ALAIN LOCKE AND THE NEW NEGRO MOVEMENT

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THE NEW NEGRO MOVEMENT

The rise of a genuine New Negro Movement was fostered and encouraged by one person, Alain Leroy Locke, who became its creative editor and its chronicler. It may be true that the term Renaissance, as Sterling Brown has so perceptively pointed out, is a misnomer because of the shortness of the life span of the Harlem movement. Also, the New Negro writers were not centered only in Harlem and much of the best writing of the decade was not always about Harlem, for most of the writers were not Harlemites. Yet Harlem was the "show window," the cashier's till, though it is no more "Negro America" than New York is America. The New Negro had temporal roots in the past and spatial roots elsewhere in America and the term has validity only when considered to be a continuing tradition.

It may be argued that the so-called Negro Renaissance held the seeds of defeat for a number of reasons, among them being the general anti-intellectualism of the new Negro middle class. But it was, by every admission a representation of a re-evaluation of the Negro's past and of the Negro himself by Negro intellectuals and artists. For the rise of the New Negro Movement coincided with an ever increasing interest in Negro life and character in the twenties. American literature was being re-evaluated and overhauled as a revolt against the genteel tradition and the acquisitive society of the last decades of the nineteenth century.

Charles Johnson characterized Alain Locke as "the Dean of this group of fledgling writers of the new and lively generation of the 1920's." Johnson wrote, "A brilliant analyst trained in philosophy, and an esthete with a flair for art as well as letters, he gave encouragement and guidance to these young writers as an older practitioner too sure of his craft to be discouraged by failure of full acceptance in the publishing media of the period."[1] Johnson referred to Alain Locke as "an important maker of history" of a "dramatic period in our national history." Locke had this to say about these young writers being launched on their careers: "They sense within their group a spiritual wealth which if they can properly expound, will be ample for a new judgment and re-appraisal of the race." This, then, is only a part of the backdrop of what has been called the Negro Renais-

[1] The New Negro: Thirty Years Afterward, The Howard University Press, 1955, p. 84.

sance. What Charles Johnson referred to as "that sudden and altogether phenomenal outburst of emotional expression unmatched by any comparable period in American or Negro American history."

No one, not even the older Du Bois, could have been better equipped to have been the architect of the New Negro Movement and maker of history. Philadelphia, Locke's birthplace, was the one city where one could speak of a culture. Negro artists were encouraged and Negro literary, musical and painting groups were encouraged. Young Locke was aware of this personally and always kept these artists in mind as reminders of the awakening of Negro art in America. The literary movement had many of its origins in Philadelphia, but, because of social, economic and political reasons, it flowered in New York. For a racial dilemma in Negro art, a racial solution was necessary. This came in the mid-twenties from the inspiration of the New Negro Movement with its crusade of folk expression in all of the arts, the drama, painting, sculpture, music and the rediscovery of the folk origins of the Negro's African heritage.

The racial dilemma was a distinct carryover from the same dilemma encountered by the Negro writers of the late nineteenth century. In most of these writers, there was to be found the same tendentious, pedestrian and imitative style as observed in many of the painters. There was the dialect poetry of Dunbar and his later English poems in which he was the exponent of the romantic tendencies which were to be decried by the next generation of Negro poets. There were the propaganda novels of Frances Harper, Martin Delaney, Frank Webb and William Wells Brown. The novels of Charles Chesnutt were outstanding for their genre, style and impact. The political essays were all to be merged with and channelized into that renascence which came to be know as the New Negro Movement.

Locke's Early Years

As a burgeoning critic and student of Negro life in Philadelphia, in Boston and New York, at Howard University where he had gone to teach in 1912, Locke had been working in his way, in concert with many friends, to help lay to rest the mawkish and moribund dialect school of poetry. William Stanley Braithwaite, Locke's friend and mentor while he was at Harvard; William Monroe Trotter, the editor; W. E. B. Du Bois, all helped in hastening the demise of Negro dialect poetry. Friendly critics such as Louis Untermeyer also helped by labeling the traditional dialect as "an affectation to please a white audience." And, along with James Weldon Johnson, who had genuine poetic talent, this critics' coterie saw that dialect poetry had neither the wit nor the beauty of folk speech, but was only a continuation of the stock stereotypes about gentility, humility and buffoonery, and an evasion of all of the realities of Negro life.

