

THE HARLEM LITERATURE MIRRORS THE NEW NEGRO

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ABSTRACT

The Arts of the Harlem Renaissance reveals the “beauty which prejudice and caricature have overlaid.” Truly, the literary output of the Harlem Renaissance era has, in a broader dimension, redefined the ‘Negro’ who has long been misinterpreted or underestimated. This article throws lights on the ‘New Negro’ who has evolved himself during the renaissance period. It makes one understand that his records of literary composition have had the power to transform his social disillusionment into race pride. The Harlem Renaissance does not end with race struggle and the attainment of an egalitarian society. The contribution of the ‘Black’ is decisive to produce America’s National literature and to determine America’s culture.

Key Words: Racism, discrimination, culture, oppression, alienation, identity crisis, assertion.

The long history of African American literature is fraught with violence, difficulty, slavery and discrimination. The component of African American writing remains inevitable for the fuller comprehension of American literature and culture. African American literature has led to offshoots namely Native American, Asian American and Chicano American streams of literature. A proper representation of African American literature is essential for the understanding of the divided American Society –the colour division which is evident in the American soil until the present day.

African American literature probes into the darker problem of racial discrimination comprehensively – philosophically, existentially and epistemologically. African American literature dates back to the mid 18th century upto the present day injecting into the American social fabric a deep exuberant literary and cultural transformation. Pioneering efforts were taken in the literary field by eminent literary figures. W.E.B. Du Bois *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Washington’s *Up from Slavery* (1901), Alain Locke’s *The New Negro* were ground breaking literary pieces, socially and politically, which are testimonials to African American Modernism. But the first published works of African American literature during the 18th century portrays Unites States as a new emergence with newer citizens, defined rights and freedom, a nation which owned ‘slaves’ and exploited them for centuries. Under conditions of slavery, a new ‘genre’ namely the ‘slave narrative’ came to be written as a sub genre of African American literature

The history of African-American Literature or Black Literature is largely influenced by the Harlem Renaissance. This great intellectual movement took place during the early decades of the 20th Century between 1918 and 1937. African-American literature dealt with the question of identity –crisis, black heritage, racism, slavery, discrimination and equality. The Harlem Renaissance is a multi –faceted upheaval where black writers sought to combat racial prejudice and injustice done unto their race intellectually. Therefore, the Harlem Renaissance has become an integral part of African-American literary history. Historically, the Harlem Renaissance is a prelude to the Civil Rights Movement and the American War of Independence that took place in the later

decades of this century. In terms of Literature, the Harlem Renaissance led to the creation of African American literary history.

African American art forms became popular with African American music namely, the Blues and Jazz. Black music set the pulse of the Negro Renaissance. It became even more popular with the rise of race records. Black writers like Langston Hughes valued the 'Blues' and it became the popular form of Black arts. The popularity of Jazz sparked off a 'Negro Vogue' in prime cities like New York throughout the second decade of the twentieth century. This 'Negro Vogue' was also strengthened by a white man Carl Van Vechten whose provocative novel "Nigger Heaven" focused primarily on the frustrations of the Black people especially the black urban professionals and aspiring writers. The novel was something like a tourist guide to Harlem. Van Vechten became a unifying force of all the black authors and artists through his interracial parties and publishing connections. The Negro vogue was especially evident in the night clubs like the Cotton club and Connie's Inn. Thus, the Harlem Renaissance was a social, intellectual, cultural and racial explosion and upheaval as reflected in African American Literature. It was reflected in three main categories namely, essay, poetry and art.

