



at its destination, though they were paid only for the duration of the trip. They assisted passengers, shined shoes



THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

For most of American history, most black and white Americans have shown little interest in serious literature or intellectual developments. The 1920s were no exception. People were far more fascinated by sports, automobiles, the radio, and popular music than they were by poetry, plays, museums, or novels. Still the twenties witnessed a proliferation of creative works by a remarkable

group of gifted writers and artists. Among white writers T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Edith Wharton, Ernest Hemingway, Sinclair Lewis, Eugene O'Neill, Willa Cather, and F. Scott Fitzgerald produced literary works that explored a range of themes but were mostly critical of American life and society. Eliot, Pound, Wharton, Fitzgerald, and Hemingway found American culture so unappealing that they exiled themselves in Europe.

Black intellectuals congregated in Manhattan and gave rise to the creative movement known as the Harlem Renaissance. Poets, novelists, and painters probed racial themes and grappled with what it meant to be black in America. There was no precise beginning to this renaissance. As early as 1920, W. E. B. Du Bois wrote in *The Crisis* that the nation was on the verge of a "renaissance of American Negro literature." In 1925 the New York *Herald Tribune* declared that America was "on the edge, if not already in the midst of, what might not improperly be called a Negro renaissance." No matter when it began, the Harlem Renaissance produced a stunning collection of artistic works, especially in creative writing, that continued into the 1930s.

Before Harlem

There had certainly been serious cultural developments among African Americans before the 1920s. At the turn of the century, novelist Charles W. Chestnutt depicted a young black woman's attempt to pass for white in *The House behind the Cedars*, and he wrote about racist violence in the post-Reconstruction South in *The Marrow of Tradition*. Ohio poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar wrote evocatively of black life, frequently relying on black dialect, before he died at age thirty-four in 1906. Henry Ossawa Tanner attended the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and had an illustrious career as a painter. Shortly after he produced "The Banjo Lesson" in 1893, Tanner left for Paris and spent most of the rest of his life in Europe. He died there in 1937.

Carter G. Woodson, the son of Virginia slaves, earned a Ph.D. at Harvard in history and founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915. He stressed the need for the scholarly examination of Negro history and established the *Journal of Negro History* and the *Negro History Bulletin*. He also founded Associated Publishers to publish books on black history. Woodson wrote several major works, including *The Negro in Our History*. In 1926 he established Negro History Week during February. Not surprisingly, Woodson became known as the "father of Negro history."

During the bloody Red Summer of 1919 when racial violence erupted in Chicago and elsewhere, Claude

McKay, a Jamaican who settled—like Marcus Garvey—in New York City wrote a powerful poem, "If We Must Die," in response to the brutal attacks by white people in Chicago on black residents:

*If we must die, let it not be like bogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
Making their mock at our accursed lot.
If we must die, O let us nobly die,
So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!
O kinsmen! We must meet the common foe!
Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow!
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!*

McKay left the United States for the Soviet Union in 1922, and spent the next twelve years in Europe. In 1928 while in France, he wrote *Home to Harlem*, a novel that depicted life among pimps, prostitutes, loan sharks, and petty criminals. McKay was not on cordial terms with the African-American intellectuals who formed the core of the Harlem Renaissance, and he did not consider himself part of the Talented Tenth. He later commented, "I was an older man and not regarded as a member of the renaissance, but more as a forerunner."