One counteraction, however, to this dialect poetry was a conscious reverting to Romanticism and neo-Romanticism which reflected a middle-class recognition of Europeanized esthetic values. In some ways, this was a result of the rejection of the minstrel-buffoon stereotype. In addition, as the middle class Negro became better educated, there was an increase in his desire to share in the legacy of general culture, to participate in it, even though in a lesser fashion. As Sterling Brown put it, in too many instances "these poets were more concerned with making copies of the 'beauty' that was the stock-in-trade of a languishing tradition." These imitators were, for the most part, only too anxious to avoid any mention of a Negro tradition or to look into their own experiences as Negroes. The result, in their poetry, was escapist, without vitality or understanding.

Along with this counteraction there developed in the same period, the movement which assisted in the Negro writer's spiritual emancipation. As Locke himself put it in his last published account (1952) of the movement: "For from 1912 on, there was brewing the movement that in 1925, explicitly became the so-called Renaissance of the New Negro. The movement was not so much in itself a triumph of realism, although it had its share of realists, but a deliberate cessation by

Negro authors of their attempts primarily to influence majority opinion. By then, Negro artists had outgrown the handicaps of allowing didactic emphasis and propagandist motives to choke their sense of artistry. Partly in disillusionment, partly in newly acquired group pride and self-respect, they turned inward to the Negro audience in frankly avowed self-expression."

Langston Hughes, one of their number, thus phrased this literary declaration of independence:

"We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. If colored are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on the top of the mountain, free within ourselves."

Once again, there was a common denominator between the advance-guard elements of the majority and the minority. The anti-slavery collaboration had forged a moral alliance; this was an esthetic one, which spelled out a final release from propaganda and its shackling commitments both for Negro materials in American art and literature and for the Negro artist and writer. And from 1925 to the present, realism and Southern regionalism on the one side, and the promotion of racial self-expression on the other, have informally but effectively combined to form a new progressive atmosphere in American letters.

One of the then new poets, James Weldon Johnson, sensitive, socially aware, and a founder of the N.A.A.C.P., had a considerable influence on the younger generation of Negro poets. His poems of race consciousness, his fine commemorative elegy of the fiftieth anniversary of Negro freedom, praised the Negro's contribution to the American heritage and they were more militant than anything heretofore written. After Du Bois' "Litany of Atlanta," Johnson depicted the horrible brutalization of lynching in his poetry, "grimly prideful and resistant to the lynch-mad South."

Although the younger Locke had not always seen eye to eye with the older Du Bois on every issue concerning the Negro's struggle for artistic emancipation, he had always admired "The Souls of Black Folk" and "Darkwater." He had only sympathy for the Litany from whose loins "sprang twin Murder and Black Hate." He knew of Du Bois' biography of John Brown, he sympathized with the Du Bois attack on the philosophy of Booker T. Washington. He supported the Niagara movement and voiced his support for the intellectual and literary leadership which signalled Du Bois' founding of Crisis, the journal of the N.A.A.C.P. In the early years, Locke supplied the journal with an annual review of Negro literature, art and music. And Locke joined with those Negro intellectuals who supported Du Bois as the leader of the "talented tenth" movement and of Negro liberalism.

Under the directorship of Du Bois, Crisis became the instrument which led to the vocal and verbal expression of Negro political and artistic leadership. Du Bois was one of the first American scholars to turn to the new scientific approach in the social sciences and this meant new approaches in history and sociology by way of philosophy and scientific method. All of this appealed to the philosophically trained Locke who knew of Du Bois' history of the suppression of the African slave trade to America, where he was anxious to employ the techniques of scientific research and its results for the settlement of the Negro problem in America. Locke knew of Du Bois' investigations of the treatment of Negro soldiers by the American army in 1918. Locke supported Du Bois' calls for the Pan-African Congress of 1919, 1921 and 1923. And Locke withdrew from his active role in the N.A.A.C.P. when its Board refused to support Du Bois' Pan-Africanism. He maintained this support until Du Bois' return to Atlanta and supported the "old man's" founding and editorship in 1940 of Phylon, The Atlanta Review of Race and Culture. To this journal Locke contributed another annual critical review of literature by and about Negroes.

Opportunity, An American Journal of Negro Life, the organ of the National Urban League, was first edited by Charles S. Johnson. This organ was another impetus to the literary movement with the establishment in 1924 of cash prizes for original literary work. The Crisis prizes were established through the sponsorship of Mrs. Amy E. Spingarn and the Opportunity prizes through that of Caspar Holstein. Additional prizes were offered later by Carl Van Vechten through Opportunity and by Carl Brandt through Crisis. Also through Crisis, the Charles W. Chesnutt Honorarium was given. These prizes were given for many years and had quite an effect upon the younger writers. The title poem to Langston Hughes' first volume won an Opportunity prize. "The New Negro was the distillation of the ferment of the preceding decade."

