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The Influence of the Harlem Renaissance

on the Construction of the African American Culture

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to;

The sake of god, my source of blessings

My great parents, the most precious and priceless blessing in my life

My brothers and sister, I am fortunate to have you

My sweet grandmother, thank you for the times we've shared in all these five years

My uncle Prof. Ghodbane Hatem, thank you for your help and support

Abstract

The Harlem Renaissance played a vital role in recreating the black consciousness and their self-assertion. It set a legitimate stage to bring African American creativity to light. Due to this renaissance, black people changed how they were portrayed in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s. However, the impact of such a movement remains less understood and less studied within the context of African American culture. As a result, this research aims to gain a full understanding of such influence. It explores and examines the influence of the Harlem Renaissance or as it called The New Negro Movement in the making of the African American culture of today. This study relies on historical approaches. It analyzes and describes the foundations, characteristics, and impact of the Harlem Renaissance within an artistic scope. The investigation result showed a strong influence of the Harlem Renaissance on African American culture. We conclude that the Harlem Renaissance built the characteristics needed of the African Americans that contributed to the construction of their culture.

Key Words: Harlem Renaissance, African Americans, New Negro, Black Art, Culture, Harlem.

ملخص

لعبت نهضة هارلم دورًا حيويًا في إعادة تكوين الوعي الأسود وتأكيد ذاتهم. لقد مهدت مرحلة شرعية لتسليط الضوء على الإبداع الأفريقي الأمريكي. بسبب هذه النهضة، غير السود الطريقة التي تم تصويرهم بها في الولايات المتحدة في عشرينيات وثلاثينيات القرن الماضي. ومع ذلك، فإن تأثير هذه الحركة لا يزال أقل فهما وأقل دراسة في سياق الثقافة الأميركية الأفريقية. ونتيجة لذلك، يهدف هذا البحث إلى اكتساب فهم كامل لمثل هذا التأثير. هذا البحث يستكشف ويدرس تأثير نهضة هارلم أو ما أطلق عليه "حركة الزنوج الجديدة" في تكوين الثقافة الأميركية الأفريقية اليوم. تعتمد هذه الدراسة على المناهج التاريخية. هذا البحث يحلل ويصف أسس وخصائص وتأثير نهضة هارلم ضمن نطاق فني وأظهرت نتيجة التحقيق تأثيرا قويا لنهضة هارلم على الثقافة الأميركية الأفريقية. نستنتج أن نهضة هارلم بنت الخصائص اللازمة للأميركيين الأفارقة التي ساهمت في بناء ثقافتهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نهضة هارلم ، الأميركيون الأفارقة ، الزنجي الجديد ، الفن الأسود ، الثقافة ، هارلم.

List of Abbreviations

NAACP	National Association of Advanced Colored People
BAM	Black Arts Movement
R&B	Rhythm and Blues
Rock 'n' Roll	Rock and Roll

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General Introduction

Background

The Harlem Renaissance or the New Negro movement emerged in the 1920s particularly in the Harlem neighborhood, New York. It was an artistic and cultural movement, which was a product of African American creativity and a fertile ground for their cultural manifestations. It is interesting to explore such flourished period of African American history.

After the First World War, African American soldiers who served for the union army raised their expectations. They returned to the United States with the desire for democracy and equal rights in return for their contribution to the war. As a result of Jim Crow laws and racial oppression in the south, blacks moved north in wish for a better life. They created their own metropolitan area in Harlem.

With the continuity of racial prejudice in the north, African Americans were in need to create a good image of their race, an image that can present the beauty of their color to change how they were portrayed in a white society. The contribution of W.E.B DuBois, James Weldon Johnson, and John Locke had impacted several educated blacks by their speeches, in addition to important magazines such as *Crisis*, *Messenger*, and *Opportunity* magazines.

Research Problem and Question(s)

African Americans started to develop a new consciousness and a sense of racial pride. With Locke's manifesto of *The New Negro*, the Harlem Renaissance reached its sparkle in 1925 and expressed itself through Literature, music, dance, and visual art. The African American artists showed to the white intellectual and the world that the New Negro can be creative and beautiful, who is no longer a victim of white oppression.

With the Great Depression that emerged in 1929 and lasted to 1939, the Harlem Renaissance faded and lost its sparkle but it did never fail in impacting other generations. Its artistic legacy and its strong beliefs remained till the present time in African American life.

Thus, the present research investigates the following questions:

- To what extent did the Harlem Renaissance influence African American culture?

The present research aims also to investigate the following sub-questions:

- What were the major causes that led to the emergence of the Harlem Renaissance?
- How did the African Americans respond to the Harlem Renaissance?
- How did the Harlem Renaissance influence African American culture and what fields were involved?

Research Aims

The Harlem Renaissance was an important period in African American history. However, its influence on the African American culture was less understood and questionable. The current research aims to highlight the impact of the Harlem Renaissance or the New Negro Movement in African American culture. It aims at probing its role, influence, and legacy in the construction of African American culture in particular and US culture in general.

Methodology

Regarding methodology, the present research relies on primary and secondary sources. It discusses related papers and articles dealing with the research topic. The research also looks at the studies made by scholars and academics on this subject relating to the Harlem Renaissance and African American culture. In addition to the combination of sources, the current research is based on the historical approach to describe and analyze the impact of the Harlem Renaissance on the African American culture. This approach seems appropriate, and

it seeks to answer questions raised about the topic. In addition, the present research follows the eighth edition of the MLA manual of style.

Limitations of the Research

While conducting and investigating this research, we have faced some limitations. The first issue was the lack of time. The second issue was the lack of sources while conducting the third chapter.

Structure of the Thesis

The present thesis is organized into three chapters. The first chapter is entitled **The Foundations of the Harlem Renaissance**. The chapter provides an overview of the historical background of the Harlem Renaissance since 1916. The second chapter is entitled **Artistic Manifestations of the Harlem Renaissance**. This chapter is concerned with how James Weldon Johnson and Alain Locke inspired young African American artists to manifest their creativity. Additionally, it explores African American creativity in literature, music, and visual art during the 1920s and 1930s, though that was a period in which the Great Depression brought pessimism into American Society. The third chapter is about **The Legacy of the Harlem Renaissance**. It investigates the legacy left by the Harlem Renaissance in the African American life.

Chapter One

The Foundations of the Harlem Renaissance

1.1 Introduction

This chapter tackles the foundations of the Harlem Renaissance. It aims at drawing the attention of the reader to some important events that shaped the construction of the Harlem Renaissance. It discusses how the Harlem Renaissance was founded out of diverse incidents, and what led to its birth and development. The chapter also focuses on how and why African Americans came to Harlem. Then the chapter identifies the contributions of some African American leaders in the creation of the New Negro, and it provides some examples about writings before Harlem Renaissance. Besides that, this chapter looks into the cultural contributions of the movement within the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

1.2 A Historiography of the Development of Black Population in Harlem

The district of Harlem was added to New York City in 1877. Harlem then took a larger part of Manhattan, and it “emerged as a site of black political and cultural activity around 1910” (Paterson 17). It was also known for its growing black population. Thus, According to the African American philosopher, writer and scholar Alain Locke, the great migration of blacks from the south to the north resulted in the exponential growth of the black population in Harlem, New York (18).

