

# Getting the Full Picture: Teaching the Literature and the Arts of the Harlem Renaissance

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THE LITERATURE OF THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE HAS ENJOYED A GOOD deal of attention in recent years. The MLA bibliography lists a multitude of new studies on writers who worked during the Renaissance, including dissertations, journal articles, and scholarly books. Many of these are single-author studies, and many recover the work of relatively unknown writers or neglected texts by more familiar writers. Primary texts—some long out of print—can be found in recent reprints and in collections of fiction, poetry, and drama, and African American literature anthologies routinely devote a good deal of attention to the period. The mammoth *Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, for example, includes more than four hundred pages of poetry, fiction, essays, and memoirs in its section of texts from 1919 to 1940. This attention to the literature produced during the Harlem Renaissance corresponds with the way many of us teach the movement in our English Department courses: primarily as a literary phenomenon.

But a few recent works point in another direction: they place the literary output of the movement in the context of other kinds of creative work done in the early decades of the twentieth century. For example, *Call and Response: The Riverside Anthology of the African American Literary Tradition* sets written texts alongside samples of African American oral and musical traditions. The section of the anthology on the Harlem Renaissance opens with discussions of the blues, gospel, jazz, toasts, sermons, and folktales; it also includes transcriptions of lyrics by the most well known performers of the period. Next are two essays calling for political and social change, followed by two essays debating the purpose and possibilities of representations of

African Americans in literature and other forms of art. Only then does the anthology open its selection of poems and fiction written in the 1920s and 1930s. *Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance* puts the literary work of the Harlem Renaissance into an even broader context. This book is a catalog of material from the movement that was exhibited in England and the United States in 1997 and 1998. The exhibit included movies, music, paintings, photographs, graphic designs, and sculpture as well as books published in the 1920s, and the catalog includes a number of essays that discuss each of these kinds of texts. This breadth of focus, as Richard Powell argues in his contribution, allows us to move beyond the tendency to think of the Harlem Renaissance as an overwhelmingly literary and musical movement and to appreciate it as a movement that involved many cultural forms (16–17).

The purposes of this essay are, first, to explore the importance of and the advantages of reflecting such an understanding of the Harlem Renaissance when we teach texts from the movement and, second, to discuss a number of texts that illuminate the connections among the arts during the movement. Even when we teach courses focusing primarily on the literature of the Harlem Renaissance, setting this literature in the context of other kinds of texts produced then—such as films, visual art, and music—enriches our presentation of the movement. There are a multitude of texts that allow us to demonstrate its broad cultural dimensions, including novels, volumes of poetry, illustrated books, magazine issues, and anthologies. Including such texts in our courses opens up a range of possibilities for students' work, and, although including a range of media can be a challenge to teachers with primarily literary backgrounds, there are a number of interdisciplinary studies of the Harlem Renaissance that are useful resources for presenting this material.

#### LITERATURE AND THE ARTS IN THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

The Harlem Renaissance was a movement in which participants forged important connections among the arts and explored parallels between different forms of representation in different media. But that aspect of the movement is often hidden when we focus exclusively on the literature produced during the movement. That said, certainly literature was of crucial importance to participants, and it captured a great deal of their atten-

tion. The pages of magazines like *Crisis* and *Opportunity* were full of reviews of literature by and about African Americans, and critics carried on extensive discussions of the significance of the images in these texts. Many participants of the Harlem Renaissance believed that literature contributed to attitudes toward African Americans, and they heralded the work of African American writers who were creating new images of African Americans that might replace outmoded, stereotyped caricatures of African Americans. Montgomery Gregory, for example, argued that Jean Toomer's *Cane* provided portraits of African Americans in the South that served as counterpoints to the "alien exploitation" and "caricatures of the race" that had been created by white artists (374). He made a similar point in his praise of Jessie Fauset's treatment of the "educated strata of Negro urban life" in *There Is Confusion*, emphasizing that the book offered readers a chance to look in on the life of a class of African Americans that they did not know existed and that it "[won] a new understanding for the Negro and a wider respect and recognition for him throughout the world of culture" (181). Of course, there were critics who resisted this emphasis on the cultural work literature could do, arguing that it put too much pressure on writers. These critics felt that literature should bear no such weight and that writers should be free to create without the burden of social responsibility. Langston Hughes's often-quoted proclamation in "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" that the artist should be free to create whatever he or she desired demonstrates this point of view. But even Hughes had clear ideas about what kind of work artists should create: Hughes encouraged work by black writers in which they embraced their blackness and resisted what he called the "urge within the race toward whiteness" (692). He opened his essay, after all, with an attack on an unnamed poet who had said that he wanted to be known simply as a poet, and not as a "Negro poet" (692). Essays, reviews, and proclamations such as these constituted an ongoing debate about literature produced during the Harlem Renaissance, and they can be used to outline the ideological context in which literary texts were produced and to establish questions about the social and political implications of literary representation.

