Cultural Crossings: Irish, Caribbean and the Harlem Connections – An Exploration of Theatre, Text, and Visual Art.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the cultural intersections between Ireland, the Caribbean, and Harlem through an exploration of theatre, literature, and visual art. This thesis investigates the relationship between the Irish Literary Renaissance and the Harlem Renaissance to assess the extent of their transatlantic connections and the ways in which both movements sought to reshape cultural and national identity through artistic expression. This study addresses gaps in Harlem Renaissance scholarship, particularly the underrepresentation of the Caribbean writers and intellectuals as key participants in the cultural movement. This research examines the efforts of writers, artists and political groups who challenged harmful stereotypes of Irish and African American people, highlighting the different approaches that were taken to reclaim identity and representation. Through an analysis of key texts and art, this thesis identifies the cultural crossings between these movements. The Abbey Theatre's 1911 tour of the United States, Eugene O'Neill's 1920 play *The Emperor Jones*, and the issues of the *Survey Graphic* that focus on Ireland and Harlem serve as focal points. The contributions of Caribbean writers Claude McKay and Eric Walrond are also evaluated to emphasise how their migrant backgrounds shape their literary portrayals of Black and Caribbean identities in the novel *Home to Harlem* and the short story collection, *Tropic Death.* Through investigating these cultural dialogues, this research expands discussions on resistance, and identity formation. It underscores the power of literature, theatre, and art in shaping historical narratives and encourages further exploration of transatlantic and global artistic movements, particularly in the context of ongoing struggles for representation and self-determination.

Introduction

Ireland was host to a new nationalist cultural revival in the late nineteenth century. The movement came to be known as the Irish Literary Renaissance and was characterised by a desire to understand Irish culture and, in many senses, alter its history. The movement was underpinned by a resurgence of interest in the legendary histories of Ireland which shared Gaelic myth and history with a new generation of Irish nationalists.[1] The re-fashioning of Irish history supported nationalist sentiment across Ireland and served as a catalyst for the nationalist movement that led to the Easter Rising of 1916 and ultimately Irish independence in 1921. In a similar vein, the Harlem Renaissance, which is the commonly agreed upon term, is the cultural and intellectual movement that developed around the interwar period (late 1910s-mid-to-late 1930s). It is characterised by the literature, art, music and performance emerging from Harlem. The movement bolstered a sense of renewed racial pride. Black identities and communities—African American, Afro-Caribbean, and even African—underwent radical representative change and reappraisal in U.S. fora, particular in U.S. print culture and the arts, a process which in turn contributed to social change across the Americas. Currently, some comparative studies of Irish and Caribbean literature, and the Irish Literary Renaissance and the Harlem Renaissance exist. In addition, there is a body of growing research that investigates the Caribbean impact on the Harlem Renaissance. However, there is little scholarship that examines the triangulated literary and cultural relationships between Ireland, the Caribbean and Harlem from the late nineteenth century into the early twentieth century. These three key areas of study—Ireland, Harlem, and the Caribbean—are linked by their pivotal role in both driving cultural shifts in representation and fostering tangible movements toward cultural or political nationalism, as well as a revitalized social identity, in response to oppressive governance and

[1] Standish James O'Grady played a formative role in the revival and his publication *History of Ireland: The Heroic Period in 1878* forms the first volume in a series of works that reignited interest in the legendary history of Ireland.

broader societal, political and social factors (such as racism, xenophobia, second-class citizenship, segregation and economic deprivation). This research attempts to bring together the three strands of literary scholarship, in order to produce a study that examines the impact of influence and shared experience that resulted in the artistic flowering in Harlem. This thesis explores how, and to what extent Irish, Harlem and Caribbean art, artists and political agents intersected.

The thesis explores the shared objectives of the cultural movements in Ireland and Harlem, that worked to challenge and overturn the stereotypes proliferated by their respective oppressive societies, focusing on how these efforts manifested in literature, art, stage productions, and more. These movements, though distinct in their cultural and geographical settings, shared common ambitions and strategies in rejecting and replacing the outdated representations of their respective communities. This thesis addresses the key questions of *who* was involved, *what* they sought to achieve and *how* they went about it.

In the case of the Irish Literary Renaissance, the *who* refers primarily to the Irish aristocracy and upper middle class—writers who, despite their own privileged positions, were deeply invested in the cause of Irish independence and nationalism.[2] While their lives were not directly shaped by the struggles of the working class, they became the caretakers of stories that depicted the lives of rural Irish peasantry. John Millington Synge's play *The Playboy of the Western World* is a good case in point as it captures the experiences of the rural Irish people, drawing on Gaelic myth, legend, and history in order to stir nationalistic pride and reignite a sense of identity.[3] Such depictions of rural life helped to craft a narrative that countered British colonial stereotypes and laid the foundation for Ireland's eventual path to independence. Similarly, the

[2] Mary Trotter, "Gregory, Yeats and Ireland's Abbey Theatre", in *A Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama, 1880-2005,* ed. Mary Luckhurst, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 2006).
[3] J.M Synge, *Playboy of the Western World,* (Digireads Publishing, 2009).

Harlem Renaissance was driven by a recognition among African Americans that they needed to reimagine and redefine their image and representative, demolishing, or at least moving beyond, the stereotypes imposed upon them by mainstream white society.

The Harlem Renaissance also saw significant involvement from Caribbean and white intellectuals who similarly served as ‘caretakers’ of African American representation. Figures such as Carl Van Vechten, Eugene O’Neill, and Claude McKay played crucial roles in shaping the ways African American life was presented to broader audiences. This thesis explores the complex relationships between these different groups, analysing the debates over cultural identity and representation, as well as how they influenced the development of what was referred to as the “New Negro” in Harlem and the “New Ireland” in Ireland.

However, within the Harlem or New Negro Renaissance, there was considerable debate regarding the *how*. The ‘older generation’ of thinkers, including figures like W.E.B. Du Bois, advocated for black advancement through education, respectability, and the emulation of white Western ideals demonstrated in the ideals of the Talented Tenth and the uplift politics that prevailed in the early years of the movement. In contrast, younger artists and intellectuals rejected this assimilation based on proposed ‘excellence’ and instead sought to forge a distinct black cultural identity. They embraced the vibrant cultural expressions already emerging in Harlem, such as jazz, poetry, and the sometimes seedy night-time scene, seeing these as powerful representations of African American life that rejected the mainstream’s portrayal of blackness. Among the most iconoclastic figures of this movement was Marcus Garvey, who promoted Pan-Africanism and a “Back to Africa” ideology, which encouraged African Americans and Caribbean folk to reconnect with their African roots and return to their ancestral home.

This thesis investigates the ways in which the representations of black life were actively reshaped in literature, art, stage and film, music, and print journalism. It explores how these forms of expression sought to directly challenge and rewrite the negative stereotypes that had long been embedded in popular culture. In doing so, it considers how Black writers and artists looked to Ireland as an example of successful resistance. The Irish struggle for independence, culminating in the establishment of the Free State in 1921, presented a compelling model of militant resistance that was seen by many as a potential blueprint for black nationalism in the United States. For instance, in 1917 the Virgin Islands-New York radical Hubert Harrison suggested that "the coloured people rise against the government just as the Irish against England unless they get their rights".[4] Similarly, the St Kittian-New York radical Cyril Briggs echoed this sentiment in 1921 when he hailed the "the Irish fight for liberty" as "the greatest epic of modern times and a sight to inspire to emulation all oppressed groups".[5] By 1921, the Irish cause arguably appeared to demonstrate the success of militant, radical organisation and uprising on the attainment of the Free State, and as such provided a tangible model for Black nationalism in the United States. It is beyond the scope of this study to fully examine the connections between the Irish Militancy, Black radicals and the literary output of both locations. However, the connection between cultural and aesthetic output and a rise in political activity is notable. This thesis is, at its core, an exploration into literature but it does take note of the more or less radical politics that were developing alongside art and literature.

This thesis is centred upon the shared struggles experienced by Irish, African American and Afro-Caribbean people as they contended with reshaping their cultural identity, during periods

[4] Robert A. Hill, ed. *The Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers, vol 1* (London: University of California Press, 1983): lxx

[5] David Brundage "The Easter Rising 100 years on: how the Irish revolution fired up American politics" accessed 18th February 2025, https://theconversation.com/the-easter-rising-100-years-on-how-the-irish-revolution-fired-up-american-politics-58586

of great literary, aesthetic and intellectual output. I seek to answer, and explore the following questions: what are the influences of the Irish Literary Renaissance on the Harlem Renaissance? Did the Irish, African American and Caribbean people share parallel experiences in the early twentieth century, and how is this represented in cultural discourses, literary or otherwise? How did Irish, Harlem and Caribbean art, artists and political agents intersect? In addition to investigating the ways in which the Irish Literary Renaissance made waves across the Atlantic Ocean, this thesis is concerned with the Caribbean influence upon the Harlem Renaissance. I ask what is the extent of the Caribbean involvement in the Harlem Renaissance and radical movements within the era specifically? And to what extent are Caribbean people, artists and radicals represented in the art and fiction available in the era?

Theoretical Concepts

In order to investigate the above questions, I employ a range of theoretical concepts to underpin my analysis. This thesis calls upon cultural studies, new historicism and post-colonial theory as a lens to explore the relationship between the literature and culture. This holistic approach supports this interdisciplinary investigation and does not privilege published texts over other media and ephemera. Particularly, this interdisciplinary approach allows the exploration into how the literature not only captures the zeitgeist and representation of the culture during the Irish Literary Renaissance and the Harlem Renaissance but also participated in the shaping of the cultural discourses. This thesis explores how the works of the Irish Literary Renaissance stirred nationalist pride that eventually brought about an independent Ireland and how this in turn interacted with the politics and intellectual movements in Harlem. How the writers in Harlem participated in the resurgence and revival of black culture, and how their works contributed to the movement as it happened. For instance, the engagement of the landmark issue of the *Survey Graphic* was evident in their increased sales (above that of previous issues of the

Survey), and through Alain Locke's desire to rework the publication into his anthology: *The New Negro: An Interpretation.*[6] This study examines how race and ethnicity were represented in the media that was produced and popular in the Irish Literary Renaissance and the Harlem Renaissance. By utilizing the different lens of cultural studies, new historicism and post-colonial theory, this study looks at how the texts and other sources engage with historical power structures related to race and representation and explores the ways in which black and Irish people wrote against the dominant narratives in order to reimagine and carve out new cultural identities. Through situating the literature in the broader context of culture, society, politics and history this thesis interrogates the interconnectedness between the published literature and ephemera, performance and politics.

This research also calls upon some branches of post-colonial theory, particularly when examining Irish and Caribbean literature. This thesis observes the Caribbean and Irish response to their colonial experience and the paths taken to reimagining independent cultural identity. There is also scope within this work to explore how this post-colonial phenomenon can be compared to the experience of African Americans in the early twentieth century in the context of post-slavery segregation and racism. Applying this lens assists in the comparative discussion between these geographic and literary traditions and places Ireland and the distinct cultures and locations together in their shared experience of colonialism, imperialism and oppressive forces (like segregation, racism, xenophobia, economic deprivation). Race theory provides a better perspective to study Caribbean and African American literature in dialogue. This lens also focuses on race, racism and racial identity, particularly on the elements that deconstruct racial representation and power structures. Race theory underpins the analysis into the increased agency and resistance that is discussed in the context of the Harlem Renaissance. Many of the

[6] Alain Locke, *The New Negro: An Interpretation,* ((New York: Simon and Schuster), 1992. And Paul U. Kellogg, *Survey Graphic*, vol 6, no. 6 1925 and vol.47, no.9, 1921

texts under investigation in this thesis fall under the umbrella of Modernism. They are characterised by fragmented plots, episodic stories and novel use of language. However, this thesis does not call upon a modernist perspective, in so much as it is concerned primarily with the unique concerns of the Irish Literary Renaissance and Harlem Renaissance, especially around the quest for self-expression and renewed cultural identity.

Methodology

I call upon a range of methods to support and structure my discussion. This thesis uses a largely comparative framework in order to facilitate a dialogue between the Irish Literary Renaissance and the Harlem Renaissance. By taking a comparative approach, this thesis endeavours to establish and explore proposed links between key figures in both movements, as well as investigating the evidence of influence from the prior to the latter movement with particular focus on the relationship between the political militance and art. This thesis uses a close reading methodology to analyse key texts such as Eugene O'Neill's play *The Emperor Jones,* Claude McKay's novel *Home to Harlem* and Eric Walrond's short story collection, *Tropic Death.*[7] Through close attention to the literary devices, use of language, style, form and structure and the key themes that run throughout this thesis; themes such as personal, racial and cultural identity, resistance and resilience are explored. This close textual analysis provides evidence and underpins the discussion of these thematic links between texts and the movements they are situated in.

Marshall McLuhan states that "[s]ocieties have always been shaped more by the nature of the media by which men communicate than the content of the communication" in *The Medium is*

[7] Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones*, (Digireads.com book: Digireads Publishing, 2009) and Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem,* (London: Vintage Classics, 2022) and Eric Walrond, *Tropic Death*. (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013).

the Message.[8] Attentive to McLuhan's assertion, I utilise my shared disciplinary experience of theatre and literature in my examination of the variety of (sub)disciplines that interact in the era. Martha Nadell's interdisciplinary methodology serves as a guiding influence in this project. Examining the published visual material that accompanied texts by black writers, she states that "many African American writers of that era published works that contained illustrations or other forms of visual materials."[9] She terms these works "interartistic", borrowing from Wendy Steiner, meaning "publications that concretely mix word and image and foreground the relationship between the two media." This visual material, or "extra-literary material" as termed by Jorgen Bruhn, is arguably too often ignored or thought of as secondary to the text.[10] This thesis borrows the methodology outlined by Bruhn and engages with the analysis of Nadell, and expands upon the image/text relationship and introduce the performative media that characterise the Harlem Renaissance. This thesis engages in visual art analysis to explore some of the visual material that accompanied text in both the Irish and Harlem Renaissances, in order to interrogate the images and symbolism that became synonymous with the periods. Some sources under investigation in this thesis include the illustrated issues of the *Survey Graphic,* and other prominent magazines in the 1920s such as *Vanity Fair*and the short-lived *Fire!!*[11] Other material, such as theatre pamphlets and other ephemera are wonderfully representative of the material that black artists, writers and intellectuals, whether Harlemites or not, produced and received. Although this thesis gives space to discuss visual material, it is primarily a literary examination of the texts in question.

[8] Marshall McLuhan & Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects*, (Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press, 2001).
[9] Martha Nadell, *Enter the New Negroes: Images of Race in American Culture*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).
[10] Ibid.
[11] *Vanity Fair,* (New York: December 1924) and Wallace Thurman, ed. *Fire!!,* 1926.

Literature Review

Before we delve into the content of this thesis, it is first necessary to situate the following research within the wider field of post-colonial and transatlantic studies. Bob Johnson's article "Globalising the Harlem Renaissance: Irish, Mexican and 'Negro' renaissances in *The Survey* 1919-1929" is a useful place to start.[12] His investigation of three issues of *The Survey,* these three issues focuses on cultural and artistic movements from Ireland, Mexico and Harlem. Johnson expands upon the global perspective offered by Alain Locke, editor of the 1925 *Survey Graphic* special issue "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro" and 'architect' of that renaissance; Locke "connected the 'resurgence of a people' in Harlem, New York to developments occurring across the world 'in India, in China, in Egypt, Ireland, Russia, Bohemia, Palestine and Mexico."[13] Johnson's article utilizes a comparative framework to explore the "progressive meta-narrative" put forward by Locke, and places the Harlem Renaissance as a local indicator of a global phenomenon of racial and national rebirth in the post-war landscape.[14] The landmark special issue of the *Survey Graphic* was part of a larger series, titled the 'Race Issues' which comprised of the Irish and Mexican issues amongst others. The Irish Special Issue, "Irish Anticipations", was published in the *Survey* in November 1921 is of particularly relevance to this study.[15] In the years that intervened Ireland saw a momentous cultural and political shift, "in this period, the cultural nationalism of that renaissance had ceded the limelight to the political nationalism that produced an Irish Free State."[16] It perhaps seemed to the readers that

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[12] Bob Johnson, "Globalising the Harlem Renaissance: Irish, Mexican and 'Negro' Renaissances in The Survey 1919-1929"*, Journal of Global History*, (2006).
[13] Paul U. Kellogg, "Harlem: Mecca of the new negro", *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925 and Bob Johnson, "Globalising the Harlem Renaissance: Irish, Mexican and 'Negro' Renaissances in The Survey 1919-1929"*, Journal of Global History*, (2006):155.
[14] Ibid: 158.
[15] Paul U. Kellogg, "What would the Irish do with Ireland?", *Survey Graphic,* vol. XLVII, no.9, November 1921.
[16] Bob Johnson, "Globalising the Harlem Renaissance: Irish, Mexican and 'Negro' Renaissances in The Survey 1919-1929"*, Journal of Global History*, (2006):155.

the efforts of the cultural renaissance built the momentum that provided tangible political change, with the issues' publication aligning with the emergence of the Irish Free State. The positioning of the seminal Harlem issue alongside "Irish Anticipations" invites further investigation into the relationship between the two renaissances that each special issue explores. Johnson's article places the two renaissances (and that of Mexico) in an international dialogue, engaging with the transnational scholarship concerned with Pan-Africanism and the wider issues of challenging "Anglo-Saxon dominance in the post-war period".[17] My research builds upon the connections set out in this article, exploring the Harlem Renaissance in a world-historical context, as part of a wider narrative of cultural and political revival.

There have been several studies that look at the relationship between Ireland and the Caribbean, and there is now an agreement among scholars that the nation of Ireland can be, and perhaps should be viewed as a postcolonial nation, thus the comparison between the histories, societies and experiences of Caribbean and Irish peoples is the topic of an emerging body of research. Maria McGarrity's 2008 study, *Washed by the Gulf Stream*, provides an examination of the literary and cultural ties between Ireland and the Caribbean.[18] Michael Malouf's *Transatlantic Solidarities: Irish Nationalism and Caribbean Poetics* reassesses the model that has previously separated works of Irish and Anglo-Caribbean origins.[19] The traditions have been divided and organised by their place in postcolonial studies or modernism. Malouf addresses this divide in this comparative study, exploring the commonalities between Ireland and the Anglophone Caribbean in their shared experience of colonialism, and their common spaces of migration in New York and London.

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[17] Ibid: 159.
[18] Maria McGarrity, *Washed By the Gulf Stream,* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008).
[19] Michael G. Malouf, *Transatlantic Solidarities: Irish Nationalism and Caribbean Poetics,* (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2009).