Blacks migrated from the rural areas of the South to the urban cities in the north (Leshin 34). That migration was due to many reasons. One of the reasons was the exhausted economic status in the South and the continuing racial oppression embodied in the Jim Crow laws. Another reason was the African Americans' need to live a better life. Hence, advertisements in African American newspapers encouraged blacks for jobs opportunity, good payment, and better living conditions in the North. One of these

newspapers was the *Chicago Defender* (“Great Migration: African-American History” par.3).

Before the growth of the black population in Harlem, blacks moved to New York in several periods of history (Peterson 18). Through W. E. B. Du Bois’s essay *The Black North*, he explained the migration of African Americans to the north. Thus, according to Du Bois we can find that there was a distinctive growth in the black population in New York City before the nineteenth century. This growth can be divided into three main periods. During the Colonial Period, it increased from 630 in 1703 to 3100 in 1771 and from 16,300 in 1840 to 20,000 in 1880, in which Black people settled Manhattan in particular. After 1900, it increased to reach 91,000 in 1910 in the Metropolitan area (18).

However, that migration was not only from the South to the North, but it was also an internal movement in the north and within New York City itself. Both Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson asserted that African Americans settled in Manhattan at first then they moved to the north in the 1820s and the mid 19th century. That internal movement of black New Yorkers was examined by Johnson in his two books *The Black Manhattan* 1930 and *Along This Way* 1933. Johnson noted that by the decades of 1890 and 1900, two black groups emerged from New York. The first one was the post-bellum black elite in Brooklyn and the second one was the Black Bohemia on the West Side of Manhattan. These two groups impacted the diversity of political, social, and cultural activities which helped the New Negro movement to express itself. Hence, many African Americans found their way to Harlem according to the increasing population in New York (Paterson 19).

Additionally, the First World War also has impacted the migration of African Americans in the United States. The northern cities were in need for laborers as a result of the absence of whites (Huggins 15). The experiences of black warriors raised their hopes that

democracy and freedom would be gained at home as well (Singh 897). Thus, they returned home with new consciousness and a new sense of racial pride to create full and equal participation in a white society (Huggins 15).

From all these factors, the Harlem Renaissance came to present the entire elements that had affected African Americans in the metropolitan north. The First World War and the Great Migration both introduced new dimensions to the African American' self awareness (Singh 897).

1.3 The New Negro and the New Consciousness

When the African Americans join the white society in the north, they felt the need to rebuild their image far away from the old image of a black slave. They wanted to redefine themselves from an old Negro to a New Negro to break the racist assumptions and beliefs about blacks. However, the New Negro was only a metaphor that referred to the self sufficient and educated blacks (Gates 2).

However the term New Negro had different meanings throughout the African American history. For example, in the late nineteenth century, the term was strongly symbolizing the intellectual militancy and defense against white power especially after the First World War (Hutchinson 2). J.W.E Bowen, the editor of *An Appeal to the King*, provided a vision of the New Negro who wished to participate in the building of the nation. Additionally, he described racial consciousness and its relation to civilization as a definition of the New Negro (Gates 3). Booker T. Washington also believed in the need for creating a New Negro. In his book *A New Negro in a New Century* 1901, he claimed that the modern Negro was significantly more progressive than the old Negro (5).

However, in the 1920s, many considered him as an old Negro due to his ideology of cooperation with white leaders (Hutchinson 2).

On the other hand, Locke announced his manifesto *The New Negro* in 1925 (Williams 36) in which, he inspired the African Americans to build their own black culture. Therefore, he asserted the Black American's self confidence and racial pride after the Great Migration and the First World War (Singh 892,893). As a result, after 1925, the term New Negro became less political in nature, but it focused more on the African American culture to assert their black identity that manifested in literature, music, and the arts (Hutchinson 2).

Thought Locke considered his Harlem renaissance manifesto as a new concept, in reality, we find that the concept had proceeded that era by several years when a lot of African Americans identified themselves as New Negroes. So his concept was not fully new as he claimed (Williams 36). However its meaning was not the same.

In order to better understanding, one should investigate Locke's book. In his first essay of *The New Negro*, Locke described Harlem as the center of black African American culture and the only community that reaped more benefits from the black migration. From the description, we find that the Harlem renaissance was probably influenced by the black migration northward during 1919 (Paterson 17).

Locke's manifesto *The New Negro* can be considered as the sparking event that brought the *Harlem Renaissance* together and into focus. However, according to Henry Louis Gates, the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and the Director of the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University, Bowen's *New Negro* contributed more effectively to the creation of Harlem Renaissance (Gates 3).

Thus, throughout this new radical transformation of consciousness after the First World War, a New Negro was defined from such radicalism. From this radicalism, the New Negro movement known as the Harlem Renaissance was founded (Huggins 15).

Du Bois and Asa Philip Randolph played an important role in such radicalism. They edited *The Crisis* 1911, and *The Messenger* Magazines. In which they were ones of the prominent magazines that shaped the New Negro consciousness (Huggins 15). Furthermore, *The Emancipation*, *Challenge*, and *The Crusader* were other radical magazines that appeared in Harlem after the publication of *The Messenger*. However *The Messenger* started in Harlem; yet it wasn't limited just to Harlem or New York (Andrick 15, 14).

An article in *The Messenger* entitled "The Negro: a menace to radicalism," described black leaders as misleaders. They did not welcome the idea of the black radical change within society, but urged the black public to stay conservative. As a result, it was necessary for the young educated Negroes or the New Crowd to get rid of those leaders (Huggins 19, 20).

The critic Abraham L. Harris and the researcher Sterling D. Spero identified the program of *The Messenger* as a combination of racial psychology combined with socialist class awareness (Andrick 17).

Additionally, *The Crisis* magazine, as the monthly journal of The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, aimed at educating and questioning its readers about the problem of African Americans people. Furthermore, it endeavored to promote black art production and political advocacy (Peterson 18). It was originally intended to be much more of a political and news publication than a literary one. Yet, it

doubtless contributed to the Harlem Renaissance literary and artistic movement (Woodley 17).

Du Bois argued that the magazine demonstrated the threat of racial prejudice (Peterson 18). It recorded significant events and movements around the world mainly the ones that affected race problems and the Negro Americans in particular. Also, it included articles and essays on civil rights, culture, and politics (17).

One of the important goals of Du Bois was creating a new generation of intellectual Negroes because the effects of white's control on the Negro art worried him profoundly. As a result, he believed that Negroes should educate themselves (Woodley 85). As a result, an educated Negro was necessary to achieve his civil rights, racial equality and to create his own culture and identity.

1.4 Negro Writings before the Renaissance

In the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, Charles W. Chesnutt, Du Bois and others, had done a lot to establish the basis for a creative advancement and cultural productions of the Harlem renaissance and particularly during the pre Harlem period (Williams 36).