In general, these debates about the purposes and production of African American literature are familiar to scholars and teachers of the Harlem Renaissance. But it is less widely recognized that these discussions focused not just on the importance of litera-

ture but also on the importance of other kinds of creative work. After all, even as Hughes and Gregory were discussing writers and literature, they also referred to artists and art. Their essays are typical of those written by the many participants in the Harlem Renaissance who saw the attempt to represent African Americans' experiences and to explore and define African American identity as a collaborative and a cumulative one. They believed that it was not only African American writers who contributed to that effort, but also African American actors, singers, musicians, politicians, and sports figures. Commentators emphasized the importance of work being done in folk arts, painting, sculpture, photography, music, film, and on the stage, as well as in literature. In their eyes, the Harlem Renaissance was not simply a literary movement; instead, they saw it as a broad cultural movement that involved all of the arts and popular culture. One of the earliest indications about the scope of the movement to come was W. E. B. Du Bois's "The Negro in Literature and Art," which he published in 1913. Du Bois opened with an argument about the importance of the spirituals, turned to a discussion of literature, and closed by noting the work of African American painters, actors, and composers. His discussion of literature is the most extended section of the essay, but the fact that Du Bois preceded and followed that consideration with discussions of other kinds of creative work manifests his understanding of the relations among these arts. By the years of the Harlem Renaissance, this interest in the many ways African Americans expressed and represented themselves was widespread. James Weldon Johnson, in a particularly clear example, discussed the cumulative impact of many different kinds of texts in "Race Prejudice and the Negro Artist," an essay that he published in 1928. His focus was on the "ameliorating effect" of African Americans' creative work on race relations (770), and he linked a variety of texts to that effort. Johnson opened his discussion by noting the growing appreciation of the spirituals and the corresponding increase in understanding of African Americans as contributors to "our common cultural fund" (770). He then moved on to consider the work of poets, actors, singers of spirituals and the blues, fiction writers, painters, and sculptors (771–73). These various artists, Johnson concluded, were doing much to smash the stereotype of African Americans as "intellectually, culturally, and morally empty" by demonstrating that the Negro "has long been a generous giver to America" (775–76). Like many other commentators, Johnson, in his assessment of the

importance of the work being done by African American artists, identified the literary output of the Harlem Renaissance as only one part of the movement.

The fact is that Du Bois and Johnson—like Hughes and so many others—were discussing the work of “artists,” and while they sometimes used the term to refer to visual artists, they often used it to refer to musicians, actors, and writers. Thus when Du Bois announced the symposium “The Negro in Art” in February 1926, he made it clear that he was interested in how African Americans “should be pictured by writers *and* portrayed by artists” (“A Questionnaire” 165, emphasis added). Many of the people who responded to Du Bois’s questions about the representation of African Americans in the arts focused on literature about African Americans, but they also mentioned other kinds of texts, from the musical review “Porgy” to the work of painters and sculptors to the singing of Paul Robeson to magazines like *Crisis* and *Opportunity*. The contributors to this symposium clearly saw work in different media carrying out similar functions. The parallels between the arts are also implied in the pages of *Crisis*, *Opportunity*, and other literary and social magazines of the period, where literary reviews were printed alongside essays about other arts and reviews of music or theater performances. Gregory’s review of *Cane*, for example, appeared in the December 1923 issue of *Opportunity*, which included an editorial on “Negro Life and Its Poets” and a number of poems by other writers, as well as a tribute to singer Roland Hayes and a transcription of an African folk story. Thus developments in literature were discussed alongside developments in other fields, rather than as unique phenomena.