The influence of Harlem Renaissance on African American literature is very great. Harlem Renaissance extends from the end of World War I in 1920s through the middle of the Great Depression in 1930s. Queries related to Racism, Black identity and equality have continued through centuries up to the present day African American Literature. The movement was then known as the 'New Negro Movement', a term coined by Alain Locke in his famous work 'The New Negro' in 1925. The movement involved black writers and intellectuals who concentrated themselves in 'Harlem', migrating from other parts of United States. Harlem Renaissance produced a group of talented black writers whose extensive writings and race records drew the attention of the 'Whites' and of the world. Consequently, the Harlem Renaissance had left an indelible mark on African American literature. The Harlem Renaissance or the New Negro movement was fuelled by three writers Marcus Garvey, founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), Alain Locke, the author of The New Negro and W.E.B. Du.Bois, the editor of 'The Crisis' magazine. This had a profound effect on the Blacks who were encouraged to look upon their own culture with pride and celebrate their black race in their writings. Thus the 'Black Man' who felt inferior for long made a journey through culture and heritage to rediscover the 'New Negro' and to reshape his destiny. This became evidently significant and motivating all 'Blacks' at a time when 'Race' had been used as a tool for discriminating the 'underprivileged'. The Harlem Renaissance had also influenced American culture by elements in African tradition. It paved way for a new style of literature and new philosophical ideas with which 'Blacks' issues of the day in the American soil were argued. The Harlem Renaissance historically chronicles, in African American Literature, the horrid state of the 'blacks' and the 'ideals' realized. In the words of Aberjhani, "the best of humanity's recorded history is a creative balance between the horrors endured and victories achieved, and so it was during the Harlem Renaissance". [81]

The Harlem Renaissance was marked by the Great Migration of the Blacks from the Rural South to Urban North due to industrialization. This Great Migration which took place by 1910 was the largest in the history of United States. The Exodus from many parts of rural South to the urban centres in the North was prompted by habits of industry and the quest for employment. A major part of this mass of African Americans moved into New York city while the rest settled in Philadelphia, St Louis, Chicago, Detroit, the Washington-Baltimore corridor and other major cities of the North which were named as 'ghettos' of the Black. Racial Discrimination had restricted them to those certain regions. Even armed men back from the War and young aspirants who sought for education migrated to these urban areas hoping to free themselves from racial discrimination,, exploitation of labour and white supremacy. Nevertheless, they landed here only to watch their hopes shattered and the promise of American democracy was belied. The second exodus of immigrants from Caribbean, Puerto Rico and Cuba joined the already suppressed lot uniting themselves as partakers in the history of oppression. If the hope for liberty and equality was never realized, the immense treasure of African American culture and arts was rewarding the Blacks financially. This permeated into the American soil, the African roots were recognized and the African American achieved social respectability. The rich and unique representation of African American literature can be attributed to the factual truth that it plainly portrayed communal lifestyle, rituals, folk, oral and musical customs of Africa, indirectly transforming and influencing the culture of America, the nation which had oppressed the Blacks for centuries, not realizing much of his own double consciousness.

This social base offered ample opportunity for the concentration of Blacks of diverse talents in Harlem. The crisis magazine of NAACP i.e., National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People and the Negro

World, Marcus Garvey's newspaper subscribed by Blacks encouraged Black writing particularly in genres like essay, poetry and short story. Harlem Renaissance offered African American visibility and provided opportunity for publication through vistas created by the black magazines and newspapers. Foremost among the Harlem writers were Countee Cullen, James Weldon Johnson, Marcus Garvey, Alain Locke and W.E.B. Dubois. The most famous poet of the period was Langston Hughes. Harlem Renaissance, as a movement encouraged works of literature and other forms of art and music through which the ideal of freedom and equality was propagated. It is through expression that freedom was realized in the later decades when the Harlem Renaissance culminated in the Civil Rights Movement and American War of Independence. Thus, the Harlem Renaissance because of its historical association with the later movements could be considered multi-sided—literary, artistic, social and cultural movement.