Writers and Artists

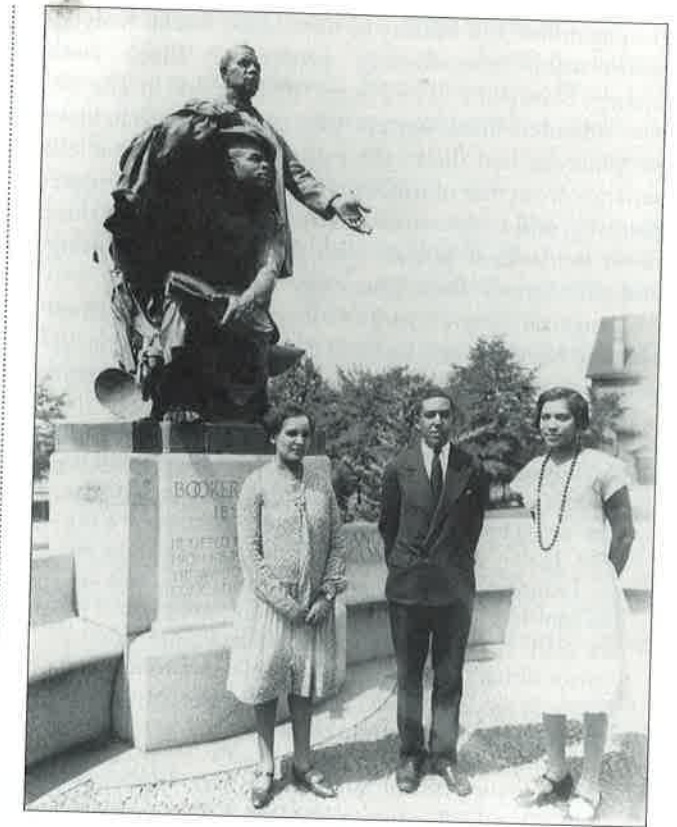
Few white Americans and still fewer black Americans had access to a college education in the early twentieth century. Only slightly more than 2,000 African Americans were pursuing college degrees by 1920. Yet the writers and artists who came to be associated with the Harlem Renaissance were the products of some of the nation's finest schools, and with the exception of Zora Neale Hurston, they did not come from isolated, rural southern communities. Hurston was born in Notasulga, Alabama, and raised in the all-black town of Eatonville, Florida, near Orlando. She attended Morgan State University and Howard University, and graduated from Barnard College. Alain Locke was a native of Philadelphia and Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Harvard. He was the first African American to win a Rhodes scholarship to Oxford University, and he also earned a Ph.D. in philosophy from Harvard. Aaron Douglas (one of whose works graces the cover of this book) was born in Kansas and was an art major at the University of Nebraska.

Langston Hughes was born in Joplin, Missouri, graduated from high school in Cleveland, and attended Columbia University before he graduated from Pennsylvania's Lincoln University. Jessie Fauset came from a prominent Philadelphia family of color. She was a graduate of Cornell University and a member of Phi Beta Kappa; she earned an M.A. from the University of Pennsylvania in romance languages. Jean Toomer was born in Washington, D.C., and was raised largely by his grandparents in a fashionable white neighborhood. Toomer went to the University of Wisconsin and then the Massachusetts College of Agriculture. Wallace Thurman was born in Salt Lake City and attended both the University of Utah and the University of Southern California. Countee Cullen was a native of Lexington, Kentucky, and a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of New York University.

The Renaissance gradually emerged in the early 1920s and then expanded dramatically later in the decade as more creative figures were drawn to Harlem. In 1923 Jean Toomer published *Cane*, a collection of stories and poetry about southern black life. It sold a mere five hundred copies, but it had a major impact on Jessie Fauset and Walter White. Fauset was the literary editor of *The Crisis*, and in 1924 she finished *There Is Confusion*, the first novel published during the Renaissance. Her novels explored the manners and color consciousness among well-to-do Negroes. Walter White, who was James Weldon Johnson's assistant at the NAACP, published *The Fire in the Flint* in 1924, a novel that dealt with a black physician who confronted white brutality in Georgia.

In the meantime, *The Crisis* as well as *Opportunity*, a new publication of the Urban League, published the poetry and short stories of black authors, including Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and Zora Neale Hurston. White publishers were also attracted to black literary efforts. In 1925 *Survey Graphic* published a special edition devoted to black life and culture called "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro." Howard University Professor Alain Locke then edited *The New Negro*, which drew much of its material from *Survey Graphic* as well as *Opportunity* and included silhouette drawings with Egyptian motifs by Aaron Douglas. In his opening essay, Locke explained Harlem's literary significance: "Harlem has the same role to play for the new Negro as Dublin has had for the New Ireland or Prague for the New Czechoslovakia."