The belief among participants in the Harlem Renaissance that different kinds of creative work served similar purposes also is clear in the literary work they produced, much of which draws attention to such connections. Writers demonstrated their interest in and awareness of the other arts both in the content of their work, when they focused on characters like Joanna Marshall, the dancer who is the main character of *There Is Confusion*, and in the presentation of their work, when they combined their texts with work by other kinds of artists in a number of collaborative volumes. These include many books of poetry and fiction that were illustrated, either simply with cover art, like Hughes’s *The Weary Blues*, or with more extensive illustration throughout, such as Johnson’s *God’s Trombones*; illustrated periodicals such as *Crisis*, *Opportunity*, and *Fire!!*; and magazine issues and an-

thologies that were meant to define the New Negro movement, most notably Alain Locke's *Survey Graphic's* issue on Harlem and his anthology, *The New Negro*. The most complex of these volumes include written texts and visual ones, transcriptions of songs, sermons, and folktales, and discussions of music, drama, and literature. They are particularly clear manifestations of the efforts of participants in the Harlem Renaissance to forge connections among literature and the other arts.

These creative works and collaborative volumes, along with the critical debates that tied together work in so many different media, clearly demonstrate the multidisciplinary dimensions of the Harlem Renaissance. They add to our understanding of the literature produced then and of the complexity of the movement. As teachers and as scholars, then, we do the period justice when we uncover and explore these connections among the arts in our attention to the period.

### TEACHING THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE AS A BROAD CULTURAL MOVEMENT

There are many kinds of texts that we can use to recover and explore the connections among the arts during the Harlem Renaissance, including anthologies; documentary films, audio recordings, books on art, and other secondary sources; and a range of texts produced during the period, including works of fiction and poetry that draw attention to other arts, illustrated texts, and collaborative volumes. These texts open up questions and issues for exploration in the classroom, establish broader contexts for the literary work produced during the period, and illuminate the importance of many kinds of creative work. They can be used in introductory level undergraduate courses, more focused undergraduate courses, or advanced graduate courses.

In courses that focus relatively briefly on the Harlem Renaissance, two anthologies are particularly helpful for exploring the relations among the arts during the period. For a unit on the Harlem Renaissance in a survey course on African American literature, *Call and Response* is the most useful anthology, because it includes so many kinds of texts. For courses which place the work of the Harlem Renaissance in other contexts, such as American literature or literature and the arts, an anthology of material from the Harlem Renaissance might be more appropriate. Nathan Huggins's *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance*

includes essays, fiction, and poetry, as well as a brief selection of visual arts. Both anthologies are worth supplementing with more examples of the visual arts and with recordings of music from the period, though.

For a course focusing entirely or even extensively on the Harlem Renaissance, there are many ways to draw attention to the range of media that were linked in the movement. I find it useful to begin by establishing the historical context of the period and by exploring the representation of African Americans in American popular culture. There are a number of studies of the Harlem Renaissance that offer engaging accounts of the events leading up to the movement, the relations among participants, and the work they produced. These begin with David Levering Lewis's groundbreaking 1981 study, *When Harlem Was In Vogue*, and include more recent work like Steven Watson's *The Harlem Renaissance: Hub of African American Culture, 1920–1930*. Both include many photographs of participants, thus allowing students to visually identify the artists and intellectuals whose work they will read. Lewis and Watson's accounts make the sense of community among them clear, and it is worth considering how the personal and professional relationships among participants influenced the nature of the movement. The fact that many of the participants in the Harlem Renaissance knew each other and often worked together must have facilitated the exchange of ideas among them and contributed to the understanding that they all—writers, visual artists, musicians, and other kinds of creative artists—were united by their desire to express themselves and to explore particular ideas, even if they were working in different media.

