


## READING THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE ONE HUNDRED YEARS LATER: CONTEXT, NAMES, AND INFLUENCE

Lendo a Renascença do Harlem cem anos depois: contexto, nomes e influência

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**Abstract:** The Harlem Renaissance was a modernist movement of self-affirmation of black identity in the arts that reached its peak in the 1920s, in the United States. Many of its authors, such as Langston Hughes (1901-1964), Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960), Richard Bruce Nugent (1906-1987) and Nella Larsen (1891-1964) currently have their names linked to the movement, but, despite this, they took different paths, marked by the intersections between class, race, gender and sexuality, present in their lives and works. It is our goal, therefore, to study some of these authors main works, and we do so by paying attention to the dialogues and idiosyncrasies among their works. In order to do so, we take support on the contributions of Walker (1975), Neal (1985), Gates and Lemke (1995), Hutchinson (2007), among others. The article underscores the way in which the perceptions about these authors and their respective literary works reverberated throughout the decades following the decline of the movement and until the present day.

**Keywords:** Harlem Renaissance; African-American Literature; Modernism.

**Resumo:** A Renascença do Harlem foi um movimento modernista de autoafirmação da identidade negra nas artes que obteve seu apogeu na década de 1920, nos Estados Unidos. Muitos de seus autores, como Langston Hughes (1901-1964), Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960), Bruce Nugent (1906-1987) e Nella Larsen (1891-1964) têm, atualmente, seus nomes atrelados ao movimento, mas, apesar disso, percorreram percursos diferentes, marcados pelas intersecções entre classe, raça, gênero e sexualidade, presentes suas vidas e obras. É nosso objetivo, portanto, estudar algumas das obras desses autores, e isso é feito ao atentarmos para os diálogos e idiosincrasias entre suas obras. Para tal, fundamentamos nas contribuições de Walker (1975), Neal (1985), Gates and Lemke (1995), Hutchinson (2007), dentre outros(as). Observamos, com este estudo, a maneira como as percepções acerca desses(as) autores(as) e de suas respectivas lavras literárias reverberaram ao longo das décadas subsequentes ao declínio do movimento e até os dias atuais.

**Palavras-chave:** Renascença do Harlem; Literatura afro-americana; Modernismo.

### Contextualizing the Harlem Renaissance: Introduction

According to George Hutchinson, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Harlem Renaissance* (2007), the Harlem Renaissance was, in its roots, a movement of black self-assertion

against white supremacy (HUTCHINSON, 2007). In its name, we have references to two elements that enable our understanding of the movement: a) Harlem: a New York district popular for its diversified cultural scene and, more specifically, for jazz music, that became heavily populated by black people in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>; b) Renaissance: a reference to the 14<sup>th</sup> European movement which marked the transition between the Middle Ages and Modernity. It was characterized by an effort to revisit ideas of classical Greek and Roman antiquity, and it is generally associated with a period of enormous social, cultural and artistic change.

Thereafter, when alluding to these two elements, the Harlem Renaissance meant to establish a shift between the old conceptions of the literary scenario, which excluded black artists from its basis, and a new setting, which from that moment on took black artists seriously as part of its past, present and future. A hundred years ago, what is became known as the Harlem Renaissance, was, known as the “Negro Renaissance” (HUTCHINSON, 2007, p. 1). At that time, the word “Negro”, with a capital ‘N’, did not carry the same meaning culturally established from middle to late 20<sup>th</sup> century, as pointed out by Rendall Kennedy (2002). According to Kennedy (2002), at that time, “Negro”, with a capital ‘N’, was used in direct contrast to the lowercase “nigger” – a term with a derogatory history of oppression and submission.

By the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the word “Negro” was commonly used in reference to “black”. Hence, the then called “Negro Renaissance” signified a blossoming of literary arts (HUTCHINSON, 2007), in which African-Americans could proudly assert their identities, their blackness. It took its first steps at the outset of Modernism, which was a literary movement that aimed at breaking with the notions that chained literature – and art, in general – to traditional ideas of form and theme.