The post-war decade which ushered in the Harlem Renaissance was the age of triumph for big business and the consolidation of industry and monopoly capitalism on a world wide scale. This was conducted by white capital with Negro and immigrant labor, a mass of cheap and potentially efficient labor, unlimited natural power and a use of unequalled technique, reaching all of the markets of the world and leading to the emergence of America as a force in twentieth century world imperialism.

The profits promised by the exploitations of this quasi-colonialism were endangered by labor difficulties; wholesale scabbing by Negroes threatened to flare into race war. Relations between Southern poor whites and Negroes became increasingly exacerbated. The northward emigrations to the cities depleted the rural south and made new ghettoes in the north. The shadows of race riots and lynchings remained. And they seared. The Vardamans and Tillmans still ruled the Congress. The Thomas Nelson Pages and Dixons were in the ascendancy in literature. There was bound to be an inevitable conflict between the new graduates of the Negro colleges and the northerners who had supported the new schools, all of which was symbolized in the struggle and conflicts between Booker T. Washington and Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois. The organization of the Rockefeller-supported General Education Board and the Rosenwald Foundation launched the new racial educational philosophy of the south. By the second decade a legal caste system based on race and color had been openly grafted on the democratic conscience of the United States. And the representatives of the New Negro Movement allied themselves to a man with Du Bois, Locke, Charles Johnson and James Weldon Johnson.

Locke's Leadership at Howard

Locke had the auspicious fortune to begin his educational experience at Howard University, where, as an instructor in education and philosophy, he came into contact with many scholars who greeted the Harvard, Oxford, Berlin trained youth of twenty-five. Meeting and working with Ernest E. Just, the English teacher turned zoologist, was an event and the two became inseparable friends until Just's untimely death in 1941. The young Locke was accepted and acclaimed by the first Negro to teach sociology, the former classicist and mathematician, Kelly Miller. There were many others, such as his classmate, Montgomery Gregory, with whom he organized the Howard Players. Together these Negro scholars organized into a group known as the Sanhedrin under the joint leadership of Locke and Miller. Locke organized the first literary journal, the Stylus, from its beginning until its demise. He helped in the organization of the art gallery and the music department for he saw that general and cultural education was a desideratum for Negro students. His own educational philosophy predisposed him to manifest the broad approach and an interdisciplinary point of view. In doing so, he devoted much of his own teaching to the new science of anthropology, social conflict and social theory. He wrote Race and Culture Conflict in 1916.

No one could have been better equipped for the leadership and sponsorship of the New Negro Movement than Locke, who described himself "more of a philosophical midwife to a generation of younger Negro poets, writers and

artists than a professional philosopher." For years he had been encouraging artists and musicians to study the African sources at first hand. He was an avid collector of Africana. He wrote expertly about the lost ancestral arts of Africa and traced the influence of African art on European artists in the early twentieth century. He knew a great deal about African influences in Haiti and other Caribbean islands and he consistently pointed out African influences on the Negro American, both before and after the abolition of slavery.

Alain Locke did not make many original researches into American Negro history or into the golden lore of African history, but he grew in stature as he learned more and more of this history. It taught him that the Negro scholar's ability to withstand the infirmities of the American scene is a dialectic phase of the democratic process. And this dialectic must necessarily aid in bringing into fruition the dream of a community of Negro scholars. This was his sensitivity about American history and it led him to an identification with the great leader, the self-taught Frederick Douglass, about whom he wrote a biography. Locke was deeply appreciative of Du Bois' scientific approach to history and Carter G. Woodson's pioneer scientific work in the history of slavery and the Negro past. His contributions to the New Negro Movement always turned out to be re-evaluations of Negro history as it affected the Negro writer, the Negro scholar, and the lives of all sensitively aware Negroes.

As an author, Locke knew that the story of the Negro writer had to be told, because of the social history involved. He came to see that the position of the Negro in American culture had come to mean a great deal more than merely the artistic activity of the Negro minority. It came to mean for him a pointing toward a goal of a "natively characteristic national literature as being one of the crucial issues of cultural democracy." And this had to be evaluated against the slavery and anti-slavery background from which this literature emerged.