A number of video documentaries also are useful in establishing the connections among the arts in the Harlem Renaissance. William Greaves's *From These Roots* discusses the historical, political, and cultural development of the Harlem Renaissance, beginning with the experiences of the African American soldiers who participated in World War I and their treatment upon returning to the United States. It includes discussions and examples of many kinds of creative work done in the 1920s, such as James Van Der Zee's photography, the blues, popular dances, musicals on Broadway, and literature. The soundtrack includes recordings of both the music and the poetry of the period. With a running time of only twenty-nine minutes, *From These Roots* can be easily incorporated into classroom time. Two other documentaries are helpful for their discussion of images of African

Americans in popular culture. Marlon Riggs's *Ethnic Notions* provides a survey of such depictions, from D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* to cartoons to newspapers. The video also includes interviews with scholars of African American culture who comment on the effect of these images. Though many of the images are disturbing and painful, the documentary is extremely helpful in establishing the context of the emergence of the Harlem Renaissance, particularly in terms of participants' interest in creating new texts that might replace or at least counteract these stereotyped and demeaning representations. *Midnight Ramble* also offers a helpful introduction to the period; it focuses on the development of race movies, with Oscar Micheaux as the central figure. It includes clips from films by a number of African American directors of the period, which is helpful since many of these films are difficult to find or unavailable.

Participants' discussion of the literature, art, movies, and music of the Harlem Renaissance can be found in a number of collections of primary material. Sondra Kathryn Wilson has edited three relevant volumes, *The Opportunity Reader*, *The Crisis Reader*, and *The Messenger Reader*, each of which includes a selection of poetry, fiction, and essays from the magazines. More extensive selections of reviews and essays are included in *The Emergence of the Harlem Renaissance* and *The Politics and Aesthetics of "New Negro" Literature*, edited and published by Cary Wintz in 1996 as part of Garland's seven-volume series on the movement. These volumes, at \$95 to \$105 each, are too expensive to require students to buy, but they are useful as reference sources, since they include so much primary material from the Harlem Renaissance.

There also are many novels and books of poetry that draw attention to connections among the arts during the Harlem Renaissance. Toomer's *Cane* is a helpful book to begin with, both because it was published in 1923 and because its content, form, and reception introduce a number of parallels among the arts. *The Emergence of the Harlem Renaissance* and the Norton Critical Edition of *Cane* both include a number of the reviews of this collection of fiction, poetry, and drama that appeared shortly after its publication; these reviews introduce many of the debates about the purposes literature might serve in their praise for Toomer's work, and they show the tendency of critics to draw connections between literature and the other arts. Gregory's argument that *Cane* works as portraiture can be used to frame an exploration of the "portraits" Toomer offered in his writing



through close readings of some of the poems and short stories; it invites consideration of the effectiveness of his portraiture in the different forms of writing. Gorham B. Munson, on the other hand, emphasized the musical unity of *Cane* in 1925, an idea picked up by B. F. McKeever in 1970, when he likened *Cane* to the blues; excerpts from his essay are included in the Norton Critical Edition. Discussing the text with its portraits and its musicality in mind draws certain thematic issues and poetic techniques into focus, particularly Toomer's use of vivid visual imagery and his references to the music of the South, including the spirituals as well as the blues.

A number of texts are useful for further exploration of the similarities between *Cane* and other forms of art. Toomer's portraiture can be even more vividly compared to portraits in other media with the help of *Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance*: the center of the catalog includes reproductions of sculpture by Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller, Sargent Claude Johnson, and Richmond Barthé; paintings by Palmer Hayden, Winold Reiss, Edward Burra, Malvin Gray Johnson, and Aaron Douglas; and photography by Doris Ulman and Richard S. Roberts. *Harlem Renaissance: Art of Black America* includes a wide selection of photographs by James Van Der Zee, an analysis of his work by Deborah Willis Ryan, and reproductions and discussions of the work of a number of other visual artists. On the other hand, *Rhapsodies in Black: Music and Words of the Harlem Renaissance* offers recordings of vaudeville and blues music by some of the most important musicians of the period, and the CD audio companion to *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature* includes recordings of six spirituals and gospel songs.