Modernism was a way in which authors could free themselves from the aspects they believed to be outdated. This was best represented by the authors such as T.S. Eliot (1888 – 1965), Williams Carlos Williams (1883 – 1963), Gertrude Stein (1874 – 1946), William Faulkner (1897 – 1962) and Marianne Moore (1887 – 1972). However, when black artists saw themselves in the need of freedom from traditional forms and themes, they were aiming at striking the literary cannon with different contributions white authors were not able to give from their own perspectives, since they were not racialized like black people were. In this sense, to be a black author in the early Modernist movement, and more specifically, in the Harlem Renaissance, meant being a counterpart to stereotypes, to institutional racism and sexism, and to reinforce the need for black authors to voice their talents to the literary field as well.

In order to understand how those artists contributed to the literary cosmos of the time, let us, in this first moment, discuss the productions and lives of some the greatest names of

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<sup>1</sup> This was due to the Great Migration: more than one million African-Americans fleeing the harsh laws of the Jim Crow Era in the conservative South and finding relatively less strict communities in the big cities of the North and West of the United States.

the Harlem Renaissance – like Langston Hughes (1901 – 1967), Zora Neale Hurston (1891 – 1960), Richard Bruce Nugent (1906 – 1987), and Nella Larsen (1891 – 1964) –, whose legacies are continuing to influence the artistic scenery of the United States until today. And then, we will take into account how these authors and some of their productions were received at the time, as well as discuss the way in which they continued to reverberate until our days.

## Names

If asked about the biggest contributor to the Harlem Renaissance today, one might almost automatically, and with reason, think of Langston Hughes. Alongside Zora Neale Hurston, Wallace Thurman, Richard Bruce Nugent, among others, he created *Fire!!*, a magazine published in 1926, which focused on expressing the African-American experiences through art. By opting for writing in ways that were considered highly controversial at that time, like using commonly vernacular language, which can be seen in Hughes' and Hurston's works, and touching on subjects such as homosexuality and prostitution, present in Nugent's, the intent of the publication was to “burn” old ideas, challenging the norms both in art and in society.

Image 1: Cover of *Fire!!*



Source: African-American Registry

Hughes himself was a contributor of the magazine and today he is remembered as one of the greatest American poets of the 20th century. According to Larry Neal (1985), the author wrote poems that represented the collective voice of people fighting to define themselves in opposition to a second plan of political and social oppression. The poet sees the life of Harlem as the romantic that he is (NEAL, 1985): enamored with the glorious beauty of his people, and tries to celebrate their values, giving texture to black culture.

One example of Hughes's acid humor can be seen in “When Susanna Jones Wears

Red”, a poem in which the author alludes to common stereotypes attached to black people – like the supposed appeal to bright colors, like red (NEAL, 1985) – and transforms such elements by giving them life, celebrating his community.

When Susanna Jones wears red / Her face is like an ancient cameo / Turned brown by the ages. / Come with a blast of trumpets, Jesus! / When Susanna Jones wears red / A queen from some time-dead / Egyptian night / Walks once again. / Blow trumpets, Jesus! / And the / beauty of Susanna Jones in red / Burns in my heart a love-fire sharp like pain. / Sweet silver trumpets, / Jesus! (HUGHES, 1995, p. 30).

In this poem, the trumpets make reference not only to the religious tradition of Christianity Hughes was a part of, but they also were symbols reminiscent of jazz and blues, musical rhythms that were created by the African-American community and were highly influential to Hughes’s poetry.

Neal (1985) asserts that, with his poetry, Hughes tries to reproduce the rhythmic figures of the new urban music, and just like in Walt Whitman’s verses (his biggest influence), one can recognize the direct emotional connection of Hughes’ works with the high quality of our voices (NEAL, 1985).