The African American Charles W. Chesnutt was among several writers that produced important literary works that portrayed the black life of that time. However, he was not much recognized as a name by the American public as Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson (Wilmesherr 1). Chesnutt's literary works were mainly published in the years of 1899 and 1905. He had written three books and two short stories which portrayed the African Americans struggle (Williams 35). His short stories were mainly published in 1880s by national journals (Wilmesherr 1).

His first collection of short stories was *The Conjure Woman*. A fictional work published in 1899 and which consists of seven short stories that portrayed the antebellum South in regional black dialect. The second book of Chesnutt was *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Colored Line*. These short stories illustrated the internal conflict of mixed races people that fall for the challenge of choosing where to belong within society. Furthermore, his first novel *The House behind the Cedras* was published in 1900. It also illustrated the problem of identity and racial conflicts within the African Americans (Wilmesher 3). Later on, he published his journals in 1993 and provided the young writers with a close look to his complete journal that contained his ideas, experiences, and observations as an African American writer. Through his journals readers could understand his metamorphoses from a white individual with North Carolina pride to a black individual who could not uphold life in the South. However, Chesnutt was just recently noticed and his impact to American literature is now being recognized (Wilmesher 1-4).

One of the prominent literary works that was considered as important text in African American literature was the literary work of Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folks* 1903. It illustrated the dark side of slavery and Jim Crow segregation in the American society (Du Bois 2). He intended to put more focus on the African American community and to understand the black people. He introduced the notion of double consciousness and of the African Americans under the oppression of white supremacy. Du Bois also critically analyzed whiteness. These analyses were to attract the attention of white readers (Owen 107). However, Du Bois' literary works were more political in nature.

1.5 The Question of Art and Literature within the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Before the reawakening of the Harlem Renaissance, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) preceded it by almost ten years. The

NAACP took into account that art and literature were a vital strategy to fight racial oppression. Although the NAACP fought to achieve racial equality through political strategies, it also believed that art can change the way white Americans thought about blacks (Woodley 54).

The three leaders of the NAACP; Du Bois, Walter Francis White, and James Weldon Johnson had different strategies and ideas. However, during the early years of the NAACP, they worked together in terms of investigating and promoting the association. Thus, they were notably prominent in its cultural activities (Woodley 15). That cultural program was mainly identified by Du Bois and Jessie Redmon Fauset in *The Crisis*, while Johnson and White deeply participated in the renaissance. Hence, through *The Crisis* magazine and their artistic efforts, Woodley assumed that most academics and critics think that the Association and its publications were significant in supporting the emerging of black culture throughout these decades (16, 17).

The NAACP leaders proposed that art could fight racial problems. For example, Johnson believed that “the development of Negro Art in the United States will not only mean a great deal for the Negro himself but will provide the easiest and most effective approach to that whole question called the race question” (Woodley 57).

Johnson also had confidence that white Americans would have to understand that African Americans deserve racial justice if blacks create and produce literary works and paintings. Here we can say that the black artistic creativity was needed to achieve certain goals and to gain respect for the African Americans. However, the political activist Marcus Garvey opposed Johnson's belief. Garvey argued that a country should not be formed on literature or art, but on hard working people. Hence, he simply expressed the idea that art should be subordinate to politics (Woodley 59).

As a result, the cultural strategy was first embraced by the NAACP and it focused on the print media to fight for blacks' rights. Yet, the Harlem Renaissance was much broader than the narrow focuses of the NAACP since it included music, visual arts and other artistic forms (Woodley 57).

1.6 Conclusion

Through this chapter, we discussed the important events that contributed to the creation of the Harlem Renaissance. Thousands of blacks moved to the north in the Great Migration with a new consciousness, and many settled Harlem in particular. That new consciousness made Harlem become the center of the outpouring of African American culture. Furthermore, several brave writings and speeches were conducted by the NAACP leaders, to convince the new Negroes that art and literature could be the effective way toward cultural appreciation. We may thus conclude that the NAACP and the Great Migration paved the way for the black culture to manifest within the Harlem renaissance.

Chapter Two

Manifestations of the Harlem Renaissance

2.1 Introduction

The current chapter offers an overview of manifestations of the Harlem Renaissance. These manifestations include literature, music and visual art. First, this chapter aims at highlighting how James Weldon Johnson and Alain Locke inspired the young African American artists to manifest their creativity during the renaissance. Therefore, significant artistic works were produced by African Americans during the 1920s and 1930s. Second, in this chapter briefly presents African American literature and examines some literary works such as Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven*, Jean Toomer's *Cane*, works that are considered as important during the Renaissance. One can also notice Langston Hughes's *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*, *I Too Sing America* and *The Weary Blues*, and Claude McKay's *Harlem Dancer* and *Harlem Shadow*. The chapter also discusses black women writing, such as Nella Larsen, Jessie Fausset and Zora Neal Hurston. Finally, besides literature, this chapter emphasizes African American artistic forms like visual art and music such as Jazz and Blues which took a great importance in African American cultural history.

2.2 African American Literary Culture during the Harlem Renaissance

Racial and cultural stereotypes have shaped American society for many years. As a result, African American literary tradition emerged in particular from a need to affect social change. The African American authors have set a significant framework to shape black cultural identity and solidarity. Through the Harlem Renaissance, black writers started to explore their identity and cultural manifestations in the 1920s and 1930s (Bader vii, viii, ix). This self discovery revealed itself in multiple ways including literary and artistic works (Perry 13).

James Weldon Johnson and Alain Locke played an important role in helping the renaissance to gain recognition. Furthermore these two leaders aimed to present the creativity of the black artists to the world (Perry 13). By the publication of *The New Negro* 1925, Locke worked to discover and to demonstrate the black talents among African American writers. He stressed how this creative literary achievement could demonstrate to the world that the Negro can create his own culture through his creativity. As a result, Locke supported the African American writers spiritually and morally during the movement. Such support made the movement concrete and meaningful to the young black writers (15).

Weldon Johnson also shared the same ability to recognize and to embrace the talent of black writers (Perry 16). In addition to his encouragement and support for black writers, he influenced them to share their emotions of being black in a white society (17).

By the publication of *The Book of American Negro Poetry* in 1922, Johnson claimed that if African Americans produced literary works that expressed a certain level of cultural sophistication, America's white elite would understand the importance and the value of African American cultural development and grant black people political equality. This belief inspired Johnson's contributions to the Harlem Renaissance. However, instead of publishing literary works, Johnson chose to work as a critic and assist black authors in the process of publishing their works to the public (Hill 13). Furthermore, through *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, Johnson made the black literary past accessible to curious readers (Stokes 29). He provided a close reading of the Harlem Renaissance' texts while taking into consideration the ancient black literature (30).