A number of the books published in the years following *Cane's* publication further demonstrate writers' interest in the work of visual artists. Fauset's 1928 *Plum Bun*, for example, is most obviously concerned with questions of passing and with the treatment of black women, but its characters include Angela Murray, an art student; Rachel Powell, an art student who is denied a scholarship because she is black; and Anthony Cross, a portrait painter. Virginia Murray, Angela's sister, is a music teacher who becomes active in the artistic and intellectual circles in Harlem. Fauset used these characters to comment extensively on art, representation, and racial identity. Similarly, Wallace Thurman included a number of visual artists among the writers, singers, and actors who populate *Infants of the Spring*,

which he published in 1932 and which reflects his cynical and pessimistic attitude toward the Harlem Renaissance. Thurman's characters are failures, artists who are unable to create meaningful texts. While Thurman's novel offers a stark contrast to the optimism evident in so many other Harlem Renaissance texts, it fits well with their attention to the work of all sorts of artists.

The importance of musicians in the Harlem Renaissance also is clearly reflected in the literature of the movement. James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* is worth mentioning here, given its narrator's vocation as a musician. Of course, this novel was first published in 1912, but its republication at the height of the Harlem Renaissance in 1927 and its thematic connections to the work of the movement make it an appropriate text to include in a course on the Harlem Renaissance. Johnson's narrator's work as a ragtime performer and composer allowed Johnson to include lengthy discussions of ragtime, and the book includes a number of analyses of the music and its performers. Johnson also discussed the work of African Americans in other forms of creative expression, including the spirituals, the cakewalk, and sermons. Like Johnson's novel, two of the short stories in Hughes's collection, *The Ways of White Folk*, focus on main characters who are musicians, Oeola in "The Blues I'm Playing" and Roy in "Home."

Writers' awareness of the importance of music in the Harlem Renaissance also is demonstrated in the many texts that include scenes in musicals and cabarets. Perhaps the two most obvious—and most controversial—are Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* and Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem*. Both include passages of vivid descriptions of dance halls and their patrons, and both sparked intense criticism from reviewers, including Du Bois, who objected to the characterization of African Americans in both texts. Du Bois's review of *Nigger Heaven*, along with those by McKay, Johnson, and Hughes, are included in the 1971 edition of the book. In any case, the role of music in both novels is crucial: both include transcriptions of blues lyrics as well as commentary on the music, its environs, and its effects on its listeners. Van Vechten also commented on the spirituals, although in far less depth. Many of the films of the period also include scenes in clubs or at shows, such as *The Blood of Jesus* and *Scar of Shame*, and Robeson's singing is a key part of movies like *The Emperor Jones* and *Song of Freedom*.

The poetry of Hughes and Sterling Brown goes even further

than these texts toward demonstrating the relations among different kinds of creative expression: Hughes and Brown both focused numerous poems on blues musicians and incorporated the form of the blues into the structure of their poems. Hughes's "The Weary Blues" and Brown's "Ma Rainey" are probably the best-known examples, but the books they appeared in, *The Weary Blues* and *Southern Road*, respectively, are full of blues poems. The most obvious blues poems have titles like "St. Louis Blues," focus on topics common in the blues, and use the three-line, repeating structure of the blues. Recordings of the blues can be used to discuss the characteristics of the music and to lay the groundwork for discussions of the extent to which Hughes and Brown were able to capture the spirit and the techniques of the music in their poetry. *Rhapsodies in Black: Music and Words from the Harlem Renaissance* is a particularly helpful source for such recordings, since it includes both music and spoken-word selections.