Moreover, Hughes has tried to represent how racial equality is one of the main expectations of his community. This can be perceived in “I, Too”: being sent to eat in the kitchen when visitors arrive, the Lyric I explains how, despite the humiliation, he grows stronger each day, knowing that in the future this will not continue:

I, too, sing America. / I am the darker brother. / They send me to eat in the kitchen / When company comes, / But I laugh, / And eat well, / And grow strong. / Tomorrow, / I’ll be at the table / When company comes. / Nobody’ll dare / Say to me, / “Eat in the kitchen”, / Then. / Besides, / They’ll see how beautiful I am / And be ashamed — / I, too, am America. (HUGHES, 1995, p. 46).

The poem brings to light the core of the Jim Crow Era: segregation and shame. Being put in the back of buses, drinking water from different fountains than those that white people drank, and not being able to vote were just some of the implications of the laws that diminished the opportunities of people of color in the United States.

By being sent to eat in the kitchen, a place of domestic subjugation, is, therefore, a scene representative of the place in which black people have been put in society. The subjugation of the Lyric I symbolizes the higher subjugation that black people have experienced in society and in art.

Differently from Whitman, who celebrated America by singing and celebrating the body of his brothers, that fraternity was not commonly extended to black people, that is the reason why the Lyric I reinforces “I, too, sing America” (HUGHES, 1995, p. 46): the adverb “too” showcases the urgency to be included. This celebration is a symptom of how the African-American community felt the need to be included as a part of the history of their country as protagonists, taking their place in the aesthetic, cultural and social spheres.

Another author of the Harlem Renaissance who also became notorious over time is Zora Neale Hurston, a novelist and anthropologist, whose work is known for exploring African-American and Caribbean folklores. She adds the layer of gender to the discussions that some of her colleagues of the Harlem Renaissance, like Langston Hughes, brought to light.

Throughout her life, Hurston wrote more than 50 short stories, essays, and novels; being *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)<sup>2</sup> her most famous work. Regarded nowadays as a classic, the book is discussed and studied frequently in academic settings in the United States and around the globe. Nonetheless, there is another story that establishes dialogues between similar themes, exploring the intersections of race, gender and class in the lives of black women, and that was published before the forementioned novel: the short story “Sweat” (1926). The text is about the journey of Delia Jones, a washwoman who works for white people in the bleak of the Jim Crow Era, and has to endure the many different violent acts she is submitted to by her abusive husband. The story starts by establishing the routine of the main character:

It was eleven o'clock of a Spring night in Florida. It was Sunday. Any other night, Delia Jones would have been in bed for two hours by this time. But she was a washwoman, and Monday morning meant a great deal to her. So she collected the soiled clothes on Saturday when she returned the clean things. Sunday night after church, she sorted them and put the white things to soak. It saved her almost a half day's start. A great hamper in the bedroom held the clothes that she brought home. It was so much neater than a number of bundles lying around. (HURSTON, 1994, p. 353).

This diligent Sunday night routine is as constant in her life as the abuses she suffers from Sykes, her husband. He appears for the reader for the first time when trying to use a whip as if it is a snake, since he knows how Delia fears that animal. The psychological abuse she is submitted to is not less frequent as the physical abuse, which takes a toll on her appearance: “He done beat huh ‘nough tuh kill three women, let ‘lone change they looks” (HURSTON, 1995, p. 77), says one character.

The very title of the story is a reference to her daily routine of work and suffering. According to Manguiera and Leite (2018, p. 290) the repetition of the noun “sweat” linked to the actions expressed by the verbs “work”, “cry” and “pray” summarize the miserable life of a woman subjected to the designs and wishes of a violent husband and oppressive system.

