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**Edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. & Gene Andrew Jarrett: *The New Negro***

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## INTRODUCTION

*A class of colored people, the “New Negro,” . . . have arisen since the War, with education, refinement, and money.*

—*Cleveland Gazette* (June 28, 1895)

*We are at the commencement of a “negroid” renaissance . . . that will have in time as much importance in literary history as the much spoken of and much praised Celtic and Canadian renaissance.*

—William Stanley Braithwaite (1901)

*. . . Rough hewn from the jungle and the desert’s sands,  
Slavery was the chisel that fashioned him to form,  
And gave him all the arts and sciences had won.  
The lyncher, mob, and stake have been his emery wheel,  
TO MAKE A POLISHED MAN of strength and power.  
In him, the latest birth of freedom,  
God hath again made all things new.  
Europe and Asia with ebbing tides recede,  
America’s unfinished arch of freedom waits,  
Till he, the corner stone of strength  
Is lifted into place and power.  
Behold him! dauntless and unafraid he stands.  
He comes with laden arms,  
Bearing rich gifts to science, religion, poetry and song . . .*

—Reverend Reverdy C. Ransom, “The New Negro” (1923)

The three epigraphs tell the classic story of the American Negro’s symbolic transition from “Old” to “New” between Reconstruction and World War II. During this period, the Old Negro was a trope that depicted the African diaspora as an inferior race. Allegedly, Negro uncles, mammies, and chillun’ dressed, talked, behaved, and thought in ways that lacked the kind of sophistication and refinement generally attributed to Anglo America. Such caricatures oversimplified black subjectivity and experiences, while ridiculing the idea of black assimilability to American civilization. African American discourses of the New Negro, however, emerged to contest degrading black stereotypes. Literature, photographs, illustrations, theater, and speeches were but a few of the contexts in which African Americans declared that the race could be morally, intellectually, and culturally elevated to civilization.

In the wake of recent scholarship that has examined the remarkable history of the New Negro, this anthology hopes to flesh it out even further, showing why the New Negro was one of the most compelling stories of racial uplift that circulated throughout U.S. intellectual society, culture, and politics.<sup>1</sup> By reprinting approximately one hundred canonical and lesser-known essays written or published between 1892 and 1938, we lay the groundwork for scholars, teachers, students, and general readers to learn more about the political interconnection of race,

representation, and African American culture. Racial representation, we argue, functioned as an ideological or philosophical bridge between the cultural politics and the political culture of African America. Culture politics—or the politics of culture—mainly refers to how people acquire, understand, and apply power in their relationships to one another. Such power relations, in turn, underwrite the formation of certain patterns of human values, discourses, attitudes, actions, or artifacts. By contrast, political culture—or the culture of politics—emphasizes how cultural patterns inform the institutions, organizations, and interest groups of public policy or governmental activity. With these two preliminary definitions in mind, this anthology aims to show that the New Negro was a major discursive cornerstone of racial representation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. What is more, this discourse helped to generate the terms by which we describe and understand African American culture today.

The tropes, politics, and discourses of racial uplift that we intend to explain in this introduction outline the parameters of what could be thought of as “New Negro criticism.” This tradition comprises not only essays that explicitly mention the term “New Negro,” but also those involved in a wider critical conversation on race, representation, and African American culture—a conversation of which the trope of a New Negro was, of course, an original, defining feature. For this anthology, we have chosen a vast array of essays written by sophisticated critics, historians, and thinkers interested in anchoring the meanings of art, culture, and politics to racial representation.

### **The Trope of a New Negro**

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Frederick Douglass, the great nineteenth-century writer and orator, was widely advertised during his lifetime as “the representative colored man of the United States.” It was a designation that Douglass liked; indeed, he seemed to have encouraged its use. What a curious manner by which to be known, or by which to be recalled: the representative colored man of these United States. But in what sense was Frederick Douglass “representative”? In the sense of mode, or mean, or median? Certainly not Frederick Douglass, a man of learning, an author of three masterful autobiographies as well as hundreds of speeches and essays. Douglass could not be mistaken for the mean, the mode, or the median of the African American community of the nineteenth century. Clearly, another sense of representation obtains here, one that we tend to forget.

Douglass was the representative colored man in the United States because he was the most presentable. And he was the most presentable because of the presence he had established as a master of voice. When Douglass spoke or wrote, he did so “for” the Negro, in a relation of part for whole. He spoke to recreate the public face of the race. Douglass, then, was the most representative colored man both because he represented black people most eloquently and elegantly, and because he was the race’s great opportunity to re-present itself in the court of racist public opinion. African Americans sought to re-present their public selves in order to reconstruct their public, reproducible images.

The word “reconstruction” and the concepts that it connotes are so familiar to American historians and to scholars of African American studies that we tend to forget the word’s etymology and its complex layers of signification. The dictionary

states that to reconstruct means “to construct anew in the mind; to restore [something past] mentally.” “Reconstruction,” it tells us, consists of “the action or process of reconstructing,” or “an instance or example of this; a thing reconstructed.” “Reconstruction” is also the proper name for “the *process* by which after the Civil War the States which had seceded were restored to the rights and privileges of the Union.” This period, we know, commenced officially with the passage (over President Andrew Johnson’s veto) of the Reconstruction Act of 1867, and ended with what is known popularly as the Hayes-Tilden Compromise of 1877. Reconstruction, then, endured officially for a mere ten years, to be replaced by a dark period in American history known as Redemption, which Sterling Brown once said lasted in the South from roughly 1876 “to yesterday”! By the turn of the century, Southern Redemption had become fused with black disenfranchisement and the rise of the white supremacist movement, led by the Ku Klux Klan.

Moreover, the dictionary defines “construction” as the process of putting “a specified interpretation on.” “Construction” also means “the action of framing, devising, or forming, by the putting together of parts.” “Construction” signifies as well “the manner in which a thing is artificially constructed or naturally formed; structure, conformation, disposition.” “Construction,” finally, is “a thing constructed; a material structure; a formation of the mind or genius.” Here, of greatest concern are the latter two definitions: the manner in which a thing is artificially formed, and the structure of a formation of the mind and the imagination. Of greatest concern, more specifically, are two antithetical figures of the black—the curious heritage of the New Negro, and the white figure of the black as Sambo—and the complex relation that obtains between them.

These two figures bear an antithetical relation to each other, and function in a relation of reversal. Whereas the image of a “New Negro” has served various generations of black intellectuals as a sign of plenitude, regeneration, or a truly reconstructed *presence*, the image of the black in what could be thought of as “Sambo Art” has served various generations of racists as a sign of lack, degeneration, or a truly negated *absence*. The two sets of figures can also be said to have a certain cause-and-effect relation. The fiction of an American Negro who is “now” somehow “new” or different from an “Old Negro” was sought to counter the image in the popular American imagination of the black as devoid of all the characteristics that supposedly separated the lower forms of human life from the higher forms.