During the Harlem Renaissance, Literature and other forms of art such as music and painting were used as agents of propaganda to assert Black identity and equality by the Black writers. One such Alain Locke described Harlem as “not merely the largest Negro community in the world but the first concentration in history of so many diverse elements of Negro life.”[44]

A writer who propagated Black ideals through his writings was Alain Locke. He coined the term ‘New Negro’ in his anthology entitled ‘The New Negro’ which is an important work in African American Literature inspiring Harlem Literature and its writers. The work induced a new kind of spirit in the Blacks. Their attitudes were reshaped to look into their own culture, i.e. Black heritage with new eyes and write about their own African and African American experience. The influence of this book was so great that the Blacks who felt inferior for a long period in history felt encouraged to overlook their racial bias and take pride in their own race and culture. These were reflected in their writings and the ‘New Negro’ was entirely new in his outlook of life. The writings of the ‘Blacks’ were entirely original and creative unlike the white Americans who copied the European models. Thus, Black literature, apart from bringing glory to the Negroes, has enriched American literature. During this time, publication rights were given for the Negroes who were otherwise dependant on the white patrons. Ultimately, Alain Locke's ‘The New Negro’ has directly influenced Black literature and it has become the first text in history to define and claim for Black Liberation. Houston A. Baker Jr, in his book *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* indicates that “Locke succeeded in writing our first national book.... the sounds, songs, images and signs of a nation” [473] Baker compliments Locke that the New Negro Book marks the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance and has boosted the spirit of the African Americans. ‘The New Negro’ and the power of Locke's language has really liberated the Negro for a newer life style and has prepared him for a life with different perspective. Thus, the Harlem Renaissance was a New Negro movement in the sense that it has redefined and established the uniqueness of Black culture.

The writers of the Harlem Renaissance had proved the power of the written word. Literature was converted into a mass medium for multifarious purposes – to create awareness, to throw light on Black heritage, to celebrate the race, to assert ‘Black’ identity and to show resistance. A writer of such amazing potential who kindled the spark in the ‘Darker brother’ and motivated him for the Civil rights movement was the activist, author and editor of ‘The Crisis’ magazine a well known literary figure, Du Bois. He wanted equality for his dark brethren. He advocated peace and resisted racism and its injustices, such as lynching and segregation. Du Bois made his mark in African American Literature by writing his collection of essays *The Souls of Black Folk* which later became the defining text of the Negro movement. The impact of this prose was felt on an entire generation belonging to the Harlem Renaissance throughout the twentieth Century. He strongly stated that the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line. The statement was an eye opener to the blacks to reflect on their own conditions and the challenges ahead of them. By making the essay autobiographical, Du Bois has shared his personal experiences since his boyhood, namely, the denial of basic rights and recognition. Travelling through such experiences, the readers encounter the reality of their own race. The essay also motivates the African Americans to fight back, resist and redefine their life style. Du Bois had induced his men to think and act for the right cause. By his writing, Du Bois had reminded his readers of their ethical commitment in works of literature, i.e. to write about the conditions of the Blacks and their suppression and the travail to freedom where he can find himself as the “New Negro”.

The literature of the Harlem Renaissance may be said to have begun and enriched both American and African American literature which was unique and different from that of the European literature. Du Bois' essays are a testimony to black intellect.

The Harlem Renaissance was further promoted as a Black movement through artistic expression by writers like Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen and Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes popularized a new form of poetry namely, Jazz poetry, besides folklore and spirituals. This Black liberation movement started with Hughes writing of *The Negro Speaks of Rivers* and ended with Zora Neale Hurston's publication of *Their Eyes were Watching God*. Langston Hughes poem *The Negro Speaks of Rivers* provided solid unity to the heritage and culture of the Blacks. In his essay *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain* Hughes makes it clear that a work of art by a Negro artist must be valued based on its themes and merits and must not be criticized based on the skin colour of the author. Such writings propagated the Harlem waves with twin ideologies, namely Black pride and the anti colonial, anti assimilation ideology of Negritude. The social background of the period also fuelled the writings of black intellectuals. Events such as World War I, camp life of the soldiers and the social contact, the Red summer of 1919 and the great Economic Depression lay bare the hard realities of black existence. They were led into an acute racial consciousness. The discrimination and injustice done unto the Negro race was felt along the length and breadth of Harlem. This led to the emergence of Blacks as a rebellious but intellectual crowd. Far from imitating the white Europeans, the blacks were original thinkers. The Harlem writers reshaped the attitude of the Negroes and led them to 'Black solidarity' and 'Black Nationalism'. Marcus Garvey, a Jamaican, who was uncompromising with the Whites paved way for a Life of Liberty for the Negroes. Thus, Marcus Garvey is remembered as the Father of Black Nationalism and was an enemy to the British Empire. Garvey concentrated not only on the 'Blacks' in America but also attempted to consolidate the Blacks all around the world. According to Garvey, 'Black is beautiful.' This Garvey dictum invigorated the Negro pride and consciousness. He started the Universal Negro Improvement Association and advocated a 'Back to Africa' movement. Such an attitude was deeply absorbed into mainstream African American literature. Thus, the Harlem Renaissance breathed life into African American existence and African American literature, besides African America music, painting and visual arts. Thus the Harlem Renaissance is a significant movement in African American history. It gave expression to the deep-rooted, 'Negro Consciousness' through writings. During the Harlem Renaissance, the whites in America acknowledged the 'black intellectuals' as the blacks were able to exhibit their identity, culture, race and heritage. Writers like Langston Hughes asserted their Black pride.