Tracy Mishkin's book *The Harlem and Irish Renaissances: Language, Identity and Representation* documents the comparisons between these renaissances, and notes the Irish responses to the cultural movement in Harlem.[20] Mishkin's book provides an astute comparison of the literary and cultural movements from a largely United States perspective. Mishkin provides the first, if not the only book length study that puts Irish Literary Renaissance and the Harlem Renaissance in dialogue. This comparative book details the contexts of the two movements at length and delves far into the Irish history and that of African American peoples in order to investigate the connections between the two cultural movements. The study is primarily concerned with how both movements saw links between liberation, linguistic construction and regaining control over the means and content of representation. The study can be seen as a work of literary history, tracing the known interactions between the two movements, from the Abbey Theatre tour of the USA in 1911-12, to the more isolated instances of critics and commentators drawing the connections between the situation in Harlem to that of Ireland. This book provided a solid foundation for my research. However, the analysis and discussion in this book do at many points tend to over generalise, and non-specific claims weaken the study. There is an apparent omission, or neglect of the Caribbean contributors to the Harlem Renaissance. Despite some of the shortcomings, this work is still ground-breaking in its content and approach. In this thesis, I ask what is the extent of the Caribbean involvement in the Harlem Renaissance and radical movements within the era specifically?

There are many studies that assess Ireland and Harlem independently, which have been instrumental in grounding my research. In the field of Irish Literature, Declan Kiberd has been a significant voice in assessing the ways in which literature has been key to the re-creation and regeneration of Irish national identity. The 1995 book *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the*

[20] Tracy Mishkin, *The Harlem and Irish Renaissances: Language, Identity and Representation,* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 1998).

Modern Nation provides a thorough investigation into the modern Irish writers, who wrote against the dominant English culture.[21] Kiberd addresses the impact of British colonialism on the culture of Ireland, and the work of writers to restore the national identity. The book places the Irish Literary Renaissance as part of a larger movement that sought to reshape Irish national culture. The emphasis on language, identity, culture and resistance in this book are echoed within my own study. Other scholars, such as Terry Eagleton and his 1999 work *Scholars and Rebels in the Nineteenth Century Ireland* gives an account of Ireland's "neglected" intellectuals. Eagleton draws upon the "traditional" and "organic" intellectual, borrowing from Antonio Gramsci, to inform his discussion of the Young Irelanders, Dublin University Magazine (DUM) and the Irish Renaissance. [22] Eagleton's observations surrounding the fluidity of an 'intellectual's' interest, versus the perhaps more rigid perspective of an academic is also applicable to the figures in the Harlem Renaissance. Eagleton explores the interaction between the two groups of intellectuals, the 'traditional' and 'organic'. The book proposes that their shared crisis of identity and cultural interests were the uniting factors of the Irish Renaissance. This book is relevant, not only for the astute insight into the workings and preoccupations of the Irish intellectual, but also in the discussion of how and what an intellectual is, the ways the term has evolved and functions.

In a similar vein, Harlem Renaissance studies represent a lively field of research. Scholars such as James Donald, Brent Hayes Edwards and Robert Hill provide incredibly useful analysis of the social and cultural history of the Harlem Renaissance and beyond. Their work helps to situate the Harlem Renaissance within the context of a larger multi-lingual global phenomenon. Donald's book *Some of These Days: Black Stars, Jazz Aesthetics, and Modernist Culture* is a

[21] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of a Modern Nation*, (London: Vintage Press, 1995).
[22] Terry Eagleton, *Scholars and Rebels in the Nineteenth Century Ireland*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999).

study of the cultural history of the Harlem Renaissance and beyond, mixing the important role of jazz with the actors, architects, poets and musicians that were interacting with each other and the wider 'New Negro' movement.[23] Donald's book underlines the biographical work with the relationship between African American aesthetics and the modernist movement, that flourished from 1920 to the end of the second world war. Hayes Edwards work *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation and the Rise of Black Internationalism Diaspora,* investigates black transnational culture in the 1920s and 1930s, paying particular attention to the intellectual movement in Harlem and the francophone Parisian counterpart – Négritude.[24] The multilingual approach breaks down the barriers previously upheld by nation, language and translation, to put the francophone and Anglophone movements in dialogue, opening the analysis for the history and culture of the black diasporic world. These scholars, and the work they have produced has influenced and informed this thesis, and I have taken the frameworks presented in these texts into my own work.

Chapter Synopsis

This thesis is divided into five chapters that are organised in a broadly chronological and geographical order. Chapter One explores the period between 1900-1920 in Harlem, Ireland and Britain. By charting the significant theatrical, political and social changes that took place, this chapter investigates the conditions and connections between the Irish Literary Renaissance and the Harlem Renaissance. The intervening years between 1900 and 1920 represent an interim period between the two renaissances that are at the centre of this thesis, the Irish and Harlem Renaissances. The two decades saw unprecedented and remarkable shifts in politics,

[23] James Donald, *Some of These Days: Black Stars, Jazz Aesthetics, and Modernist Culture,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
[24] Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation and the Rise of Black Internationalism,* (London: Harvard University Press, 2003).

culture and society on both sides of the Atlantic. This chapter focuses on the Abbey Theatre's first tour of the United States; the ways in which Harlem's demographic changed; the struggle for independence in Ireland and the solidarity that was exhibited in the United Kingdom and United States of America. Lastly, Chapter One offers reflection on the influence of Ireland's radical and militant politics over the radical race nationalism that defined the Harlem Renaissance.

The second chapter investigates the impact of Eugene O'Neill's controversial play *The Emperor Jones* (1920).[25] The play offers an interesting example of the overlapping areas that form the core of my research: Irish Literary Renaissance; Harlem Renaissance and the Caribbean associations in both movements. *The Emperor Jones* brings these three areas into focus: a Harlem Renaissance play, written by an Irish American playwright, depicting Black life on a Caribbean island. This part of the thesis examines the body of criticism surrounding the play and the ways in which the plot, characters and setting can be seen as various allegories, and the collection of borrowed forms and styles O'Neill uses to construct his play, exploring the tragic and expressionist elements in particular. Chapter Three shifts away from fiction and theatre to two special editions of *The Survey Graphic*: "What would the Irish do with Ireland?"[26] published in 1921, and the well-known 1925 issue "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro".[27] These two special illustrated issues investigate the aesthetic, social and political changes of Ireland and Harlem during the post war era, and most importantly chart the progress made during and after the Irish Literary Renaissance and the Harlem Renaissance, and as such serve as an interesting focal point for my research. The third chapter will firstly establish the significance of *The Survey,* the readership, and editors; it then explores the two opening essays of the issues,

[25] Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones*, (Digireads.com book: Digireads Publishing, 2009).
[26] Paul U. Kellogg, "What would the Irish do with Ireland?", *Survey Graphic,* Nov. 1921.
[27] Paul U. Kellogg, "Harlem: Mecca of the new negro", *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925.

primarily concerned with imagining and creating newness, written by A.E and Alain Locke respectively; in the process, it assesses the question of the rural and urban experiences captured in both issues. This chapter examines these two landmark issues of the *Survey Graphic,* building upon the work of Bob Johnson, to investigate how the events in Ireland and Harlem were documented in the pages of *The Survey.*

Chapter Four explores and analyses the artistic output that flourished alongside the literary and political boom in Harlem in the 1920s and 1930s. Following Chapter Three, this part moves focus away from the written word to the visual arts that accompanied the two renaissances. This chapter investigates the less investigated Irish art and illustration from the earlier literary movement and examines the ways in which the visual arts were treated comparatively within the two movements. This chapter assesses the ways in which the intellectuals from within the Irish and Harlem Renaissances were considering how art and artists should best represent their communities by situating the discussion of how the artistic output in the United States was being interpreted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This chapter revisits the *Survey Graphic* to explore the Irish case and applies the same investigation of art and representation to the Irish illustrations in the issue.[28] The foremost African-American illustrator of the Harlem Renaissance, Aaron Douglas, and the short-lived, and highly aesthetic publication *Fire!!* is also explored in this section.[29]

The final chapter turns attention away from strictly Irish and African American connections, to consider the circumstances of the Caribbean migrants in New York and their contribution to the Harlem Renaissance. Chapter Five is centred on two prominent texts from the Harlem Renaissance by Caribbean migrants: Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem* and Eric Walrond's

[28] Paul Kellogg, ed. *Survey Graphic,* (issues "What Would The Irish Do with Ireland?", "Mexico: A Promise" and "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro".
[29] Wallace Thurman, ed. *Fire!!*, 1926.

Tropic Death.[30] The discussion situates the influx of Caribbeans to Harlem by briefly reviewing some prominent Caribbean figures who were vocal during the Renaissance era. It also examines the conditions of a Caribbean upbringing that primed McKay and Walrond for their politically radical and creative output. This chapter will then explore some of the shared thematic links between McKay's and Walrond's works, such as belonging, hybridity, tropical landscapes and finally discuss the ways in which their texts were vessels for poignant criticism of the neo-imperialism that was overspilling into the Caribbean basin from the USA in the 1920s.

[30] Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem,* (London: Vintage Classics, 2022) and Eric Walrond, *Tropic Death*. (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013).

Chapter One: Between Two Renaissances

Chapter One

This chapter will explore the period between 1900-1920 in Harlem, Ireland and Britain. By charting the significant theatrical, political and social changes that took place, this chapter will investigate the conditions and connections between the Irish Literary Renaissance and the Harlem Renaissance. The intervening years between 1900 and 1920 represent an interim period between the two renaissances that are at the centre of this thesis: the Irish revival had seen its heyday, and the Harlem movement was building momentum to the burst of creative expression that took place in the following decade. However, these two decades saw unprecedented and remarkable shifts in politics, culture and society on both sides of the Atlantic. In this chapter, I will be focusing on the Abbey theatre's first tour of the United States; the ways in which Harlem's demographic changed; the struggle for independence in Ireland and the solidarity that was exhibited in the United Kingdom and United States of America. Lastly, this chapter will reflect upon the influence of Ireland's radical and militant politics on the radical race nationalism that defined the Harlem Renaissance.

The Abbey Theatre at Home

The Abbey Theatre opened its doors for the first time in late December 1904, with W.B Yeats and Lady Isabella Augusta Gregory at the helm. The theatre received an audience of "Irish nationalists and the literati".[1] Their opening performance featured a triple bill, with plays from W.B Yeats and Lady Gregory: *On Bailes Strand* and *Spreading the News* were debuted and accompanied by W.B Yeats' *Cathleen Ni Houlihan.* The theatre's premier was received warmly, and the audience "praised its mission to establish a distinctly Irish theatre aesthetic."[2] The Abbey Theatre was formed of smaller companies concerned with establishing a 'national'

[1] Mary Trotter, "Gregory, Yeats and Ireland's Abbey Theatre", in *Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama, 1880-2005,* ed. Mary Luckhurst, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 2006): 87.
[2] Ibid: 87.

theatre of Ireland, including Yeats's and Gregory's earlier Irish Literary Theatre, which was an instrumental organisation in the Irish Literary Renaissance. In 1897 the Irish Literary Theatre published a 'manifesto' in order to raise funds for their project: the mission of their theatre was to "show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and of easy sentiment as it has been represented, but the home of ancient idealism" and hoped that they would find "imaginative audiences …. Who are weary of misrepresentation".[3] This mission was carried through to the Abbey Theatre, where Irish pride and nationalism were fostered through the original plays performed on their stage. The Abbey Theatre became a space where Irish culture, politics and drama could be reinvented and reimagined. On stage, the plays by J.M Synge, Lennox Robinson, Lady Gregory and W.B Yeats depicted "images of both ancient and contemporary rural Irish culture that emerged… [that] were in large part invented, designed to create an idealised image of Irish life that reflected the mores and desires of the contemporary movement more than those of heroes of ancient Irish sagas".[4] The Abbey Theatre's role in repatriating culture from colonial powers back to Ireland emerged from the larger cultural revolution that was occurring across Ireland, that was calling for a free and independent nation. The Abbey Theatre, as a national theatre, contributed to the "cultural revival which would drive the transformative dynamics of Ireland under Home Rule. Home Rule for Ireland would usher in a spiritual renaissance, in which a noble, submerged culture would proclaim itself as radical to other urban, industrial modernity."[5] The Abbey Theatre in Ireland provided imagined insight into a version of Ireland separate from British and English rule, and used their stages to represent marginalised and colonised communities.

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[3] Ibid: 91.
[4] Ibid: 88.
[5] Victor Merriman, "Domestic and Imperial Politics in Britain and Ireland: The Testimony of Irish Theatre", in *A Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama,* ed. Mary Luckhurst, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006): 9

Across the Atlantic: The Abbey in America

The Abbey Theatre company arrived in the United States in September 1911, ready to begin their seven-month tour of thirty venues across the Northern States. After a ten-day voyage, the company arrived in Boston, followed by Lady Gregory a week later. As the company set sail, The *Boston Evening Transcript* reported the company's imminent arrival, and captured the excitement and appeal of the tour before it had begun. In an article titled *The Coming of the Irish Players,* published on the 8th of September 1911, it was stated that: "At least among those that follow the English-speaking drama closely, and especially among connoisseurs of acting, the note of the Irish National Theatre has long preceded it. Since it was founded in 1901 and took over the Abbey Theatre in Dublin in 1904 [sic]".[6] The article goes on to relay the success of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin readying the American audience, introducing the playwrights, directors and founders of the theatre and their touring company. The tour opened at the New Plymouth Theatre, Boston, on the 23rd of September 1911 with a programme of John Millington Synge's *In The Shadow of the Glen,* Lady Gregory's *Hyacinth Halvey* and Thomas Cornelius (T.C) Murray's *Birthright.*[7] The company was made up of fifteen players, including the esteemed Sara Allgood, Joseph Michael Kerrigan and Cathleen Nesbitt. They worked for very modest salaries with the senior members of the company receiving £10 a week, and the remaining company as little as £4 until the box office enabled an increase of salaries and an extension of the tour.[8] In the following months the company travelled around the Northern states, performing in small theatres in Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Illinois and concluded their debut tour back in Boston; exposing the audiences to no less than

[6] *Boston Evening Transcript, Friday 11th October 1911*. https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=V48-AAAAIBAJ&pg=PA12&dq=abbey+theatre&article_id=614,754947&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjz1uDAn5_oAhU-QkEAHQ3ACKgQ6AEIKTAA#v=onepage&q=abbey%twentietheatre&f=false
[7] Ida. G. Everson, "Young Lennox Robinson and The Abbey Theatre's First American Tour", *Modern Drama,* vol. 9 no. 1 (May 1966): 77.
[8] Ibid.

forty Irish plays by W.B Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, St. John Ervine and Lennox Robinson among others.[9] These plays received favourable reviews from critics, enthralled by the refreshing performances. John Edward Hoare wrote for *The North American Review* in October 1911:

> No devastating 'star' parts break the harmony of a company which acts as a unit intent on the just interpretation of their author. And in this school of acting, with its quiet restraint and simplicity in tragedy, its spontaneity in comedy, its fresh exuberance in farce, we attain a realism that seems reality in the absolute if it were not for our knowledge of the study and the art that lie concealed beneath. And what a welcome relief it is to find a company devoid of self-consciousness, of posturing's [sic], and those ghastly affectations that form the script and scrippage of many a 'star' on either side of the Atlantic.[10]

The tour provided an insight into this understated performance, free from the theatrical affectation common in vaudeville and melodrama favoured across the United States. The "simplicity" and "spontaneity" was also present in the costume and minimal set design, and was commented upon in *The Theatre* by a critic conducting a review of Miss Allgood in Synge's play *In the Shadow of the Glen,* which remarked on the fact that she wore little to no make-up, her appeal being in her "low sweet voice, her dusky brown hair and tense, wistful face"[11]. The result of this portrait of the characters, playing on unadorned stages representing rural Ireland was "realism that seems reality, another critic commented that "It was as if one happened upon a cross-section of actual life today."[12] This novel style of acting, performance and writing became emblematic of the Abbey Theatre in the United States of America, where the reputation of the company, and the success of the first tour has been upheld and celebrated. Although the Abbey Theatre has consistently toured since their first transatlantic venture, John

[9] Ibid: 77.
[10] Ibid: 78.
[11] Ibid: 78.
[12] Ibid: 78.

P. Harrington notes that the perception of the National Theatre of Ireland as an *international* theatre has for the most part been neglected in scholarship and public opinion.[13]

Whilst newspaper critics heralded the Abbey Theatre as recreators of reality onstage, the tour generated a significant amount of controversy. Lennox Robinson, who accompanied the tour as a playwright, director and manager noted that "Our plays were not the sentimental Irish plays they [the Boston Irish] had expected", instead the audience watched as the players performed J.M. Synge's *Playboy of the Western World,* and T.C Murray's "unflinching" *Birthright.*[14] The audiences, in large cities especially, were outraged and shocked by the immoral and degrading images of Irish life depicted in these theatres. Ida G. Everson commented that although these plays are remarkably tame by today's standards, in 1911, Synge and Murray were names that provoked waves of disapproval, and sparked vehement protests of these plays that sought to represent Ireland in such an unflattering and damaging light.[15] *Playboy of the Western World* was met with protesters at the premier in Dublin five years prior, and the scandal was transported to America in this tour. Robinson defended the inflammatory nature of the plays, that had left behind some of the poetic idealism of W.B Yeats' earlier plays, stating that "we young men… a generation later than Yeats ... loved her [Ireland] as truly as Yeats ... and the rest- maybe we loved her more deeply, but just because we loved her so deeply her faults were clear to us. And because they wanted to expose her faults and rid her of them they wrote all their 'terrible words about her' out of love."[16] The company continued their tour from Boston and reached New York in November, where the worst of the protests took place. On the opening night of the *Playboy* in New York's Maxine Elliott Theatre, the objections from the audience

[13] Nicholas Grene and Chris Morash ed., *Irish Theatre On Tour,* (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2005): 36.
[14] Ida. G. Everson, "Young Lennox Robinson and The Abbey Theatre's First American Tour", *Modern Drama,* vol. 9 no. 1 (May 1966): 80.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.

drowned the noise on stage causing the entire first act to be repeated, after the noisy culprits had been "unmercifully" ejected onto the street by police. The levels of controversy did attract interest and the protests translated to full houses during this first tour, which was unprecedented for the Abbey Theatre at this time.[17] The humour of the situation was recalled by George Tyler, the agent who had brought the company across the Atlantic: "The play was written by an Irishman, the company was Irish, the rioters were Irish, the cops were Irish, and it was an Irish judge that fined them all for disorderly conduct."[18] However, to most of the Irish population in New York the protests were far from humorous.