Sharp disagreements erupted during the Harlem Renaissance over the definition and purpose of black literature. Some, such as Alain Locke, W. E. B. Du Bois, Jessie Fauset, and Benjamin Brawley, wanted black writ-



During the summer of 1927, three of the major figures associated with the Harlem Renaissance visited the Booker T. Washington Memorial on the Tuskegee Institute campus in Alabama. One can only wonder what pointed comments about the "Wizard of Tuskegee" were exchanged as (from left to right) Jessie Fauset, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston posed to have their photograph taken.

ers to promote positive images of black people in their works. They hoped that inspirational literature could help resolve racial conflict in America, and they believed that black writers should be included in the larger (and mostly white) American literary tradition. Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston disagreed. They portrayed the streets and shadows of Harlem and the lives of poor black people in their poetry and stories. In *The Ways of White Folks*, Hughes ridiculed the notion that writers could promote racial reconciliation. One of his characters derisively declares, "Art would break down color lines, art would save the race and prevent lynchings! Bunk!"

W. E. B. Du Bois commented caustically after he read Claude McKay's bawdy *Home to Harlem*: "I feel distinctly like taking a bath." Du Bois was less than impressed with Jake, the novel's protagonist, who is intimately involved with the reality of life in Harlem that included opium, alcohol, and sex. Alain Locke dismissed McKay as a mere

propagandist, and McKay in turn called Locke "a dyed-in-the-wool pussy-footing professor." Black critic George Schuyler's "The Negro Art Hokum" in *The Nation* ridiculed black writers who contended that black people even had their own expressive culture that was separate from that of white people. "As for the literature, painting, and sculpture of Afroamericans—such as there is—it is identical in kind with the literature, painting, and sculpture of white Americans."

Langston Hughes meanwhile defended the authenticity of black art and literature but insisted that the approval or disapproval of white people and black people was of little consequence.

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.

Hughes pursued racial themes in *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927), which contained "Red Silk Stockings," a poem that depicted young black women who were tempted by liaisons with white men, a subject that offended some readers.

Red Silk Stockings

Put on yo' red silk stockings,
Black gal.
Go out an' let de white boys
Look at yo' legs.

Ain't nothin' to do for you, nobow.
Round this town.—
You's too pretty.
Put on yo' red silk stockings, gal,
An' tomorrow's chile'll
Be a high yaller.

Go out an' let de white boys
Look at yo' legs.

Even more upsetting to those who wanted to safeguard the reputation of black people was Wallace Thurman, who arrived in New York in 1925. Thurman worked briefly at *The Messenger*, the socialist publication that had been absorbed by A. Philip Randolph's Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. He was a voracious

THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

- 1919 Claude McKay publishes "If We Must Die"
- 1920 Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* opens featuring Charles Gilpin
Langston Hughes publishes "The Negro Speaks of Rivers"
- 1922 *Shuffle Along* by Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake opens on Broadway with Florence Mills and Josephine Baker
Claude McKay publishes *Harlem Shadows*
- 1923 Jean Toomer publishes *Cane*
The Cotton Club opens
Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life edited by Charles S. Johnson and supported by the National Urban League begins publication
- 1924 Jessie R. Fauset publishes *There Is Confusion*
Walter White publishes *The Fire in the Flint*
Paul Robeson stars in Eugene O'Neill's drama *All God's Chillun Got Wings*
- 1925 Countee Cullen publishes his book of poetry, *Color*
James Weldon Johnson publishes *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*
The New Negro edited by Alain Locke is published
- 1926 Langston Hughes publishes *The Weary Blues*
George Schuyler's "The Negro Art Hokum" appears in *The Nation*
The Savoy Ballroom opens
Wallace Thurman publishes one issue of *Fire*
Florence Mills dies
- 1927 Langston Hughes publishes *Fine Clothes to the Jew*
James Weldon Johnson publishes *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse*
- 1928 Claude McKay publishes *Home to Harlem*
Duke Ellington's band appears at the Cotton Club
- 1929 Jessie R. Fauset publishes *Plum Bun*
Wallace Thurman publishes *The Blacker the Berry* . . .
Claude McKay publishes *Banjo*
Countee Cullen publishes *The Black Christ*
Fats Waller's *Ain't Misbehavin'* opens on Broadway
- 1930 James Weldon Johnson publishes *Black Manhattan*
- 1931 Jessie R. Fauset publishes *The Chinaberry Tree*
- 1933 Jessie R. Fauset publishes her last novel, *Comedy American Style*
James Weldon Johnson publishes his autobiography, *Along the Way*
- 1934 Wallace Thurman dies
- 1935 Zora Neale Hurston publishes *Mules and Men*
- 1937 Zora Neale Hurston publishes *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