Thus between the 1920s and 1930s, Harlem became the congregation of very powerful artists, writers, painters and musicians all of them 'Black' who encouraged one another to 'Greatness'. Thus these Black men of enormous potent realized the worth of their own culture and heritage and in fact, the African American heritage was the main source of inspiration for writers and musicians. Black musical forms like jazz and blues won international acclaim. Even the awestruck whites like Carl Van Venchten wrote criticism on Jazz and blues which popularized the black arts and music internationally, Blues' as a form became vibrant in the hands of Langston Hughes. It set the pulse of the Harlem Renaissance. Alongside, a new form of poetry, namely, the Jazz also gained worldwide acclaim.

Some main goals were achieved during the Harlem Renaissance. The Renaissance of the New Negro changed the political climate in the United States. Racial Discrimination was viewed with contempt even by some of the white republicans. These white republicans joined hands with the blacks and acknowledged their human person. Laws were framed for the assertion of Negro equality and to ban Racial Discrimination. Policies were framed to assert social justice for the blacks and paved way for an integrated society where blacks can be identified. Thus the movement sowed the seeds early for the Civil Rights Movement which gained momentum in the later part of this century. The long lost African cultural roots were revived and retold with pride in the works of African authors. African American writings were more or less a propaganda creating a solidarity of Blacks through organization like NAACP founded by Du Bois and its linked magazine, namely, 'The Crisis' which was also edited by Du Bois. The organization and the magazine continue to this day championing the cause of the Blacks. Thus the African American writings had its own original stamp and the American literature and culture of this period was largely influenced by the writings of the Blacks. The movement also solidified and consolidated the Blacks all over the world and addressed their issues. The movement gained support from white patrons who flocked to Harlem drawn by the literary and artistic output of the Harlem writers. Thus blacks were supported economically by the generous Whites.

"The younger generation is vibrant with a new psychology; the new spirit is awake in the masses Each generation will have its creed." (TNN 40)

Creative expression became one of the outcomes of Harlem Renaissance. The cultural scene in Harlem encouraged the black artists, writers, musician and painters to experiment new forms and styles. Harlem became a vibrant nightlife centre where performers like Bessie Smith popularized the Blues as an art form. All art forms brought out during this period focused on African American history and their struggle for equality. Meta Fuller's sculptures concentrated on ideas of Racism and Colonialism as she was inspired by W.E.B. Du Bois, social activist and editor of the Crisis. This also illustrates that cross disciplinary collaboration was a common feature during the Harlem Renaissance. Thus, writers and artists, as they yearned for creative self expression moved one another to greatness. Langston Hughes, Alain Locke, Billie Holiday and Duke Ellington through their expression, were instrumental to instill African pride and ensure African visibility.