In an accurate, if humorous, sense, blacks have felt the need to attempt to “reconstruct” their image probably since that dreadful day in 1619, when the first boatload of Africans disembarked in Virginia. Africans and their descendants commenced their cultural lives in this hemisphere as veritable deconstructions of all that the West so ardently wished itself to be. Almost as soon as blacks could write, it seems, they set out to redefine—against already received racist stereotypes—who and what a black person was, and how unlike the racist stereotype the black original could actually be. To counter these racist stereotypes, white and black writers erred on the side of nobility, and posited equally fictitious black archetypes, from Oroonoko in 1688 to Kunta Kinte in more recent times. If various Western cultures constructed blackness as an absence, then various generations of black authors have attempted to reconstruct blackness as a presence.

Reconstruction, of course, is a broad concept that, in regard to the Negro in America, spans a period longer than the decade separating the Reconstruction Act and the Hayes-Tilden Compromise. Indeed, black intellectual reconstruction

commenced in the antebellum slave narratives, published mainly between the 1830s and the early 1860s, and ended (if indeed it *has* ended) in the decade after the New Negro, or Harlem, Renaissance of the 1920s. And the *trope* of reconstruction was the trope of the New Negro in African American discourse between Reconstruction and World War II. This long period, rather than the short one between 1867 and 1877, was the crux of the period of black intellectual reconstruction. For the literary critic, there is little choice. Between 1866 and 1877, for example, black people published as books only *two* novels, one in 1867 and one in 1871. Between 1892 and 1938, however, African American writers published close to seventy-five novels.

While a dramatic upsurge of energy in the American body politic had characterized the period known as Reconstruction, the corpus of *African American* literature and culture, on the other hand, enjoyed no such apparent vitalization. On the contrary, blacks published more novels between 1853 and 1865, when they were fighting slavery, than they did when they were at least nominally free, the freest that blacks had been since the day before they set sail for Virginia in 1619. It is as if the great and terrible subject of African American literature—slavery—found no immediate counterpart when blacks were freed. Once Redemption had established itself as a new form of enslavement for African Americans, they regained a public voice, louder and more strident than it had been even during slavery.

This stands as a paradox of our intellectual history. One of the most important contributions to African American literature between 1866 and 1877 was written not by a black person at all but by Mark Twain. His 1874 short story, “A True Story,” purports to be “Aunt Rachel’s” oral narration of her own enslavement, rendered entirely in what we call “dialect.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, Reconstruction was not a time of a great renaissance of African American letters, but the period between this moment and World War II was the era of the myth of a New Negro, a New Negro in search of a cultural renaissance capable of accommodating it.

The “New Negro,” of course, was only a metaphor, a trope. The paradox of this claim was inherent in the trope itself, combining as it did a concern with time, antecedents, and heritage, on the one hand, with that for a cleared space, the public face of the race, on the other. The figure, moreover, combined implicitly both an eighteenth-century vision of utopia with a nineteenth-century idea of progress to form a black *fin-de-siècle* dream of an unbroken, unhabituated, neological self—signified by the upper case in “Negro” and the belated adjective “New.” A paradox of this sort of self-willed beginning was that its “success” depended fundamentally upon self-negation, a turning away from the “Old Negro” and the labyrinthine memory of black enslavement and toward the register of a “New Negro,” an irresistible, spontaneously generated black and sufficient self.

Perhaps a more profound paradox of this form of neological utopia was that this willed, ideal state of being and renewal could exist only in what Michel Foucault has called “the non-place of language,” precisely because it was mainly a rhetorical or discursive figure. And, just as utopia signifies “no-place,” so did “New Negro” signify a “black person who lives at no place,” and at no time.<sup>3</sup> It was a bold and audacious act of language, signifying the will to power, to dare to recreate a race by renaming it, despite the dubiousness of the venture. It was this kind of racial-historical fiction—the weary black dream of a perfect state of being, with no history in particular detail, rather than the search for a group of black and especial historical entities—which contemporary literary scholars must historicize.

Frank E. and Fritzie P. Manuel, writing in *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (1979), have aptly characterized the latent content of all utopic thought thusly: “The great utopia startles and yet is recognized as conceivable. It is not a sleeping or bizarre vision but one that satisfies a hunger or stimulates the mind and the body to the recognition of a new potentiality [. . .]. It can be studied as a reflection of the specific crises that it presumes to resolve [. . .]. It may capture the anguish of an epoch in a striking metaphor.”<sup>4</sup> The weary dream of a perfected state of being, with no history, the dream of naming a second, new self, was emblematic of the anguish in African American history. This naming ritual, in short, was prefigured in the autobiographical texts of the ex-slaves published before 1865. Frederick Douglass called himself by three surnames before he stumbled upon “Douglass.”<sup>5</sup> Sojourner Truth, in her own autobiographical narrative, strongly recalls the naming of her newly freed self, and attributes that art to the grace of God:

My name was Isabella; but when I left the house of bondage, I left everything behind. I wan’t goin’ to keep nothin’ of Egypt on me, an’ so I went to the Lord an’ asked him to give me a new name. An’ the Lord give me Sojourner, because I was to travel up an’ down the land, showin’ the people their sins, an’ bein’ a *sign* unto them. Afterward I told de Lord I wanted another name, ’cause everybody else had two names; an de’ Lord give me Truth, because I was to declare the truth to de people.<sup>6</sup>

In *Up from Slavery* (1901), Booker T. Washington, the Negro self as endowed institution, confirms Truth’s declaration of the name as a “sign” of the self, even if a less natural relationship prevailed between the sign and its referent for most Negroes than it did for her: “After the coming of freedom there were two points upon which practically all the people on our place were agreed, and I find that this was generally true throughout the South: that they must change their names, and that they must leave the old plantation for at least a few days or weeks in order that they might really feel that they were free.”<sup>7</sup>

From instances such as these, but multiplied, what was thought to apply to the part was willfully applied to the whole. At least since the creation in 1827 of the first black newspaper, *Freedom’s Journal*, African Americans had displayed consistent, and perhaps undue, concern for their racial name. Especially full was the account of debates over the race’s name at the turn of the twentieth century, as printed in *Alexander’s Magazine*, the *Voice of the Negro*, *Colored American Magazine*, and the *New York Age*. The idea that the race’s public perception turned largely upon the connotations of its name was a received and resistant one, as germane to African American intellectual history as was the idea of a direct relation between the race’s creation of “art” and its realization of political desire. As we shall soon see, nowhere in African American history was this complex relation more evident than in the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s.

In the centuries before this period, the phrase “New Negro” was so compelling that one eighteenth-century writer, for example, felt called upon to define it for his 1745 readership of the *London Magazine*.<sup>8</sup> What was curious even about this early definition was that the name already connoted, as it would later at the turn of the century, both a temporal order of succession and an ahistorical American experience. Furthermore, its connotation of a direct spatial association with Africa implied a state of consciousness, perhaps a form of racial dignity or integrity, a sort of “organic community,” no longer even possible to aspire toward in the new world of

enslavement. But this usage, as suggestive as it was, was an isolated one. It was the several definitions of the “New Negro” as the sign of a new racial and public self after Reconstruction that applied most directly to the Harlem Renaissance. This racial self, as we define it here, did not exist as an entity or group of entities, but “only” as a coded system of signs, complete with masks and mythology.