reader with a brilliant mind and an eccentric personality who attracted many loyal admirers. He once wrote, "I cannot bear to associate with the ordinary run of people. I have to surround myself with individuals who for the most part are more than a trifle insane."

In 1926 Thurman published *Fire*, a journal that lasted only one issue but managed to incite enormous controversy and leave Thurman deeply in debt. *Fire* included Thurman's short story, "Cordelia the Crude," about a prostitute, and a one-act play by Zora Neale Hurston, "Color Struck." Hurston effectively replicated the speech of rural black Southerners while depicting the jealousy a darker woman feels when a light-skinned rival tries to take her man. Black critic Benjamin Brawley complained that with *Fire* "vulgarity had been mistaken for art."

Thurman, who was a dark black man, antagonized still more people when *The Blacker the Berry* . . . was published in 1929. In it he described the tribulations and sorrows of Emma Lou, a young woman who did not mind being black, "but she did mind being too black." The book made it plain that many black people had absorbed a color prejudice that they did not hesitate to inflict on darker members of their own race.

White People and the Harlem Renaissance

Like many of the writers associated with the Harlem Renaissance, Zora Neale Hurston had a pen that sliced like a scalpel. She called the white people who took an interest in Harlem "Negrotarians," and she labeled her black literary colleagues the "Niggerati." But no matter how they were described, black and white people developed pleasant but often uneasy relationships during the Renaissance.

No white man was more attracted to the cultural developments in Harlem than photographer and writer Carl Van Vechten. In 1926 he caused a furor with his novel, *Nigger Heaven*. Many people were offended by the title—which referred to the balcony where black patrons had to sit in segregated theaters and auditoriums. The novel dealt with the coarser aspects of life in Harlem, which irritated Du Bois, Fauset, and Countee Cullen. But Van Vechten's purpose was in part a call for a more honest depiction of the black experience, and James Weldon Johnson, Walter White, and Langston Hughes approved of the novel.

Most black writers and artists welcomed the encouragement, support, and financial backing they received from white authors, critics, and publishers. White writers, including Eugene O'Neill, Sherwood Anderson, Sinclair Lewis, and Van Wyck Brooks, were fascinated

by black people and interested in the works of black authors. Major publishers, such as Alfred A. Knopf, brought out the works of Harlem writers. Black and white literary figures sometimes gathered for cocktails, small talk, and music at Carl Van Vechten's spacious apartment on West 55th Street.

The attention and support of white people were sometimes accompanied by condescension and disdain. Too many "Negrotarians" considered Harlem and its inhabitants exotic, curious, and uncivilized. They found life in Harlem—its clubs, music, and entertainers as well as its poetry, prose, and painting—energetic, lively, and sensual compared to white life and culture. Black culture was also—many white people believed—unsophisticated and primitive, which is what made it so fascinating. Black writers like Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and Countee Cullen wanted to depict black life realistically—from its gangsters to its gamblers. But they and other black artists resented the notion that black culture was inherently crude and unrefined.