Then Let's
Sing it, dance it,
Write it, paint it,
Let's do the impossible. (VNL 24)

African American visibility led to enhanced self image and pride. In other words, it enhanced the self esteem of African Americans. This goal was achieved by creating extraordinary works of art and literature which reflected the strength, the resilience and intelligence of the African Americans. Creating such powerful and positive images helped the Negroes dispel negative ideas which were wrought by racially prejudiced myths and tales told in the media. Thus the Negroes were able to look at themselves in a better light. African American leaders were highlighted in publication which also carved the self image and pride of the Negroes. Enlightenment was also imparted to the Negro community through a deeper and accurate portrayal of African American cultural roots. Tracing this origin, a move back to Africa, made writers exhale the fragrance of African culture with pride which turned out to be a celebration of race and cultural heritage. It could be rightly defined that the Harlem Renaissance is the blossoming of African American culture.

Between the 1920s and 1930s, Harlem became a 'paradise' and heaven for the New Negro. Harlem became the 'Mecca' of the Blacks. The movement redefined the 'African' genius to the American and the rest of the world. The blacks were enabled to look at themselves with a newer perspective and pride.

Double consciousness and Dual Nationalism became a prominent feature among the negroes, particularly the Harlemites during the Harlem Renaissance era -The 'New Negro' evolved and emerged with a new kind of pride that of being a Negro in the roots, i.e., an African and that of being a black American i.e., an African American, assimilating a new culture in the American soil on an equal footing with the whites. W.E.B. Du Bois, the black visionary stated rightly in 'Souls of Black folk' that "the African American exhibited a characteristic double consciousness, two unreconciled strivings two warring souls in one dark body." The Negro Renaissance also known as the Black Literary Renaissance stimulated race pride dormant in every Negro. They began to look into themselves and admired themselves. Down the ages, suppression and segregation had crushed them down with an inferiority complex. Racial prejudice had almost crushed the lives and the potential of the Negroes. Racial discrimination and unemployment, war experiences, Jim Crow's segregation, Ku Klux Klan-these factors had helped to solidify the Negro spirit. The 'nigger' who concentrated in Harlem sought to combat the white dominion intellectually involving themselves in creative self-expression like arts, visual arts, music and literature.

"A people may become great through many means, but there is only one measure by which greatness is recognized and acknowledged. The final measure of the greatness of all people is the amount and standard of the literature and art they have produced. No people that has produced great literature and art has ever been looked, upon by the World as distinctly inferior". (TBANP 35)

Truly, the composition of the New Negro during the Harlem Renaissance reflects a renewed Black spirit that is portrayed proudly and consciously. The writers of this period devotedly portrayed racial issues, black pride and the need for social reform. The Black writers experimented artistically in Harlem, a popular nightlife destination. Harlem had earlier been a popular residence for the Whites. By the 1920s the Harlem district became a vibrant black colony within Manhattan. Besides Harlem, the intellects connected with the Renaissance also resided in other boroughs of New York City. This included the bulk of black intellectuals from Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Los Angeles and other cities. These groups of creative artists and writers sought to create a definite and enhanced 'Black Image'. The Negroes who fought on par with the Whites during World War I were treated with

dignity and equality in the warring camps in France and such a treatment they had never known in America. They were racially separated even in the war camps in America. Despite this, the Negroes displayed a great deal of patriotism. Back from the war, the suppression and racial segregation which they met in the American soil was more acute than ever. 'Discrimination' based on dark colour was practiced both legally and illegally. The crucial situation in the 1920s sparked off several riots. Jim Crow's segregation, Red Summer of 1919 and Ku Klux Klan(KKK) are instances when acute race riots could be witnessed.

"The Pulse of the Negro world has begun to beat in Harlem."(TNN 24)

The Harlem Renaissance is also known as the 'the New Negro movement. The 'New Negro' was a term used right from the mid 19th century. The term was coined by Alain Locke, professor at Harvard to define the emerging Negro during the Harlem Renaissance. The 'New Negro' was active, dynamic, radical and oppressive in sharp contrast with the 'Old Negro' who was gentle and weak. The 'New Negro' henceforth is redefined by Locke, who is supposed to be the 'Father of Harlem Renaissance'. The New Negro asserts his independence and equality. He is the darker brother who has discovered himself. He is the one who is self conscious, self assertive with race pride conscious about his own black heritage and claims for black equality, both socially and politically on par with the European Americans.