The Abbey Theatre in America is not representative of the Abbey's entire history, but certainly is a significant part of their identity and legacy, so much so that in the programme celebrating their centenary in 2004, a tour of America closely resembling their debut was included. Ireland and America have a long-standing relationship, as trade partners of culture, politics and economic matters. Harrington claims that "For many, the history of transatlantic cultural commerce represents Irish artists and American hosts at their mercenary worst: Irish performance standards eroded by the influence of American 'entertainment', and American commodification of an artistic heritage."[19] However, this part of the Abbey's history "can be seen as a mutually enlightening transaction"[20]. Years of touring and persistent branding in America had resulted in the Abbey being "recognised as one singular sensation, an exceptional production company very unlike New York uptown or down, and it is warmly welcomed as an alternative that is at once exotic and reliable."[21] The reputation of the Abbey Theatre in America

[17] Nelson O 'Ceallaigh Ritschel, "Synge and the Irish Influence of the Abbey Theatre on Eugene O'Neill" *The Eugene O'Neill Review,* vol. 27, (2007): 130.
[18] Ida. G. Everson, "Young Lennox Robinson and The Abbey Theatre's First American Tour", *Modern Drama,* vol. 9 no. 1 (May 1966): 83.
[19] Nicholas Grene and Chris Morash ed., *Irish Theatre On Tour,* (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2005): 35-36.
[20] Ibid: 35.
[21] Ibid: 37.

had cemented their image as a company that not only represents Irish artists but also offers an 'authentic' version of Ireland onstage. In this first tour, the Abbey may have lost some of their nationalist audience, however, they gained the support of those that received the plays as high-art and regarded the performances as an innovative and unique experience. The Abbey Theatre's first tour captured the imagination and creative minds of the next generation of playwrights; those who would come to be instrumental in the Harlem Renaissance and shape the new age of theatre. One of the most direct and famous instances of praise comes from Eugene O'Neill, expressing his experience of their first tour on his own career, commenting in 1926: "as a boy I saw so much of the old, ranting, artificial, romantic stage stuff that I always had a sort of contempt for the theatre. It was seeing the Irish players for the first time that gave me a glimpse of my opportunity."[22] On another occasion, O'Neill repeated this sentiment, referring to the theatre his Irish-born father had acted in, "the work of the Irish players on their first trip over here, was what opened my eyes to the existence of a real theatre, as opposed to the unreal… hateful theatre of my father".[23] The result of this first Abbey tour can be traced through the imitators that attempted to recreate their style and "become more real than the competition" and, perhaps not as directly, to the generation of theatre-makers, political activists and authors who experienced this debut tour. [24]

Style and Substance

One of the lasting takeaways from the Abbey's first and subsequent tours was the understated and natural acting style, which was in contrast to the popular melodramas that dominated stages in Europe and America during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The Abbey Theatre

[22] Audrey McNamara, Nelson O'Ceallaigh Ritschel, "Editor's Foreword Ireland and O'Neill", *The Eugene O'Neill Review,* vol. 27, (2018): VI.
[23] Nicholas Grene and Chris Morash ed., *Irish Theatre On Tour,* (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2005): 42.
[24] Ibid: 42.

produced plays that possessed this quality of reality from its inception. The origins of the Abbey Theatre are often solely attributed to W.B. Yeats and Lady Gregory, but there were three distinct sources that collaborated to form one National Theatre of Ireland, that took residence at the Abbey Theatre. Another of the contributors were the brothers William and Frank Fay, who were involved in directing touring and amateur companies in Dublin and eventually established 'W.G Fay's Irish National Dramatic Company'. After watching the Irish National Dramatic Company perform in 1901 W.B Yeats was inspired by what he had seen and "knew that these were the actors necessary to make his vision of Irish theatre a reality".[25] The Fay brothers rejected the "flagrant histrionics" that were commonplace in Irish melodramatic theatre and instead took influence from the French actor Constant Coquelin, who had conveyed the French representational style of acting developed from the theories of eighteenth century philosopher Denis Diderot. In essence, Diderot established techniques that encouraged the actors not to *become* the characters, or to "allow the characters emotions beyond the limits of normal behaviour", instead the actors must exercise constant control over their characters whilst "maintaining…life-like boundaries" [26]. This style of acting that was marked by self-control and clear uncomplicated speaking later became a signature of the Abbey Theatre[27]. The plays performed by the Abbey Theatre on this tour called for this alternate style of acting: subdued to match the tone and settings of the plays. Even amongst the drama of the *Playboy* who proudly advertises patricide, the rural shebeen could not accommodate the superfluous pacing or gesticulation that were the widespread markers of drawing room melodrama. Instead, the Abbey company, drew upon their own experiences and knowing how Irish peasants moved and behaved in their "huts in the heather-covered mountains" knew that they did not pace across

[25] Mary Trotter, "Gregory, Yeats and Ireland's Abbey Theatre", Chapter in A *Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama, 1880-2005,*ed. Mary Luckhurst, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 2006): 93.
[26] Nelson O 'Ceallaigh Ritschel, "Synge and the Irish Influence of the Abbey Theatre on Eugene O'Neill" *The Eugene O'Neill Review,* vol. 27, (2007): 130.
[27] Ibid: 130.

their "earthen floor unnecessarily from left to right at the end of every speech".[28] The Fay brothers (who had by this time withdrawn from the Abbey Theatre due to creative and managerial differences), and the Abbey company are credited by Robinson for developing and creating this 'new' style of acting:

> So these Irish players made for themselves an art of acting, acting of the greatest naturalness and simplicity and intimacy. They learned never to move unless it was necessary, never to make a turn unless it was necessary. Every movement that they made, and every gesture, took on immense significance. They learned to imagine, as no other country ever had imagined, a fourth wall to the stage. It was a crime with them, and it is still a crime, to play directly to the audience. They did what players had not done for generations. They turned their backs to the audience.[29]

This restrained performance had a lasting impact on American theatre. The Abbey players had introduced a naturalness and simplicity to the stages they visited, which arguably shifted the focus of the theatre-going population from the elaborate star driven theatre of Broadway to this innovative and more 'truthful' plays. Edward Shaughnessy asserts that the impression of the Abbey's players on Eugene O'Neill "can hardly be overstated" and perhaps when O'Neill was directing *Bound East for Cardiff* and *Thirst* during the summer of 1916 with the Provincetown Players, it was the Abbey style that he was attempting to emulate.[30] The restraint exercised by the cast extended to the set and costume; unlike the lavish productions of Broadway, with no cost spared for historically accurate costume and sets that enthralled audiences, the Abbey's sets were "designed to suggest, not recreate an environment".[31] Of course, it is likely that the sparse staging was, in part, a necessity of the touring company. Nonetheless, the muted and natural production had the effect of modern Brechtian performance: moving the audience's focus from the stars and aesthetics and toward the play's words and ideas.[32]

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[28] Ibid: 79.
[29] Ibid: 80.
[30] Nelson O 'Ceallaigh Ritschel, "Synge and the Irish Influence of the Abbey Theatre on Eugene O'Neill" *The Eugene O'Neill Review,* vol. 27, (2007): 131 and 134.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid: 131.

The issue of 'authenticity' has been the subject of significant debate surrounding the Abbey Theatre, in their depictions of Irish life and their presence on the international stage as the 'official' national theatre of Ireland. J.P. Harrington asserts that "there is a great emphasis in America on the Abbey authenticity, as in programme imprimaturs certifying that this really is the 'official national theatre of Ireland'. The Abbey in America has to be 'The Real Thing' with all the complications collectively brought upon that phrase".[33] The attention to 'authentic' theatre of Ireland was present in the initial manifesto published by Yeats and Lady Gregory to "bring upon the stage the deeper emotions of Ireland" and the Abbey in the twenty-first century are still committed to depicting and engaging with all strata of Irish society. Although it is not unusual for a national theatre to be concerned primarily with national matters, the Abbey was unique in 1911, representing a nation "not yet recognised by the world", and as such the touring company were representative of Ireland and Irish theatre in America.[34] It could be argued that the Abbey Theatre's preference for realism is indicative of the commitment to represent Celtic ideals through the mode of theatre concerned with rural Irish existence, in which the style of realism is an appropriate vehicle of their political drive to return power to the Irish people, and away from British rule. This realism is also emulated in the language used to capture the vernacular of the Irish people. The plays penned by Lady Gregory were prose plays, translated from Celtic and Gaelic mythology and staged to promote Irish idealism. These plays, and the works by J.M. Synge and the Abbey playwrights were often about "a peasantry who, living in a very remote part of Ireland, spoke a different kind of English, because they were really Gaelic speakers 'or very nearly related to Gaelic speakers,' and when they spoke they were making a 'rapid mental unconscious translation from Gaelic into English. . . . There are things you cannot say in Gaelic. For example, you cannot say 'yes' or 'no.' So if you meet a real Irish peasant and

[33] Nicholas Grene and Chris Morash ed., *Irish Theatre On Tour,* (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2005): 38.
[34] Mary Trotter, "Gregory, Yeats and Ireland's Abbey Theatre", in A *Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama, 1880-2005,* ed. Mary Luckhurst, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 2006): 87.

say, 'Are you going to the town?', he answers, 'I am so,' or 'I am not.'"[35] Victor Merriman asserts that: "in dramatizing the Irish race and the Irish nation, either in the theatres of the English speaking world, or in public sites of armed insurrection. To enunciate one's Irishness was to affirm for local audiences one's sense of being other than the empire decrees one to be – a crucial step in the formation of anti-colonial consciousness."[36] The Abbey Theatre created a version of Irish life on stage, in Dublin and abroad that endeavoured to portray an authentic image of Irishness as distinct and separate from British rule.

The Rise of the Little Theatres

Concurrent with the arrival of the Abbey Theatre in America, a new type of theatre was gaining momentum in the larger cities of the United States. This innovative style of theatre rejected the spectacle of Broadway, and the monopoly of the theatre held by the Theatre Syndicate. Inspired by the vital political theatre being produced on European stages, the Little Theatre Movement encouraged freedom of expression, and the collaborative projects involved young actors, playwrights and stage designers who embraced their amateurism for the cause of a freer and democratic theatre. The Little Theatre Movement was characterised by small, independent companies staging new and experimental plays performed in alternative venues that were not associated or designed for traditional dramatic performance. The companies of the Little Theatre Movement set up their stages in public libraries, bookshops, cafes, and community theatres. The companies were diverse, but united in their striving for a renewed and vastly different theatre to that of mainstream America. Little Theatre was a non-commercial enterprise

[35] Ida. G. Everson, "Young Lennox Robinson and The Abbey Theatre's First American Tour", *Modern Drama,* vol. 9 no. 1 (May 1966): 79.
[36] Victor Merriman, "Domestic and Imperial Politics in Britain and Ireland: The Testimony of Irish Theatre", *A Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama,* ed. Mary Luckhurst, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006): 7-8.

that was born out of the "love of the drama, not from the love of gain".[37] These companies were not concerned with popularity or monetary success, and this allowed the productions to be driven by experimentation and to engage with audiences to provoke discussion, with the favoured style of performance falling in the realms of realism. It is not entirely coincidental that the Abbey Theatre tour coincided with the rise of the Little Theatre Movement, and it can be asserted that the influence of the Abbey Theatre can be seen in the *raison d'être* of Little Theatre: experimentation with the mission to redefine national identity. Direct influence can be drawn from the best-known theatres of the movement: The Provincetown Players, The Washington Square Players and The Chicago Little Theatre. Susan Glaspell and her husband Jig Cook attended the Abbey Theatre tour in Chicago in 1911 and went on to be the primary organisers of the Provincetown Players (established in 1915), Glaspell later recalled that "quite possibly there would have been no Provincetown players had there not been Irish players. What [Jig] saw done for Irish life he wanted for American life – no stage conventions in the way of projection with the humility of true feeling".[38]

Constance D'Arcy MacKay wrote an accompaniment to the movement in 1917, titled *The Little Theatre in the United States.*[39] The book is a summary and guide to the evolving companies of the Little Theatre Movement, with entries for the companies, detailing their directors, venues and costing. This text gives insight into the high concentration of Little Theatres in New York City especially, with two chapters dedicated to the emerging companies. Constance D'Arcy MacKay also provides a useful evaluation of the global movements and theatres that have had an impact on this innovative movement, crediting Constantin Stanislavski and the Moscow Arts

[37] Constance D'Arcy MacKay, *Little Theatre in the United States,* (New York: H Holt and Company, 1917): 16.
[38] Nelson O 'Ceallaigh Ritschel, "Synge and the Irish Influence of the Abbey Theatre on Eugene O'Neill" *The Eugene O'Neill Review,* vol. 27, (2007): 131.
[39] Constance D'Arcy MacKay, *Little Theatre in the United States,* (New York: H Holt and Company, 1917).

Theatre; André Antoine in Paris and The Abbey Theatre's Irish players as some of the many precursors to Little Theatre in the United States. Constance D'Arcy MacKay states that although the Abbey was a small touring company, often playing small venues their work did not fall under the category of Little Theatre due to their status as a repertory company, and stated that their preference for simplicity did not constitute experimentation, and only added a "new effect". In New York, the rise of the Little Theatre's worked toward dismantling the authority of the Theatre Syndicate that had a monopoly on the booking, actors and ticketing of the majority of theatre in New York. The Syndicate, conversely, different to the ethos of Little Theatre, was concerned with the profitability of theatre rather than artistic integrity or development.[40] The fall of the Syndicate was in the hands of the Schubert brothers, who were intent on getting in on the opportunity for profit in theatre. The brothers infiltrated the Syndicate and worked to dismantle their authority from the inside, breaking the Syndicate apart in 1910. The Little Theatre Movement undermined the importance and authority of Broadway and the melodramas that were favoured on their stages, by reclaiming the theatre for the smaller companies.

The founders of the Abbey Theatre had established a national theatre in the late nineteenth century, seeking to create an environment that fostered cultural exploration and examination. The Irish playwrights and actors were able to realise their works in the political arena of the stage, prompting the Irish nationalist population to take control of representation, with either pride or protest. Similarly, it can be argued that Little Theatres also attempted to find a voice for American identity, in a time in which the United States was undergoing an identity shift in the post-Civil War era. Nelson O 'Ceallaigh Ritschel observed that "The imaging of America,

[40] For more information about the Syndicate and the fall of the syndicate read: Steve Travis, "The Rise and Fall of the Theatre Syndicate", *Educational Theatre Journal,* Vol. 10, No. 1 (Mar. 1958), pp. 35-40.

a task different from the imaging of British-and-Catholic occupied Ireland, was a task that awaited a voice in 1911. While O'Neill initially was attracted to the Abbey Theatre because it was from Ireland, he and other Americans, even non-Irish Americans, were able to see the struggles for national identity in the plays performed during its first American tour".[41] Using theatre as a means to develop, create or recreate identity was especially urgent within the Black population, and the Little Theatre movement attracted Black artists keen to represent the Black lived experience themselves with authenticity and truth, separate from the minstrel performances that were still commonplace in the early twentieth century. In *Little Theatre in the United States,* there is a one-page entry for the 'Negro Players' under the management of Emilie Hapgood, the players opened at the Garden Theatre in New York in 1917. The players staged three plays written by Ridgely Torrence: *The Rider of Dreams, Simon the Cyrenian,* and *Granny Maumee.* Constance D'Arcy MacKay stated that "the strength, impressiveness and beauty of these plays… were beyond question". This ground-breaking performance was, according to this account, the first time[42] Black players had appeared in plays "interpretative of their own race".[43] The significance of this should not be understated the Little Theatre provided space for Black creatives to appear onstage, in plays that were written about Black life. However, Constance D'Arcy MacKay notes that this could have been more significant if these plays "had been written by an author of their own race"[44]. These early Negro Players paved the way for the later drama of the Harlem Renaissance. Freda J. Scott asserts that during this time:

[41] Nelson O 'Ceallaigh Ritschel, "Synge and the Irish Influence of the Abbey Theatre on Eugene O'Neill" *The Eugene O'Neill Review,* vol. 27, (2007): 135.
[42] There had been earlier Broadway hits with all-Black casts, and writers, such as *In Dahomey,* the 1903 comedy musical. Bert Williams and George Walker starred in the popular musical, and the show's success is significant. However, this type of Vaudeville performance featuring blackface, minstrelsy and pantomime does not reflect the ordinary life of African Americans, which the Little Theatre's strove to achieve.
[43] Constance D'Arcy MacKay, *Little theatre in the United States,* (New York: H Holt and Company, 1917): 69.
[44] Ibid: 69.

> Black communities throughout the country, in the same spirit as the Yiddish theatre, the Abbey Theatre and the Moscow Art Theatre, set to work building amateur and Little Theatre companies where Black playwrights, in increasing numbers, could develop their crafts and a body of Black drama. The commercial stage and White audience, though newly fascinated with the depiction of the "real" Black experience on stage, showed minimal interest in depictions presented by Black playwrights.[45]

The Negro Players were subject to the similar predicament that faced the Abbey Theatre. Where the Abbey playwrights who represented Irish peasantry were largely from the Anglo-Irish upper middle-class, and formed the patrician caretakers of the Irish narrative, the likes of Eugene O'Neill and Ridgely Torrence were the caretakers of African American drama.[46]

The issue of the commercial success versus building theatre that represented Black identity continued to be central to debate into the height of the Harlem Renaissance; whether the Black playwright capitalised on the majority White audience or for a Black audience "which wished to see its image with less distortion" to the sacrifice of monetary gain.[47] It made sense that the Black creatives turned once again to the medium of Little Theatre, W.E.B DuBois, editor of the monthly journal for the N.A.A.C.P, *The Crisis,* "surmised that a Black drama must be built, from scratch, by Blacks for a Black theatre for years and had written and produced a pageant, *The Star of Ethiopia,* himself". During his time as editor of *The Crisis* DuBois established Krigwa (Crisis Guild of Writers and Artists) as an answer to the issue of Black representation, capturing the "New Negro" and the authentic life of Black population in the 1920s.[48] In a similar fashion to W.B Yeats and Lady Gregory's Irish Literary Theatre manifesto, *Crisis* magazine published a statement of objectives, which follows:

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[45] Freda L. Scott, "Black Drama and the Harlem Renaissance", *Theatre Journal,* Vol. 37, No. 4 (Dec. 1985*)*: 438.
[46] Nicholas Grene and Chris Morash ed., *Irish Theatre On Tour,* (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2005): 41.
[47] Freda L. Scott, "Black Drama and the Harlem Renaissance", *Theatre Journal,* Vol. 37, No. 4 (Dec. 1985*)*: 432 and 433.
[48] Ethel Pitts Walker, "Krigwa Players: Krigwa, a Theatre by, for, and about Black People", *Theatre Journal, Perspectives in Theatre History* (Oct. 1988): 347.