The harsh effects of slavery had to be viewed as contributing to the recognition of the Negro's role as participant and contributor to American culture. "Just as slavery may now (1952) in perspective be viewed as having first threatened our democratic institutions and then forced them to more consistent maturity, the artistic and cultural impact of the Negro must be credited with producing unforeseen constructive pressures and generating unexpected creative ferment in the literary and artistic culture of America. In cutting the Negro loose from his ancestral culture, slavery set up a unique and unprecedented situation between the Anglo-Saxon majority and the Negro minority group. The peculiar conditions of American slavery so scrambled Africans from the diverse regions and culture of our entire continent that with the original background culture, tribal to begin with, neither a minority language nor an ancestral tradition remains. The American Negro was left no alternative but to share the language and tradition of the majority culture."[2]

Locke believed that, despite historical interludes, the Negro's values, ideals and objectives, have always been integrally and unreservedly American. He wrote, "The crucial factors in group relationships are social attitudes and literature--recording and reflecting these in preference even in social fact--becomes the most revealing medium."[3]

The Works of Locke

Locke wrote more than a dozen books and articles after 1921 on Negro art, music and literature, tracing these developments from the earliest times, from 1760 up to 1920. He began with the first Negro poets, essayists and novelists, showing that the earliest indictments of slavery from the articulate free Negro displayed signs of a strong race consciousness. He showed that if slavery had molded the emotional and folk life of the Negro, that also it was the anti-slavery movement which

[2]Locke, "The Negro in American Literature," New World Writing, Vol. I, (1951) p. 19, New American Library.

[3]Ibid.

developed the intellect of the Negro and pushed him forward to articulate, disciplined expression. The edifice of chattel slavery was shaken to its foundation by the combined efforts of the literary and oratorical efforts of Negro leaders and self-taught fugitive slaves. The emergence of the "slave narrative" supplied the incandescent spark to be added to the abolitionist tinder.

In making America aware of the Negro artist and his work, an important part was played by the Harlem Number (1925) of the Survey Graphic which was edited by Locke. This issue of the Survey contained a hundred pages. There were twenty contributors, fifteen Negro and five white and twelve belonged to the Harlem group. Among the articles were "Enter the New Negro," "The Making of Harlem," "Black Workers and the City," "Jazz at Home," "Negro Art and America," "The Negro Digs Up His Past," "The Rhythm of Harlem," and many others appertaining to Harlem. This issue of the Survey had the largest circulation of any in its history. Several editions had to be run off before the demand was satisfied. In Black Manhattan, James Weldon Johnson in 1926, wrote, "It was a revelation to New York and the country. Later the symposium, somewhat enlarged, was brought out as a book, entitled The New Negro, under the editorship of Alain Locke. It remains one of the most important books on the Negro ever published."

The movement, for a while, did thrive in Harlem. Then the "influence of Locke's essays and of the movement in general, spread outward over the country, touching writers in Missouri, Mississippi, in Boston, Philadelphia and Nashville and Chicago."[4]

Unknowingly, there was being cultivated a middle class nationalism within the protective folds of the capitalist ethos. The majority did not rebel, but rather hearkened to the voice of bourgeois authority. American capitalism had prospered in the redivision of the profits and spoils of the war. In too many instances, the "New Negro" had served in too large a measure as a means of amusement, to be fawned upon and idolized. Many of the New Negroes were unwilling victims of an inverted racialistic nationalism, looking upon themselves as having arrived, and priding themselves that they could sing, paint and write as well as their white-skinned patrons.

Rediscovery of African Past

But, the movement was a true "renaissance" in another sense--the antiquity which Negroes wanted to revive from a "lost" African past. However they might share in the leavings of their new found prosperity, if they were to rediscover their racial souls, they had to go back, at least mentally, to the African past. There were the successes and the failures of Du Bois' leadership in the 1921, 1923 and 1925 Pan-African Congresses. The efforts of Locke to instill in the younger poets, artists and musicians, some sense of this African heritage bore fruit in the work of Toomer, Cullen, McKay and Hughes.

The most developed poet and literary figure of the New Negro movement, Langston Hughes, wrote on all manners of subjects and always movingly of Africa. In 1926, "Weary Blues" and in 1927, "Fine Clothes to the Jew," Hughes displayed his artistry of particular power and beauty pursuing his own course more than any other of the New Negroes. Hughes' antecedents were bound up in a family tradition where the struggle for freedom was always a strong memory and inspiration. A grandfather died fighting beside John Brown. An uncle was a Reconstruction Congressman and the first Dean of the Howard Law School. Even Hughes' blues, melodious and rhythmic are full of African feeling as in "Homesick Blues":

De railroad bridge's
A sad song in de air
Every time de trains pass
I wants to go somewhere.