Another work of Johnson that encouraged black writers was *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, a character narrate his movement from the deep South to northern cities, witnessing the sense of excitement of the intellectual and artistic change, and becoming

obsessed by African American culture and folklore (Boi 66). *The Autobiography* was considered an important text that had a major impact on the Harlem Renaissance's political designs (Myers 5). It offered an argumentative encouragement and served as a literary framework for the movement that identified racial inequality (6). First published in 1912, but it was unrecognizable until its second publication in 1927. It influenced those involved in developing the movement's ideology (5). In addition, it represented the race-color paradox since the ex-colored man was legally black and visibly white, and although he had faith that blacks can be successful in America, yet he passed as a white to achieve success (Nordhoff-Beard 403). In this literary work, Johnson depicted the educated black who served as a basic individual in the formation of the renaissance's ideology, showing how such social change could bring pride and respect to the African Americans (Myers 5).

Through this support and encouragement of Locke and Johnson, African American authors proudly produced an impressive literary works by using the major genres of poetry, short fiction, novels, and plays with daring subjects, methods, and techniques (Hull 69). Because of their high aesthetics quality, Harlem Renaissance authors held an important role in African American literary history. This high artistic quality appeared in many works by Carl Van Vechten, Jean Toomer, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and others (223).

Black authors' literary works received widespread critical and social appreciation at the time (Bader ix). Van Vechten, was one of the Harlem Renaissance white critic and writer. He was considered one of the important writers of the movement. Vechten was enthusiastic about Harlem, as well as the African American culture. Through his literary works, he brought the white recognition to the black art. One of his prominent works during the renaissance was *Nigger Heaven* 1926 (Perry 18) which represents black characters (Kellner 64). The novel engaged in spreading, improving and illustrating the African American culture as Du bois, Locke and Johnson did (Hill 8). Despite the fact that the novel faced many

negative criticizes, yet it attracted many white readers to the African American literature (Kellner 64).

Another important renaissances writer was Jean Toomer. He was regarded as the voice of a new wave of Harlem Renaissance authors by many critics and writers. He was better known for his seminal novel *Cane* (Bader 225). It was considered as the most important modernist literary effort that provided the black experience, individual impressions of that experience, and the ambiguities that existed between the South and the North. Many of the themes and concerns of later Harlem Renaissance literature were first presented in *Cane* (Boi 66). Jean Toomer's *Cane* was released in 1923 (Raynor 69). He illustrated the cultural and social fragmentation of African-American life in contemporary society (Bader 227). *Cane* received positive reviews for its modernist style and its study of black migration and the relationship between African Americans and their long history in the South and Africa. *Cane*, on the other hand, was difficult to categorize since Toomer (Raynor 69) combined the different sketches, poetry, and drama into what has been described as an innovative, lyrical novel (Bader 226). His novel was regarded as an important literary work compared to other works during the renaissance (Raynor 69) because he was able to construct an actual and unique African American vision within the scope of experimental modernist literary styles that addressed both white and African American audiences (Bader 227).

Besides Harlem Writers, Claude McKay was a militant poet who wrote several race poems such as his famous one *if we must die* 1919. His poetry has pictured his race's frustration, anger, and the search for true black identity. Furthermore, he tried in his poems to assure whites what it was like to be a Negro and how a Negro felt at the time (Hagino 89, 90). He depicted also dancing and music in his poems. Thus we can easily find that clubs and music which considered major components of Harlem life were included in McKay's, Larsen's and Van Vechten's writings (Capel Swartz 251).

McKay was considered one of the first Black artists that discussed the subject of the black man's cultural connection to Africa when he published his collection of poems, *Harlem Shadow* 1922. His collection of poems set the tone for the rebirth of Negro creativity realized during the Harlem Renaissance (Griffin 1).

In McKay's poem, *The Harlem Dancer* 1917-1922 (Shroyer 1), McKay illuminated the beauty of resilience and degradation of the African American Self perpetuated by racial oppression in his poem (Critical Reading: 'the Harlem Dancer' and Her Storm par.1) by portraying a black woman that dressed and acted erotically for an audience only for earning a living, without regard to her self-respect (Shroyer 1, 2). This poem described that, although the renaissance provided further opportunities for blacks to perform, African Americans were still not recognized on the same level as whites (Shroyer 2, 3, 4).

Another important Harlem Renaissance figure was Langston Hughes. He was an African American poet, writer, playwright, and journalist (Utama 1). In his poetry, he emphasized African American spirituality and connectedness (Hill 16). His poem, *The Negro Speaks of Rivers* was well known for two reasons. First, when it was first written and well-received in *The Crisis* in 1921, the poem attracted many readers to the creativity of Hughes. Second, the novel was a notable work because of the links it created between African heritage and recent African American culture (6).

Another poem written by Hughes, *I Too Sing America* 1926. This poem filled the gap between the black creative voice, dedicated writing, literary culture, and song. Hughes referred to the contradiction that the black voice was omitted from America while still being capable of singing (Michlin 236, 237). In the poem, Hughes portrayed racial prejudice from the perspective of slaves and oppressed blacks. Hence, Hughes's poetry represented a similar

occurrence for many African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance, when segregation was still in practice (Utama 1, 2).

Furthermore, Hughes combined black music with his poetry. He had used Jazz music as a theme in his poems *Jazzonia* 1923 and *Cabaret* (Michlin 237), in which he portrayed the nightclubs of Harlem (Vogel 911). In addition, he found that the only artists voicing and singing the real truth of the black masses were the blues singers. He wrote *The Weary Blues* in 1923. Accordingly, it was a real blues poem in the sense that Hughes was combining the blues with poetry, by elevating the blues man's voice to the status of a symbol of blackness. Thus, Hughes wrote about the blues; but, as he progressed, he discovered that the dialect, melody, rhythm, grief, and resiliency of the blues themselves could enrich his poetry. As a result, his poetry was not about the blues, but the poetry of the blues itself. Hughes was not obsessed with the blues only, but also jazz as we mentioned (Michlin 237).

2.3 African American Women's Writing during the Harlem Renaissance

The Harlem Renaissance also witnessed an increase in women's writings (Bader ix). The black women who wrote during the Harlem Renaissance came from different backgrounds, and regardless of their differences, these writers had a goal of recreating the black woman. They asserted the value and determination of the black women in their writings and offered a way for the African American woman to redefine herself (Scott 9, 10).

Nella Larsen, Jessie Fausset and Zora Neal Hurston were an example of women writing who published during the Renaissance. Fausset and Hurston's works appeared in *Crisis* and *Opportunity* Magazines. Fausset depicted decent middle blacks, emphasized the parallels between blacks and whites, and she wrote in Standard English. While Hurston portrayed poor blacks, emphasized the distinctions between whites and blacks, and wrote in folk dialect. Despite the distinctions between the two writers, they shared common themes in their stories.

They used themes of family solidarity and ethics, as well as depicted women as the passive heroine, often carrying the brunt of responsibility. They wrote also about men-women relationships that could help black female's self-affirmation (Scott 9, 10). However, Larsen was regarded as the black star according to critics, although, she published only two novels. Furthermore, her works received a lot of positive criticism (Wall 207). In her writing, she addressed the African American middle class life and investigated racial concepts (251).