> The plays of a real Negro theatre must be: 1. "about us." That is, they must have plays which reveal Negro life as it is. 2. "By us." That is, they must be written by Negro authors who understand from birth and continued association just what it means to be a Negro today. 3. "For us." That is, the theatre must cater primarily to Negro audiences and be supported and sustained by their entertainment and approval. 4. "Near us." The theatre must be in a Negro neighborhood near the mass of ordinary Negro peoples.[49]

The company, based in Harlem, were the first Black theatre company to create and produce drama *by, for* and *about* Black people and life. Ethel Pitts Walker observed that "The significance of the Krigwa Players lies in the fact that this group of Black actors and technicians, most of whom were untrained in the theatre, set out to accomplish something that had not been done in Harlem".[50] The *Crisis* magazine, and *The Opportunity* under the leadership of Charles S. Johnson, ran literary contests, nurturing the literary creativity of the 1920s. The magazines awarded prizes for essays, fiction, poetry and playwrighting. These competitions encouraged Black writers to submit original manuscripts. The prize-winning plays would be performed by the Krigwa Players. The rules "called for an emphasis on realism in the portrayal of Black people".[51] The competition awarded three one-act plays prizes, with Eugene O'Neill acting as one of the judges, alongside Charles Burroughs and Lester A. Walton. These one-act plays *The Church Fight* by Ruth Ada Gaines-Shelton, *The Broken Banjo* by Willis Richardson and *For Unborn Children* by Myrtle A. Smith (this was not produced by the Players), reflected Black life in diverse ways and were strikingly different in subject matter and delivery. These plays were staged in 1926, with Willis Richardson's second play *Compromise* taking the place of Smith's play on the billing.[52] Both of Richardson's plays presented serious issues concerning poverty, murder and racial inequality. These plays were vastly different to the age of the

[49] Ibid: 348.
[50] Ibid: 355.
[51] Ibid: 348.
[52] Krigwa Player Pamphlet, University of Massachusetts Library: https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/pageturn/mums312-b034-i165/#page/2/mode/1up

minstrel and the images of ‘Sambo’ and ‘Uncle Tom’, that were usually performed in blackface, and these were the images that African American theatre wished to reclaim from the stages of mainstream popular culture and theatre. The notion of theatre as a space for creating, recreating or reclaiming identity as a nation or race connects the Little Theatres of New York to the Abbey Theatre of Dublin. There is likely both direct and indirect influence that has filtered through the American consciousness from the first Abbey tour to the productions of the Krigwa Players of the Harlem Renaissance. Both the Krigwa Players and the Abbey Theatre had to overcome and undo misrepresentation and weaken stereotypes in order to create characters and narratives that could represent their communities and nations, uniting audiences in their objectives toward nationalist agendas.

Harlem’s Changing Demographic

This next section will move away from the theatrical and literary influences of Ireland, and shift the focus toward the political events that shaped the period of 1900-1919 in both Ireland and the United States. I will investigate the solidarity exhibited on each side of the Atlantic, and the ways in which Black nationalism looked to Ireland for influence and framework, and the changes to Harlem’s demographic that readied the district for the burst of creativity in the next two decades.

Whilst the theatres of the New York and the Northern cities hosted the Abbey Theatre, Harlem was undergoing significant social transformation; the demographic of the neighbourhood was shifting and changing, creating the conditions for Harlem to become the ‘Negro Mecca’ it came to be in the following decade. In particular, the real estate wars which were characterised by the fights for fair rents and housing were fought across the district; the population of Harlem expanded and encouraged community and economic growth; and intellectual politics were diversifying and branching off from established political groups that failed to serve race specific

causes. The turn of the twentieth century saw the Black population in New York City increase from 36,183 to 60,666 "of whom 36,246 lived in Manhattan". Shannon King, in her book *Whose Harlem is it, Anyway?: Community Politics and Grassroots Activism in the New Negro Era* states that:

> Relocation to Harlem did not happen at once. Although the majority of Black New Yorkers lived in Harlem by World War I, a significant portion of the Black population continued to live in the San Juan Hill area. Between 1910 and 1930, the city's Black population climbed from 91,709 to 327,706; by then, approximately 224,670 lived in Manhattan and 160,340 in Harlem, with the Caribbean population representing approximately 25 percent (39,833) of Harlem's Black population. The community also expanded geographically. In 1920, the majority of the Black population lived between 131st Street and 144th Street, between Lenox and Seventh Avenues. By 1928, Harlem had expanded north, from 110th Street and Central Park East to 159th Street to the Polo Grounds, and east, from St. Nicholas Avenue to the Harlem River.[53]

King recognises the 1900 New York race riot of the Tenderloin district as one of the important catalysts that inspired the wave of migration to Harlem from the Irish dominated district. The riot was sparked by an incident involving a White plain clothed police officer, Robert J. Thorpe and Black woman, Mary Enoch and her common-law husband Arthur Harris. Thorpe was seen grabbing Enoch, outside Harris's apartment building in the early hours of August 13th, falsely believing she was a prostitute. Harris witnessed this, and not knowing Thorpe was a police officer, attacked him and stabbed him in the stomach. Thorpe died in hospital the next day. The Tenderloin district was traditionally an Irish section of New York, and as such Thorpe's death exacerbated racial tensions. On the day before Thorpe's funeral, a fight broke out between a White man, Thomas Healy and a Black man, Spencer Walters.[54] A White mob joined the fight and beat Walters to near death. This assault provoked the violent riot that saw White mobs, with the support of the police, attack Black pedestrians at random, prompting many Black

[53] Shannon King, *Whose Harlem is it, Anyway?: Community Politics and Grassroots Activism in the New Negro Era,* (New York: New York University Press, 2015): 23.
[54] Healy has also been reported to be policeman in some reports, but there is inconsistency in the records.

people to arm themselves. For more than a month after the riot subsided, incidents of racial violence continued. Many from the Black population sought to relocate to Harlem.

Following the aftermath of the 1900 race riot Harlem's Black population increased and over the next two decades "a network of Black realtors, Black churches, and Black tenants took advantage of market conditions and interracial tensions among White homeowners and renters to claim residential space in Harlem."[55] As African American and Caribbean migrants settled in Harlem, it was necessary to begin building both secular and spiritual institutions to serve the needs of the growing community. King observes that throughout this "community-building process Black leaders asserted that Black entrepreneurialism and racial consumer loyalty were the fulcra of the Black community."[56] Influenced by Booker T. Washington, Black Harlemites attempted to establish a separate economy, in line with other Black metropoles in the Northern and Southern states of America, in order to achieve economic independence. However, in Harlem's marketplace, White proprietors competed and catered for Black consumers, often offering more variety and services than the Black businesses could offer, which resulted in Black Harlemites experiencing their created Black metropolis as consumers, as such economic autonomy was elusive.[57] In public spaces such as theatres, restaurants and public transportation "Black consumer expectations collided with Whites' effort to constrain Blacks' civil rights".[58] It can be asserted that the everyday responses to de facto segregation formed the roots of Harlem's Civil Rights movement, rather than the efforts of Civil Rights organisations like the NAACP, founded in 1909. Although the headquarters were in New York City, King reports that the organisation "played a marginal role in local civil rights matters."[59] Neglected by the

[55] Shannon King, *Whose Harlem is it, Anyway?: Community Politics and Grassroots Activism in the New Negro Era,* (New York: New York University Press*,* 2015): 14.
[56] Ibid:15.
[57] Ibid: 16.
[58] Ibid: 16.
[59] Ibid: 16.

efforts of the NAACP in community rights matters, a new interracial organisation emerged in 1910: the National League on Urban Conditions among Negroes, later renamed the National Urban League.[60] This new civil rights organisation was dedicated to improving living conditions, economic autonomy and social reform. This process of community-building that took place before the outbreak of the Great War, provides some cultural context of Harlem prior to the major influx of African Americans from the Southern states during the Great Migration. Black Harlemites began building their mecca: a space for cultural and racial restoration, a haven from racism and the constraints of the Jim Crow South. Harlem was not only a neighbourhood where Black people lived, but a place where newfound freedom translated into an eruption of creativity. This in turn bolstered the fight toward equal civil and community rights. By the time the first two decades of the twentieth century elapsed, Harlem hosted a majority Black community, whose residents were creating a cultural and intellectual metropolis, a capital of African American power.[61]

As Harlem's demographic changed and evolved, representation in politics and the philosophies of Black nationalism had to be reassessed to meet the needs of the burgeoning Black community. The politics of Hubert Harrison serve as a helpful example of the transition from the twentieth century philosophies of Booker T. Washington to the radical Black nationalism which characterised much of the Harlem Renaissance. Hubert Harrison, a Crucian immigrant, and a leading figure and Black activist in the birth of the "New Negro" movement, emigrated from St. Croix in 1900 at the age of seventeen. Within a decade of his arrival in the United States Harrison was making waves within the political arena. Having spent his youth on the Caribbean island of St. Croix, Harrison was unaccustomed to the formal segregation, virulent White supremacy or the lynching that epitomized the severe racial discrimination that was rife

[60] Ibid: 17.
[61] Ibid: 23.

in the Southern States. Whilst in America, Harrison developed his intellectual capabilities, and read extensively on history, politics, science, freethought and literature. Harrison was bold in his views, and as a keen orator, turned his hand to teaching and lecturing, as well as submitting letters to newspapers. In 1910 Harrison wrote two letters to the *New York Sun,* that were critical of the conservative Booker T. Washington. Jeffery B. Perry outlines:

> His differences with Washington centered on politics, education, labor unions, protest, and dissent. Washington, the most powerful Black man in the U.S., had achieved his position of influence by building an extensive patronage machine through ties to powerful Whites. Washington's policy was one of Black subordination in political and economic spheres, and his core philosophy emphasized industrial over higher education for African Americans, Christian character-building, economic base-building before demands for equal civic and political rights, and co-operation with wealthy and powerful Southern White friends. Washington warned that "the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremist folly," advised that African Americans must begin "at the bottom of life" and "not at the top," and emphasized that "the Negro" was "not given to strikes and lockouts".[62]

Harrison's opposition to the politics and philosophies of Washington and his "subservient" attitude toward the advancement of Black people was evident in his writing. Shortly after the letters were submitted and published in *New York Sun,* Harrison was fired from his position as a Postal Worker, possibly due to "the efforts of Washington's powerful 'Tuskegee Machine.'"[63] Harrison then joined the Socialist Party of America (SPA) and committed his work to their causes full-time from 1911, attracted to the party for their militant advocacy for improving the "lot of humanity".[64] Harrison garnered importance as a prominent party member and his articulate soap box speeches were regular fixtures at campaigns and socialist gatherings earning him acclaim as "America's leading Black socialist".[65] During his time with the Socialist Party,

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[62] Jeffery B. Perry, "Hubert Harrison 1883-1927 Race consciousness and the struggle for socialism", *Socialism and Democracy,* vol. 17, (2003): 109.
[63] Ibid: 110.
[64] Irwin Marcus, Hubert Harrison: Negro Advocate", Negro History Bulletin, Vol. 34, No. 1 (JANUARY 1971): 18.
[65] Jeffery B. Perry, "Hubert Harrison 1883-1927 Race consciousness and the struggle for socialism", *Socialism and Democracy,* vol. 17, (2003): 110.

Harrison initiated the 'Colored Socialist Club' in 1911, which was "an unprecedented effort by U.S. socialists at organizing African Americans."[66]

Harrison contributed two series of articles published in the Socialist Party's *New York Call* and the *International Socialist Review* on the subject of "Socialism and The Negro". The articles provided analysis on the economic, social, political and educational issues regarding the 'Negro Question'. From the standpoint of an educated Black Socialist, Harrison challenged the notion that racism is innate and actively moved the argument, that was upheld and utilised by White supremacists, from the biological spheres to the "socio-historic arena" calling for socialists to back the cause of African American civil rights and to "affirm the duty of all socialists to oppose White supremacy". However, the Socialist Party of America failed to do so, instead were at best indifferent to the cause and rejected Harrison's attempts to bring the race consciousness to the Socialist Party, stating at the National Convention in 1912 that "class-consciousness must be learned, but race-consciousness is in-born and cannot be wholly unlearned." Harrison resolved that if it was the belief in the Socialist Party that race consciousness could not be corrected by actions against racism, then they would "be of no real importance to a Socialist agenda."[67] By 1917, the appeal of the Socialist Party had all but worn off, its apparent lack of concern for the race-specific issues led Harrison to break from the party, and by the summer of that year, he had founded the Liberty League and *The Voice,* which, according to Jeffery B. Perry "were, respectively, the first organization and the first newspaper of the 'New Negro' movement."[68] The Liberty League was founded in the same vein as the National Urban League: responding to the needs of a community demanding more radical policy and representation in the efforts to improve civil rights matters, which were currently offered by the existing

[66] Ibid: 110.
[67] Ibid: 113.
[68] Ibid: 116.

organisations such as the NAACP. It was Harrison's view that the NAACP focused too much on the "Talented Tenth", and was dominated by White people's conceptions of how Black people should conduct themselves, and as such "limited itself to paper protests"[69]. In 'The New Policies for the New Negro' a 1917 article printed in *The Voice,* Harrison put forward the position of the 'New Negro' as an assertive figure, "demanding elective representation in Baltimore, Chicago and other places." Jak Peake observes that "in this article, Harrison outlined an 'Africa first' position, later reprinted as 'Race First', based on 'the Swadesha movement of India and the Sinn Fein movement of Ireland.'"[70] It is with this race conscious approach, influenced by the anti-colonial movements from around the globe, that Harrison became the founder and intellectual 'father' of the 'New Negro' movement. Harrison was recognised by his contemporaries for laying the ground for Marcus Garvey's Pan-African movement, and the "race and class conscious, internationalist, mass-based, autonomous, militantly assertive movement sought political equality, social justice civic opportunity, and economic power"[71]

Irish Home Rule and Transatlantic Solidarity

Across the Atlantic, Ireland was also undergoing a violent and turbulent fight towards Irish independence. When the Abbey Theatre departed for their tour of the United States in 1911, they left growing support for separatism in Ireland driven by the anti-colonial sentiment that had been brewing for the previous century. The national zeitgeist was captured in the plays, literature and folklore written and performed in the Irish Literary Renaissance. This section will

[69] Jeffery B. Perry, "Hubert Harrison 1883-1927 Race consciousness and the struggle for socialism", *Socialism and Democracy,* vol. 17, (2003): 116.
[70] Peake, J. "'Watching the Waters": Tropic flows in the Harlem Renaissance, Black Internationalism and other currents.' *Radical Americas* 3, 1 (2018): 8.
[71] Jeffery B. Perry, "Hubert Harrison 1883-1927 Race consciousness and the struggle for socialism", *Socialism and Democracy,* vol. 17, (2003): 117.

briefly outline the major events that contributed to the Irish Home Rule Movement, the Easter Rising and the Irish war of Independence that occurred within the first two decades of the twentieth century. The Home Rule Bill proposed the creation of bi-cameral legislative assembly, which would act as a secondary power outside of the imperial parliament in London. The first Home Rule Bill was introduced to parliament in 1886, but was rejected. Seven years passed before the following Bill was introduced, which was also unsuccessful, failing in the House of Lords. By 1912, the third Irish Home Rule Bill was being introduced in Westminster to British Parliament and was gaining traction among the liberals and republican Irish, however, the Bill was met with resistance from the Unionists. The Bill was passed to the statute books in 1914, but with the outbreak of the First World War, the Home Rule Bill was suspended for the duration of the conflict.

The postponement of the Bill, and the belief that it had been 'watered-down' since its inception and no longer went far enough, led Irish Nationalists such as the secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood to plan radical action, seeking complete independence for Ireland. David Brundage states that "Unlike the rebellions of 1798, 1848, or 1867, the Rising of 1916 opened the door to a full-fledged and partially successful war for Irish independence."[72] The Rising was instigated by The Citizen Army, Irish Volunteers and Irish Republican Brotherhood and involved around 1,600 rebels at the height of the insurrection, which is relatively small in scale. Although the Rising was due to take place across Ireland, it ended up primarily taking place in Dublin, quickly capturing key government sites in the city. From the steps of the General Post Office "Patrick Pearse read a proclamation establishing what they called the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic."[73] The rebellion did not gain

[72] David Brundage, *Irish Nationalists in America: The Politics of Exile 1798–1998,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016): 2.
[73] Ibid.

support from the general public as the rebels had hoped, and as the British government soon declared Martial Law, the uprising was quashed leaving 450 people killed and over 2,000 injured, many of whom were civilians. The violent and destructive uprising resulted in the public resenting the rebels, but public opinion soon changed through the actions taken by the British government. Brundage observes this shift in public opinion: "Most people in Ireland probably assumed that the leaders of the Rising would be given prison sentences, perhaps long ones, like those handed down to Young Irelanders in 1848 and Fenians in 1867. Instead, fifteen men were charged with treason during wartime, given speedy and secret trials in military courts, and then, to the shock of many, executed by firing squad"[74]. The executions of the Rising's leaders led to the "widespread perception" of these men as nationalist martyrs[75]. Although the British government, supported by the Unionists, deemed their punishments as legal and appropriate during a time of war, the executions gave the radical republicanism "a moral authority that it had not possessed for decades"[76]. The rushed executions and indiscriminate martial law (that continued until the Autumn) were some of the factors that rallied public support for the Independence movement.

Sinn Féin benefitted from the shifting Irish opinion, having been largely inactive since Arthur Griffith founded the political organisation in 1905. Sinn Féin did not take part in the planning or undertaking of the Easter Rising, but its members did, many belonging to more than one radical organisation, and in the aftermath of the insurrection, Sinn Féin provided a "viable political outlet for those supporting a united and independent Ireland."[77] The Irish Party endorsed the conscription of Irishmen to the British Army, which led Sinn Féin to grow in popularity due to their anti-violence approach, which won the support of the disillusioned Irish

[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid: 3.
[77] Ibid.