The New Negro seeks for a concept of Black Americanism, freeing himself from the chain of social segregation in the name of race or any other. The New Negro has no fear as William Faulkner, the Nobel Laureate and 20th century American novelist said that the basest of everything is to be afraid. The New Negro, i.e., the African American felt it his privilege to find sources for the literary creations during this period in his own Black Culture. The Renaissance was influenced both by primitivism and cultural pluralism.

The American Negro must remake his past in order to make his future. (TNDP 12)

When Alain Locke coined the term 'New Negro' he called for a new perception of the African –American. He became the lucid voice of the African Americans. The golden jubilee year of the abolition of slavery was celebrated in 1915. Ten years since the celebration i.e., in 1925, the socio-political climate in U.S. seemed perplexing. Slavery was legalized after World War I and Negritude became a social problem in the United States among Blacks thinkers. Under this circumstance 'Black consciousness' became acute, the claim for being called an African American became prominent and the concentration of such like-minded Blacks together in Harlem made Harlem the biggest black neighborhood in the world Harlem became the epicenter of the movement promoting thick cultural activity. The conducive environment of Harlem has made this Black neighborhood the 'Mecca of the New Negro' and the capital of the Harlem Renaissance. This included art, music, painting and literature. These were based on Black culture for it was widely believed that 'Black Culture' would provide the key and the stimulus to African advancement. This cultural and artistic explosion from Harlem freed the White European in astonishment and the awestruck men among the Whites began to appreciate the artistic and intellectual potential of the Negroes. In particular, Jazz, a new form of Black music became popular and the 1920 came to be known as the Jazz Age. Some men like Booker T. Washington advocated that the Negro was left without a choice but to accommodate himself to Jim Crow segregation and other white policies W.E.B. Du Bois, founder of NAACP advised the Blacks to participate in politics which would pave way for the Blacks to attain Civil Rights. Yet, it was Alain Locke who strongly believed and interpreted the African American as the new destiny. It is evident that no race that has ever produced 'worthy literature' can be effaced from the history of the World.

In this effort to demonstrate the power of the African American not by protest but through silent expression of art, Alain Locke edited 'The New Negro', an anthology of poetry, fiction and essays. The edition of 'the New Negro' is a touchstone to the amazing degree of literary composition that exploded during the Harlem Renaissance. This literary text largely throws light on Black culture, the African heritage and the celebration of race. Race records were sung. This interest in Black culture went hand in hand with attempts to define an American culture that was different and distinctive. This new American culture of the 1920s was characterized not only by cultural pluralism but also democratic ethos. This term Cultural Pluralism was coined by Horace Kallen who felt that diverse cultures should flourish side by side and this pluralistic culture constitutes what is called to be American culture. This makes it too evident that there cannot be an American culture without the base of or the influence of Black heritage. Though rights are denied and the Blacks are ill treated, the establishment of Americana culture and its definition should be traced back to the Black cultural roots and African heritage. This is the prime factor apart from other

influences that has shaped up the American culture distinctively from the Europeans. Thus, on the Negro crusade to identify themselves in America, the benevolent 'Black' man has given America its own stamp that was new, unique and different from the white Europeans. It is clear that during the second decade of the 20th century America had a facelift culturally. 'Cultural Pluralism' in its various forms offered the platform for the growth of African American literary tradition. It extended its wings for the promotion of American expressive tradition. Though American literary tradition is distinctive from the Europeans, American tradition was inseparable from Black heritage. The American intellectual and the African American individual during this period were engaged in a common literary pursuit. While the American intellectuals pursued to define an American culture and tradition as distinct from that of the Europeans, the African American intellectual tried to establish his relationship with the American national identity historically and culturally. Though the Americans strived hard to distinguish American culture and make their expressive tradition unique, American tradition and black heritage remains inseparable. W.E.B. Du Bois and his NAACP colleague, James Weldon Johnson stated that the American expressive tradition was largely developed by the African Americans. The Native American culture was then gradually deteriorating and fading out as the American looked upon the Europeans for models and sacrificed their own art for economic gains. At this point of time, the African American who struggled to uphold their identity in this 'New World' ultimately became the champions of democracy and the artistic guards of America culture. As artistic men, they African American, i.e., the New Negro popularized their 'Black' music particularly, the Jazz and Blues. Black music set the pulse and made the Harlem Renaissance a vibrating sensation both to the Whites and the Blacks.