At least since its usages after Reconstruction, the name had implied a tension between strictly political concerns and strictly artistic concerns. Alain Locke’s appropriation of the name in 1925 for his literary movement represented a measured co-opting of the term from its fairly radical political connotations, as defined in the *Messenger*, the *Crusader*, the *Kansas City Call*, and the *Chicago Whip*, in bold essays and editorials printed during the post–World War I race “riots” in which African Americans rather ably defended themselves from mob aggression.

During the 1920s, the New Negro indeed had undergone changes of the profoundest sort. The two poles of this apparently drastic transformation, however, were present in even the earliest uses of the phrase. The sheer resonating preserve and force of this transformation can be gleaned somewhat from the fact that the postwar writings of Alain Locke and his contemporaries saw fit to graft, onto its postwar connotations of aggressive self-defense, the mythological and primitivistic defense of the racial self that was the basis of the Harlem Renaissance.

### New Negro Politics

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In the brief history above, which states that the concept of the New Negro implied a tension between political concerns and artistic concerns, what was the exact nature of this tension? What definition or kind of politics created it? Is it the politics of culture (cultural politics), or the culture of politics (political culture)?

Certain scholars today have discouraged the misapplication of “politics” in histories of African American culture. For example, in *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought* (1997), Adolph L. Reed, Jr. has accused literary historians—and perhaps cultural historians more generally—of “unhelpfully blur[ring] the distinction between cultural history and the history of social and political thought, such that the former has tended to substitute for the latter.” These historians ascribe “politics” to African American culture, especially as it relates to social behavior and art, in ways that presumably a political historian would dismiss as ahistorical, if not also too hagiographical. Accurate definitions of politics should include issues of “legitimacy, justice, obligation, the meaning of equality, or the nature of the polity”; “demography, social psychology, political economy, or public opinion”; not to mention the conventions of government.<sup>9</sup>

Analogous critiques of African Americanist approaches to politics have arisen in literary studies, too. In *So Black and Blue* (2003), Kenneth W. Warren provides an important way of thinking about how and why historians should distinguish between “direct black political action” and “indirect cultural politics.” Direct black political action acknowledges that “race [. . .] is at bottom a problem of politics and economics—of constitution making and of wielding power legislatively and economically in order to mobilize broad constituencies to preserve an unequal social order.” In this context, African Americans have used activist, legislative, judicial, or public-policy means to access institutional resources and power, and to exploit them for their own best interests as racialized subjects. Indirect cultural politics,

by contrast, signifies the efforts of African American intellectuals and artists, after the “failure” of Reconstruction, to operate “outside the political realm of direct representation—whether one did so literarily, sociologically, philosophically, administratively, or philanthropically.” By way of this distinction, Warren identifies a long historical trend in African American intellectualism tracing back to a post-Reconstruction “cultural turn in black politics,” when African American leaders and uplifters linked cultural to political arbitrations of racial representation. According to Warren, this logic was flawed because culture was not—and has not been ever since—as responsible and transformative as direct political action.<sup>10</sup>

Warren’s call for more accurate historical contexts that account for the cultural turn does not decry—as much as Reed does—contemporary academic interest in cultural politics. But his assumption that “direct black political action” is more transformative than “indirect cultural politics” neglects those instances in African American history when cultural politics and political culture were more mutually dependent than he makes them appear. Moreover, there are successful examples when African Americans sought, in a sense, to make cultural politics as “direct” as possible.

Recently, scholars such as Barbara Foley, Marlon B. Ross, Anne Elizabeth Carroll, and Martha Jane Nadell have supported this point. They have studied various aspects of “New Negro politics,” a paradigm encapsulating black and white interest in the cultural politics and the political culture of racial representation. In *Spectres of 1919: Class and Nation in the Making of the New Negro* (2003), Foley details the New Negro’s ideological transition from political radicalism in 1919 to romantic culturalism in 1925, while Ross in *Manning the Race: Reforming Black Men in the Jim Crow Era* (2004) shows that the gender and sexual assumptions about African American men placed certain pressures on, and created certain impressions within, New Negro political discourse between the Civil War and the early twentieth century. Ross also gestures to how African Americans tried to control the cultural politics of racial representation through artistic forms more accessible and emotive than literary art. Carroll’s *Word, Image, and the New Negro: Representation and Identity in the Harlem Renaissance* (2005) and Nadell’s *Enter the New Negroes: Images of Race in American Culture* (2004) elaborate this idea by examining the relationship between written words and visual images in New Negro politics. While Carroll celebrates the multimedia legacy of African American culture, Nadell exposes the discursive limitations of words and images intrinsic to this legacy. Published within the past few years, these four books mark a crucial moment in the academic study of New Negro politics. The new scholarship demonstrates that the political inflation of culture in African American studies has not been as misguided as we have been led to believe.<sup>11</sup>

Working in concert with this scholarship, this anthology illustrates the significance of New Negro politics to our understanding of African American history. In the first section of the anthology, entitled “The New Negro,” the reprinted essays provide an ideal context for determining the cultural role of the New Negro in the history of African American political mobilization. Conversely, as we shall soon see, the construct helps us to realize the original political role of racial representation in the development of African American culture.

Certain black leaders, for example, rhetorically aligned the international, imperialist war being waged in Europe with the domestic, racial war being waged in the United States. In a 1919 editorial published in *The Crisis*, W.E.B. Du Bois decries the

wartime mistreatment of Negro troops in France, whom white Americans at home and abroad had unfairly, and excessively, accused of raping women, among other atrocities. The admirable participation of African American soldiers in an international struggle on behalf of America and its European allies against the German military, according to Du Bois's testimony, could not alleviate the soldiers' concerns that their home country "represents and gloats in lynching, disenfranchisement, caste, brutality and devilish insult" of the darker-skinned race. Consequently, African Americans did not desire just to "return from fighting," but to "return fighting" on behalf of "Democracy."<sup>12</sup>

If we investigate ideological areas in postwar New Negro discourse other than left-wing radicalism, we can see that Du Bois's political-warrior mentality had resonated among black intellectuals. In his 1920 book, *When Africa Awakes: The "Inside Story" of the Stirrings and Strivings of the New Negro in the Western World*, Hubert H. Harrison argues that the New Negro must embrace a "Race First" philosophy that realizes the importance of direct political representation and action: "The new Negro race in America will not achieve political self-respect until it is in a position to organize itself as a politically independent party." Outlined in the chapter entitled "The New Politics: The New Politics for the New Negro," Harrison further contends that African Americans must "demand, not 'recognition,' but representation, and we are out to throw our votes to any party which gives us this, and withhold them from any party which refuses to give it," which at this time was the Republican Party. Granted, he suggests unrealistically later in the chapter that a New Negro could become president of the United States if the race concentrated its votes around that candidate—whose African ancestry, by the way, needed to be indiscernible to the naked eye. But Harrison's nearly Garveyistic idea that the development of racial-political consciousness and nationalism marked the Negro's transition from Old to New was deemed quite practical by his contemporaries.