Party members. In 1917, American born Éamon de Valera, "the most senior surviving leader of the Easter Rising, who had just been released from prison," was elected to be the president of Sinn Féin, and in 1918 the party won 75 of the 103 Irish seats in the December general election for the British Parliament.[78] During the next two years, the Sinn Féin party stayed true to their pledge to abstain from British Parliament and established a new Irish Parliament (Dáil Éirann) in Dublin in January 1919. Whilst the parliament settled into their new residence, the Irish Volunteers "gradually transformed themselves into the Irish Republican Army (IRA)… determined to end British rule in Ireland and rejecting the idea of partition, the IRA was commanded by Michael Collins, who led it in a highly effective guerrilla war against the British army from 1919 to 1921, as well as against Britain's hastily recruited special auxiliary forces, often referred to as the Black and Tans."[79] The Anglo-Irish War of 1919-1921 was ruthlessly violent on both sides, with 'active service units' performing ambushes of British soldiers and Collins personally commanded squad "carried out systematic assassinations of British security agents and civil servants.[80] The British government, however, were responsible for the merciless massacre at a Gaelic football match in Dublin in 1920, in an act of retaliation. The British soldiers opened fire on spectators, killing twelve and injuring many more. The 'Black and Tans' atrocities were reported to include "arson, looting, torture, and cold-blooded murder in their efforts to subdue the country. Reports of these atrocities led to a substantial weakening of support for the war in Britain and a Labour Party commission condemned the British military role".[81] One of the most significant events of the conflict is the hunger strike of the republican activist, and Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence MacSwiney. MacSwiney was arrested at an IRA meeting by British forces in August 1920 and demanded release, denying the authority of the

[78] David Brundage, *Irish Nationalists in America: The Politics of Exile 1798–1998,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016): 3.
[79] Ibid: 4.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.

British in Ireland. The British Government refused to release him, and MacSwiney began a hunger strike lasting seventy-three days, before he passed away in London in October. The hunger strike was reported almost daily in European and American news throughout his ordeal.

The news of Terence MacSwiney's plight was not the only instance of global attention Ireland attracted in the United States; the Irish struggle towards independence amassed solidarity from unlikely supporters. The United States hosted many organisations that were committed to Irish Nationalism, and their membership extended beyond the Irish diaspora, such as The Friends of Irish Freedom who were founded six weeks before the Easter Rising in 1916, and spent their first events rallying support for the Rising. The Friends of Irish Freedom (FOIF) gained members across the East Coast and held large meetings in Boston and New York. The FOIF were "to encourage and assist any movement that will tend to bring about the national independence of Ireland".[82] The Irish Progressive League was another New York-based organisation, founded in 1917 and took the space left by the forming political vacuum caused the rapidly disintegrating FOIF.[83] Between 1917 and 1920 the Irish Progressive League (IPL) had a core membership of around 150, and throughout its brief history the organisation was "notable in attracting enthusiastic support from a wide variety of socialists, left-wing progressives, and radical labor activists."[84] The IPL promoted a broadly anti-imperialist perspective on Irish independence, and their activism had a global outlook, sympathising and supporting the Indian and Egyptian nationalists in particular. The solidarity for other nations aiming to undo and untangle the grip of colonialism also extended, for some members, to Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), and the Pan-African

[82] Robin D.G. Kelley, "The Friends of Irish Freedom: a Case-study in Irish-American Nationalism, 1916–21" *Published in Twentieth-Century / Contemporary History*, (Mar/Apr 2008).
[83] David Brundage, *Irish Nationalists in America: The Politics of Exile 1798–1998,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016): 8.
[84] Ibid.

movement.[85] The FOIF and IPL were swallowed by the American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic (AARIR) which was founded 1920 in by de Valera on his eighteen-month campaign in the United States. By 1921 the organisation had amassed 700,000 members and raised over "$10,000,000 for the Republican Movement in Ireland. A veteran activist of these years recalled 'sentiment in favour of the Irish Republic swept over this country so strongly that it was felt in every city and town in the nation. It permeated all walks of life'"[86]. These organisations supported the Irish cause from across the Atlantic, and in the case of the IPL, brought the Irish fight for independence to the global arena, extending and committing to anti-imperial matters in other nations, who all were seeking to regain their ancestral lands.

The solidarity with Ireland in the early twentieth century was not reserved for Irish Americans. Most notably, Marcus Garvey's support of the Irish struggle mobilised the Caribbean and African American community in support of the Irish cause. The 1920 strike of the Manhattan docks provides insight into the strength of solidarity displayed by the African American labourers. Once word of Terence MacSwiney's arrest and hunger strike reached New York, immediate action was taken to support his cause from abroad. The New York Women's Pickets set up a vigil outside the British consulate, and later in the week moved their protest to Pier 60, where they knew the British ship, the *Baltic* would be mooring. The Women's Picket hoped to appeal to the predominantly Irish longshoremen to boycott the ship, "or, more precisely, refuse to unload its cargo, as a symbol of British imperialism"[87]. Their efforts were successful; the longshoremen not only boycotted the *Baltic*, but closed Pier 60 and all the docks of British lines on Manhattan's West Side. "Declaring a boycott on the cargo of all British ships in port, the longshoremen demanded nothing less than the immediate release of Terence MacSwiney from

[85] Ibid: 9.
[86] Ibid: 5.
[87] Ibid: 12.

prison and they remained on strike for the next three and a half weeks".[88] It is not surprising that the longshoremen supported MacSwiney's release, as it is possible to speculate that the majority of the workers were of Irish descent or were themselves recent immigrants. It is more surprising, however, that on the first day of the boycott, when the crowd "moved from pier to pier, calling on dockers working on British ships to walk off the job… [when the crowd] came to Pier 56 it looked like the action might come to an abrupt end, for there was little reason to think that the Black dockers who worked on this pier would join. But they did join and supported the boycott for its entire duration."[89] Brundage asserts that this would have "undoubtedly surprised many Irish nationalists" who were aware of the anti-Black racism that had dominated the docks, however, the plight of the Irish resonated with the African Americans and Black Caribbeans.[90] Marcus Garvey's direct intervention of the strike is also of some importance: by the early 1920s Garvey had gathered a strong following and he had a sizable influence: "According to a federal agent who had infiltrated the UNIA, shortly after the boycott began, Garvey sent an aide, the Reverend J. W. Selkridge "down to the docks to urge all the Negro longshoremen not to load British ships."[91] The events on New York's docks provide an insight into the ways in which the Irish revolution surpassed racial divisions, even if only temporarily, to join in transatlantic solidarity for the fight for freedom and independence in all nations.

Another interesting instance of Black solidarity with the Irish cause is demonstrated by Claude McKay during his residency in London in 1920, McKay attended a Sinn Féin demonstration in

[88] David Brundage, *Irish Nationalists in America: The Politics of Exile 1798–1998,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016): 12.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid: 13.
[91] Ibid.

Trafalgar Square and wrote of his experience a year later in *The Liberator,* in an article titled *How Black sees Green and Red*:

> The place was densely packed, the huge crowd spreading out into the Strand and up to the steps of the National Gallery. I was there selling the *Workers' Dreadnought,* Sylvia Pankhurst's pamphlet, Rebel Ireland, and Herman Gorter's *Ireland: The Achilles Heel of England*; I sold out completely. All Ireland was there. As I passed round eagerly in friendly rivalry with other sellers of my group, I remarked aged men and women in frayed, old fashioned clothes, middle aged couples, young stalwarts, beautiful girls and little children, all wearing the shamrock or some green symbol. I also wore a green necktie and was greeted from different quarters as "Black Murphy" or "Black Irish." With both hands and my bag full of literature I had to find time and a way for hearty handshakes and brief chats with Sinn Féin Communist and regular Sinn Féiners. I caught glimpses also of proud representatives of the Sinn Féin bourgeoisie. For that day at least I was filled with the spirit of Irish nationalism-although I am Black![92]

McKay's account of his experience amongst the Irish nationalist demonstrators exhibits the solidarity felt across race lines, in the shared experience of colonisation and imperial rule. McKay expands upon this thought: "I suffer with the Irish. I think I understand the Irish. My belonging to a subject race entitles me to some understanding of them. And then I was born and reared a peasant; the peasant's passion for the soil possesses me, and it is one of the strongest passions in the Irish revolution." [93] McKay actively supported the struggle for Irish independence during his year in London, as well as "the mass movement for Black self-determination led by his fellow-Jamaican Marcus Garvey".[94] McKay's "green necktie" is a visible symbol of alliance and solidarity that echoes the industrial action of the longshoremen supporting Irish independence in New York.

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[92] Claude McKay, "When Black sees Red and Green", *The Liberator, Vol. 4 No.6 July 1921, pp17-19*
[93] Ibid.
[94] Lee M. Jenkins, "'Black Murphy': Claude McKay and Ireland", *Irish University Review*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Autumn - Winter, 2003): 288.

Irish Struggle and Sacrifice: A Model for Black Nationalism

There are a plethora of comparisons that can be drawn between the Irish revolution and the rise of radical Black nationalism, and the 'New Negro' politics that evolved in the interwar period. The solidarity for the Irish cause can be seen as an important influential factor in the development of the ideologies of Marcus Garvey, Cyril Briggs and even Hubert Harrison. On the 1st of August 1920, Marcus Garvey exhibited his solidarity and sympathy with the Irish cause by equating the Irish struggle with his own Pan-African ideology. In Madison Square Gardens, Garvey addressed crowds of UNIA supporters and began his speech by reading a telegram he was to send to Éamon de Valera: "25,000 Negro delegates assembled in Madison Sq. Gardens in mass convention representing 400,000,000 Negroes of the world, send you greetings as President of the Irish Republic. Please accept the sympathy of the Negroes of the world for your cause. We believe Ireland should be free even as Africa should be free for the Negroes of the world".[95] Robert Hill asserts that: "The Irish revolutionary struggle assisted in focusing Garvey's political perspective. Dramatically symbolised in the "blood sacrifice" of the Easter Week Rising of 1916, the Irish cause provided the major ideological mainspring for Garvey's radical political transformation. Even the slogan made famous by Garvey, "Africa for the Africans at home and abroad", echoed the oft-repeated Irish slogan "the Irish race at home and abroad".[96] Hill continues, and states that Garvey's ideological political evolution "closely mirrored the rise and fall of the two historic phases of the Irish nationalist movement, namely the constitutional nationalism of Sinn Fein".[97] Similarly, Cyril Briggs' secret paramilitary organisation, the African Blood Brotherhood for African Liberation and Redemption (ABB) is explicitly modelled on the Irish Republican Brotherhood that was at the centre of the Easter

[95] Ed. Robert A. Hill, *The Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers, vol 1,* (London: University of California Press, 1983): lxxvi
[96] Ibid: lxx.
[97] Ibid: lxxviii.

Rising. Minkah Makalani observed that although the ABB was inspired by the IRB, the group "in fact functioned as… activist-intellectuals intent on guiding the Black freedom movement toward a pan-Africanist proletarian revolution.…. But the ABB's size belied its significance to the New Negro movement and Black radical thought more generally. It embodied alternative political currents."[98]

The Irish cause was an undeniable source of inspiration and emulation for the emerging radical politics that permeated the Harlem Renaissance. The Irish struggle was often evoked by leading figures, as a call for uprising, rebellion and radical action; Hubert Harrison suggested in 1917 that "the coloured people rise against the government just as the Irish against England unless they get their rights", Brigg's echoed this sentiment in 1921 when he hailed the "the Irish fight for liberty" as "the greatest epic of modern times and a sight to inspire to emulation all oppressed groups."[99] By 1921, the Irish cause arguably appeared to demonstrate the success of militant, radical organisation and uprising on the attainment of the Free State, and as such provided a viable and compelling model for Black nationalism in the United States. The impact of the Easter Rising and the subsequent Anglo-Irish War had far-reaching implications to radical politics in the United States of America, providing inspiration for oppressed groups to rise against their imperial oppressors.

Conclusion

The first two decades of the twentieth century saw significant changes to politics, economics and theatre. The influence of Irish art and radical politics, as well as the shifting demographic

[98] Minkah Makalani, *In The Cause of Freedom,* (University of North Carolina Press, 2011): 46.
[99]Ed. Robert A. Hill, *The Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers, vol 1* (London: University of California Press, 1983): lxx and David Brundage "The Easter Rising 100 years on: how the Irish revolution fired up American politics" https://theconversation.com/the-easter-rising-100-years-on-how-the-irish-revolution-fired-up-american-politics-58586

of Harlem, were factors that created some of the conditions for the Harlem Renaissance. The events that took place on both sides of the Atlantic are not limited to those covered in this chapter, but provide significant background to frame the chapters that follow. This chapter has assessed the ways in which Irish and African American politics and arts looked to each other for guidance in how they might move their independent identity forward. This transatlantic guidance is evident through the lines of solidarity, influence and inspiration. This chapter has laid the ground for the analysis that follows, chapter two explores the work of Eugene O'Neill in an analysis of the play *The Emperor Jones:* the play that bookended the perceived start and end of the Harlem Renaissance.

Chapter Two: *The Emperor Jones*

Chapter Two

This chapter will explore the impact of Eugene O'Neill's popular and controversial play *The Emperor Jones* (1920).[1] The play offers an interesting example of the overlapping areas that form the core of my research: Irish Literary Renaissance; Harlem Renaissance and the Caribbean involvement in these two movements. *The Emperor Jones* brings these three areas into focus: a Harlem Renaissance play, written by an Irish-American playwright, depicting Black life on a Caribbean island. This chapter will examine the body of existing criticism surrounding the play and the ways in which the plot, characters and setting can be seen as various allegories; the second section will focus on the collection of borrowed forms and styles O'Neill uses to construct his play, exploring the tragic and expressionist elements in particular. Lastly, this chapter seeks to observe the lasting legacy of *The Emperor Jones,* and how the later reincarnations have shaped public opinion and give insight into how the intervening years of the New Negro Movement have impacted Black artists and intellectuals.

Beyond Stereotypes

Opening in November 1920 by the Provincetown Players in New York, *The Emperor Jones* enjoyed immediate popularity. The initial performances attracted large audiences, and proved to be both O'Neill's and the Provincetown Players first major box office 'hit'. There was such an appetite for the play that a move to a larger venue was needed, and the play ran for over 490 performances before departing on a successful tour. This hugely surpassed the planned two-week engagement. This demand could be explained in part by the radical casting choice that placed African-American actor Charles Gilpin in the title role of the Emperor Jones. O'Neill's earlier portraits of Black life, *Thirst* (1914), *The Moon of the Caribees* (1918) and *Dreamy Kid* (1919) all employed white actors in blackface, therefore *The Emperor Jones* marked a

[1] Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones*, (Digireads.com book: Digireads Publishing, 2009).

significant shift away from the prominent Minstrel theatre of the 19th Century. O'Neill created a ground-breaking role in Brutus Jones that allowed for a serious tragic portrayal of an African-American character. The fascination with the Black or African American experience was further highlighted when the play was staged on Broadway in 1925, with the then unknown Paul Robeson as the lead. This role propelled Robeson's career, and catapulted him into the fame and wealth of success he garnered following the Broadway run, the subsequent European tour and the 1933 film adaption of the play.

Despite the apparent popularity of the play, *The Emperor Jones* has been the subject of scathing criticism, mostly regarding O'Neill's uncomplimentary depictions of Black life. Modern critics and contemporaries alike have had issues with the ways in which the play descends into primitive and atavistic stereotypes and have focused on these damaging images without too much attention being paid to the nuanced readings possible. Michele Mendelssohn reconsiders the prevalence of this particular trend: "Pawley, Cooley, Gillett, Murphy, Pfister, Saiz, Poole and others have more than adequately discussed the play's latent and patent racism and racial stereotyping."[2] Although I do not deny that these critical contributions are valid, and important, my intention for this chapter is to explore the issues of race and racial identity without succumbing to accusations of racism on the part of the playwright. John R. Cooley in particular credits O'Neill's behaviour and personal attitudes towards Charles Gilpin, the original actor cast to play Emperor Jones, and their turbulent personal relationship as evidence for his apparent racist ideology and as such his harmful depiction of African-American and Black characters.[3] There are multiple articles and reviews that place *The Emperor Jones* as no more

[2] Michèle Mendelssohn, "Reconsidering Race, Language and Identity in "The Emperor Jones"', *The Eugene O'Neill Review,* vol, 23, no. 1, (Spring/ Fall 1999): 20.

[3] There are sufficient accounts of the falling outs experienced between Gilpin and O'Neill during the initial Provincetown run and first tour that detail the violent threats given by O'Neill to his Black lead. These accounts provide an insight into O'Neill's personality, and perhaps are suggestive of his

than a "racist relic", as Nia Reynolds termed it in a 2007 review of the National Theatre production, and no longer worthy of performance or analysis in our modern society.[4] In the century that has passed since the play's debut our evolving perception of race and the representation of racial identity has meant that recent adaptations can expect to be met with a cringing reaction from modern theatre-going audiences. However, if we look beyond the immediate stereotypes, it is possible to access the more relevant and interesting readings this play presents, and "to expect O'Neill to meet today's standards of political correctness is unreasonable".[5] I would argue that this narrow view of *The Emperor Jones* as a product of its time denies the impact of the play upon fellow Black artists and intellectuals throughout the Harlem Renaissance and beyond, which will be further investigated later in this chapter.

The fixation on racism is due in part to the fact that O'Neill was a white, Irish-American playwright, and as such his portrayal of Black life invites questions regarding his role as the caretaker of these portrayals; and whether his depictions of Black life had faithful and helpful intentions, or if they were bred from a position of superiority and oppression. The popularity *The Emperor Jones* enjoyed was certainly fuelled by the appeal the play had with white audiences. The fascination with African-American and Black existence prevailed in the 1920s amongst white Americans who wished to consume Black culture, Black bodies and Black experiences of these communities, especially that of Harlem. Carme Manuel discusses this fashionable obsession with Africa, and by extension African-American and Caribbean life: "African Americans became 'for white bohemian and avant-garde artists a symbol of freedom

ideological position in regard to race, however, to dwell on this as other scholars have already done, does not serve to support my reading of his play. See Cooley and Pawley for further details.