White patrons like Amy Spingarn, whose husband Joel was president of the NAACP Board of Directors, and Charlotte Osgood Mason—"Godmother"—supported black writers and artists. Spingarn helped finance Langston Hughes's education at Lincoln University. "Godmother" Mason was a wealthy widow who offered substantial amounts of money to black artists. She worked closely with Alain Locke who helped identify Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Aaron Douglas among others who became her "godchildren."

Mason wanted no publicity for herself, but the acceptance of her money had its costs. Mason gave Hughes \$150 a month and Hurston \$200 a month as well as an automobile. She also gave Hughes expensive clothing and writing supplies. In return, Mason demanded that the black writers keep her fully informed about their activities, and she did not hesitate to tell them when they were not productive enough. She also tried to influence what they wrote. She preferred that black writers confine themselves to exotic themes. As helpful as Mason's financial assistance and personal encouragement were, she created a system of dependency, and Hughes and Hurston finally broke free from the arrangement. Hughes later fondly recalled, "I can only say that those months when I lived by and through her were the most fascinating and fantastic I have ever known."

Harlem's cultural icons sometimes congregated away from the curiosity and paternalism of white admirers. The plush twin town houses of A'Lelia Walker at

108–110 West 136 Street also attracted Harlem's literary figures as well as entertainers. Walker was the daughter of black cosmetics millionairess Madam C. J. Walker. Though she read little herself, A'Lelia Walker enjoyed hosting musicians, writers, and artists at "The Dark Tower," as she called it. Her home was named for Countee Cullen's column, "The Dark Tower," that appeared regularly in *Opportunity*. But Harlem artists also gathered in the much less luxurious surroundings of "Niggerati Manor" on 267 West 136 Street. This was a rooming house where Thurman, Hurston, and Hughes resided in the late 1920s.

The profusion of literary works associated with the Harlem Renaissance did not so much end as fade away. Black writers remained active into the 1930s. Zora Neale Hurston wrote her two most important works then—*Mules and Men* in 1935 and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in 1937. Claude McKay and Langston Hughes continued to write and have their work published. But the Great Depression that began in 1929 devastated book and magazine sales. Subscriptions to *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* declined, and both journals published fewer works by creative writers. Many black intellectuals left Harlem. James Weldon Johnson and Aaron Douglas went to Fisk University in Nashville. W. E. B. Du Bois had a falling out with the NAACP and returned to Atlanta University. Alain Locke remained on the faculty at Howard University. Jessie Fauset married an insurance executive and took up housekeeping after her last novel was published in 1931. Wallace Thurman died an alcoholic in 1934. Countee Cullen taught French at DeWitt Clinton High School in New York City where James Baldwin was one of his students in the late 1930s.

HARLEM AND THE JAZZ AGE

As powerful and important as these black literary voices were, they were less popular than the entertainers, musicians, singers, and dancers who were also part of the Harlem Renaissance. Without Harlem, the twenties would not have been the Jazz Age. From wailing trumpets, beating drums, dancing feet, plaintive and mournful songs, Harlem's clubs, cabarets, theaters, and ballrooms echoed with the vibrant and soulful sounds of African Americans. By comparison, white American music seemed sedate and bland.

Black and white people flocked to Harlem to enjoy themselves—and to break the law. In 1919–1920, the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead Act prohibited the manufacture, distribution, and sale of al-

coholic beverages. But liquor flowed freely in Harlem's fancy establishments and smoky dives. Musicians and entertainers—like Harlem's working-class residents—had migrated there from elsewhere. The blues and their sorrowful tales of troubled and broken relationships arrived from the Mississippi Delta and rural South. Jazz had its origins in New Orleans, but it drew on ragtime and spirituals as it moved up the Mississippi River to Kansas City and Chicago on its way to Harlem.