Of course, the publications of essays and books like Du Bois's and Harrison's did not discourage certain writers from accusing the New Negro of being politically meaningless. In "The New Negro Hokum" (1928), Gustavus Adolphus Stewart laments that the Negro secures governmental positions that are at best "second-rate," without significant influence. The level of iconoclastic cynicism characterizing this article, however, insinuates Stewart's degree of disingenuousness. Rhetorically, it resembles the original article after which Stewart modeled his essay, George S. Schuyler's "The Negro-Art Hokum" (1926), which similarly masked the author's true belief in the Negro's political salience.<sup>13</sup>

Schuyler's iconoclastic campaign, it turns out, began amid the public debate over Alain Locke, his ambassadorial status, and his two edited collections of 1925, "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro" (*The Survey Graphic Number* [March 1]) and, its later edition in book form, *The New Negro: An Interpretation*. Locke's romantic construction of the New Negro neglected the depth and complexity of African American struggle. The wartime and postwar New Negro was actually undergoing an ideological evolution, or what Barbara Foley has called "devolution." This idea helps us to avoid the conventional apolitical story of the Negro symbolically transmuted from Old to New in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In reality, Locke's romantic New Negro was a "militant, card-carrying, gun-toting Socialist who refused to turn the other cheek," a "New Negro class struggle warrior," or a "gun-brandishing New Negro." Modern political culture, in short, revolved about the New Negro. According to Foley: "In the revolutionary crucible of 1919, the term

*New Negro* signified a fighter against both racism and capitalism; to be a political moderate did not preclude endorsement of at least some aspects of a class analysis of racism or sympathy with at least some goals of the Bolshevik Revolution.” In periodicals ranging from *Call*, *Liberator*, and *Worker’s Monthly* to *Negro World*, *Messenger*, and *Crusader*, antiracist discourse portrayed the New Negro, through a class frame of analysis, as a political activist of both national and international stature.<sup>14</sup>

Through Locke’s popular 1925 collections, however, New Negro discourse shifted from political radicalism to romantic culturalism. That ideological turn within the New Negro movement pivoted on Locke’s hegemonic tropes of the “folk,” vis-à-vis his proclamation that African American art and culture were undergoing a rebirth of extraordinary proportions. Although only a glimmer in some of his earlier, pre-Renaissance writings and lectures, Locke relatively succeeded in disengaging African American culture from radicalism in *The New Negro*. Through the revision of certain essays to the omission of others that conjured up radical sentiment, Locke suppressed in his 1925 collections the idea that the New Negro was radical both in tone and in purpose.<sup>15</sup> Romanticized as ahistorical, lower-class, and authentically black, the folk served as metonym or synecdoche of the African American community, lubricating Locke’s turn from racial antagonism to racial amelioration. The consequent decline in production and consumption of left-leaning New Negro cultural politics, in other words, was, to a certain degree, an accurate compass for the direction of larger U.S. political culture.<sup>16</sup>

Locke’s relationship to political radicalism came full circle in the 1930s. If one interprets Richard Wright’s historic essay, “Blueprint for Negro Writing” (1937), as a 1930s (as opposed to pre-Renaissance) version of New Negro radicalism, then we can see that Locke’s early-1930s writings anticipate, and even concede, Wright’s critique of the Harlem Renaissance. Both Wright and Locke pointed out the ideological disconnections, once exacerbated by the Renaissance, between the proletariat and the intelligentsia of African American society. What is more, Wright’s demand that the African American writer should meet the “serious responsibility” of doing “justice to his subject matter, in order to depict Negro life in all its manifold and intricate relationships,” echoed Locke’s insistence that the African American writer should avoid the “spiritual truancy and social irresponsibility” of Claude McKay, for example. Although once a New Negro radical, McKay lived abroad from 1922 to 1934, compromising his relationship to African American cultural, intellectual, and political institutions.<sup>17</sup>

All this means that the powerful transfer of cultural ambassadorship from Locke to Wright—that is, from the Harlem Renaissance to the so-called Chicago Renaissance—did not operate through extreme philosophical disagreement. Rather, it occurred through their mutual recognition of the decline of the Harlem Renaissance, the African American cultural opportunities afforded by political radicalism, and the importance of pragmatic collaborations between writers and “the people” during the long New Negro movement. In sum, the ideas of Wright and Locke were more continuous in the 1930s than their long-standing and divergent reputations as deans of the Harlem Renaissance and the Chicago Renaissance, respectively, have led us to believe.

Published one year after Wright’s “Blueprint for Negro Writing,” George S. Schuyler’s “The Rise of the Black Internationale” similarly captures the political mood of the New Negro, but it does so from a more global perspective. Schuyler

characterizes black political internationalism as the penultimate stage of the New Negro's "arrival":

The New Negro is here. Perhaps no more courageous than the Old Negro who dropped his shackles in 1863, and fought against ignorance, propaganda, lethargy and persecution, but better informed, privy to his past, understanding of the present, unafraid of the future. [. . .] He believes that to combat this White Internationale of oppression a Black Internationale of liberation is necessary. He sees and welcomes a community of interest of all colored peoples. No longer ignorant, terrorized or lacking confidence, he waits, and schemes and plans. He is the Damoclean sword dangling over the white world. Everywhere he is on the march, he cannot be stopped, and he knows it.

Schuyler's words belong to a long history of African American discourse on New Negro local and global politics, spanning from the postbellum nineteenth century to the first years of the twenty-first. They bespeak the historic desire of many African Americans to know why America's optimistic democratic project remains unfinished. The New Negro, it turned out, captured the political goal of certain African Americans to facilitate this project for uplifting the race and, by extension, for the betterment of the nation and the world.

### **New Negro Uplift**

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New Negroes, in marked contrast with their enslaved or disenfranchised ancestors, demanded that their rights as citizens be vouchsafed by law. Significantly, New Negroes were to be recognized by what editorials in the 1890s called "education," "refinement," and "money," with property rights strongly implied as the hallmark of those who can demand their political rights. "Property," in this sense, was only one of a list of "properties" demanded of this New Negro. "Education" and "refinement"—to *speak* properly was to be proper—would ensure one's rights, along with the security of property.

Curiously, as the first section of this anthology, "The New Negro," attests, these terms of racial uplift came to bear on subsequent definitions of African American culture. For example, J.W.E. Bowen, writing in *An Appeal to the King* (1895), defines the New Negro only in terms of racial "consciousness" and its relation to "civilization": "the consciousness of a racial personality under the blaze of a new civilization." Bowen's "New Negro" led directly to the Harlem Renaissance, for it was above all through literature that both "a racial personality" and "the blaze of a new civilization" manifested themselves. Bowen's New Negro tried to create a universal racial art.