Jazz music cast its spell on the Blacks and gradually upon the Whites. The Jazz Age of 1920 witnessed the growth of Jazz orchestras with newer instruments and better performances. Alain Locke said that "the Jazz Age was 'a spiritual coming of age' for African American artists and thinkers who seized upon their chances for group expression and self determination." Jazz became a dignified art form popularized by the Black not only in Harlem but also in Northern Urban centres like Chicago and New York City. The most popular Jazz soloist between 1920 and 1924 was Louis Armstrong. The Negro art came in to vogue with the growing popularity of the Black music i.e., Jazz and the Tap dance which popular in all black musical revues. The body language of the African American dancers was admired even by the European dramatists.

The Negro came into vogue with growing popularity of the Black music namely Jazz and the Tap dance which was popular in all - black musical revues. The body language of the African American dancers was admired by the European dramatists. The Negro arts became a passport for the Blacks to claim their identity and originality internationally during Harlem Renaissance. A very notable white man to draw attention to the significance of Jazz and Blues was Carl Van Vechten. A wider attention was drawn through his music criticism which articulated the significance Jazz and Blues in the Novel *Nigger Heaven*. The novel was a virtual map guiding the tourists to Harlem which became the Mecca of the New Negro. Besides focusing on the alien and unusual aspects of black urban life the novel primarily discusses the frustrations and the challenges faced by the black urban professionals and black aspiring writers. During the Harlem Renaissance, the Black writers were solely dependent on the Whites for publication as the Blacks were denied of publication rights. The novel *Nigger Heaven* brings out the restraints imposed by the whites upon the blacks. Carl Van Vechten became the mediator and ambassador for the blacks finding publishing houses for the black artist overthrowing interracial politics and segregation. Thus Carl Van Vechten became the key figure helping the blacks find publishing connections and the Harlem Renaissance became an integrated movement resulting in the upsurge of African American perceptions and images in the areas of visual arts, music and literature. The once rural village Harlem was subject to urbanization during this movement and Harlem became the conglomeration of black talents. Harlem came to be viewed as the Mecca of the New Negro providing him with social liberation, economic independence and racial emancipation. Harlem sheltered black artists, migrants who escaped from the south. The Negro vogue could be significantly observed in the night clubs such as Cotton Club and Connie's Club and these clubs were frequented even by the whites in course of time. It gave space for the negro to gain social visibility and acquire international acclaim too.

The popularity of Negro art had its roots in black culture and heritage. This was an incentive for other black talents of various fields to turn back to their own primitive black culture and reflect only this in their art forms. This increased shift towards specific Negro art and its application was discovered to be the basis of self expression, innovation and artistic experimentation. During the renaissance period, this interest in primitivism and black cultural heritage had left its indelible impressions in area of music, choral programs and literature. The musical revue cast by Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle on Broadway in 1921 became the standard model that inspired black musicals for the next 60 years. Florence Mills, a dancer and phenomenal singer gained immense popularity across racial lines