One can observe how the protagonist was exploited throughout the text, and this is a representation of the experience of black American women at that time. These oppressions, as studied by Fernandes and Souza (2022), linked to the configurations of the matrimonial, heteropatriarchal and colonial system, cross the existence of black women, curtailing their lives. This text, however, takes a more optimistic tone about this process: instead of ending the narrative in a tragic tone that only highlights the violence that the protagonist suffers, the

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<sup>2</sup> The book is about Janie Crawford, who takes on a journey of self-discovery in which she learns about the meaning of love and grows to create her own path in life. Most notoriously, the book is noted for its depiction of the intricacies between gender and race.



author brings to light elements that can be used to confront and subvert this situation (FERNANDES; SOUZA, 2022, p. 61).

Hurston faded from the literary scenario over the decades, she even disappeared from the African-American literary circles in the 1940s when the naturalism of Richard Wright and the feminist naturalism of Ann Petry dramatically dominated the literary landscape among black writers. Despite this, Gates and Lemke (1995) assert that she received new interest in her work posthumously, due to the rising black feminist movement led by Alice Walker and Mary Helen Washington in the 1970's, when feminists seized her as the main black writer belonging to the canon (GATES; LEMKE, 1995).

It was, more specifically, in 1975 when Alice Walker published an essay intitled "In Search of Zora Neale Hurston", in *Ms Magazine*. Walker details her journey to Eatonville, Hurston's hometown. While there, the author seeks to learn more about how Hurston died and how she lived, thus establishing a link between the author's memory and a feminist tradition that was beginning to emerge at that time. On her journey, between looking for the house where the writer lived, getting to know the neighborhood and the places she talked about so much in her books, Walker ended up at the cemetery where the writer was buried. Upon arriving there, she was surprised by the poor state of the place which, filled with grass that reached past her knees, made it difficult for her to locate the tomb of the author. It is set in this backdrop that Walker literally starts shouting for Hurston:

"Zora!" I yell as loud as I can (causing Rosalee to jump), "are you out here?" – If she is, I so hope she don't answer you". If she do, I'm gone". "Zora!" I call again, "I'm here. Are you?" – "If she is", grumbles Rosalee, "I hope she'll keep it to herself". "Zora!" Then I start fussing with her. "I hope you don't think I'm going to stand out here all day, with these snakes watching me and these ants having a field day [...]". (WALKER, 1975, p. 17).

Walker's cries for Hurston represent a search not only literal but also symbolic. The silencing of the tradition of black women writers made Walker's cries more than a quest: a claim. Thus, it is understood that the absence of writers like Hurston was not because they did not exist, but because, once driven to silence like so many other black women, it would be necessary to raise one's voice to shout for them, questioning, in this way, the space of literary excellence which would no longer be something exclusive to white men.

Besides Hurston, another female writer who paved the way for black women in American literature was Nella Larsen, who, according to Davis (2001, p. 251), at the end of the 1920s, emerged as the premiere novelist of the New Negro movement. In rapid succession, she produced *Quicksand* (1928) and *Passing* (1929), both published by the respected New York firm, Alfred A. Knopf.

It should be noted that, differently from many of her peers – like Hurston, for instance –, Larsen actually led a literary career with considerable success, even publishing in a respected editorial house of notoriety. Her only two published novels, "immediately earned her a considerable reputation and prominence as a writer of powerful explorations of female psychology and modern consciousness" (DAVIS, 1995, p. 252). Considering the attention

usually given to her first novel, we will primarily discuss her second one.

*Passing* (1929) is about two childhood friends who end up following different paths in their lives: Irene Redfield and Clare Kendry, both light-skinned black women; the first grows to be the wife of a respected African American physician; the latter, married to a white businessman who hates people of color, and lives her matrimony dangerously passing for white.