A number of writers of the Harlem Renaissance also used their texts to draw attention to other kinds of performers. One example is Fauset's emphasis in *There Is Confusion* on the cultural work Joanna Marshall carries out as a dancer and an actress and the potential impact of Marshall's performances on perceptions of African Americans. Another example is Johnson's *God's Trombones*, in which Johnson transcribed sermons often delivered by African American preachers. The book as a whole and the individual poems demonstrate Johnson's knowledge of and respect for the preachers, which also are clear in *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, in the narrator's descriptions of the performances of Singing Johnson and the preacher John Brown. But in *God's Trombones*, Johnson also raised questions about the how written texts might preserve oral traditions in compelling ways—or fail to do so. Johnson opened the book with a preface in which he pondered his ability to capture these sermons in a meaningful, compelling fashion in poetry, and his discussion of the difficulties of reflecting the complexities of oral performance in writing and the poetic techniques he used to indicate the patterns of delivery opens up questions of craft and technique. He used punctuation, repetition, and diction to give his poems some of the characteristics of his preachers' art, but the poems still can only hint at these aspects of the preachers' delivery. Johnson, in fact, believed that the art of the preachers' work was largely lost in transcription, and he insisted on the need to perform the sermons. He often "intoned" these sermons at parties

and on radio broadcasts, thus demonstrating the kind of performance he wanted to preserve. Teachers today can bring such performances into the classroom thanks to an audiotape recording of the sermons being delivered by a number of the most prominent African American ministers in New York City in 1993. These sermons were recorded in front of live audiences, and the listeners' responses to the sermons demonstrate the call and response structure and the relation between preacher and audience that would have been so important to the delivery of the sermons.

Zora Neale Hurston's first three books demonstrate still more connections among literature and the other arts. In *Jonah's Gourd Vine* Hurston blended fiction and folklore, and many of the issues of the ability of writers to transcribe oral traditions raised in *God's Trombones* apply as well to Hurston's transcription of the sermons and prayers of her main character, the preacher John Buddy Pearson, as well as to her use of proverbs and her recordings of songs and stories. Furthermore, Hurston's use of dialect and her inclusion of a glossary of terms bring questions of language to the fore. Similar issues can be explored in *Mules and Men*, where Hurston wove the stories and rituals shared with her by African Americans in the rural South into a narrative about her work as the collector of this material. In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the folklore is perhaps secondary to the narrative of Janie's experiences, but the importance of storytelling and rituals is clear throughout the novel. The three books, then, offer various perspectives on the relations between fiction and folklore.

Importantly, a number of these books also include illustrations, and they thus demonstrate parallels and connections among the visual arts, literature, music, and folklore. The illustrations in *God's Trombones* are particularly important. Johnson's poems are accompanied by eight illustrations by Douglas. These illustrations complicate Johnson's versions of the sermons: in "The Crucifixion," for example, Douglas focuses his illustration on Simon, the black man who carried the cross for Jesus. Johnson mentions Simon only briefly in his poem. In this pair of written and visual texts, then, as well as in a number of the other pairs in the book, the illustrations more clearly than the written texts recenter these Biblical narratives around the roles of black participants. As I have argued more extensively elsewhere, visual and written texts complement one another; the total volume has a greater scope than either its written or

its visual components (see my "Art, Literature, and the Harlem Renaissance"). Although the illustrations were produced in black and white in *God's Trombones*, Douglas did full-color studies for them, a number of which are included in *Harlem Renaissance: Art of Black America*.

A number of other volumes of poetry and novels include illustrations. Brown's *Southern Road* includes a series of black and white woodcuts by E. Simms Campbell, and Countee Cullen's *Color, Copper Sun*, and *Black Christ* include drawings by Charles Cullen. A similar collaboration occurred between Hughes and Douglas in "Two Artists," a two-page spread that appeared in *Opportunity*, in which Douglas provided black and white drawings for each of five poems by Hughes. The poems are brief but clear examples of Hughes's use of the blues in both the form and content of his poems, and the illustrations demonstrate Douglas's ability to communicate the essence of the blues in simple visual images. Hughes's *The Weary Blues* was published with cover art by Miguel Covarrubias, who also contributed a few drawings to *Mules and Men*. Douglas did cover art and art for ads for a number of other books, including *Nigger Heaven*, the 1927 edition of *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, and *Home to Harlem*. Most of the contemporary reprints of these works omit the visual art, but the images are reproduced in secondary sources that discuss the art and literature of the Harlem Renaissance, including Cary Nelson's *Repression and Recovery*, Amy Kirschke's *Aaron Douglas, Harlem Renaissance: Art of Black America*, and *Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance*.