Booker T. Washington, Fannie Barrier Williams, and N. B. Wood dreamed of *A New Negro for a New Century*. The book was an elaborately constructed compendium of excerpted black histories, slave narratives, journalism, biographical sketches, and extended defenses of the combat performances of black soldiers from the American Revolution and "the Rebellion" to the Spanish-American War, in general, and the actions of "Regulars in the Philippines" and "Regulars in Cuba," more specifically. Published in 1900 and subtitled "An Accurate and Up-to-Date Record of the Upward Struggles of the Negro Race," *A New Negro* clearly intended to "turn" the new century's image of the black away from the stereotypes scattered

throughout plantation fictions, blackface minstrelsy, vaudeville, racist pseudoscience, and vulgar social Darwinism. The task was an enormous one. African American society had only the most minimal control over the mass production and dissemination of information, and its intellectuals believed that their racist treatment in life merely imitated their racist “treatments” in art. Accordingly, to manipulate the image of the Negro was, in a sense, to manipulate reality. The public Negro self, therefore, was an entity to be crafted.

And craft it Washington and his fellow editors attempted to do. The whole of *A New Negro*—some 428 pages and 60 portraits—reads now as a complex, if bulky, sign of the individual achievements of black men and women as abolitionists, soldiers, and artists. It also reads as a sign of the twentieth century’s “New Negroes,” the “progressive” classes of the race, who were forming numerous self-help institutions, such as “Colored Women’s Clubs,” which were key indicators of the race’s capacity for “elevation.” These two metaphors, by the way, along with the myriad versions of the vernacular phrase “we is risin,” were echoes of the eighteenth-century terminology of racial uplift, related to the idea of a vertical great chain of being, along which both races and individuals “rose” from the animal kingdom to the most sublime instances of humanity, such as those frequently identified with the mathematician Isaac Newton and the poet John Milton. “Capacity” designated physical cranial measurements, but it quickly became the metaphor for the measure of the potential of human intelligence. The following lines from Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, quoted in Mrs. Booker T. Washington’s essay on the “Club Movement among Negro Women” in J. L. Nichols and William H. Croghan’s 1920 edition of *The New Progress of a Race*, indicate these origins clearly:

There is light beyond the darkness,  
 Joy beyond the present pain;  
 There is hope in God’s great justice  
 And the Negro’s rising brain.

*A New Negro*’s use of the keyword “progressive” dozens of times corresponds directly to an idea of progress through perfectibility, an eighteenth-century idea of racial uplift. Booker T. Washington’s *New Negro*, then, stood at a point on the great chain head and shoulders above the ex-slave black person, freed now for only thirty-five years. As the introduction postures: “This book has been rightly named *A New Negro for a New Century*. The negro of today is in every phase of life far advanced over the negro of thirty years ago. In the following pages the progressive life of the African American people has been written in the light of achievements that will be surprising to people who are ignorant of the enlarging life of these remarkable people.” Of this anthology’s eighteen chapters, no less than seven are histories of black involvement in American wars, while six chapters “unmask” slavery. Rather creatively, a large part of this material derives from the writings of African American historians such as George Washington Williams, William C. Nell, and William Grant Still. “Heroes and Martyrs” to the race are John Brown, Calvin Fairbanks, William Lloyd Garrison, and Elijah P. Lovejoy, while two men and two women—Frederick Douglass, Toussaint L’Ouverture, Phillis Wheatley, and Sojourner Truth—are accorded the unusual privilege of being called “Fathers [and Mothers] to the Race.”

Two chapters in the collection treat the “Club Movement among Colored Women,” and another charts the educational progress of the race. Booker T. Washington’s

portrait forms the frontispiece of the volume, while Mrs. Washington's portrait concludes the book, thus standing as framing symbols of the idea of progress.<sup>18</sup> Between this handsome pair are portraits of military figures, such as Antonio Maceo, Maximo Gomez, Charles E. Young, and John H. Alexander; creative writers such as Paul Laurence Dunbar, T. Thomas Fortune, Charles W. Chesnutt, and Frederick Douglass; scholars including W. S. Scarborough, H. T. Kealing, S. Laing Williams, and W.E.B. Du Bois; and notable women such as Mary Church Terrell, Anna J. Cooper, Dr. Ida Grey Nelson, Miss Lulu Love, and Fannie Barrier Williams, all of whom appear to be very "progressive" indeed.

The concomitant militaristic emphasis in *A New Negro* intends to refute claims made by Theodore Roosevelt in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1899 of the inherent racial weaknesses that prevented black officers from commanding effectively, thus making mandatory, in subsequent wars, their command by white officers. Almost the whole of Sgt. Presley Holliday's rebuttal, printed initially in the *New York Age* in 1899, appears in *A New Negro*, along with the histories of black valor in every American war. The tone of these essays is fairly represented by Holliday's claim that black soldiers in the Civil War "turned the tide of war against slavery and the Rebellion, in favor of freedom and the Union." To have fought nobly, clearly, was held to be a legitimate argument for full citizenship rights.

Fannie Barrier Williams's essay, "The Club Movement among Colored Women of America," furthermore, is pertinent evidence here of an urge to displace racial heritage with an ideal of sexual bonding. "To feel that you are something better than a slave, or a descendant of an ex-slave," she writes, "to feel that you are a unit in the womanhood of a great nation and a great civilization, is the beginning of self-respect and the respect of your race." It is this direct relationship between the self and the race, between the part and the whole, that is the unspoken premise of *A New Negro*. As much as transforming a white racist image of the black, then *A New Negro's* intention was to restructure the race's image of itself. As Williams puts this necessity: "The consciousness of being fully free has not yet come to the great mass of the colored women in this country," in part because "the emancipation of the mind and spirit of the race could not be accomplished by legislation." This call to "progress" and "respectability," therefore, was meant to marshal the masses of the race into the regiments of the New Negroes who, of course, would command them. And if "Zip Coon," "Sambo," and "Mammy" were thought to be the stereotyped figments of racist minds, there was just enough lingering doubt about their capacities for progress for Washington and his cohorts to structure a manifesto directed as much at them as at sensitive, intelligent, and wealthy whites.

Fannie Barrier Williams, writing in Crogman's 1902 edition of *The Intellectual Progress of the Colored Women of the United States since the Emancipation Proclamation*, again in an essay entitled "The Club Movement among Colored Women of America," places the black woman at the center of the New Negro's philosophy of self-respect and racial uplift. "The Negro woman's club of today," she maintains, "represents the New Negro with new powers of self-help." Two years later, in 1904, John Henry Adams, Jr., in a *Voice of the Negro* essay called "A Study of the Features of the New Negro Woman," concurs with Williams's assessment of the central role of African American women in the New Negro movement, and even goes so far as to reproduce images of several ideal New Negro women so that other women might pattern themselves after the prototype.

Undaunted, two months later John Henry Adams published the male companion piece to his earlier essay. “The New Negro Man” appeared in the October 1904 number of the *Voice of the Negro*. Again, Adams is eager to chart the unpainted features of this New Negro:

Here is the real new Negro man. Tall, erect, commanding, with a face as strong and expressive as Angelo’s Moses and yet every whit as pleasing and handsome as Reuben’s favorite model. There is that penetrative eye about which Charles Lamb wrote with such deep admiration, that broad forehead and firm chin. [. . .] Such is the new Negro man, and he who finds the real man in the hope of deriving all the benefits to be got by acquaintance and contact does not run upon him by mere chance, but must go over the paths of some kind of biography, until he gets a reasonable understanding of what it actually costs of human effort to be a man and at the same time a Negro.