The Cotton Club was Harlem's most exclusive and fashionable nightclub. Opened in 1923 by white gangster Owney Madden to peddle illegal beer, it catered to well-to-do white people who regarded a trip to Harlem as a foreign excursion. The Cotton Club's entertainers and waiters were black, but the customers were white. Black patrons were not admitted. The club featured well-choreographed and fast paced two-hour revues that included a chorus line of attractive young women—all brown skinned, all under twenty-one years old, and all over 5'6" tall. No dark women appeared. Music was provided by assorted ensembles. Cab Calloway might sing "She's Tall, She's Tan and She's Terrific," or "Cotton Colored Gal of Mine." In 1928, Edward K. "Duke" Ellington and his orchestra began a twelve-year association with the Cotton Club. Although Ellington had not yet begun to compose his own music in earnest, his band already had an elegant, sophisticated, and recognizable African-American sound.



Born in Washington, D.C., in 1899, Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington moved to New York City in 1923 and organized a five-piece band. He began recording in 1924, and first appeared at the Cotton Club with a ten-piece orchestra in 1928. He did not stop playing, conducting, and composing music until his death in 1974.

BESSIE SMITH

No one personified the blues more than Bessie Smith. She knew the blues. She sang the blues. She lived the blues. She was the "Empress of the Blues." During the 1920s, no singer in America was more popular than she was.

Bessie Smith was born in poverty on April 15, 1894, in Chattanooga, Tennessee. She was one of seven children of a Baptist preacher, William Smith, and his wife, Laura. Both of Bessie's parents and two brothers died while she was still a child and the surviving children were raised by an older sister, Viola.

With her brother Andrew accompanying her on the guitar, Bessie began to sing on Chattanooga street corners to earn money for the family. It was an apprenticeship that helped shape her career. In 1912 she briefly toured with a musical group that featured Gertrude "Ma" Rainey. In 1913 she worked in Atlanta for ten dollars a week plus tips. Her fame spread and soon she was touring the South. By the 1920s she was singing in Philadelphia and Atlantic City.

Initially her voice was considered too rough for the infant recording industry. But in 1923 Frank Walker signed her to a contract with Columbia Records. She recorded what were known in the 1920s as "race" records, produced for black audiences by white recording companies. Her first recordings included "Downhearted Blues" and "Gulf Coast Blues." Her second session brought "Tain't Nobody's Business If I Do." She sold an astonishing 780,000 records within months.

In 1925 she recorded "St. Louis Blues" and "Careless Love" with Louis Armstrong—their only recordings together. She toured major cities, including Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Chicago, in a private railroad coach and huge crowds lined up for admission to clubs and theaters to hear her. Though it could sound coarse, she had a striking and appealing voice that conveyed the depths of her emotions and experiences.



No one has ever sung the blues better than Bessie Smith. "The Empress of the Blues" appeared in theaters and clubs across the country before mostly all-black audiences, but thousands of white people bought her recordings in the 1920s and 1930s. Her contract with Columbia Records, which earned her only \$28,575 for eight years of recordings, profited the company at her expense.

She knew of what she sang. When she sang "Money Blues," "Pickpocket Blues," or "Empty Bed Blues," she revealed the pathos but also the humor that so many northern and southern black people had experienced. Smith's blues tore at the raw feelings that sociologists and academics missed when they discussed poverty, unemployment, alcoholism, or sexual relationships. Smith's blues were firmly grounded in African-American oral and musical traditions.

Bessie Smith was not a delicate woman. She was married twice. Her first husband, Earl Love, died shortly after they married. Her second marriage, to Jack Gee, was marked by jealousy, drinking, and physical conflict that ended in separation in 1930. She had a profusion of lovers—male and female. Her warmest and most enduring relationship was with Richard Morgan, a Chicago bootlegger.

People did not trifle with Bessie Smith. She was a large lady—over 200 pounds. She ate, drank, and fought to excess. She could be mean,

contentious, and violent. She physically attacked others and was herself attacked. But she also had a sweet and loyal side. She could be helpful, generous, and compassionate. However, she seemed fond of some of the sleaziest, most dangerous, and seediest nightclubs in America. She could not resist Detroit's Koppin Theater, a den of debauchery. She admitted that she wanted to go where "the funk was flying."