There also are a number of illustrated, collaborative volumes produced during the Harlem Renaissance that bring together literature, visual art, and discussions of many other kinds of creative work. The fact that they include reproductions or discussions of so many kinds of texts makes them particularly vivid demonstrations of the connections among the arts and the complementary roles of different kinds of texts. The first of such volumes was the *Survey Graphic* magazine's special issue on Harlem. Edited by Locke and published in March 1925, this issue combines social analysis with creative work; it includes expository essays, creative writing, discussions of music, and visual art. The *Survey Graphic* issue is relatively brief; the fact that it includes such a range of texts in such a concise format makes it a particularly condensed demonstration of the complementary nature of different kinds of texts. In the months follow-

ing its publication, Locke expanded it into *The New Negro*, the anthology that has become the most well-known defining work of the period. This volume includes, as did its predecessor, essays and sociological studies as well as creative work. Here, the creative work includes poetry, short fiction, and drama, and it is complemented by essays about and transcriptions of African American music, folklore, drama, and visual art. *The New Negro* also includes visual texts, black and white designs and illustrations by Winold Reiss and Aaron Douglas and portraits by Reiss. These portraits appeared in full color on special paper in the 1925 edition of *The New Negro*; clearly Locke saw the portraits as a crucial part of his definition of the movement. Unfortunately, most reprints of the volume drop these visual texts. The edition of the book published by Arno Press in 1968 is the only one that includes the portraits, but it reproduces them in black and white, so they have far less impact than did the originals. To show the portraits to students, a first edition is necessary—or, given the likelihood that one would not be available, Jeffrey Stewart's reproductions of Reiss's work in *To Color America* can be used. This book only includes a few of the portraits that were in *The New Negro*, but they demonstrate what the series was like.

*Fire!!* was the next defining volume of the Harlem Renaissance to appear. Published in 1926 by a group of the younger artists and writers to whom Locke had dedicated *The New Negro*, it was intended to be the first issue of a quarterly journal, but only one issue was published. That issue offers a very different portrait of the New Negro movement than Locke's anthology does, but like *The New Negro*, it includes a range of texts that represent African Americans. For example, Thurman's short story, "Cordelia," has a written portrait of a prostitute and is preceded by Richard Bruce Nugent's drawing of a nude woman. This pair of texts makes clear the editors' intent to shock their readers and draw sexuality to their attention, and it demonstrates the role of both visual and written texts in announcing the challenge of this younger generation to Locke's portrait. Other texts in the volume also offer portraits of African Americans who had not been seen in *The New Negro*. Hurston's short story "Sweat" and her play "Color Struck," a collection of poems, and Douglas's line drawings of a waitress, a preacher, and an artist use different kinds of written and visual texts to focus on the folk; this range of creative texts allows for a consideration of how different texts function to make the folk the center of

attention in this volume. The issue also contains a number of manifestoes: these constitute yet another type of written text involved in the Harlem Renaissance, this type a call to action.

These volumes demonstrate complex and dynamic definitions of African American identity, as I discuss in my *Word, Image, and the Harlem Renaissance*. Their significance here is as examples of texts in which visual and written texts were brought together during the Harlem Renaissance. A number of similar works reinforce this point. One example is Charles Johnson's *Ebony and Topaz*, published in 1927. It is a less well-known anthology than Locke's *The New Negro*, but one that includes a similar combination of stories, poems, folktales, songs, and essays. It also includes striking illustrations by Douglas, Charles Cullen, and a handful of other illustrators, as well as a number of facsimiles of title pages from books and pamphlets by African American writers. A number of periodicals also published special issues focusing on African Americans, including *The North Carolina Review* and *Palms*.

Teachers who wish to present the Harlem Renaissance as a broad cultural movement, then, have an abundance of texts to choose from. The fact that participants reflected connections and parallels among the arts in everything from novels to films to anthologies means that teachers can incorporate this aspect of the movement into their courses in many ways. Those who wish to keep their focus on the fiction and poetry of the movement can continue to do so but can simply use the content of these texts to draw attention to the other arts, while those who want to include a broader range of texts in their courses can do so through individual texts, illustrated books, and collaborative volumes, or through music, film, and visual art.