Nella Larsen was a prominent Harlem black writer during the renaissance (Bader 159). Her works depicted race issues and sexism that faced the African American woman in her pursuit to build her own identity. She discussed also cultural differences. Most of Larsen's heroines adopted fake identities to facilitate their lives. However, those females ended up with psychological problems (Wall 208).

First Larsen's novel *Quicksand* 1928, she depicted the heroine as a mulatto, who suffered from some difficulties in her life, as a result of both ethnic and personal problems (Levering Lewis 142). Furthermore, the novel investigated into the heroine's emotional, social and sexual problems as a mixed race lady (Bader 160). *Quicksand* was described by Du Bois as the greatest piece of fiction created by an African American since the era of Chesnut (159,160). Also it was accomplished by Hughes and Locke (Levering Lewis 141).

The second novel of Larsen *Passing* 1929, depicted also the ethnic and social problems and displacement of the heroine who was obliged to decide whether to pass as white or to stay faithful in her original black identity. However, the second novel did not get much accomplishment as the first one. Thus, during her lifetime, Nella Larsen had a famous success as an author during the Harlem Renaissance. However, she did not publish since 1930 till she died (Bader 160).

Jessie Fauset was also one of the key figures during the Harlem Renaissance. She was honored for her contribution to the *Crisis Magazine*. As the *Crisis*' literary publisher, Fauset uncovered early works by African American writers, such as Langston Hughes, Jean Toomer, and Claude McKay (Tillman 27).

Fauset's writing about the Negro middle class was very brave and daring since blacks were considered inferior at that time. Fauset's narratives, which follow the lives of middle-class black families, were often based around a mulatto heroine's attempts to achieve economic stability and social status by passing for white. Many of Fauset's characters later experienced depression as a result of imposing false values on themselves and their relatives. She opposed the traditional literary portrait of women by portraying women who consciously pursued jobs and desired equality in their relationship with men (Tillman 27). In addition, instead of emphasizing the distinctions between black and white societies, Fausset highlighted their parallels (29).

Fauset's first famous novel, *there is A Confusion* 1924, depicted women breaking free from constraints of life without being overly punished. The novel portrayed a diverse variety of characters and behavior against the backdrop of American slave history and it addressed racial inequality (Tillman 29). Her second novel *Plum Bun* 1928 was considered as a novel which gave a sort of the renaissance's cultural history. In this novel, Fauset addressed the challenge of passing, and the problems faced by the heroine first as black and second as women (West 365).

In the other hand, Zora Neale Hurston took many radical changes as she tried to research and explore African American society to express it in her writing. Hurston's writing identity was constructed on her passions for anthropology, folklore, and African American Modernism. The mixture of these experiences encouraged her to represent a complex and

comprehensive image of African-American cultural identity (Russell 126). However, Scholars, critics, and anthropologies dismissed her for a long period (Dance 322).

Her most popular novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, was written in 1937 and closely reflected Hurston's life in several respects (Nordhoff-Beard 3). The novel was generally recognized as a masterpiece of African American and world literature. It emphasized an independent black women's life (Scott III 599). It had been interpreted as a journal of Janie Crawford's effort to escape traditional cultural norms and define herself as an independent black woman. Janie's progress toward these aims was described by Hurston's representation of Janie's relationships with her husband for a long period (Thompson 2). In addition to her social and sexual development was described in this story (Raynor 72). However, this novel lacks a clear link to her role as a folklorist and anthropologist (Russell 126).

In *John Redding Goes to Sea* 1921, Hurston depicted how John can be taken back by the people around him. His wife and his mother banded together to submit him to their needs rather than pursuing his dreams. It depicted the black reality, where black men were marginalized by their wives, who dampened men's spirits and ambitions (Scott 12, 13).

Another literary work by Zora Hurston was *Drenched in Light* 1924. This novel portrayed how black parent purposefully brutalized their children to train them for a harsh future. This tradition might justify the grandmother's strict manner toward the heroine Isis. In the story, Isis has big dreams, but her grandmother wanted to suppress her ambitions, as well as the women in *John Redding Goes to Sea*, in which John's dreams were oppressed. Hurston in her writings believed that African-Americans had the right to dream but to not be oppressed neither by uneducated blacks nor by whites (Scott 28, 29).

2.4 African American Music during the Harlem Renaissance

Music was the most notable legacy of the Harlem renaissance, in which the black artists gain their cultural appreciation (Capel Swartz 251). Jazz and the Blues were regarded as art forms, despite their origins in folk or traditional black culture. They were two musical phenomena that helped shape the Renaissance and the African American culture, originated in a variety of areas like New Orleans, then were moved north by people migrating to Chicago, New York, and other cities. Similarly, most authors, poets, performers, and artists relocated to Harlem from many other parts of the country (Wintz and Finkelman x). Music also paved the way for the transition of black culture to white Americans during the Renaissance (Carreiro 2).

Jazz emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the Mississippi Delta region. It was a mix of African, European, and American musical ideas, intonations, and rhythms. Jazz arrived in Harlem and other northern black neighborhoods through the great migration and oppression in the south. It was heard in bars and rent parties as part of the popular nightlife (Hill 10). and it was the most and recognizable form of African American culture among white Americans in the 1920s, making it an atmosphere for interracial cultural exchange (Carreiro 51).

As the evolution of Jazz in Harlem, many white jazz players became acquainted with the black culture. Jazz music brought black culture to a mainstream audience, however, Dubois and others refused to give jazz that important because they thought it was rough and uninspired. They were, however, much more interested in expressions of what they perceived to be sophisticated culture as theatre, painting, poetry, and literature because black music for a while was addressing mostly social taboos. The African American historian Nathan Huggins also argued that only Hughes took Jazz seriously when he combined his poems with jazz

music (Carreiro 45). Contrary to Huggins' argument, not all African American intellectuals were uninterested in jazz. According to Locke, while jazz was essentially Negro, it was, fortunately, indeed human enough to be popular. Jazz's fame, according to Locke, reflected the appreciation of its universal rhythmic qualities. Locke wished that an appreciation of jazz would lead to an appreciation of black culture (Carreiro 46, 47).

One of the popular figures of jazz music was Duke Ellington. In 1927, he made his debut at the cotton club, moved from Washington DC to Harlem, and eventually became the headliner at the cotton club. His success reached the attention of downtown white artists, who flew to Harlem just to hear his music and talks. However, despite the growing success of African American performers, the majority of cinemas, and nightclubs were still segregated till the mid-1930s (Carreiro 48).

In 1928, a young American man, Benny Goodman, learned the ropes from notable black New Orleans natives then moved to New York and jammed in secret with some of the best black jazz artists of the time. As African Americans Teddy Wilson and Lionel Hampton joined Goodman's band in 1936; the color line was eventually broken. Wilson, Hampton, Goodman, and another white guitarist formed the Benny Goodman Quartet, the first professional multiracial group. Goodman later claimed that when they played, nobody cared much what colors or races as long as they played good music. Goodman's feelings about jazz's interracial aspects represented the Renaissance's actual cultural success (Carreiro 52, 53).