According to David Levering Lewis (1995), both of these women, who have not seen one another since their infancy, meet by accident and their lives ended up entangled by Clare's increasing desire, undisclosed to her husband, to familiarize herself with the African American world she relinquished (LEWIS, 1995, p. 410). Irene, on the other hand, astonished by Clare's "hazardous business of passing" (LARSEN, 1995, p. 460), has her routine assailed by her friend, provoking uneasiness and discomfort to the almost perfect portrait of Black excellence her family represented.<sup>3</sup>

The tumultuous relationship of these two friends is crowded by the questions that fill the blanks of their disconnection over the years. Clare, for instance, initially troubled by the fact that she seemed to be the only light-skinned woman she knows that passes for white:

As if aware of her desire and her hesitation, Clare remarked thoughtfully: "You know, 'Rene, I've often wondered why more colored girls, girls like you and Margaret Hammer and Esther Dawson and – oh, lots of others – never 'passed' over. It's such a frightfully easy thing to do. If one's the type, **all that's need is a little nerve**". (LARSEN, 1995, p. 460 – our emphasis).

To Clare, the choice of passing for white comes as an escape mechanism used to abandon her oppressive childhood. She lived with two white and strictly religious aunts, pertinently named Grace and Edna, who were happy to remind her of the favor they were doing her father by taking care of her. This situation was the basis for Clare to be treated as a maid in their care, being "expected to earn my keep by doing all the housework and most of the washing" (LARSEN, 1995, p. 461). The power dynamics between her white aunts and herself, a young biracial girl, thoroughly influenced her to pursue a different life from the routine of oppression she grew up in:

So, when Jack, her future husband, came from his exploits in South America enriched by the gold he had lay hold of, "there was no one to tell him that I was colored, and many to tell him about the severity and the religiousness of Aunt Grace and Aunt Edna. You can guess the rest. After he came, I stopped slipping off to the South Side and slipped off to meet him instead. I couldn't manage both. In the end I had no great difficulty in convincing him that it was useless to talk marriage to the aunts. So on the day I was eighteen we went off and were married. So that's that. Nothing could have been easier (LARSEN, 1995, p. 462).

Davis (1995) asserts that recent attention to this novel has emphasized the author's use of passing as a device for encoding the complexities of human personality and for

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<sup>3</sup> The nature of both characters is inscribed in their names: Irene, the Greek Goddess of Peace; Clare, from the Latin "clarus", meaning light or clear.

subverting simplistic notions of female self-actualization (DAVIS, 1995, p. 251). The act of passing in the book, though firmly objected by Irene in the beginning, is not simply a reprehensible act, considered morally wrong; rather, it is presented to the reader as a way in which an African American woman found another possibility of living a life with certain freedom, leaving her oppressive past behind, and building a new possible path for herself.

Larsen, therefore, does not tell a simple cautionary tale of the dangers of passing for white; rather, she builds a story about the choices one has to make in order to survive, subverting the harshness of the world, and, possibly, to try and find some happiness with the few possibilities some of us have in life. In this sense, these two women, though linked by a similar aspect of their lives – their light skin tones –, choose to follow two different paths.

When it comes to life and work of another author of that period, Richard Bruce Nugent, it is possible to comprehend his career as the opposite of Larsen's: badly received by the critics and his community, Nugent spent most of the last decades of the XX century as a footnote of the Harlem Renaissance. That can be interpreted as a response to his provocative nature, unashamed to deal with topics such as unveiled homosexuality and prostitution, considered taboo at the time.

According to Grant (2007), "Shadows", was Richard Bruce Nugent's first published poem, which tackled on the subject of race, and appeared in *Opportunity Magazine* and was reprinted in Countee Cullen's *Caroling Dusk* (1927). Another of his poems, "Sahdji", published in Alain Locke's *The New Negro* (1925), "is a pseudo-African story characterized by the use of ellipses and contains the twin themes of homosexuality and biblical imagery that would often determine his later work" (GRANT, 2007, p. 314). Nonetheless, it was the short story "Smoke, Lilies and Jade" (1926) that made him notorious.

