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## **Salem Press Announces A New Addition to the *Critical Insights Series: Harlem Renaissance***

*Critical Insights: Harlem Renaissance* presents the period of unparalleled growth in art and literature from the African American Community, also known as the Harlem Renaissance. With its production of key authors, from Langston Hughes to Claude McKay, among others, the Harlem Renaissance saw the rise in creative endeavors by black artists and writers eager to celebrate the unique characteristics of black life and to challenge the institutionalized racial hierarchy pervasive within twentieth-century American society. These creative thinkers, certainly intellectuals in their own right, used their poetry, short stories, novels, and plays as a vehicle to critique the longstanding issues within society that limited socioeconomic mobility for blacks, while perpetuating startling stereotypes about a community too long oppressed. Because of its undeniable impact in shaping the American cultural imagination regarding blacks and on the larger American literary canon, the Harlem Renaissance has since been heavily studied as the most significant period of artistic as well as cultural development the African American community has ever experienced.

Edited by Christopher Allen Varlack, a lecturer in Writing and Rhetoric for the Department of English at the University of Maryland, *Critical Insights: Harlem Renaissance* seeks to offer not only expanded readings of the central themes that have long captivated the attention of scholars across time, but also providing valuable insight into the texts, authors, and critical perspectives too often overlooked.

In the introduction, “The Harlem Renaissance: The New Negro Intellectual and the Poetry of the Sociopolitical Imagination,” editor Christopher Allen Varlack examines poetry of the time and the ways in which authors, from Sterling Brown to Claude McKay, engage the overarching political motivations the progenitors of the movement set in place. From there, the collection introduces four **Critical Context** essays that expand these key themes by tracing the history of the era in addition to introducing valuable critical and comparative perspectives necessary to understanding the spirit of the time. Beginning with “Dawn in Harlem: Exploring the Origins of the Harlem Renaissance through Image and Text,” by Carolyn Kyler, she examines the intersections of visual and literary works in the era’s most noted print publications, from the Harlem issue of *Survey Graphic to Fire!!*. Next, in his essay, “Apathetic Critiques Revisited: Jean Toomer’s *Cane* and Its Importance to the Harlem Renaissance,” Gerardo Del Guercio highlights the history of apathetic criticism regarding the novel *Cane* by Jane Toomer. Focusing on another author who often defied traditional artistic and racial conventions in “Sugar Cane and Women’s Identity in Selected Works of Zora Neale Hurston,” Allyson Denise Marino calls attention to Hurston’s short fiction and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* with a particular emphasis on the presence of sugar cane in these works. This final critical contexts essay, “Mobile Subjects in Faulkner, Larsen, and Thurman: Racial Parody and the White Northern Literary Field” by Cheryl Lester, examines the urban North as an invaluable setting for the

exploration of racial anxieties and the reconfigurations of a national identity in early twentieth century texts.

In its endeavor to explore the key themes and directions of the Harlem Renaissance period, *Critical Insights: Harlem Renaissance* then engages fourteen critical readings essays across four sections:

- The New Negro: The Politics and Aesthetics of the Harlem Renaissance
- Across the Color Line: Racial Passing and the Harlem Renaissance
- Black Woman/Black Mother: Toward a Theory of the New Negro Woman
- The New Negro Revisited: New Readings of the Harlem Renaissance

The first section, “The New Negro: The Politics and Aesthetics of the Harlem Renaissance” introduces the core artistic and political movements that shaped the literature of the time and inform our understanding of its central themes. Next, “Across the Color Line: Racial Passing and the Harlem Renaissance,” offers a look into one of the central topics explored in much of the era’s literature: passing and the notion of racial indeterminacy. Section three, entitled “Black Woman/Black Mother: Toward a Theory of the New Negro Woman,” is a particularly important section in expanding the definition of the New Negro, which is typically referred to male. These essays trace the vital role of a female characters and female-authored texts in shaping the discourse of the Harlem Renaissance. The final section, “The New Negro Revisited: New Readings of the Harlem Renaissance,” attempts to move beyond what Miriam Thaggert describes as the worn-out themes and approaches to the Harlem Renaissance, offering new insights into the era’s more controversial, as well as under-examined texts.

Each essay in *Critical Insights: Harlem Renaissance* is 2,500 to 5,000 words in length, and all essays conclude with a list of Works Cited and detailed endnotes. Also included in this volume are **Appendixes** to provide readers with additional information and opportunities for further research, including an extensive **chronology of the Harlem Renaissance era**—one that attempts to call attention to key literary and artistic works that best define the spirit of the age, a list of **Works of the Harlem Renaissance**, an annotated **Bibliography**, biographies of the **Editors** and **Contributors**, and an alphabetical **Index**.

The *Critical Insights Series* distills the best of both classic and current literary criticism of the world’s more studied literature. Edited and written by some of academia’s most distinguished literary scholars, *Critical Insights: Harlem Renaissance* provides authoritative, in-depth scholarship that students and researchers will rely on for years. This volume is destined to become a valuable purchase for all.

### **Free Online with Print Purchase**

In addition, *Critical Insights: Harlem Renaissance* comes with complimentary online access via <http://online.salempress.com>. A single purchase of the printed version is all it takes to gain access to this important title on the web.

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