She continued to record even after record sales declined during the Depression. Her last recording session included "Nobody Knows When You're Down and Out." Bessie Smith died at age forty-three in 1937 in an automobile accident near Clarksdale, Mississippi. Perhaps Louis Armstrong summed up her musical legacy best. "She used to thrill me at all times, the way she could phrase a note with a certain something in her voice no other blues singer could get. She had music in her soul and felt everything she did."

Another club, Connie's Inn, also served a mostly white clientele. Thomas "Fats" Waller played a rambunctious piano at Connie's. Waller's father was the deacon at the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, and his mother was the organist. The songs and music their son wrote, including "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Ain't Misbehavin'," were hardly sacred, but they were popular. Connie's also put on stunning musical revues, perhaps the best known of which was *Hot Chocolates*. Dancers who performed at Connie's included the legendary Bill "Bojangles" Robinson and Earl "Snakehips" Tucker. A young cornetist from New Orleans, Louis Armstrong, played briefly at Connie's. Armstrong amazed listeners with his virtuoso trumpet and his gravelly singing voice.

Harlem's black residents avoided the Cotton Club or Connie's Inn. They were more likely to step into one of Harlem's less pretentious and less expensive establishments like the Sugar Cane. The beer and liquor were cheap. The food was plentiful. The music was good, and there were no elaborate production numbers. Even less impressive clubs and bars remained open after the legal closing hour of 3 A.M. "Arrangements" were made with the police who looked the other way as the music and alcohol continued through the night. Musicians from "legal" clubs drifted into the after-hours joints and played until dawn.

Another popular—and sometimes necessary—form of entertainment among Harlemites was the rent party. Housing costs in Harlem were extravagant, and white people and real estate agents refused to rent or sell to black people in most other areas of New York City. To make the steep monthly rent payments, apartment dwellers would push the furniture aside, begin cooking chicken, chitterlings, rice, okra, and sweet potatoes. They would distribute a few flyers and hire a musician or two. The party was usually on a Saturday or a Thursday night. (Most domestic servants had Thursdays off.) Party-goers paid ten cents to fifty cents admission. Food and liquor were sold. With a decent crowd, the month's rent was paid.

Song, Dance, and Stage

Black women became popular as singers and dancers in Harlem and then often appeared in Broadway shows and revues. Florence Mills entranced audiences with her diminutive singing voice in several Broadway productions including *Plantation Review*, *Dixie to Broadway*, and *Blackbirds* before she died of appendicitis in 1927. Adelaide Hall also appeared in *Blackbirds* and later opened her own nightclubs in London and Paris. Ethel

Waters worked her way up from smoky gin joints in Harlem basements where she sang risqué and comic songs to Broadway shows, and then to films. Many years later she toured with the Billy Graham crusade.

White men wrote many of the popular Broadway productions that starred black entertainers. In 1921, however, Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle put on *Shuffle Along*, which became a major hit. Its most memorable tune was "I'm Just Wild about Harry." Sissle and Blake wrote several more shows, including *Chocolate Dandies* in 1924. It was created especially for a thin, lanky, dark, and funny young lady named Josephine Baker. But in 1925 Baker left New York and moved to Paris where she starred in the *Revue Nègre*, which created a sensation in the French capital. She remained in France for the rest of her life.

White playwright Eugene O'Neill wrote serious drama involving black people. Charles Gilpin and then Paul Robeson appeared in O'Neill's *Emperor Jones*. Robeson—who went on to an illustrious performing career—was a graduate of Rutgers University where he was an All-American football player. He earned a law degree at Columbia University, but abandoned the law for the stage. He appeared in numerous productions, including O'Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings*, Shakespeare's *Othello*, Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, and Kern and Hammerstein's *Showboat*. He often sang spirituals in his magnificent, rich voice, and later recorded many of them.

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