In 1926, with Wallace Thurman, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Aaron Douglas, Nugent founded the controversial magazine *Fire!!*. Nugent's "Smoke, Lilies and Jade" was published, and it was inspired by the author's own life. This short story is regarded as *the* scandal of the Harlem Renaissance, and conceived as a celebration of androgyny, homosexuality and drugs (LEWIS, 1995, p. 569). It leads us through Alex's journey, a young black man who has to come to terms with the death of his father, the familial expectations that are entailed by this event, and his own path of finding love and his artistic and personal identity.

Regarded by Lewis (1995) as one example of literary impressionism, the form of the text is one of the first things noticed by the reader, as it can be observed by the following excerpt:

[...] but soon the moon would rise and then he would clothe the silver moon in blue smoke garments...truly smoke was like imagination..... [...] if colors could be heard could paint most wonderous tunes.... symphonious... think... the dulcet clear tone of a blue like night.... (NUGENT, 1995, p. 574).



Influenced by the visual arts, literary impressionism<sup>4</sup> gained strength in early XX, in the bleak of Modernism. Some of its main aspects, like achronological reading, the use of *in media res*, the reader's and the narrator's simultaneous discovery of information the fragmentation of form and plot, among others (STORSKOG, 2018, p. 10-11), can be noticed in Nugent's prose. In "Smoke, Lilies and Jade", the form of the text subverts the traditional format of an Aristotelian plot, and the long paragraphs with ellipsis leave the reader trying to understand the text by complementing these dots with their own interpretation of the events.

If we take the title of the story into account, it is almost as if the text can be interpreted as a big cloud of smoke, in which the reader can never see things completely. The smoke element, as a motif, makes things difficult to be seen, understood or distinguished. The plot itself does not follow a chronological development of events, and the intricacies of race, poverty, and sexuality are present, though arduous to articulate. Besides, the smoke, as something volatile, can be perceived as a manifestation of desire, which here is free, flowing through the air.

To that end, the story also explores the possibilities one has in finding love outside heteronormative impositions. Alex, by bearing the embodiment of his name, constantly does not follow societal laws imposed upon him, and that can be observed in his non-monogamous relationship with Melva and Beauty:

Melva had said... don't make me blush again... and kissed him... and the street had been blue... one *can* love two at the same time ... Melva had kissed him... one *can*... and the street had been blue... one *can*... and the room was clouded with blue smoke.... drifting vapors of smoke and thoughts... Beauty's hair was so black... and soft... blue smoke from an ivory holder... was that why he loved Beauty... one *can*... or because his body was beautiful.... And white and warm.... Or because his eyes ...one *can* love. (NUGENT, 1995, p. 583 – emphasis in original).

The fluidity of the relationship is built in stark contrast to the heteronormative relationships that are based on the model of a couple of the opposite sex. That new possibility is something the protagonist has only recently found possible to live, as noticed by the emphasis put in the verb "can". Queer people grow in a society in which they are constantly told what they *can not* do, who they *can not* be or love, therefore, to articulate one's identity outside those societal expectations is not only a journey of self-discovery, but also of intransigence that very frequently can lead us to a path of violence and frustration.

In opposition to the traditionally violent or tragic end expected from stories that feature LGBTQ+ characters, like *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), by Oscar Wilde, or *Bom-Crioulo* (1895), by Adolfo Caminha, this does not take place in "Smoke, Lilies, and Jade" (1926), thus subverting the traditional fate of such characters in literature. *Maurice*, by E.M. Forster, written between 1912-1913 and published in 1971, is regarded as the first LGBTQ+ novel

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<sup>4</sup> One of the writers famous for using this writing style was the English author Virginia Woolf (1882 – 1941).

with a happy ending, contrasting itself to those forementioned works. However, if we take other literary genres into account, it is possible to say that Nugent's short story was a predecessor of many future stories with non-tragic LGBTQ+ representation, and it also brought race into the conversation, establishing a dialogue with intersectionality, a relevant matter to the literary criticism of today.