As he had done in his essay on the New Negro woman, Adams prints seven portraits of the New Negro man, so that all might be able to recognize him. What is of importance here is Adams’s stress upon the “features” of this “new” Negro, drawing a correlation between the specific *characteristics* of the individuals depicted and the larger, uplifted *character* of the race. Why is this so important? Precisely because the *features* of the race—its collective mouth-shape and lip-size, the shape of its head (which especially concerned phrenologists at the turn of the century), its black skin color, its kinky hair—had been caricatured and stereotyped so severely in popular American art that black intellectuals seemed to feel that nothing less than a full facelift and a complete break with the enslaved past could ameliorate the social conditions of the modern Negro. While this concern with features would imply a visual or facial priority, it was also the precise structure and resonance of the black *voice* by which the very *face* of the race would be known and fundamentally reconstructed. Both to contain and develop this voice, a virtual cultural renaissance was called for.

The trope of the New Negro did not disappear between 1904 and the 1920s, when it resurfaced as the sign of the cultural movement that contained the New Negro voice. Ray Stannard Baker outlines his idea of the New Negro in 1908 in *Following the Color Line*. In 1916, William Pickens published a book of essays entitled *The New Negro*, and two years later in 1918, the “*New Negro*” *Magazine*, edited by August Valentine Bernier, made its brief appearance. Between January and March of 1920, the *New York Age* published an open forum entitled “The New Negro—What Is He? Does the New Negro Differ from the Negro of the Past?”

We have come a remarkably long way from Booker T. Washington’s image of the New Negro at the turn of the century. The militancy of the reconstructed image of his figure of the New Negro was both too potent and too problematical to predominate within the black intelligentsia. As mentioned earlier, in 1925 Alain Locke edited special editions that served both to codify and launch a New Negro cultural movement. But Locke’s New Negro served in yet another capacity: it transformed the militancy associated with the trope and translated it into a romantic, apolitical movement of the arts—which his debate with Du Bois over aesthetics versus propaganda made clear. Locke’s New Negro was an artist, and it would be in the sublimity of the fine arts, and *not* in the political sphere of action or protest poetry, that Anglo America (it thought) would at last embrace the Negro of 1925,

a Negro ahistorical, a Negro who was “just like” every other American, a Negro more deserving than the Old Negro because he had been reconstructed as an entity somehow “new.”

### **Race, Representation, and African American Culture**

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The section “How Should Art Portray the Negro?” begins this anthology’s turn toward the general intellectual discussion of the political role of racial representation in African American culture. In her essay, Anna Julia Cooper critiques the literature of William Howells, the “dean” of American literature in the late nineteenth century, because of its caricatures of Negroes and its oversimplification of their lives and struggles. Although Albion Tourgée and George Washington Cable drew more realistic images of the Negro, Cooper nonetheless concludes that “an authentic portrait, at once aesthetic and true to life, presenting the black man as a free American citizen, not the humble slave of [Harriet Beecher Stowe’s 1853 novel] *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*—but the *man*, divinely struggling and aspiring yet tragically warped and distorted by the adverse winds of circumstance, has not yet been painted.” The other writers of this section—most notably, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Charles W. Chesnutt, William Stanley Braithwaite, and the prominent contributors to a 1926 symposium in *The Crisis* magazine—to an extent reiterate Cooper’s frustration. By recalling nineteenth- and twentieth-century art in the United States and Europe, they arrive at Cooper’s own opinion that artistic portrayals of the black race should aspire to acceptable standards of historical realism and racial-political diplomacy. Ultimately, they believe, the success of this project hinges not only on the expertise of black artists but on the cooperation of whites as well.

The next section, “The Renaissance,” revolves around the implications of racial representation for African American culture. The essays illustrate how black and white intellectuals connected New Negro politics to particular cultural-historical phenomena, philosophical debates, and culture genres. In 1924, W.E.B. Du Bois, for example, called the collective emergence of talented Negro authors a remarkable “younger literary movement”—that is, younger than his own literary generation of Paul Laurence Dunbar and Charles W. Chesnutt—that was revising the norms of class, society, and sexuality. One year later, Alain Locke, the putative dean of this movement, which he termed a “Negro Renaissance,” likewise recognized a “younger generation” of black writers for whom racial experience provided the material for their creative expression. He also argued that their movement coincided with the advancement of white writers toward more realistic—if less Old Negro—portrayals of African America. For Locke, such images demonstrated sensitivity, tact, and realism unlike the minstrel images found in the plantation tradition of Anglo-American literature in the postbellum nineteenth century, or in the equally racist but more threatening, violent, and Negrophobic images found in early twentieth-century Anglo-American literature.

Carl Van Vechten, in his review of Locke’s *The New Negro*, agrees. Van Vechten takes issue with William Stanley Braithwaite, a Negro poet-critic featured in Locke’s book, who kept recycling the “old cliché that Negro novels must be written by Negroes.” H. L. Mencken’s 1926 review of *The New Negro* and the subsequent reflections on the Harlem Renaissance, especially by Carl Van Doren, Benjamin Brawley, Martha Gruening, and Allison Davis, all speculate on the degree to which the

African American cultural efflorescence could be called simply a fad, a vogue for things primitive and exotic, a commercial bubble of patronage and fetishism destined to burst. On the one hand, the essays in this section of the anthology move us to consider whether the Harlem Renaissance was a failure or a success. On the other hand, they also demand a more sophisticated inquiry into whether the scholarly prevalence or disregard of these terms serves as a reliable index of the ideological or philosophical tendencies of African American studies in the past few decades.<sup>19</sup>

The section “Art or Propaganda?” covers the tension in African American cultural history between art for the sake of art and art for the sake of racial politics. The central point of contention appears between Du Bois and Locke. In 1926, Du Bois remarked that the desire of black artists to conform to public expectations, held mainly by whites and adopted by blacks, led them to perpetuate false racial stereotypes, to cling to obsequious attitudes toward whites, as well as to settle into political ambivalence or complacency. Thus he advocated the kind of Negro art in which the apostle of “beauty” intertwined with those of “truth,” “goodness,” “justice,” “honor,” and what was “right.” In the end, art should express propaganda so that it could “gain[] the right of black folk to love and enjoy,” a right that should go hand in hand with black political demands for fair, humane treatment in U.S. society and around the world.

Du Bois’s disregard, in his words, of the “wailing of the purists” partially indicted Locke’s position on art and propaganda. Indeed, Locke’s 1928 and 1936 essays—“Art or Propaganda?” and “Propaganda—or Poetry?”—reveal his long-held belief that propaganda must presuppose myths of black inferiority in order to build its refutation of them. Propaganda was thus an inevitable limitation of black self-expression and creativity in the arts. Unsurprisingly, in the latter essay, Locke admonishes the new proletarian wave of African American writers “not to ignore or eliminate the race problem, but to broaden its social dimensions and deepen its universal human implications.” One year later, in 1937, however, Richard Wright redeemed Du Bois’s criteria for Negro art in the name of “protest.” Wright presented a blueprint for Negro writing that refuses to go “a-begging to white America” for self-justification or for the imagination of wide social impact.