[4] Nia Reynolds, "The Emperor Jones Is a Racist Relic", *The Guardian,* Tuesday 4th September 2007. https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2007/sep/04/theemperorjonesisaracist

[5] Diya M. Abdo, "The Emperor Jones: A Struggle For Individuality", *The Eugene O'Neill Review,* vol. 4 no. 1/ 2 (Spring/ Fall 2000): 31

from restraint, a source of energy and sensuality'"[6]. These white artists drew inspiration from the "great burst of Africana" and from the cultural and artistic shifts that characterise the Harlem Renaissance: a celebration of Black culture and excellence and an active rejection of the harmful stereotypes and white myths that built the "old negro" type.[7] In light of this, plays such as *The Emperor Jones* can be seen as "perpetuating the harmful stereotypes that the era was actively moving against".[8] The white audiences drawn to these representations of Black life may have found comfort in the old stereotypes. The play could have been attractive to audiences who "sought to reminisce about an era where the "simple, forceful and unmechanized existence that the negro came to represent".[9] This nostalgia, bred from the discontent with increasing industrialisation and commercialism, did not disappear during the height of the Renaissance. George M. Fredrickson explains that: "In the 1920s a revised form of romantic racialism became something of a national fad, resulting in part, curiously enough, from patronizing white encouragement of the New Negro movement and the Harlem Renaissance. 'The New Negro,' as perceived by many whites, was simply the old romantic conception of 'the Negro' covered with a patina of the cultural primitivism and exoticism fashionable in the 1920s."[10] O'Neill was not alone in his exploration of Black life, novels such as Waldo Frank's *Holiday* (1923), Sherwood Anderson's *Dark Laughter* (1925) and Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* (1926) serve as examples of the surge of interest among white writers in the literature of Black experience.[11] Cooley asserts that although this interest was often at the expense of Black

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[6] Carme Manuel, "A Ghost in the Expressionist Jungle of O'Neill's "The Emperor Jones"", *African American Review,* vol. 39 no. 1/ 2, (Summer 2005), quoting John Cooley "In Pursuit of the Primitive: Black Portraits by Eugene O'Neill and Other Village Bohemians" *Kramer,* 52.: 68.
[7] John. R. Cooley, "The Emperor Jones" And The Harlem Renaissance", *Studies in the Literary Imagination,* col. 7 no. 2, (Fall 1974): 75
[8] Carme Manuel, "A Ghost in the Expressionist Jungle of O'Neill's "The Emperor Jones"", *African American Review,* vol. 39 no. 1/ 2, (Summer 2005): 69.
[9] Ibid: 69.
[10] Ibid: 67.
[11] John. R. Cooley, "The Emperor Jones" And The Harlem Renaissance", *Studies in the Literary Imagination,* col. 7 no. 2, (Fall 1974): 74.

representation, the backing of white artists worked to boost Black writers and artists and created opportunities for Black actors and creatives to come to the forefront as well as, as Robert Bone stated, creating "a sympathetic audience for the serious treatment of negro subjects".[12]

These white writers play a complex part in the Harlem Renaissance which is not within the scope of this chapter to explore in depth, but the role of O'Neill as an Irish American will be further investigated. The so-called "Negrophiles of the 1920s" picked up their own pens to record their interpretation of Black folk in which their existence was often reduced to basic, exotic portrayals.[13] African Americans continued "to express their collective artistic temperament and love of life through jazz and the literature of the Harlem school". Many of the issues with these white-written depictions of Black life surround the tendency to rely upon exoticism and primitivism, which raises questions of exploitation and in line with current cultural debates, appropriation.[14] This perpetuation of exotic stereotypes and primitivism did not assist in the re-writing or reclamation of independent Black identity, which the contemporary Black writers and artists were taking part in.

The presence of primitive images cannot be denied in O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones,* and in light of the existing criticism placing emphasis on O'Neill's objectives, I intend to explore what the impact is of Jones's journey from African-American Emperor to the convulsing loin cloth 'savage' he becomes by the final scene. *The Emperor Jones* takes the form of an expressionist dream-scape set amongst the backdrop of an untamed, unnamed Caribbean island not yet "self-determined by white marines".[15] It is a one act play with eight scenes, bookended by two realistic, dialogue driven scenes and with the intervening six scenes taking the protagonist on

[12] Ibid: 74.
[13] Carme Manuel, "A Ghost in the Expressionist Jungle of O'Neill's "The Emperor Jones"", *African American Review,* vol. 39 no. 1/ 2, (Summer 2005): 67
[14] Ibid: 67.
[15] Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones*, (Digireads.com book: Digireads Publishing, 2009): 3.

an hallucinatory journey into his own past, and the collective past of all African Americans. During his short time on the island, he has amassed a fortune from the heavy taxes he imposes on the inhabitants – resulting in an imminent uprising on which the play opens. Jones is assured in his self-appointed position, having fooled the island inhabitants that he possesses a magical power, and can only be killed by a silver bullet, thus making him invincible in the eyes of his subjects. Upon hearing of the islanders' plans to rebel, Jones flees into the forest, supposedly following a trail punctuated by cleverly set up food parcels and resources he has buried in anticipation for his escape. The action follows a series of dreamlike flashbacks, wherein Jones is haunted by "Little Formless Fears", and must conquer his own mind and past, before even encountering the islanders he is fleeing.[16] O'Neill's Jones takes a journey through his unconscious, through his personal memory of his life in the USA, and back into memories he has not experienced in his own lifetime; rather his journey continues into an ancestral or collective unconsciousness of the African Diaspora, namely that of the African slaves. His devolution from savvy African American - who was arguably always in pursuit of the American Dream - to a possessed Black body is a troubling image. This descent into the primitive is not only applied to Jones's Black body but extends to the island landscape in which the action takes place. The palace setting is revealed to the audience in the initial scenes. The palace is described by O'Neill as:

> A spacious, high ceilinged room with bare, whitewashed walls. The floor is of white tiles. In the rear, to the left of centre, a wide archway giving out on a portico with white pillars. The palace is evidently situated on high ground for beyond the portico nothing can be seen but a vista of palm trees…. The room is bare of furniture with the exception of a chair made of uncut wood which stands at centre, its back to rear. This is very apparently the Emperor's throne. It is painted a dazzling eye-smiting scarlet. There is a brilliant orange cushion on the seat and another on the floor to serve as a footstool. Strips of matting, dyed scarlet, lead from the foot of the throne to the two entrances.[17]

[16] Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones*, (Digireads.com book: Digireads Publishing, 2009): 27.
[17] Ibid: 7.

This detailed stage direction of the palace setting of the "audience chamber" provides us with a direct contrast to the dark and mystical forest in which the main action take place. Jones's palace is reminiscent of the residences of European royalty, with the archways, portico and pillars drawing influence from the Greco-Roman architecture popular in the Western world. These features can be found throughout the Caribbean colonial landscape and the Southern United States, brought across the Atlantic as symbols of authority and wealth. The stark, white walls and floor all work to draw the audience's eye to the all-important throne, which is ultimately at the centre of the one act drama. Adorned with scarlet and orange, these regal colours emphasise the status of the Emperor and serve as a reminder to all that he entertains in his audience chamber. Some critics have asserted the significance of the "whitewashed" walls, as being symbolic of Jones's own whitewashed mentality, but I believe that these staging decisions serve more to provide a dramatic visual contrast to the forest. The island's forest setting is wild and untamed, and a setting in which the darkness and mystery can thrive. In Scene Three, the audience find Jones amongst the woodland:

> The moon has just risen. Its beams, drifting through the canopy of leaves, make a barely perceptible, suffused, eerie glow. A dense low wall of under-brush and creepers is in the nearer foreground, fencing in a small triangular clearing. Beyond this is the massed Blackness of the forest like an encompassing barrier. A path is dimly discerned leading down to the clearing left, rear, and winding away from it again toward the right. As the scene opens nothing can be distinctly made out.[18]

The presence of the half light of the moon, barely illuminating the stage would have revealed to the contemporary audiences, both Black and white, an unknown and unfamiliar environment.

[18] Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones*, (Digireads.com book: Digireads Publishing, 2009): 29.

O'Neill had travelled through the rainforests of Honduras in the years before he penned *The Emperor Jones* and the influence of that experience can be seen in the writing of the forest setting of this play. O'Neill underlines the role of darkness of the forest, the "Blackness" stretches out to unknown distances, and the connotations of this are in clear contrast to the "whiteness" of the palace. The clean, stark and regal throne room is replaced by the dark, eerie and overgrown clearing. The forest is not only the setting in which the ghostly figures of Jones's past emerge and haunt him, it is also an external depiction of the wilderness of Jones's psyche, which will be discussed further on in the chapter. The forest is claimed to be the territory of Jones's subjects, who he describes as "low-flung bush niggers" or "woods' niggers". Jones's palace is situated on high ground, literally and metaphorically above the island's inhabitants, and their familiarity with the forest is deemed as a characteristic that keeps them below Jones and his civilised, or rather Western, capabilities. The islanders are simultaneously perceived as simple, gullible and 'savage' but also the main threat throughout the play, hunting Jones through the night armed with a silver bullet and "no end of devil spells and charms"[19]. The forest is the land of the islanders, where the reaches of Jones's imperialism have not yet touched. In the act of abandoning his safety of the palace Jones is placed at the mercy of the islanders and the threat of their supernatural abilities. The distinction between Jones and the islanders is great: there is little to no cultural overlap, yet despite this most critics do not see past both parties' racial similarity. Thomas Pawley acknowledges "the difference between the 'Afro-Caribbean' and the 'Afro-American,' a distinction that is important because, although they have a common ethnic background, the racial experience of the two groups was not identical"[20]. The inclusion of these indistinct Caribbean characters, on this fictional island serves as an opportunity to explore the perception of the Caribbean during the 1920s. Both Jones and the

[19] Ibid: 22.
[20] Diya M. Abdo, "The Emperor Jones: A Struggle For Individuality", *The Eugene O'Neill Review,* vol. 4 no. 1/ 2 (Spring/ Fall 2000): 30.

islanders are painted in an equally uncomfortable light, but the difference between the parties is noteworthy, especially within the context of my research. This will be discussed later in this chapter, with further emphasis on Jones' own role as a colonial or imperial figure in relation to these unspecified Caribbean inhabitants.

Allegory

This next section will explore the ways in which the characters, setting and plot of *The Emperor Jones* can be seen as an allegory for larger issues facing the Harlem landscape in the early twentieth century. By assessing the existing theories that place the play as an allegory, the discussion is able to move further away from the typical, straightforward reading of the play and performance as simply racist.

A widely understood theory is that O'Neill's nameless West Indian Island is an allegory for Haiti. At the time of the play's inception, Haiti was undergoing the fifth year of occupation by the United States. O'Neill was able to present a thinly veiled radical critique of American imperialism in Haiti as an economically exploitative, capitalist driven and violent regime through the use of an ambiguous island setting. The September 1920 issue of The NAACP magazine, *The Crisis,* is of particular interest here.[21] The issue dedicates two features to the history of Haiti and the ongoing occupation, with contributions by W.E.B Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson. These articles provide fantastic insight into the perception of Haiti from the core of the Harlem intelligentsia, and I assert that O'Neill's play aligns closely with the views of his literary peers, who, as is clear within this *Crisis* issue, held the shared desire to expose and criticise the Occupation in Haiti. The illustrated article titled "The Truth About Haiti, an NAACP investigation", by James Weldon Johnson details the "political, social and economic"

[21] W.E.B Du Bois, "The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races" ed., vol 20, 5, whole no 119. (September 1920).

conditions in Haiti, as he experienced during his visit in 1920.[22] O'Neill's nameless island is symbolic of Haiti, and this extends past the surface comparison of the tropical islands, but to the governance and status of self-rule established in both the fiction island and Haiti prior to external intervention from the United States: "Haiti gained her independence 116 years ago and maintained her complete sovereignty down to 1915, the year of American intervention."[23] Johnson goes on to state that "Haiti is ruled today by martial law dispensed by the Americans. There are nearly three thousand American Marines in Haiti, and American control is maintained by their bayonets. In the five years of American Occupation, more than three thousand innocent Haitians have been slaughtered."[24] The violent regime in Haiti was not unique in the years preceding and following military occupation the United States of America had extended their imperial reach into the Caribbean basin, John Lowe notes that:

> Puerto Rico came under U.S. control in 1898, and Panama in 1903. The Virgin Islands became a U.S. possession in 1916. U.S. military forces took over Nicaragua in 1909 and occupied Haiti from 1915 until 1934. Many of the troops sent to Haiti were white Southerners, who were considered well-suited for the task of putting down Black insurrectionists. These soldiers imposed *corvée* labor on Haitian Blacks, forcing them to work on the roads, just as Black convicts had been doing for decades in Southern chain gangs."[25]

The details of contemporary Haiti that are outlined by Johnson echo the treatment of O'Neill's fictional island, in which the illusion of prosperity under new rule are just that: an illusion. Johnson notes that "It is true that only one or two of the principal streets of Port-au-Prince were paved at the time of the intervention – five years ago – but the work had already been begun and contract for paving the whole city had already been let by the Haitian Government. The

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[22] James Weldon Johnson, *The Truth About Haiti: An NAACP Investigation,* "The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races" ed. W.E.B Du Bois, vol 20, 5, whole no 119 (September 1920): 217.
[23] Ibid: 218.
[24] Ibid: 218.
[25] John Lowe, "Creating the Circum-Caribbean Imaginary: DuBose Heyward's and Paul Robeson's Revision of The Emperor Jones", *Philological Quarterly,* vol.90 no 1. (Spring 2011): 318.

American Occupation did not pave, and had nothing to do with the paving of a single street in Port-au-Prince."[26] This example provides an insight into how the American Occupation operated, and the ways in which their desire to claim the successes of Haiti as their own helped to justify the violent and brutal regimes in place. The new roads of Haiti, and the grand palace 'created' by the Emperor Jones are both credit to the islanders and *not* the result of new imperial rule. In *The Emperor Jones* the imperial rule, headed by White Marines – as specified in the first stage directions of the play – is also reminiscent of other fiction coming out of the Harlem, especially that of Walrond and his short story collection, *Tropic Death*[27], set around the construction of the Panama Canal, in which the treatment of the Black workers was akin to the *corvée* labour used in Haiti.[28] Eugene O'Neill's critique of the United States of America's imperialism through the guise of blackness places *The Emperor Jones* within Harlem Renaissance literary scene, contributing to the debates of *how* to achieve and redefine independent cultural identity.

The Emperor's New Clothes

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, journalists and intellectuals asserted that *The Emperor Jones* was a "scathing critique of the Black Nationalist movement in the U.S"[29], and that O'Neill's tyrannical and corrupt Emperor was based upon one of the leading figures: Marcus Garvey. This comparison between Garvey and the plays protagonist, Brutus Jones is widely upheld by modern critics, with Garvey's eccentric behaviour, uniform and aspirations mirroring that of the fictional Emperor. Garvey was "often introduced as 'His Highness, the Potentate'…Garvey

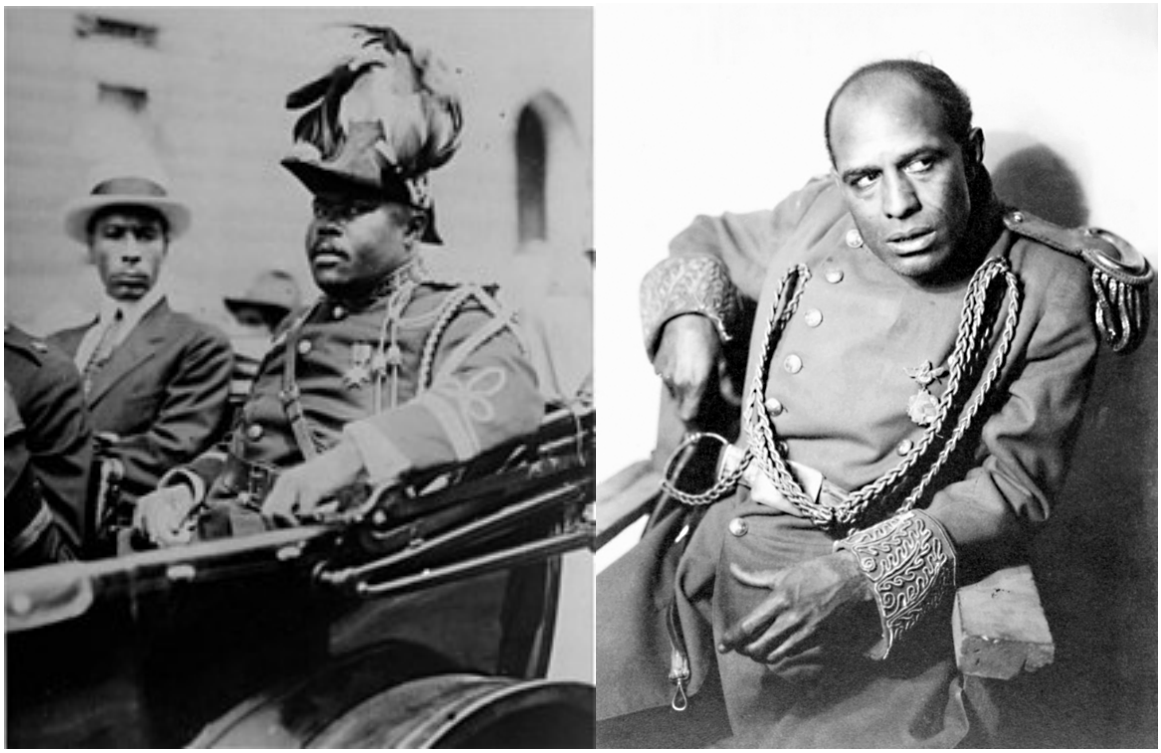
[26] James Weldon Johnson, *The Truth About Haiti: An NAACP Investigation,* "The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races" ed. W.E.B Du Bois, vol 20, 5, whole no 119 (September 1920): 221.
[27] Eric Walrond, *Tropic Death,* (New York: W.W Norton and Company, 2014).
[28] *Tropic Death* is discussed fully in Chapter Five.
[29] Anna Siomopoulos, "The 'eighth o' style: Black Nationalism, The New Deal and *The Emperor Jones*", *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory*, Vo. 58, No 3, (Autumn 2002): 57.

himself denounced the play for its implication that he was a political opportunist who used his nationalistic political organization, the Universal Negro Improvement Association, for his own financial gain."[30] Garvey was a charismatic and captivating orator, and his success amassed a significant following during the 1910s and 1920s, and his indulgence in military regalia would have been visually captivating too. O'Neill's protagonist also took great care in his outward presentation, and the detail of his costume ensures a faithful portrayal of his appearance:

> He wears a light blue uniform coat, sprayed with brass buttons, heavy gold chevrons on his shoulders, gold braids on the collar, cuffs etc. His pants are bright red with a light blue stripe down the side. Patent leather laced boots with brass spurs, and a belt with a long-barrelled, pearl handled revolver in a holster complete his makeup. Yet there is something not altogether ridiculous about his grandeur. He has a way of carrying it off.[31]

The garb that Jones is adorned in at the beginning of the play is remarkably striking to the uniform Garvey awards himself, which he is pictured wearing at various events in New York. Both the fictional Jones and Garvey declare themselves to be a leader of Black folk and match their appearance to this self-professed role. The detail O'Neill places on Jones' "light blue uniform coat, sprayed with brass buttons" and decorated in gold accents certainly echoes Garvey's own attire worn in his role of "Provisional President of Africa" pictured below.