In order to understand Nugent's story as a representation of Queer desire, we take support of ideas about the concept of Queer in Guacira Lopes Louro (2020), who perceives Queer as a representation of the clear different that does not want to be assimilated or tolerated, and, therefore, it is much more transgressive form of action (LOURO, 2020, p. 36). Hence, Queer is an identity that deconstructs the binarism between men and women, male and female, heterosexuality, and homosexuality, going beyond those duplicities to a much broader field of sexual expressions and desires. That is how Alex's Queer journey is represented: as a path of on-going search of surpassing or subverting familial expectations and notions of sexual identity and desire.

Even in his brilliance, Nugent was not commonly studied as other members of the Harlem Renaissance and, differently from some of his colleagues, such as Langston Hughes and Nella Larsen specifically, Nugent, alongside Hurston, never really became widely published, however, he had a relevant impact on art in Harlem. Alongside Romare Bearden in the 1960s, he acted as a cofounder of the Harlem Cultural Council (GRANT, 2007), which expresses his continuing commitment to African-American life and culture.

### **Influence and legacy: final thoughts**

In this brief article, we established a correspondence amongst the work of Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larsen and Richard Burce Nugent. The goal behind this was to present and briefly analyze some of the most noted works by the above-mentioned authors, and to underscore the implicit dialogues and particular idiosyncrasies that can be drawn between their works which are pivotal to the Harlem Renaissance. Hughes was fundamental in bringing race into light, making the literary works written by African-American authors, which also explored the issue of race in America, a part of the *literary milieu* of the XX century and beyond. It is fair to say that his biggest influence, Walt Whitman, wanted to bring the body into literature in a positive aspect, but the universality of his approach was not enough to illuminate the bodies of black people – that is why Hughes' voice is so relevant.

Zora Neale Hurston, in her own right, adds yet another layer to the conversation: gender. To be an African-American author in The United States pre-Civil Rights Movement, was a challenge, but more so when you are a woman. Thrown to the margin of society, women have been silenced throughout history and in literature this has not been any different. After her death, the author experienced harsh criticism, neglect and, finally, oblivion. Her literary colleagues, like Kate Chopin and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, meanwhile, were recuperated by Second Wave Feminism, while Hurston awaited on an unmarked grave for another black

female author, Alice Walker, to unearth her brilliance and claim Hurston rightful share in American literary history.

When it comes to Nella Larsen, a writer who, unlike Hurston has a successful career, like the problem of 'passing', for instance, and use her literature as a tool to understand the psyche of women and the paths some of them have to follow in order to escape the harshness of racialism and racism in the world. The echo of her talent still resounds today, as we can see in the recent homonymous adaptation of her novel into a moving, by Rebecca Hall (2021).

The same thing can be said about Richard Bruce Nugent, with the adaptation of "Smoke, Lilies and Jade" (2021), by Deondray Gossfield and Quincy LeNear Gossfield. These adaptations not only reinforce the relevancy of these authors' works, but they also mark the importance of the Harlem Renaissance one hundred years after its peak. It is important to note, nonetheless, that it was not the first time Nugent's short story received attention from the film industry. In 2004, Rodney Evans launched *Brother to Brother*, a movie that tries to establish a connection between black queer artists of present and past. The movie does so by using its protagonist, the student and artist Perry, and Burce Richard Nugent as a character. Their meeting it the link that for so long was overlooked in the history of black Queer artists in literature.

So, if by seeking for the grave of Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker tried to establish a black women matrilineal tradition in the history of American literature, by revisiting Nugent's works in the light of Queer theory, is it not possible to do the same for the LGBTQ+ community? Is Richard Bruce Nugent the forefather of Black Queer tradition in literature? I certainly would like to believe so.

All of these artists individually added different contributions to the legacy of the Harlem Renaissance and also to the institution of literature and, collectively, by exploring race though different lenses, they showed us how this topic is interlinked to many different aspects of one's life and cannot be separated from them.

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