both in the United States and Europe until 1927 when she was affected with appendicitis. Josephine Baker who began her career as a chorus girl shot into fame as an International Star when *La Revue Negre* opened in 1925 in Paris where she became a celebrity playing variety of striking roles exploiting 'primitivism' as a renewed trend. Popular revues attracted all - black audiences from the entire part of the United States and many of the black-produced shows were played repeatedly again and again due to its significant popularity in the 1920s. By this time, even the white -produced shows had included black casts and black elements. These are instances to testify the suitability, visibility, prominence and the vogue of the 'Negro Art' during the Jazz Age which sparked off like a rebellion throughout the United States gripping the attention of both the Blacks and Whites. The success of the Negro art over other art forms like that of the Europeans spread an optimistic wave of the Harlem Renaissance itself making it a progressive movement. This was made possible despite the fact that the socio economic conditions were worsening in Harlem and this coupled with political setbacks in an age that was conservative and racist. The Black talent was able to come to the limelight by penetrating into such a rigid social structure that was known for its class system and racist beliefs. During this particular period of the popularity of black arts, the Ku Klux Klan reached its peak gaining political significance in the South and Midwest when black leaders felt that the success of the Negro Art would help the black to rearrange race relations proving his mettle and it would help him to understand himself as people of a Nation.

The 'Negro Vogue' made it possible for the Blacks to get an 'identity' for themselves. Despite the invisible empire of the Ku Klux Klan and the pronouncement of the Jim Crow law promoting further bitterness of the segregated existence, Black literature gained recognition. Until then, the reading public of the United States were exposed only to works pertaining to British Literary tradition. Works of other nationalities were read only by the immigrants in their native language. During such a crucial period important publishing houses managed by the Whites opened their doors to Blacks writers. The earlier emphasis on British format and literary forms were overthrown and publishers like Alfred A. Knopf, Harcourt Brace and Boni & Liveright received the Black writers for their new style and uniqueness. Besides, modern works of literature from various nationalities were translated into English and read by the Whites of the United States. The American cultural pluralism, the trend of 'primitivism' and the rally for black Civil Rights offered market for books written by the Blacks on 'Negro' topics. This approach mitigated the severity of the endangered existence of the Blacks in the United States. The black literary talent was also showcased in African American magazines like *The Opportunity* and *The Crisis* and literary contests and prizes encouraged Negro Writers. A parade of talented African American writers appeared as cohort in Alain Locke's edition of 'The New Negro'. The edition was more than a literary collaboration for it was an alarm to the dormant 'Negro Consciousness' awakening him to a movement namely the 'New Negro Movement' or the Harlem Renaissance.

Locke called for the black writers to bring about an art of self-expression based on 'folk values'. This was a departure from the writings which heralded social and political protest. Locke's movement coincided with the trend of primitivism by returning to folk bore and folk values and it resembled the Irish Literary Renaissance. Yet the Black authors were not single minded in the choice of subject or the artistic method. This added importance to the Renaissance as the writers concentrated on the varied dimensions of African American folklore and African tradition. New literary art forms were produced in the 20th Century during the Harlem Renaissance. Locke felt that by means of self-expression, the 'still inferior' Black face can be effaced from the African American history. The reception and the wider attention given by the Whites for Black authors was an incentive encouraging the Blacks in literary production. The focal point was the pursuit for social identity. The New Negro Renaissance produced a kind of literature that was creative intellectual, experimental and intentional. Every literary piece can be considered as a deliberate voice shouting for 'racial equality'. This highly intellectual artistic experimentation by the Blacks attracted recognition in the main stream. It has made the Harlem Renaissance as a significant period in African American history for it had fundamentally influenced the twentieth century. By this time Harlem has fully emerged as the 'Negro capital of the World'. The emergence of the New Negro and the age of the Harlem Renaissance coincided with the Jazz Age and the World Wars which has made the period the roaring twenties. These impacts were felt within the Black community expressed in terms of literary pieces and thereby making the American robust cultural industry rich. Thus, it is wrong to perceive the Harlem Renaissance as a single phenomenon or pertaining only to Harlem. The impact of the movement is multi dimensional influencing consequently the American industry of poetry, music and fiction.

Thus, these aspects of art reveal to us that the Harlem Renaissance is not a single phenomenon nor does it pertain to 'Harlem' district alone. The movement is a multidimensional upsurge of the Negro art forms and culture

with 'Harlem' as its capital. In this Golden age of Black Arts, the optimism of the post war era achieved by the New Negro had enabled him to land in a position of National and racial self determination.

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