The black world of America and Africa came to have a new meaningful

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[4] Negro Caravan, edited by Sterling Brown, Arthur P. Davis and Ulysses Lee, Dryden Press, 1941, p. 16.

nationalistic pride for so many of these poets. It was not always very deep or couched in any scientific anthropological understanding, but no matter, there was precious little understanding at the time for anyone. What mattered was that this flowering was a true renaissance of feeling, a prideful evocation of the dark image of Africa, germinated from a fructified seedbed but one which took on a new form and content.

Literary Renaissance and the "New Negro"

The Harlem Renaissance, substantively, transformed the Negro as subject and as artist from the old stereotype into the New Negro, militant, no longer obsequious, more of a paragon because he had shown that he was nearly on equal terms with his white counterpart. He won coveted prizes, fellowships, he was being published and he won his spurs the hard way in creative writing. These artists were not organized but theirs was a strong spirit of cohesion, a bond of group consciousness, toward some goal of achievement which would make the Negro artist proud of his work. It was a self-confidence which grew and proliferated into an outburst of emotional expression, never matched by any comparable period in American history. The new generation of writers began to carve out a niche in the hitherto impermeable walls of American literary culture. Hence the self-confidence, the self-assurance and the pride of craftsmanship.

The New Poetry Movement embraced every facet of Negro experience from lyricism, African heritage, social protest, folk song and blues, Negro heroes and episodes, lynchings, race riots, treatment of the Negro masses (frequently of the folk, less often of the workers), and franker and deeper self-revelation, social injustice and intolerance. Claude McKay's famous "If We Must Die" became the touchstone for the dynamics of the social forces and conflicts of the twenties. His was the answer to the growing crescendo of race riots and lynchings which characterized the times. Toomer's eloquent outcries in Cane were race conscious and challenging. In Cullen's "Shroud of Color," his sense of race is one of loyalty, pride and group consciousness, "almost that one of a chosen people."

> Lord, I would live persuaded by
> mine own
> I cannot play the recreant to
> these!
> My spirit has come home, that
> sailed the doubtful seas.

Hughes' "Brass Spittoons" tells of the distasteful tasks of menial labor:

> Hey, Boy!
> A bright bowl of brass is beautiful
> to the Lord
> Bright polished brass like the
> cymbals
> Of King David's dancers
> Like the wine cups of Solomon.

These poets, in their different ways, were all influential in the twenties and thirties, influencing an entire generation of younger poets. Cullen and Toomer in New York and all over America, Hughes in New York and all over the world, McKay in New York and the socialist world, Sterling Brown at Howard and all over the South, all expressing ideas that were representative of the Negro movement. In "Strong Men," Brown pens:

> They dragged you from your homeland,
> They chained you in coffles
> They broke you in like oxen
> They scourged you
> They branded you
> You sang:
> Keep a-inchin' along
> Lak a po' inch worm . . .
> You sang:
> Walk togedder, chillen,
> Dontcha get weary
> The strong men keep a comin' on
> The strong men get stronger.

After Frederick Douglass's fictionalized Madison Washington and the short stories of William Wells Brown and Chesnutt, the Negro as short story writer could only emerge from a vacuum even though the short story as literary genre had taken creditable form in America.

Negro writers were unable to gain any entree into the magazines. Charles Chesnutt's experiences in 1887 with the Atlantic Monthly when the editors did not wish to publicize his racial identity was an infamous blot on American literature. Chesnutt's story "The Goophered Grapevine" was accepted by Walter Hines Page and later Page accepted "The Wife of His Youth," and only belatedly admitted that the author was a Negro, claiming to the editor of the magazine Critic that he did not want to do damage to the author's reputation. Dunbar's stories were popular because of the plantation tradition of his dialect style and they did not offend.

In the late twenties, Langston Hughes faced the problem when Esquire published "A Good Job Gone." Hughes wrote about this in "Fighting Words":

> Here are our problems: In the first place, Negro books are considered by editors and publishers as exotic. Negro material is placed, like Chinese material or Bali material into a certain classification. Magazine editors will tell you, "We can use but so many Negro stories a year." (That "so many" meaning very few.) Publishers will say, "We already have one Negro novel on our list this fall." . . . . When we cease to be exotic, we do not sell well.