The Harlem Renaissance jazz music was remembered for its accessibility. As opposed to literature, jazz made it possible for whites in Harlem to cross the color line. An article or a poem, if well composed, may be disagreed with dependent on one's political beliefs and interpretation. However, it was difficult to ignore the existence of good music and genuine artistic talent. While jazz did not provide a path to political impacts or equality, it did offer

opportunities for African American cultural development to become acceptable to parts of white society and also to be adopted by white musicians (Hill 9).

Regarding the blues, it arose in Mississippi in the late 1800s, its origins go back to the music of black slaves and, later, black plantation owners. The blues moved to the north as the other southern families during the Great Migration. In the 1920s, the blues were still not recognizable in the north; many people did not consider it important or acceptable music to be performed. Mostly, artists like William Grant Still and Duke Ellington did not become acquainted with the blues until after their careers had begun, in which each began to realize the beauty of the blues genre and its distinctive artistic nature (“An African-American Legacy: The Harlem Renaissance” 9, 10).

Aside from its unique melodic style, the blues was a literary art form in which a person tells a story by music. These are typically tales of suffering and sorrow about wealth, relationships, or the racial oppression but they often demonstrate determination and resolve to fight these difficulties. Hughes combined the blues into his poetry and published *The Weary Blues* in 1926. His blues poetry often conforms to the style of a typical blues song (“An African-American Legacy: The Harlem Renaissance” 11).

2.5 African American Visual Art during the Harlem Renaissance

The visual arts flourished alongside literature and music during the 1920s and 1930s (Ann Calo 49). The absence of black paintings before the renaissance made the African American Aeron Douglas the creator and the pioneer of the African American visual art (Kirschke 188). He was the most artistic figure closely identified with the movement. Douglas rapidly created a distinct painting technique. His style of painting depictions of African American life and culture attracted a lot of attention from Harlem's scholars. In 1925, Douglas

illustrated *the Opportunity* and *the crisis* magazine (Farrington 50, 51) to illustrate political problems such as lynching and slavery (305).

Douglas had much opportunity to depict happiness and sadness, pain and pride of the African Americans (Kirschke 192). Hence, he developed a wide variety of work that helped form the movement and bring it to national recognition. Through his collaborations and paintings, he developed a method of integrating elements of modern art and black culture to glorify the African American experience while taking into consideration racial prejudice and segregation. He attempted to convey that black is beautiful (Duncan and Archino).



Fig.1. Douglas, Aaron. “Slahdji (Tribal Women).” 1925.

One of his artworks, *Slahdji (Tribal Women)* 1925 (see fig. 1 above), was made under the supervision of German artist Fritz Winold Reiss who inspired Douglas to derive influence from African art and culture., In this portrait, he attempts to build a visual language for Black

beauty by highlighting body curves, thick lips, and African American portrait of the female black figure (Duncan and Archino).



Fig.2. Douglas, Aaron. "The Judgment Day." 1927.

Douglas also portrayed *The Judgment Day* 1927 (see fig.2 above). It was an illustration for Weldon Johnson's collection of poems. The illustration depicts three figures: the angel Gabriel as the biggest figure in the image, on his right we can see the saved person who will go into heaven and on the left a group of sinners. From this illustration, by portraying black persons in identifiable biblical settings Douglas aims to convey to African Americans that, like the white, they were God's chosen people (Duncan and Archino).



Fig.3. Douglas, Aaron. "Harriet Tubman." 1931.

Another work of Douglas was *Harriet Tubman* 1931 (see fig.3 above). It includes the female figure of Harriet Tubman, who worked with the Underground Railroad to free over 400 slaves in the nineteenth century. In that illustration, Douglas provided New Negroes with a narrative through which they could identify themselves, their origins, and their futures, while also demonstrating African American self-determination and defiance (Duncan and Archino).

2.6 Conclusion

Through this chapter, we have discussed how Locke and Johnson shaped the African American artists and encouraged them to produce literary works during the Renaissance. This support manifested itself through several important works as Locke's *The New Negro* and the Johnson's *Book of American Negro Poetry*. As a result and from the need to feel accepted and

valued, African Americans demonstrated to the segregationist white elite that the black people could be creative and beautiful despite his race color. The manifestation of the Harlem Renaissance can be considered as an essential element in forming the African American identity and culture. Indeed, their cultural production from literature to arts, including Jazz and the Blues were offering the African Americans a sense of pride and creativity.

Chapter Three

The Legacy of the Harlem Renaissance

3.1 Introduction

Though the Harlem renaissance lost its sparkle with the dawn of the Great Depression, it left a great legacy to the coming African American generations. Literary works, music genres, dancing styles, and other philosophies of the Harlem renaissance remained till the present time in the African American history. Thus, the current chapter introduces the legacy left by the Harlem renaissance within an artistic focus. First of all, the chapter briefly discusses the aesthetic beliefs adopted by Locke and other young writers such as Wallace Thurman and Langston Hughes. It discusses also important literary works that are considered as a legacy for the African American culture. Secondly, the chapter aims at highlighting some legacy of Jazz, Blues, and dancing styles that emerged during the 1920s and developed through time. Finally, the chapter examines the influence of the Harlem Renaissance on the Black Arts Movements of the 1960s and the 1970s.

3.2 The aesthetic Legacy of the Harlem Renaissance

Warrington Hudlin asserts that “the legacy of the Harlem Renaissance is its art, its artists, and its idea” (10). The 1920s and early 1930s were remarkable and productive moments for black artists and their literary, visual, and musical expressions. The Harlem renaissance as a political movement failed to fit its supporters’ aspirations. However, the renaissance’s aesthetics impacted generations of black artists in the United States and even across the world (Hill 10, 11).

The artistic legacy of the Harlem Renaissance is mainly demonstrated in the perspectives adopted by Du Bois, Alain Locke, and the younger Harlem Renaissance writers including Langston Hughes, Wallace Thurman, and Zora Hurston. While Locke supported

cultural pluralism, he realized that the conditions that shape a New Negro would also shape a new American's way of thinking. Regarding art and literature, Locke did not oppose being Negro or American, but rather he considered it as a chance to improve both through cultural exchange. According to that point of view, Locke redefined the notion of double consciousness for artistic and cultural purposes adopted by Du Bois. Nevertheless, Locke emphasized the necessity to link Negroes civil rights to the creative production of African Americans by portraying the racial struggle (Singh 498).

Wallace Thurman, one of the youngest Harlem Renaissance' writers, viewed that Locke's points of view limited their artistic freedom, and they opposed also the strict ideologies of leaders like Du Bois. As a result, through the publication of *Fire!!* and *Harlem*, Thurman showed his opposition to the old generation and these two works mainly opposed the older generation's perceptions while inspiring the younger generation of artists (Singh 498).

On the other hand, Hughes emphasized also his artistic freedom in *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain*: "We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our darkskinned selves without fear or shame. . . . We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves" (Singh 499).

As Amritjit Singh claimed in "The Legacy of the Harlem Renaissance," there has been no comprehensive examination of the influence of the Harlem Renaissance on contemporary African American authors in the current writing. However, it appears that what is significant for modern culture and literature is the New Negro's emphasis on what Locke termed 'spiritual emancipation' (Singh 499).