The next four sections of this anthology survey major genres of African American culture. The first part of the section, “Literature: History and Theory,” begins with essays that historicize or theorize literary representations of the race. More specifically, the omnibus essays on African American literary history by Du Bois, Thomas L. G. Oxley, and Benjamin Brawley examine the range and complexity of African American literary accomplishments and struggles. Equally erudite essays by Katherine Tillman and Victoria Earle Matthews corroborate these accounts, but not without foregrounding the important political role of women in racial advancement. Moreover, Arthur Schomburg and Alice Dunbar-Nelson, respectively, turn to such intellectual paradigms as archaeology and pedagogy to devise the best, if most practical, ways of imagining and recovering African American literary history, while Robert E. Park and Fred DeArmond apply sociology in order to limn what Park has called the “human nature” or “inner life” of African American authors. Finally, Zora Neale Hurston’s outline of the “characteristics of Negro expression” links the history of Negro authorship to theories of black aesthetic and cultural typology.

The essays by Brenda Ray Moryck and James Weldon Johnson anticipate the articles in the next part of the section, which talk mainly about the literary profession

and marketplace for black authors. The key, recurring ideas—raised by Hubert H. Harrison, Willis Richardson, James Weldon Johnson, and Sterling Brown—touch on the tense relationship between black authors and their white editors, publishers, and readers who imposed on these authors certain expectations about what they could or should write about. In their essays, George W. Jacobs (a pseudonym for George S. Schuyler), Claude McKay, and Eugene Holmes confront the implications of such external burdens for the creative options and freedom of African American authors.

The last part of this section illuminates many of these themes in the context of poetry. Aside from James Weldon Johnson in his now-famous preface to the 1922 edition of *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, several authors in his era were talking at length about poetry as a crucial form of literary art. Given that contemporary scholars tend to focus mostly on fiction when they survey African American literary history after the death of Paul Laurence Dunbar in 1906, this selected group of essays should support the case that poetry always held a special place in the minds of black intellectuals, even in the minds of such luminaries as Wallace Thurman and Alain Locke, whom scholars have celebrated more often for their writing and editing of prose than for their poetics.

The next section, “Music,” focuses on the spirituals and jazz. Several of the writers, especially Paul Laurence Dunbar and W.E.B. Du Bois, portrayed spirituals as the key to realizing the collective trauma of slaves and their ancestors as they struggled against colonialism in Africa, the middle passage, and the institution of slavery in the New World. While Alain Locke, John W. Work, and Zora Neale Hurston recognized the thematic interplay of religion and secularity born out of this genre of African American music, Hurston and Laurence Buermeier examined the specific formal properties of the spirituals as well as their cultural and commercial development over the centuries as “folk-songs.” B. A. Botkin comments on several of these issues in his review-essay of recent collections and scholarship devoted to “workaday” songs.

Several of these writers on the spirituals resorted to such stereotypes as “primitive” and “simple” to characterize black creativity. Similarly, certain writers on jazz—exemplified by Walter Kingsley, a supposed “authority” on the subject—consistently restricted the music to the idea that black demonstrations of rhythm result from a “savage” or “exotic” racial inheritance. However, other writers, namely J. A. Rogers, R.W.S. Mendl, and Louis Armstrong, broadened the history of jazz beyond denigrating myths of African culture. They considered instead the musical genre’s modern formal and cultural development in America, above all in New Orleans and, to a lesser extent, in the great cities of the Midwest, Northeast, and West Coast, as the best context for speculating on the nature and future of jazz.

One thematic subtext in the selected criticism on music, theater, and the fine arts is that print literacy is not a precondition for the mass consumption of these cultural media. Rollin Lynde Hartt follows up on this point in his essay, included in the section “Theater.” He refutes the prevailing idea that the “Negro press” is the primary means by which African American leaders could influence their constituencies. The commercial proliferation of theaters and movie houses managed and owned by African Americans supported his counterargument that these cultural media are poised to be more influential than the Negro press.

Rowena Woodham Jelliffe and Montgomery Gregory echoed Hartt’s indication of the “vast potentialities in this field.” Indeed, Negro theater had evolved within

and against minstrelsy and vaudeville in the nineteenth century and on Broadway in the early twentieth century. The essays by Gregory, Paul Robeson, Jessie Fauset, and Alain Locke view the more complex dramatic roles of Negroes—including the “noble savage” roles of Robeson in Eugene O’Neill’s plays—as a defining and welcome stage in the growth of Negro theater. Fauset took this idea one step further. Humor or comedy, she asserted, was a therapeutic way for African American actors and their audiences to grapple with and overcome the trauma of racial oppression. In some ways, her notion of the “gift of laughter” resembles similar ideas in Paul Laurence Dunbar’s poem “We Wear the Mask” in *Majors and Minors* (1896) and Langston Hughes’s *Laughing to Keep from Crying* (1952). Taking a different, if cynical, approach, Ralph Matthews—writing from the position of theater editor of Baltimore’s *Afro-American* in 1934—contended that Negro theater rehashes many of the same racial stereotypes found in nineteenth-century minstrelsy and vaudeville, just in more subtle and modern ways. Negro theater, in his words, was akin to a “Dodo Bird, an extinct fowl which, as was later revealed, did not exist at all,” or was at best a fleeting cultural phenomenon.

The last section, “The Fine Arts,” addresses painting and sculpture. Essays by Alain Locke, Harry Alan Potamkin, and Romare Bearden seek to dispel the notion that art created by the African diaspora was merely an exotic fad during the years after World War I. Rather, their serious analyses of the history and nature of African art and Negro art demonstrated their collective belief that, in the words of Bearden, this field required “some standard of criticism then, not only to stimulate the artist, but also to raise the cultural level of the people.”

