Old Women A-Shopping Go!"), as well as unreprinted poems by Georgia Douglas Johnson, Jessie Fauset, John F. Matheus, Joseph S. Cotter, Jr., Wallace Thurman, and Richard Bruce Nugent. Overshadowed by texts that have made it into the canon, those often considered minor or left to languish in the period's journals can come to life when viewed within the contexts of sexism, homophobia, and racism. Whether major or minor, female- or male-authored, texts of the Harlem Renaissance enrich our understanding of African American history and culture. These texts served as inspiring, pathbreaking trails—away from silence, against all odds, toward futures their creators only dimly perceived.