[30] Ibid: 57.
[31] Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones*, (Digireads.com book: Digireads Publishing, 2009: 8.



Left: Marcus Garvey at during a parade on Lennox Avenue, August 1922. Right: Charles Gilpin as Brutus Jones, promotional material, 1920. Fig 1 & 2.

The two images show the striking similarities between Marcus Garvey's eccentric dress, and the costume worn by Charles Gilpin in the 1920 staging of the play. Complete with the brass buttons, gold braided details and adorned cuffs, the two figures certainly share a flair for the ornate military fashions. Mendelssohn states that "Jones would likely have reminded them of Marcus Garvey, since the Jamaican was 'the most publicized Black 'emperor' in uniform in 1920'"[32]. The plays' middle section sees Brutus Jones stripped of his regalia, losing items of dress as he descends further into the forest in his escape from the islanders, and the formless fears that are haunting him. The wilderness of the forest strips Jones of the clothing that connects him to his self-created identity as Emperor, and in turn strips Jones of his personal experiences too and creates an image of Jones unclothed black body as an anonymous

[32] Michèle Mendelssohn, "Reconsidering Race, Language and Identity in "The Emperor Jones"', *The Eugene O'Neill Review,* vol, 23, no. 1, (Spring/ Fall 1999): 27.

representative of all African Americans, experiencing the displacement of slavery and return to an African coast. *The Emperor Jones* goes further than to just critique Garvey's narcissism displayed through his outlandish style, but his political ideology too. The descent into Jones's ancestral past transports him to a foreign African land, and this is a land that he has no contact to, no reference to and no belonging to. This can be seen as a clear criticism of Garvey's UNIA and 'Back to Africa' campaign, in which Garvey urged African American and Black folk to pursue a 'separate but equal' existence and to ultimately abandon the USA and return to West Africa, in search of their ancestral homeland. O'Neill plays out this return to Africa in the final hallucinatory episode, in which we see Jones on an unnamed African beach, faced with the apparition of a "Congo witch-doctor… He is wizened and old, naked except for the fur of some small animal tied about his waist, its bushy tail hanging down in front".[33] Jones's only lucid response in the throes of his hypnotism is to call out to his Christian God: "Mercy, Oh Lawd! Mercy! Mercy on dis po' sinner."[34] Despite the influence of the forest, and the supernatural powers of the "haunts" it is clear that Jones holds onto his Christian, and by extension, Western beliefs. It can be asserted that O'Neill was making a deliberate statement against Garvey's controversial 'Back to Africa' stance, using the scene to confront the audience with an hypothetical result of returning African Americans to Africa, to a land that they have little tangible cultural connection to after the horrors of slavery.

It is possible to also consider Jones as a representative of US imperial rule on O'Neill's fictional island, and this consideration brings into question the inclusion of the other non-native character of Smithers. Smithers is an aging British trader, who acts as a vindictive and spiteful assistant to Jones. As the only white character onstage, his status in relation to Jones presents an interesting character dynamic, as well as the opportunity for a more nuanced analysis of the

[33] Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones*, (Digireads.com book: Digireads Publishing, 2009): 44.
[34] Ibid: 45.

relationship between the growing US imperialism and the declining British colonialism. Smithers is described by O'Neill as a:

> [t]all, stoop shouldered man of about forty. His bald head, perched on a long neck with an enormous Adam's apple, looks like an egg. The tropics have tanned his naturally pasty face with its small sharp features to sickly yellow, and native rum has painted his pointed nose to a startling red. His little, washy blue eyes are red rimmed and dart about him like a ferret's. His expression is one of unscrupulous meanness, cowardly and dangerous. He is dressed in a worn riding suit of dirty white drill, puttees, spurs, and wears a white cork helmet. A cartridge belt with an automatic revolver is around his waist. He carries a riding whip in his hand. [35]

This description of Smithers is dramatically different to that of Jones, whose character oozes a confident, suave and modern aesthetic. Smithers' "sickly yellow" hue, offset by his "startling red" nose paints him as someone who is not at all well suited to the climate and lifestyle of the tropics. In contrast to Jones's bold uniform with highly pigmented scarlet and blue, and decorated with brass and gold accessories, Smithers' clothing is the opposite: faded, scruffy and dirty. In addition to their opposing costumes, Jones's demeanour is described as:

> He is a tall, powerfully-built, full-blooded negro of middle age. His features are typically negroid, yet there is something decidedly distinctive about his face – an underlying strength of will, a hardy, self-reliant confidence in himself that inspires respect. His eyes are alive with a keen, cunning intelligence. In manner he is shrewd suspicious, evasive.

O'Neill has countered each element of Smithers' undesirable attributes with Jones's more flattering characteristics. Whereas Smithers is depicted as a mean, "cowardly and dangerous", Jones is "hardy, self-reliant" and confident. The gentlemen are presented as opposites, in status and in their racial identity, and to contemporary audiences this apparent misalignment between their race and status would have likely been discordant. Although there are critics that have

[35] Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones*, (Digireads.com book: Digireads Publishing, 2009): 6.

commented upon the choice of having a white character bookend the play, appearing in the first and last scenes only, there has been little said of the significance of Smithers as a distinctly British, cockney character. It can be suggested that, if Jones is to be seen as a representative of US imperialism, then Smithers can also be seen as a symbol of the British colonial rule, on the brink of decline. During the early 20th century, the United States was extending its reach, and implementing military rule in a number of Caribbean countries, just as the British Empire had done centuries before. Looking at these characters as personifications of imperialism and colonialism could reveal O'Neill's attitude about the USA overtaking Britain's place as a global power.

There is also a marked difference in how these two outsiders approach their role on the island, and in their coercion of the inhabitants. The first scene works to reveal the contempt that both Smithers and Jones hold for the island's inhabitants, and the ways in which these outsiders have deemed themselves as superior through differing means. Although both men are seen to have weapons on their person, (for Jones this is a suitably flamboyant "long barrelled pearl-handled revolver" and Smithers wears a "cartridge belt with an automatic revolver" about his waist), the riding whip in Smithers hand is an indicator in how he conducts himself with the islanders. O'Neill emphasises Smithers' penchant for violence in the opening minutes of the play, in which Smithers accosts an "old native woman" in the audience chamber of the palace, ahead of the Emperor waking from his afternoon sleep. Smithers aggressively grasps the unnamed woman, before announcing his presence, and demands to know where all the palace staff have gone; when she resists, he presses further:

> SMITHERS: Bloody liar! But tell me what's up. There's somethin' funny goin' on. I smelled it in the air first thing I got up this mornin'. You Blacks are up to some devilment. This palace of 'is is like a bleedin' tomb. Where's all the 'ands? [*The woman keeps sullenly silent. Smithers raises his whip threateningly.*] Ow, yer won't, won't yer? I'll show yer what's what.

> WOMAN: [*coweringly*] I tell, Mister. You no hit. They go – all go. [*She makes a sweeping gesture toward the hills in the distance*].
>
> SMITHERS: Run away – to the 'ills?
>
> WOMAN: Yes, Mister. Him Emperor – Great Father. [*She touches her forehead to the floor with a quick mechanical jerk*]. Him sleep after eat. Then they go – all go. Me old woman. Me left only. Now me go too.
>
> SMITHERS: [*His astonishment giving way to an immense mean satisfaction*] Ow! So that's the ticket! Well, I know bloody well wot's in the air – when they runs orf to the 'ills. The tomtom 'll be thumping out there bloomin' soon. [*with extreme vindictiveness*] And I'm bloody glad of it, for one! Serve 'im right. Puttin' on airs, the stinking nigger! 'is Majesty! Gawd blimey! I only 'opes I'm there when they takes 'im out to shoot 'im.

Smithers does not hesitate to use the force of his body against the elderly woman. Nor does he need to employ the threat of his whip, a symbol that would have been strongly associated with slavery for contemporary audiences, and modern audiences alike. This proclivity for violence over the inhabitants conveys Smithers' need to assert his dominance and authority at each given opportunity. As the only white character in the play, and it is suggested the only white man on the island, it can be implied that Smithers holds the expectation that all the island's Black inhabitants ought to be inferior to his whiteness, including Jones, and therefore his excessive use of force and vindictiveness are bred out of this apparent imbalance of power. The Emperor, however, is shown to use a different approach in his coercion of the islanders. O'Neill is particular in his description of Jones's "cunning intelligence", and I argue that it is this that has led to his success on the island.[36] Throughout the first scene, it is implied that Jones had assimilated on the island and learned the culture and language of the inhabitants before his ascent to his position as Emperor. Jones boasts that he has transformed from a stowaway to Emperor in two years, and has amassed a fortune from stealing from the island during this time, whereas Smithers appears to have decayed and aged during his decade trading on the isle.

[36] Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones*, (Digireads.com book: Digireads Publishing, 2009): 8.

> JONES: Ain't a man's talkin' big what makes him big – long as he makes folks believe it? Sho' I talks large when I ain't got nothin' to back it up, but I ain't talkin' wild just de same. I knows I kin fool 'em – I knows it – and dats backin' enough fo' my game. And ain't I got to learn deir lingo and teach some of dem English befo' I kin talk to 'em? Ain't dat wuk? You ain't never learned ary word er it, Smithers, in do ten years you been heah, dough you' knows it's money in yo' pocket tradin' wid 'em if you does. But you'se too shiftless to take de trouble.[37]

Jones has gone further than Smithers in his efforts to integrate with the islanders, before his rise to power. Jones has taken the time to not only "learn deir lingo" but to share his English with them too, whereas Smithers "never learned ary word 'er it" despite the financial gains available to him if he had done.[38] Jones' bilingualism is an example of the adaptability of his character, throughout his life we can see that Jones is adept at selecting and confidently wearing the mask of the person he needs to be in different circumstances, proving that "talkin' big what is what makes 'im big."[39] Mendelssohn calls upon the postcolonial theorist Frantz Fanon and his chapter on "The Negro and Language" in order to assess why Jones is able, and willing, to become "literally bilingual but also cultural bilingual"[40] even though his reasoning is to be able to better exploit the islanders. Fanon states that:

> To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization. [...] A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language. What we are getting at becomes plain: Mastery of language affords remarkable power.[41]

Applying Mendelssohn's interpretation of Fanon's theory to the character of Jones supports the notion that his intelligence and ability to use the language of the islanders affords him access

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[37] Ibid: 13.
[38] Ibid, 13.
[39] Ibid, 13.
[40] Michèle Mendelssohn, "Reconsidering Race, Language and Identity in "The Emperor Jones"', *The Eugene O'Neill Review,* vol, 23, no. 1, (Spring/ Fall 1999): 22.
[41] Ibid.

to their culture and civilisation, and ultimately is the key to his journey to Emperor. Throughout the mid-section of the play, the flashbacks of Jones's personal memory reveal the ways in which Jones has had to adapt to the different roles he has had during his life in the United States. The protagonist has transformed from a Pullman Porter to a convict, and later a fugitive before seizing the role of island Emperor. The malleability of Jones's character is not unlike the Anancy folklore of West Africa, which remain popular among African American and Caribbean peoples. Anancy, or Anansi is a shapeshifting trickster spider whose cunning, wily intelligence allow him to outsmart his more powerful opponents. Jones similarly adapts his outward appearance, behaviour and language for the cause of self-preservation or improvement. Smithers, on the other hand, has not "troubled himself" to make any changes, despite the knowledge that by doing so he would prosper. Smithers broadly represents the white man, who cannot bear the success of the Black man, but more specifically, as I have attempted to assert, represents Britain in the eyes of the USA: outdated, fading and losing control. However, O'Neill still awards Smithers both the first and last lines of the play, reaffirming Smithers sustained power on the island. In a play dominated by Black voices we can perhaps extract some bias from O'Neill in his choice. Whether this be due to his personal attitudes or an addition that aimed to appease the white theatre-going audiences, Smithers opening and closing the play suggest that regardless of the power of the Black man, the white man has the last word. It is also worth noting that O'Neill's Irish-American heritage could have influenced his writing of this untrustworthy, unattractive British character. At the time of the play's writing, Ireland was undergoing the turbulent process of disentangling from British occupation, as discusses in Chapter One. The bloodshed and uncertainty occurring in Ireland was in the American, and Harlem consciousness during the early 1900s. Although we can more clearly see the O'Neill's island as symbolic for Haiti, it could be inferred that O'Neill's relationship with Ireland is reflected in his writing from an anti-colonial or anti-imperial standpoint. Shannon Steen

proposes that in order for O'Neill to explore his own "feelings of exclusion and alienation produced by his ambiguously positioned Irishness" he turned to mining the Black experience to make the racial tension he felt and experience visible, and as such confirms this relationship between *The Emperor Jones* and Ireland: "Brutus Jones, then, is an imitation of Blackness that is itself really an imitation of whiteness. If we accept Dyer's claim that whiteness is invisible and can never itself be represented, so Brutus Jones is an imitation of an imitation of something invisible. In order to dramatize the problem of whiteness, or at least of Irishness, O'Neill turned to Blackness to represent his own crisis of psychic and social alienation."[42]

The Emperor demonstrates his adaptability in his apparent bilingualism, but also in his behaviours on the island, and during his life in the USA he is not only "talkin' big" but matching his actions as well.[43] The character of Jones is careful to deny that he has 'gone native' and fully assimilated to the island's culture - even when engaging with their customs he assures Smithers that he only "pretends to! Sho' I pretends! Dat's part o' my game from de fust."[44] This practice of mimicry that Jones employs in pursuit of wealth is also seen in his relationship to the United States, and the wider Western culture. Jones brags about his self-education throughout his time as a Pullman Porter and claims that "For little stealin' dey gits you in jail soon or late. For big stealin' dey makes you Emperor… If dey's one thing I learns in ten years on de Pullman ca's listenin' to de white quality talk, it's dat same fact. And when I gits a chance to use it I winds up emperor in two years."[45] From this statement we can assess that Jones has consciously based his imperial, or colonising behaviours on that of the successful white men who frequented the Pullman trains he attended to. There is an argument that Jones abandons

[42] Shannon Steen, "Melancholy Bodies: Racial Subjectivity and Whiteness in O'Neill's "The Emperor Jones"", *Theatre Journal,* vol. 52, no. 3 (October 2000): 356.
[43] Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones*, (Digireads.com book: Digireads Publishing, 2009):13.
[44] Ibid: 22.
[45] Ibid: 12.

his African-American heritage in order to take up the mask of the white man. Shannon Steen comments upon the established claims that Frantz Fanon and Homi K. Bhabha both make about the role of the mimic, and the act of applying the 'mask' of the white man as a tool to thrive and survive in the post-colonial and post-slavery landscape: "O'Neill's depiction of the Black man in the masquerade of colonial power evokes Bhabha's 'almost the same, but not quite' formulation: the powerful man who speaks English, but an English distinctive for its rolling patois; the local tyrant who sits on a 'dazzling, eye-smiting scarlet' throne, but in a room with white-washed walls; the rich man who wears clothes that signify power, but in a grotesque parody of that sign."[46] Jones' Black body, draped in the symbolic clothing of a colonial power, works to highlight the "collocation of white and Black features" which serves as an example of what Fanon terms "the white man's artifice inscribed on the Black man's body".[47] Jones draws upon a range of influences from his life to propel him to his position as emperor – the wiles of Anansi, the adaptability to assimilate enough with the island's culture and the craft of wearing the 'mask' of the successful white men from his past allow him to successfully control the island for a short while.

This brings into question, for many critics, the role of Jones as a Black man – inflicting these conditions on fellow Black people. Jones occupies the paradoxical space of being both a colonising figure, but also a colonised one in his own history. Many critics have asserted that this dynamic within Jones's consciousness makes him a 'treasonous' character, abusing his *own* people. I argue that this is perhaps a clumsy approach, and one that when you take a deeper look into the assertion, is only ever applied to non-white people in western society: so-called 'Black on Black crime' of the 21st century echoes the same sentiment. There is an expectation

[46] Shannon Steen, "Melancholy Bodies: Racial Subjectivity and Whiteness in O'Neill's "The Emperor Jones"", *Theatre Journal,* vol. 52, no. 3 (October 2000): 347.
[47] Michèle Mendelssohn, "Reconsidering Race, Language and Identity in "The Emperor Jones"', *The Eugene O'Neill Review,* vol, 23, no. 1, (Spring/ Fall 1999): 23.

that people of colour should feel a blanket affinity to those that share their racial identity, yet the conflicts between European countries are rarely interrogated as 'treasonous'. Jones is certainly guilty of colonisation, or rather this new type of imperial colonisation, which is undeniably driven by money and greed. Jones has exploited the island, it's people and resources, but I would not go so far as to say Jones has committed treasonous acts against his *own* people. Diya M. Abdo comments that "[Jones] feels no strong affinity with the natives of the island… They do not…share the same experiences or recent history".[48] However, it could be argued that his attitude and crimes against his fellow African Americans, as played out by the 'haunts', constitutes a betrayal to his people at worst, at best it highlights the character's self-regarding qualities and desire to amass financial and social freedom regardless of the detriment to others.

In spite of how the unflattering portrayal of the Emperor and his 'savage' subjects may be to modern audiences, and contrary to the more pervasive criticism that surrounds the play, contemporary Harlemites welcomed the contribution of O'Neill and other white creatives. The play was applauded by contemporary audiences and reviewers for having "marked a new step in the treatment of the African American on the American stage".[49] The intellectual leaders of the Harlem movement also hailed the plays' success, as discussed here by Carme Manuel:

> In 1921 W. E. B. Du Bois's "Negro Art" admonished African Americans to accept artistic presentations of the truth of Negro life, but also stated that they were secure enough in their accomplishments and "to lend the whole stem human truth about ourselves to the transforming hand and seeing eye of the Artist, white and Black." Du Bois stressed "Sheldon, Torrence and O'Neill [as] our great benefactors—forerunners of artists who will yet arise in Ethiopia of the Outstretched Arm".[50]

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[48] Diya M. Abdo, "The Emperor Jones: A Struggle for Individuality", *The Eugene O'Neill Review,* vol. 4 no. 1/ 2 (Spring/ Fall 2000): 33.
[49] Carme Manuel, "A Ghost in the Expressionist Jungle of O'Neill's "The Emperor Jones"", *African American Review,* vol. 39 no. 1/ 2, (Summer 2005): 68
[50] Carme Manuel, "A Ghost in the Expressionist Jungle of O'Neill's "The Emperor Jones"", *African American Review,* vol. 39 no. 1/ 2, (Summer 2005): 69

The Emperor Jones was not only ground-breaking in its casting, staging and performance, but also in its content. O'Neill created a drama in which the action was largely carried by the utterances of his complex African-American lead, marking a momentous shift away from the minstrel theatre of the previous decades. These revolutionary shifts were not wasted on the Black intellectuals heading the Harlem Renaissance. O'Neill created a complex, quasi-tragic hero with depth, and invited a Black actor to fulfil this role. Montgomery Gregory, who held the role of the director of the Howard Players in the years preceding *The Emperor Jones* also praised O'Neill as the playwright "who more than any other person has dignified and popularized Negro drama" and who gave "testimony of the possibilities of the future development".[51] There was a momentous impact of the play, the following sections will explore the ways in which this play can be considered to be an expressionist tragedy, that went on to capture the imaginations of the Harlem audience throughout the era of creative excellence.