Of these three writers, Locke above all heeded this idea. By publishing criticism on African art in reputable magazines ranging from *Opportunity* to the *American Magazine of Art*, Locke cemented his stature as one of the leading and most prolific art critics in the early twentieth century. (The multiple selections of Locke’s essays in this anthology reflect the great diversity, frequency, and value of his critical writings.) His 1924 essay “A Note on African Art” forms a core part of his writings on African “ancestral art” in *The New Negro*. Here, he focused on how African art and European art had both factored into the African American achievement of a “characteristic idiom” that could be called New (World) Negro art. Locke’s essentialist articulation of the artists and cultural geographies of Europe, Africa, and African America hoped to reveal the legacy of the ancestral arts. While making this case, Locke accused the dean of American painters, African American artist Henry Ossawa Tanner, for perpetuating “the conventional blindness of the Caucasian eye with respect to the racial material at their immediate disposal.” Tanner’s avoidance of racial realism in his paintings—or, equally reprehensible in Tanner’s early career, his paintings of Negroes playing banjos and dancing—was a symptom of his cultural alienation from what Locke called the “folk” of African America. The white ethnocentrism and cultural privilege of Tanner’s academic training in Europe, Locke went on to say, dissuaded him from creating more racially pragmatic and politically responsible art that provided the kind of progressive images the Harlem Renaissance needed.<sup>20</sup> Jessie Fauset’s 1924 interview of Tanner in *The Crisis* conceivably stoked Locke’s emotional fire. For all the Harlem Renaissance community to see, Fauset lauded the person “known internationally now as a painter of religious subjects” and as “the great Artist” who was then staying in America, mostly in New York City, for a three-month tour. The discrepancy between Locke’s concern with Tanner’s painterly alienation from black folk, on the one hand, and Fauset’s praise

of Tanner's professional accomplishments despite and because of his expatriation, on the other, illustrates the extent to which the politics of racial representation—both as embodied by Negro artists and within their works—shaped and were shaped by critical evaluations of African American culture.



The essays reprinted in this anthology are first grouped by thematic sections to display the common subjects on which intellectuals, black and white, wrote between Reconstruction and World War II. Within these sections, the essays are laid out in chronological order, alerting readers to the fact that those subjects were always historically contingent, at once time-bound yet changing across time.<sup>21</sup>

To repeat an earlier point, the number and variety of essays chosen for this anthology should remind readers that the term “New Negro” did not have to be explicitly invoked in order for its implicit political discourses on race, representation, and African American culture to constitute a tradition of New Negro criticism. Put simply, people were talking about Old Negroes and New Negroes even when they were not referring to these tropes by name. When abstracted in this way, one can see that the politics of racial representation remains relevant today, when labels such as “Uncle Tom” conjure up not only the cultural history of black stereotypes, but also the current controversy surrounding black political responsibility, or lack thereof.<sup>22</sup> In the following pages, the documents of New Negro criticism should lay the basis on which future intellectual approaches to race, representation, and African American culture could be built.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Harvard University

Gene Andrew Jarrett, Boston University

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#### NOTES

1. The most notable examples of scholarship specifically about the New Negro include Henry Louis Gates, Jr., “The Trope of a New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black,” *Representations* 24 (Fall 1988); Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism 1850–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); George Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995); Jon Michael Spencer, *The New Negroes and Their Music: The Success of the Harlem Renaissance* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997); J. Martin Favor, *Authentic Blackness: The Folk in the New Negro Renaissance* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); William J. Maxwell, *New Negro, Old Left: African-American Writing and Communism between the Wars* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999); Anne Elizabeth Carroll, *Word, Image, and the New Negro: Representation and Identity in the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Rebecca Carroll, ed., *Uncle Tom or New Negro: African Americans Reflect on Booker T. Washington and Up from Slavery 100 Years Later* (New York: Broadway Books/Harlem Moon, 2006); Marlon Ross, *Manning the Race: Reforming Black Men in the Jim Crow Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2004); Martha Jane Nadell, *Enter the New Negroes: Images of Race in American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); and Barbara Foley, *Spectres of 1919: Class and Nation in the Making of the New Negro* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

2. Mark Twain, “A True Story, Repeated Word for Word as I Heard It,” *Atlantic Monthly* (November 1874).

3. Michel Foucault, "Preface," in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1970; New York: Vintage Books, 1994), xvii.
4. Frank Edward Manuel and Fritzie Prigohzy Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge, MA.: Belknap Press, 1979), 29.
5. See Frederick Douglass, *Autobiographies* (New York: Library of America, 1994).
6. Sojourner Truth, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, ed. Nell Irvin Painter (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 111; our italics.
7. Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery* (New York: New American Library, 2000), 16.
8. Anonymous, "Itinerant Observations in America," *London Magazine* 14 (1745–46) and reprinted in the Georgia Historical Society, *Collections* IV, 17 (1878). The explicit reference to the term "New Negro" appears in this line: "To be sure, a *new Negro*, if he must be broke, either from Obstinacy, or, which I am more apt to suppose, from Greatness of Soul, will require more hard Discipline than a young Spaniel: You would really be surpriz'd at their Perseverance; let an hundred Men shew him how to hoe, or drive a Wheelbarrow, he'll still take the one by the Bottom, and the other by the Wheel; and they often die before they can be conquer'd." See Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (1974; New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1996), 287, for the implications of this quotation and its historical period.
9. Adolph L. Reed, *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 130, 152.
10. Kenneth W. Warren, *So Black and Blue: Ralph Ellison and the Occasion of Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 20–21, 31, 33–34.
11. This scholarship is more progressive than what Reed and Warren suggest. Reed and Warren point to rather outdated essays and books, and Reed in particular tends to use Gates and Baker as the synecdoche of all of African Americanist society.
12. Although the essay is entitled "Opinion by W.E.B. Du Bois," people at the time referred to it as "Returning Soldiers," since Du Bois wrote it upon his return to the United States in 1919 from a summit in Paris. See Claude McKay, *A Long Way from Home* (New York: Harcourt, 1970), 110, for example.
13. In "The Negro-Art Hokum," Schuyler argues that since Negroes are not peculiarly racial, they do not produce peculiarly racial art. "Negro art," or what Schuyler calls art whose creators are identified as "Negro," bears the cultural imprint of the nation, a pattern discernible in art created by Anglo-Americans, generally called "American art." The idea of considering Negro art "true"—or an authentic, singular tradition—is a sham, a hokum.
14. Foley, *Spectres of 1919*, 4, 31–32, 70–71, 121, 168.
15. For more information about Locke's earlier writings, see Foley, *Spectres of 1919*, 205–17; for the subtext of his editing of *The New Negro*, see *ibid.*, 224–44. The footnoted sentence plays on Locke's line in "The New Negro," the introductory essay in *The New Negro*, that "the mainspring of Negro life is radical in tone, but not in purpose" (quoted in *ibid.*, 1).
16. According to Barbara Foley, Locke's version of the New Negro coincided with the fact that "the production of literature inflected with revolutionary politics had slowed to a near-trickle by the last half of the decade" (*ibid.*, 76).
17. Aside from Alain Locke, "Spiritual Truancy," *New Challenge* 2, no. 2 (Fall 1937), see an earlier essay Locke published, "Harlem: Dark Weather-Vane," *The Survey Graphic* (August 1936).
18. In order to see the portraits of the figures mentioned in this introduction, see John H. Adams, "Rough Sketches: A Study of the Features of the New Negro Woman" and "Rough Sketches: The New Negro Man," both of which are reprinted in this anthology.
19. See Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance*, 14–28, for a thorough overview of the rhetoric of "failure" in Harlem Renaissance scholarship.
20. Alain Locke, "The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts," in *The New Negro*, ed. Locke (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 264.

21. An exception is the case of Alain Locke in the section “The Fine Arts,” where the range of dates of his multiple essays succeeds those of the essays by subsequent authors in that same section.

22. See, for example, Linda Williams, *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O.J. Simpson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).