These have been the circumscriptions placed on the Negro short story writer on all sides in the publishing world.

When the Negro writer published in either Crisis or Opportunity, the pay was paltry and the stories were typed. The stories were concerned with lynchings, race riots, race praise or passing. Rudolph Fisher's "High Yaller" won the first prize in the 1925 Crisis contest. Later in the same year, Atlantic Monthly published his story, "The City of Refuge." Many other new writers of the Movement wrote well constructed stories which won Crisis and Opportunity prizes--Arthur Huff Fauset, John Matheus, Eugene Gordon, Marita Bonner, Edwin Sheen and Jean Toomer. Unlike Fisher, most of these writers did not continue their careers of writing. Eric Walrond's "Tropic Death," Langston Hughes' "Ways of White Folks" came close to penetrating into the innermost workings of Negro life which were overlooked by the racial idealists who wrote cloyingly of the new Negro middle class escapists.

Perhaps the novel as an art form was grist to the mill of the Negro writer at any time or place, whenever he began to write about his own experiences or those of others. The earliest Negro novelists, William Wells Brown and Martin Delaney, wrote as pleaders for a cause and as Sterling Brown wrote, "their successors have almost followed their example." The inferior propaganda novels such as Frances Harper's Iola Leroy or Shadows Uplifted and Dunbar's four conventional novels were not comparable to Chesnutt's novels of social realism.

James Weldon Johnson's Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man was a purpose work, the first "passing novel." Du Bois' Quest of the Silver Fleece had virtues but it was not artistic. Nella Larsen's Quicksand, Jessie Fauset's Plum Bun and Walter White's Flight, all written in the twenties, were "passing" novels. White's Fire in the Flint had the virtue of being the first anti-lynch novel written by a Negro in the twenties. Du Bois' Dark Princess (1928), part fantasy and part fiction, called for a union of the darker nations and also criticized the weaknesses of the Negroes' struggles for freedom and America's handling of the race problem.

The New Negro Movement produced the first really competent novelists--Fisher, Walrond, Cullen, McKay, Thurman and Hughes. The forefield of this New Negro literature was an artistic awakening. Publishers may have had only one Negro on their lists, but as the late E. Franklin Frazier pointed out, the audience was not Negro, but white. These writers were very important in the development of the Negro novelist as a craftsman. With these new writers there was great fire and enthusiasm, a creative dynamism of self-conscious racialistic expression which at the time was a healthy manifestation of the problems which beset the Negro people. Thurman, in Infants of the Spring, satirized the exaggerations and Bohemian aspects of the movement.

Fisher, a physician, the first Negro to write a detective story and a writer of social comedy, in Walls of Jericho, wrote of Harlem jive, a socially intelligent satire of the foibles of the new Negro middle class.

The Negro had come to stay as a novelist and the novelists of the New Negro Movement prepared the way for all of those who were to come later. The genius of Wright burgeoned out of the thirties. Many, like Ellison, relied heavily on the New Negro novelists' experiences. The writers of the Federal Writers Project of the thirties looked back only a decade to their New Negro precursors. As Sterling Brown wrote in his essay, "The New Negro in Literature (1925-1955)," "Negro authors of the thirties, like their compatriots, faced reality more squarely. For the older light-heartedness, they substituted sober self-searching; for the bravado of false Africanism and Bohemianism, they substituted attempts to understand Negro life in its workaday aspects in the here and now . . . Alert to the changing times, a few critics--Alain Locke among them--charted new directions."[5]

[5]The New Negro Thirty Years Afterward, The Howard University Press, 1955, p. 62.

In 1930, James Weldon Johnson in Black Manhattan wrote: "Harlem is still in the process of making. It is still new and mixed; so mixed that one may get many different views--which is all right so long as one view is not taken to be the whole picture. This many-sided aspect, however, makes it one of the most interesting communities in America. But Harlem is more than a community, it is a large-scale laboratory experiment in the race problem and from it a good many facts have been found."

And Alain Locke, more prophetic and Cassandra-like than he could have ever known, in the last article written before his death, said, "It is to this mirror that I turn for the salient changes of majority attitudes toward the Negro, and equally important, for a view of the Negro's changed attitude toward himself. For the Negro seems at last on the verge of proper cultural recognition and a fraternal acceptance as a welcome participant and collaborator in the American arts. Should this become the realized goal, the history of the Negro's strange and tortuous career in American literature may become also the story of America's hard-won but easily endured attainment of cultural democracy."

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