### RESOURCES FOR TEACHING THE ARTS OF THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

We may be teachers in English departments, scholars whose primary academic training has come from English departments, and critics who see the literary output of the Harlem Renaissance as particularly fascinating. But the many different kinds of written texts produced during the Harlem Renaissance invite us to broaden the concept of literature to include texts that might not be considered "literary," such as sociological essays, editorials, news stories, and autobiographical accounts. Furthermore,

the written texts that demonstrate connections to other arts invite us to explore the relationship between literature and music, the visual arts, cinema, and folklore, as do the illustrated and collaborative volumes produced during the movement. Focusing on the Harlem Renaissance as a broad cultural movement forces us to push our studies in new directions, to learn far more about art, film, music, and performance than we may already know. But the secondary texts I have mentioned in my discussion above are great helps for understanding and teaching the Harlem Renaissance as a broad cultural movement.

Another part of the challenge of this approach to the Harlem Renaissance is collecting the material for discussion. Again, I have already mentioned a number of the collections of primary work from the period, texts that reproduce the visual arts, and recordings of the music and sermons. A few additional words about currently available primary texts are necessary, though. First, the *Survey Graphic* issue is now available on the internet, prepared in 1995 and 1996 by Matthew G. Kirschenbaum and Catherine Tousignant at the University of Virginia's Electronic Text Center. The web page address is <http://etext.virginia.edu/harlem/index.html>. This site includes an introduction that discusses the significance of the issue, compares the issue to *The New Negro*, and offers information about this electronic edition. The site also includes a page of excerpts from reviews of the issue which appeared in the May 1925 issue of the *Survey Graphic*. The Harlem issue also is now available in print form in two sources. The most affordable is a 1981 reprint from the Black Classic Press in Baltimore, but it also is reproduced within Wintz's *The Emergence of the Harlem Renaissance*. Only one version of *The New Negro* is currently available: a relatively inexpensive edition from Simon and Schuster. But the full-color portraits from the original are not included in this edition. Even without them, this is a crucial volume, particularly because, as an anthology that collects work by so many different writers and artists, it includes so many different opinions about and representations of African Americans. *Fire!!* has recently been made accessible by a reprint available through The *Fire!!* Press in Elizabeth, New Jersey. The reprint includes a reflection on the origins and the production of the issue, written in 1982 by Nugent. It also includes a discussion of the issue by Thomas Wirth. *The Weary Blues* and *Southern Road* both have been out of print for some time. Many of the poems are included in volumes of collected works by Hughes and Brown. But to study these volumes



in their original form, finding copies of the individual volumes is essential. *God's Trombones*, in contrast, is available in an inexpensive paperback edition, as are the novels I mention above. Further publication information is included in my bibliography.

Teaching the Harlem Renaissance using a range of texts may be a bit of a challenge to literary scholars, but the rewards are extensive, in terms of furthering both our own understanding of the movement and our students'. Students who understand the Harlem Renaissance as a broad cultural movement are able to assess the movement on its own terms, as one in which artists explored parallels and connections between the arts. That understanding leaves them prepared to undertake a range of critical or creative projects. Students might carry out, for example, a comparative study in which they explore the relations between two texts in different media—say, the poems and illustrations in *Southern Road*—or they might analyze how two artists used different kinds of texts to express similar ideas. They might do more biographical or historical research into the creation or production of a particular text and its connections to other works. On the other hand, they might do a creative, multimedia project that allows them to explore the ways that different kinds of texts work together. They might, for example, create a series of illustrated poems inspired by *Southern Road*. In any case, they leave the course with an ability to look closely at individual texts and to consider how they relate to other texts, with a curiosity about the context in which texts were created, and with new insights about the ways artists work, both as individuals and with one another. These understandings of the creative work of the Harlem Renaissance also carry over into students' work on literature and the arts in other courses, whether those courses focus on literature or art or music or another media. Having explored the Harlem Renaissance as a broad cultural movement, students are armed with an ability to consider how artists of all kinds use different media to express their experiences and their ideas.

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