In accordance with these aesthetic standards of Locke and the young authors, African American art expressions, as well as later concepts such as the black aesthetic,

gained significant attention. This is a significant element of the Harlem Renaissance legacy (Singh 500).

The spirit of the New Negro movement and the creative works of African Americans had inspired black authors across the world especially in India and Africa. Léopold Senghor of Senegal and Aimé Césaire of Martinique created their various notions of *négritude* in response to the influence of Harlem Renaissance's poetry and fiction. They asserted that the New Negro movement revealed the cohesive spirit of black experience and culture across the world. Another international figure that influenced by the legacy of the Harlem renaissance is South African writer Peter Abrahams. In his book *Tell Freedom*, Abrahams describes how the Harlem Renaissance's writers and intellectuals inspired him and raised his hope about the belief of color nationalism. Thus, In the 1990s, the Harlem Renaissance was recognized as an essential manifestation of early-twentieth-century nationalist movements that contributed to a wider postcolonial awareness in worldwide literature and politics (Singh 499).

3.3 Legacy of the Harlem Renaissance in Literature

The literature of the Harlem Renaissance portrayed a new era in African American history, marked by the Jazz Age, the idea of the New Negro, a sense of radicalism among certain African Americans, and a sense of pride in being an African American. However, the Harlem Renaissance faded with the great migration of 1940. Yet, the influence and the legacy left by the Harlem Renaissance writers would survive to the new generation of African American writers (Raynor 73).

Hurston, Hughes, and McKay affirmed the Harlem Renaissance's long-term impact in their writings of the 1940s, which would influence future generations of authors. Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is now appreciated for representing black life in rural

communities of Florida and Eatonville (Cary Nerad 1018). Hughes's autobiography *The Big Sea* was published after the spark of the Harlem Renaissance in 1940. It gives an extensive discussion on the African American status in and beyond the United States. Hughes regularly compares his experiences with racial oppression in the United States with those in Europe, France in particular. Although they were unable to express themselves due to European oppression toward black Americans, the Harlem Renaissance figures gained international recognition in Europe, especially in France where the Harlem renaissance ideas were adopted. The prominent individuals of the negritude movement represent an important worldwide legacy of the Harlem Renaissance. Three black poets who were classmates in Paris in the 1930s all cite Hughes and McKay as major influences on their work. In short, the Harlem Renaissance was about more than just Harlem. Its borders, as well as its accomplishments, expanded the United States (343). Furthermore, Langston Hughes championed art for the sake of art. He aimed to describe the complete scope of black life as it was not propaganda. Hughes refused the idea that artistic production could change the brutal facts of racial prejudice (490). Hughes influenced Morrison's novel, *The Bluest Eye*, in both form and content (Shahabi and Emami Pour 289).

The artistic inheritance left for the new generation can be presented in the works of Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, and Toni Morrison (Boi 67).

Richard Wright, one of the African American authors that achieved national fame during and after the Harlem Renaissance era, particularly in the twentieth century. He served as a vital connection between the Harlem renaissance and the rise of the Black Arts Movement in the 1960s. When his novel *Native Son* was released in 1940, he became the best African American seller and he inspired a generation of writers, including Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin (Bader 260). He represents American society, which in this context is depicted as a racist culture that bears the blame for all of the difficulties that black people face

in America. As a result, this work can be a useful source for investigating racial issues, particularly those connected to black stereotypes in American culture (Inayati 2). Another important work of Wright is *Black Boy*, which became a masterpiece in American autobiography, was released in 1945 (Bader 260). Wright, who was deeply devoted to the concepts of equality for African Americans, raised the standard for black social protest literature and laid the foundation for the political and cultural activity that marked the works of the Black Arts Movement's authors throughout the 1960s (Bader 262).

Additionally, Ralph Ellison, a novelist, literary critic, gained also national and international prominence with the publication of his novel *Invisible Man* in 1952. Ellison's work, which has been translated into many languages and is regarded as a masterpiece of modern American and African American literature, made him one of the twentieth century's most significant writers. His writings proved an understanding of the African American literary traditions of the Harlem renaissance. *Invisible Man* depicts the anonymous narrator's personal struggles. The narrator is an African American man who is fighting racial prejudice. The work reflects the long history of black racial oppression (Bader 79). Ellison is recognized as one of the twentieth century's most significant African American and American authors (Bader 81).

Another important writer is Toni Morrison. Morrison has received national and international literary awards, such as the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the Nobel Prize in literature (Bader 179). Her first work, *The Bluest Eye*, was released in 1970. The story portrays the depressed life of Pecola Breedlove, a young African American girl who struggled from racism, sexual abuse, and other problems leading her to very low self-esteem. Morrison highlighted the way racism can corrupt the black identity by adopting false cultural norms, as illustrated by Pecola's wish for having blue eyes. Her novel was influenced by Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (180). Her novel was not the only novel that gained

success and fame, many other works by Morrison gained national and international prominence (181).

Regarding poetry, After the Harlem Renaissance disappeared, many poets continued to publish and many of them shifted to fiction, drama, and criticism. The African American authors of the last 1930s such as Melvin Tolson, Robert Hayden, Margaret Walker, and Gwendolyn Brooks, were inspired by Hughes's poetry. Amiri Baraka was among the most contemporary poets who have transmitted the traditions of the Harlem Renaissance to other generations (Johnson 732).

3.4 Legacy of the Harlem Renaissance in Music and Dance

The Harlem Renaissance's music and dance during the 1920s and 1930s were considered as an aesthetic inspiration that spawned artistic innovations and revivals (Hanna 289-293). With the combination of New Orleans tradition and Big Band orchestra, jazz witnessed a flourished development even after the fade of the Harlem era. Jazz concerts of the 19, 20th, and 21st centuries reflected the Harlem Renaissance tradition.

By the end of the Great Depression, jazz had divided into a new popular form known as jump Blues or Rhythm and Blues in the 1940s. Rhythm and Blues are now known as R&B, although it sounds different from the rhythm and blues of the 1950s. Furthermore, the electric guitar quickly became the typical blues instrument later on. R&B evolved into rock and roll to entice white American culture. Muddy Waters was a leading figure in the rhythm and blues genre claimed that R&B gave birth to the present rock and roll (Goffman 6, 5).

Bebop, one of jazz's styles, emerged in the 1940s, which was considered a starting point for the earliest rap. Hip hop arose in the 1970s and was also a legacy of the Harlem renaissance's jazz. Additionally, Hip hoppers were attracted by the rhythms, beats, the horn's sound, the funk style, and other styles found in jazz music. Hence, Jazz was always present in

the households of rappers such as Snoop Dogg and others, thus their exposure and admiration came from ancestors' record albums. In 1981, legendary free jazz singer Luther Thomas released "Yo Mama," the first jazz-rap song. ("What Are the Connections between Jazz and Hip Hop?" par. 2).

As a result, African American music is regarded as a magnificent cultural achievement. It was created in a racially divided and oppressive environment, but it is nonetheless regarded as a great aesthetic success and a legacy of the Harlem Renaissance (Goffman 11).

Several jazz clubs across the world are called now 'Cotton Club' and tourist buses of Harlem are available every night in New York. Jazz is still performed in honor of Harlem traditions. Furthermore, jazz's adoption by the Harlem Renaissance's younger authors ensured its position in the era's creative and cultural heritage. (Galm 616). In addition, some Jazz and dance genres such as rock and roll, Hip Hop, and other dance styles are considered a legacy of the Harlem Renaissance.

Concerning Dance, The various styles of dances performed in Harlem impacted African American authors who attempted to represent it in their works during the Renaissance. These Harlem renaissance dances which were performed in public, at home parties, at theaters, and in ballrooms strongly influenced the direction of dance in America and throughout the world (Hanna 290).

Swing dance was one of the popular dances during the Harlem renaissance that remains performed till the present day in both new and old forms (Hanna 290). The African American swing dance is divided into a variety of genres, such as Lindy Hop (292). Lindy Hop emerged in Harlem in 1928 by the dancer Snowden (Brooks 768). Lynne Hanna claimed: "The lindy hop involved rocking and turning moves with freewheeling, flowing,

improvised steps to an eight-beat count. At the Savoy, the lindy hop had a democratizing effect, offering emotional freedom and individual expression: race and class boundaries temporarily dissolved” (292).

Between the 1930s and 1940s, the swing dance, particularly the lindy hop term spread throughout the media, and the press to describe that style of dancing. During this period, dance shoes also gained popularity. Swing dance evolved across the United States between the 1920s and the 1990s to adapt the different musical styles such as Jazz, Rhythm & Blues, Rock ‘n’ Roll, and Disco (“Swing Dance History” par. 3).

During the Harlem renaissance, queer culture was known to be shaped in Harlem (Wolde-Michael par. 2). In which, lesbians and gay men were active at many nightclubs and attracted a wide homosexual audience (Vogel 909). Thus, Harlem had been a vital center for LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) art, and culture through the years. As a result, Harlem was the origin of a new style of African American dance called vogue. Vogue is a highly stylized type of dance that includes exaggerated hand and body movements originated by black and Latino LGBTQ groups. As part of this dance culture, New York was famous for vogue dance throughout the 1960s and 1980s (Wolde-Michael par. 1, 2).

In the late 1980s, vogue shifted from the old style to the new style or as it is known as the New Way Vogue. The New Way vogue of the present time is distinguished by more complicated moves. Regardless of style, the Harlem renaissance left a unique genre of dancing that demonstrates the braveness of the black LGBTQ minorities in creating their own art and culture (Wolde-Michael par. 5).

3.5 The Black Arts Movement as a Legacy of the Harlem Renaissance

The Black Arts Movement (BAM) can be considered a legacy of the Harlem renaissance to reawake the New Negro of the 1960s. However, it tended to break

the interracialism of the Harlem renaissance. During the 1960s the BAM reprinted important New Negro writings including Alain Locke's "The New Negro: An Interpretation". This focus mirrored an attempt to rebuild American identity through the diverse cultural conception of nationalism developed in Harlem in the 1920s (Stewart 25).

The writers of the Harlem Renaissance predicted the emergence of the BAM; the clearest example of such emancipation is Hughes' essays, "The Negro Artist" and "The Racial Mountain." Both the Harlem Renaissance and the BAM produced almost similar literary works, except that the Harlem Renaissance utilized Negro tone while the BAM utilized black tone rather than Negro tone. Because they approached the BAM's aesthetic ideology, several Harlem Renaissance writings can almost be classified as Black Arts writings (Crawford 387-401).

The sense of racial pride expressed in Locke's manifesto of 1925 looked spiritless in comparison to the sense of black pride shown in the BAM. In addition to the definition of the black aesthetic adopted by the BAM and the Harlem Renaissance were different (Crawford 387-401).

The black anger or rage of the Harlem Renaissance literature which is performed in Toomer's *cane*, in particular, influenced that of the BAM. The BAM was attracted by *cane*'s beauty of blackness and the deep love for a black folk spirit. Through Toomer's *cane*, the Harlem renaissance anticipated the BAM and is considered as a legacy (Crawford 387-401).

3.6 Conclusion

Through this chapter, we have addressed the main legacy of the Harlem Renaissance by focusing on the artistic aspects that remain important components of the African American cultural history. The Harlem Renaissance' artists ensured their own legacy. The legacy of this period can be summarized in Locke's perspective about never forgetting to include black

struggle within the artistic production. Despite the worst years of the Great Depression, African American writers such as Langston Hughes and Hurston continued to publish important literary works. The *Black Artist and The Mountain*, and *Their Eyes Were Watching* influenced many other young writers such as Morrison, Ellison, and Wright and is considered as an important legacy for the period. Besides these literary inheritances, Hip Hop, Vogue dance, and other music and dance styles are considered as a significant legacy because they have remained till the present day. We can thus conclude that the African American culture can stand out in this mixed legacy of the Harlem Renaissance.

General Conclusion

The Harlem Renaissance was one of the important black artistic movements of the 20th century that emerged in the United States. It is considered an important period in black history because it created an opportunity for the African Americans to manifest their creativity and to change how they were portrayed.

After a lengthy period of racial prejudice in the south, there were a lot of causes that led to the birth of the Harlem Renaissance. During the First World War, northern cities were in need for a black labor force to replace the absence of white laborers in industries. Hence African Americans moved northward during the Great Migrations of 1916 in search of jobs and better living conditions.

The Great Migration brought African Americans to northern cities and gather mainly in Harlem, Manhattan in New York City. In addition, the leading figures of the NAACP were the main contributors to the birth of such a movement. They believed that art and literature could make several race changes. Locke's manifesto *The New Negro* was the main reason that brought the renaissance to its sparkle.

The African Americans responded in an optimistic and creative way. They expressed themselves creatively during the renaissance, which they reconsidered as a stage to demonstrate racial prejudice and race oppression to the world. In addition, they performed their beliefs and traditions in literature, music, dance, and visual arts. Important literary works were published by Van Vechten, Hughes, Toomer, and McKay. They emphasized and illustrated the African American culture. The African Americans also created dance, visual arts, and new genres of music such as Jazz and Blues in terms of entertainments.

On the other hand, African American women participated in the Harlem Renaissance by publishing literary works. Their works discussed racial oppression and illustrated the black

woman who struggled with race issues and gender discrimination. Hence, black women played an important role in the movement.

Despite the pessimistic of the Great Depression, the Harlem Renaissance faded during the 1940s. It lost its sparkle after the pessimistic status that emerged during that time. However, it succeeded in achieving its desired change. The Harlem Renaissance created the African American self-confidence. It convinced the Negro that he can be creative and beautiful. Its legacy remains till the present time.

It can be concluded that the Harlem Renaissance has strongly influenced African American culture; not only in terms of artistic traditions but also in terms of beliefs and values that characterize the African American culture.

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