Expressionist Tragedy in One Act

This section will explore how O'Neill's play borrows from existing dramatic forms; Tragedy and Expressionism, in order to portray Jones' journey into his psyche. This section will also touch upon Jungian theory of shared consciousness. O'Neill constructs Jones as a semi-tragic hero, who is brought down by hubris and excessive greed, exhibited by Jones' stolen wealth and heavy taxation. Jones has all the key markers of the Aristotelian tragic hero: he is virtuous, in the sense of his, albeit self-appointed, nobility; and he is brought down by his flaws. I argue that his flaws are linked to his fixation on capitalist greed and ultimately Jones' fortune is overturned due to this. Jones is aware that his good fortune is limited in light of his poor treatment of the islanders, he claims: "I ain't no fool. I knows dis Emperor's time is sho't. Dat why I make hay when de sun shine. Was you thinkin' I'se aimin' to hold down dis job for life?

[51] Ibid: 69.

No, suh! What good is gettin' money if you stays back in dis raggedy country?"[52] Jones is perhaps overly ambitious, and not content to stay in one place too long – which is reinforced as his previous experiences in the USA are revealed in the middle section. Ruby Cohn comments upon O'Neill's use of the tragic form:

> Like classical tragedy, *The Emperor Jones* begins close to the catastrophe, which is a foregone conclusion; but the structure lacks the relentless linearity of classical tragedy. Sometimes seen as a circular play because of the realistic quality of the first and last scenes, *Emperor Jones* uses a composite mode that fulfils its own needs: scenes 1 and 8-beginning and end-are realistic, but the middle six scenes -the body of the drama-are at once an expressionist quest, a thriller escape, a psychological breakdown, and an anthropological build-up.[53]

The structure, although not entirely faithful to the tragic form, does follow the rules of tragedy loosely. Jones is brought down by his obsession with money, and this is exemplified by the myth he created and perpetuated in order to protect himself from the islanders: that the Emperor can only be killed by a bullet made of silver. The symbolism of the precious metal silver, over the common lead bullets emphasises the value Jones places on wealth, and to his luck[54] the island did not have access to silver enough to create their own bullets to take down their tyrannical leader. However, as we learn at the conclusion of the play the islanders sourced enough silver from melting down coins: "I cook urn money, make urn silver bullet, make urn strong charm too."[55] Jones is literally and metaphorically killed by the substance he chased throughout his life, and therefore brought down by his fatal tragic flaw.

The Emperor Jones on the whole relies upon the expressionist style to propel the narrative, and the middle section scenes use dream-like non-naturalistic devices to explore the inner psyche

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[52] Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones*, (Digireads.com book: Digireads Publishing, 2009): 15.
[53] Ruby Cohn, "Black Power on Stage: Emperor Jones and King Christophe", *Yale French Studies*, no.46. (1971): 42.
[54] Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones*, (Digireads.com book: Digireads Publishing, 2009): 13.
[55] Ibid: 49.

of the protagonist. O'Neill had previously taken influence from Ibsen in his earlier works, but his diversion into expressionism allowed the playwright to create "depth and complexity of human character".[56] Following on from the realism of the dialogue driven first scene, the audience are then transported to the forest and the series of Jones' soliloquies delivered over the intervening six scenes. The stage design employed at the Provincetown Playhouse in New York's Greenwich Village is in keeping with minimalism often used in expressionist theatre. The design made use of the "tabula rasa" white cyclorama, which worked not only to highlight Gilpin's dark skin against the bright featureless backdrop but also allowed the soliloquy driven action to take the focus. Steen notes that the experimentally stark stage design was commonplace on stages across Europe by 1920, "the plain white backdrop was incorporated into the American visual imagination for the first time as Brutus Jones battled his formless fears in his Caribbean forest."[57] The emptiness of the stage allowed for the "violent emotions" and "extreme subjectivity" to play out, relying on the audiences preconceived ideas of the forest to colour the action.[58] The expressionist stage craft of the debut performances serves to mirror the unveiling of the intense emotions experienced by Jones during these middle scenes: terror and fear. These scenes depict the unravelling of Jones, both outwardly and of his innermost consciousness. Manuel states that "Expressionist drama searches for a retrieval of human beings to redeem them from the dehumanized state in which industrialism and materialism have plunged them."[59] O'Neill uses scenes three and four to expose the crimes Jones committed in the United States; both incidences were driven by financial motives and incited by rage. In scene three Jones is met by a spectral vision of Jeff, a fellow Pullman Porter. Jeff is crouching,

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[56] Carme Manuel, "A Ghost in the Expressionist Jungle of O'Neill's "The Emperor Jones"", *African American Review,* vol. 39 no. 1/ 2, (Summer 2005): 72.
[57] Shannon Steen, "Melancholy Bodies: Racial Subjectivity and Whiteness in O'Neill's "The Emperor Jones"", *Theatre Journal,* vol. 52, no. 3 (October 2000): 348.
[58] Carme Manuel, "A Ghost in the Expressionist Jungle of O'Neill's "The Emperor Jones"", *African American Review,* vol. 39 no. 1/ 2, (Summer 2005): 73.
[59] Ibid: 73.

performing an unnatural series of actions: "he is throwing a pair of dice on the ground before him, picking them up, shaking them, casting them out with regular, rigid, mechanical movements of an automaton".[60] Jones does not immediately see the ghostly apparition, having just fled from the pursuit of Formless Fears in the previous scene. However, when he catches sight on Jeff, he is disoriented:

> JONES: [*starting toward the other, forgetful for a moment of his surroundings and really believing it is a living man that he sees – in a tone of happy relief.*] Jeff! I'se sho' mighty glad to see you! Dey tol' me you done died from that razor cut I gives you. [*stopping suddenly, bewildered.*] But how you come to be heah nigger? [*He stares fascinatedly at the other who continues his mechanical play with the dice. Jones' eyes begin to roll wildly. He stutters.*] Ain't you gwine – look up – can't you speak to me? Is you – is you – a ha'nt? [*he jerks out his revolver in a frenzy of terrified rage.*] Nigger, I kills you dead once. Has I got to kill you again? You take it den. [*he fires.*][61]

The language O'Neill employs in this scene contrasts greatly from the confident and direct dialogue Jones dominates in his conversation with Smithers. The broken speech reveals Jones' distress, and the dramatic stresses work to "externalise the inner psychic states in the human being".[62] Referring back to Steen's statement that expressionist drama seeks to redeem human beings from the trappings of industrialism and materialism, a state that dehumanizes them, Jones is confronting his own failings that were driven by the materialism, in the form of greed, which led to him murdering Jeff. In scene four the audience learns that Jones attacks Jeff over a set of rigged dice, leading him to his time incarcerated in the chain gang, wherein Jones murders once more – this time he strikes the white guard with a shovel. After being haunted by the chain gang, O'Neill abandons Jones's lived experience and ventures into an ancestral past.

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[60] Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones*, (Digireads.com book: Digireads Publishing, 2009): 29.
[61] Ibid: 30.
[62] Carme Manuel, "A Ghost in the Expressionist Jungle of O'Neill's "The Emperor Jones"", *African American Review,* vol. 39 no. 1/ 2, (Summer 2005): 73.

It is arguably the inspired use of the relentless tom-tom drum that pushes the narrative forward throughout O'Neill's expressionist drama. They begin at the close of scene one, and increase steadily until the islanders confirm Jones has been killed. O'Neill specifies that the drum beat "starts at a rate exactly corresponding to a normal pulse beat – 72 to the minute – and continues at a gradual accelerated rate from this point uninterruptedly to the very end of the play".[63] As the drama is episodic in the mid-section, this Expressionist device works to unify the action, and to maintain the pressure of Jones's impending death. The tom-toms increasing tempo have a visceral effect on the audience, and "produce the aural tension of the piece also serve to conjoin physiologically the experience of the spectator".[64] This primitive drum beat not only reflect Jones' rising panic and fear, but serve to accelerate the action onstage. As the drumbeat rises and grows closer, Jones crumbles into his ancestral past.

The descent into Jones's psyche beyond his personal memory and into a collective memory has commonly been discussed in relation to Jung's theory of the Collective Unconscious or "race memory". In "The Concept of the Collective Unconscious" Jung proposes the differences between the collective unconscious and the personal unconscious:

> While the personal unconscious is made up essentially of contents which have at one time been conscious but which have disappeared from consciousness through having been forgotten or repressed, the contents of the collective unconscious have never been in consciousness, and therefore have never been individually acquired, but owe their existence exclusively to heredity.[65]

Jung's theory works on the basis of an inherited memory, passed through biological means from one generation to the other. In the case of O'Neill's play, Jones is seen to inherit the memories

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[63] Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones*, (Digireads.com book: Digireads Publishing, 2009): 21.
[64] Shannon Steen, "Melancholy Bodies: Racial Subjectivity and Whiteness in O'Neill's "The Emperor Jones"", *Theatre Journal,* vol. 52, no. 3 (October 2000): 349.
[65] Michèle Mendelssohn, "Reconsidering Race, Language and Identity in "The Emperor Jones"', *The Eugene O'Neill Review,* vol, 23, no. 1, (Spring/ Fall 1999): 25.

of his African ancestors, and their tumultuous journey to the United States via the slave trade. O'Neill stages this concept through the externalisation of Jones' internal battle with these inherited memories that place Jones in unfamiliar scenarios: standing upon the trader's auction block; aboard a slave ship and part of a non-descript ceremony led by a Witch-doctor. As Jones travels deeper into these memories, each becoming more distant than the next, his appearance becomes unravelled, and his distinctive uniform is removed in stages. With each ghostly encounter Jones removes a part of his lavish uniform, and in doing so removes a piece of his individual identity. Abdo claims that through this symbolic undressing "He is slowly succumbing to the forces of a collective consciousness by becoming more and more of a slave. It is not the Emperor's coat which is the "straitjacket" it is the "loin-cloth" underneath which is the true straitjacket of the slave."[66] Jung's theory presents an interesting interpretation of the later scenes, Fanon's interpretation goes further in describing Jones' situation:

> Jung locates the collective unconscious in the inherited cerebral matter. But the collective unconscious, without our having to fall back on the genes, is purely and simply the sum of prejudices, myths, collective attitudes of a given group. [...] Jung has confused instinct and habit. In his view, in fact, the collective unconscious is bound up with the cerebral structure, the myths and archetypes are permanent engrams [sic] of the race. I hope I have shown that nothing of the sort is the case and that in fact the collective unconscious is cultural, which means acquired.[67]

Applying Fanon's adapted theory, we can ascertain that Jones's collective unconscious is not biological, as in Jung, but learned. The cultural history to which Jones' belongs is African *American*, and therefore his shared memories of slavery may not extend to the Black folk he occupies the nameless island with. By the play's end Jones has been stripped of all his African-

[66] Diya M. Abdo, "The Emperor Jones: A Struggle For Individuality", *The Eugene O'Neill Review,* vol. 4, no. 1/2 (Spring/ Fall 2000): 36.
[67] Michèle Mendelssohn, "Reconsidering Race, Language and Identity in "The Emperor Jones"', *The Eugene O'Neill Review,* vol. 23, no. 1, (Spring/ Fall 1999): 25.

American identifiers no longer draped in bold colours and accented in gold, he is "barefoot, naked to the waist, and appropriately dressed in something which is meant to resemble a loincloth" and as such "Jones' ancestral past looms large in his psyche."[68]

Lasting legacy

Eugene O'Neill's one act play captured the imagination of many of the notable voices of the Harlem Renaissance. It cannot be denied that *The Emperor Jones* had a momentous impact on the ways in which the African American experience was represented in art. The film adaptation by the same name, released in 1933 proved just as popular as the stage version that debuted a decade earlier. The film's screenplay was written by DuBose Heyward and directed by Dudley Murphy. The film had a far wider reach than the play could have ever imagined and due to the play's controversial reception productions are rarely staged now, and, as such, O'Neill's Emperor survives primarily on film. Garrett Eisler comments upon the significance of the adaptation: "By carving out a legacy for itself that is both part of and separate from that of O'Neill's play, the film at once preserves and magnifies its significance to the ongoing conversation about race in America, making *The Emperor Jones* forever a landmark title in that greater discourse."[69] Due to the accessibility of the film, versus the play, there is a much wider body of research that focuses on the various elements of screenplay, actors, style and reception. For the purpose of this chapter, I will keep my discussion of the film adaptation brief, and explore a few of the major ways in which the film diverges from O'Neill's stage play.

The first, and most notable changes in Heyward's screenplay takes the form of the lengthy 'prologue' that takes place before the action of O'Neill's original script. The loosely based

[68] Diya M. Abdo, "The Emperor Jones: A Struggle For Individuality", *The Eugene O'Neill Review,* vol. 4 no. 1/ 2 (Spring/ Fall 2000): 39.
[69] Garrett Eisler, "Backstory as Black Story: The Cinematic Reinvention of O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*", *The Eugene O'Neill Review,* vol. 32 (2010): 159.

prologue provides an in-depth backstory to Jones, starting the action in the United States, and working chronologically until Jones arrives as a stowaway on the fictional Caribbean island. Heyward and Murphy dedicated over two thirds of the film's 75-minute running time to this new material, and the majority of the action during this prologue takes place in the America.[70] There were a myriad of additional characters added to the film, all who serve to humanise Jones, prior to his dramatic ascent to Emperor. The film works the suggested past that is revealed in the dreamscape of the play's middle scenes explicit, the drips of information given during the monologues is extricated and built upon by Heyward. The most striking difference in the portrayal of Jones, is that Heyward provides reasoning to each of Jones's heinous crimes: Jeff is no longer murdered over rigged dice, but in an act of self-defence by Jones and the attack on the white guard was in response to gross mistreatment of a fellow prisoner. These added layers of morality applied to Jones's character work to rectify some, but certainly not all, of O'Neill's unattractive qualities given to his Brutus Jones. The emphasis on dramatizing African-American life appears to have been most important to Murphy and Heyward, and "engaging Heyward to adapt O'Neill's drama was a sign that the *Jones* film sought to foreground African American contemporary life in a way quite different from the play's symbolic portrayal of primitivist symbols and historical legends on a mysterious island."[71] The prologue focuses on the domestic issues facing the United States, and particularly African-American's during the 1920s, whereas O'Neill's play touches upon the wider international issues. The extended backstory allows audiences to witness Jones rise to power, and subsequent decline, twice over: it opens on a farewell service at the Baptist Church, wishing Brutus Jones a safe and prosperous life in his new job as a Pullman Porter, and follows his climb and decline thereafter, before

[70] Ibid: 151.
[71] Ibid: 150.

arriving on the fictitious island and once again rising to power, before being struck down by his own excessive greed.

Another example of the legacy *The Emperor Jones* had during, and beyond the Harlem Renaissance takes the form of Aaron Douglas's prints inspired by the play. Douglas was a prominent artist in the Harlem community, producing work for Alain Locke and other notable popular publications. The Emperor Jones series were originally commissioned by *Theatre Arts Monthly* in 1926. The four prints in the series are woodblock illustrations, carved in the geometric and art-deco inspired style, with hard-edges and a certain primitive influence that came to be synonymous with Douglas's work during the Harlem Renaissance. The illustrations are titled "Bravado", "Defiance", "Flight" and "Surrender", and depict the Emperor Jones' journey into the forest. There is little unanimous criticism that exists around these artworks, but it is clear that Douglas has captured the core of O'Neill's African American protagonist, each print illustrates a crucial point in Jones's journey through the wilderness, and back through his ancestral memory.

Aaron Douglas' Emperor Jones Series. Fig 3.

Conclusion

The Emperor Jones, in all its reincarnations serves to bookend the Harlem Renaissance. By analysing the success of the initial runs of the play, and its metamorphosis into the landmark film version a decade on, we can trace the evidence of Harlem's cultural and political shifts. The artwork the play inspired, and even the controversy that the play's subsequent restaging's created in the years intervening the stage debut and the film work to highlight how the story of this tragic anti-hero character has captured a larger debate around race, representation and the struggle for independent identity in America.

Chapter Three: The *Survey* and our Renaissances

Chapter Three

This chapter aims to explore the significance of two special editions of *The Survey Graphic*: "What would the Irish do with Ireland?" published in 1921, and the well-known 1925 issue "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro".[1] These two special illustrated issues investigate the aesthetic, social and political changes of Ireland and Harlem during the post-War era, and most importantly chart the progress made during and after the Irish Literary Renaissance and the Harlem Renaissance, and as such serve as an interesting focal point for my research. This chapter will firstly establish the significance of *The Survey,* the readership, and editors; we will then explore the two opening essays of the issues, primarily concerned with imagining and creating newness, written by A.E and Alain Locke respectively and explore the question of the rural and urban experiences captured in both issues. This chapter aims to explore these two landmark issues of the *Survey Graphic,* building upon the work of Bob Johnson, to investigate how the events in Ireland and Harlem were documented and interpreted by audiences of *The Survey.*

The Survey and Our Renaissances.

The March 1925 edition of *Survey Graphic* is one of the most significant documents of the Harlem Renaissance. African-American philosopher Alain Locke worked in collaboration with the longstanding editor Paul U. Kellogg, to produce "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro", a seminal text amongst Harlem Renaissance scholars. It is within the pages of this historic issue that some of the first mentions of Harlem as the centre of a Negro "renaissance" exist, and it is this issue that introduced Americans to the concept of the New Negro and the movement that

[1] Paul U. Kellogg, "What would the Irish do with Ireland?", *Survey Graphic,* November 1921. Paul U. Kellogg, "Harlem: Mecca of the new negro", *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925.

has come to be known as the Harlem Renaissance.[2] Alain Locke later published his anthology titled *The New Negro*, which reprinted and reorganised much of the magazine's content. This special edition and the later anthology were era-defining texts, that signalled a self-awareness of the renaissance in progress. This well-known issue was part of a wider series of 'race issues' published by *The Survey*, of which an earlier issue exploring 'New Ireland' was the first. Published in November 1921, "What would the Irish do with Ireland?" investigated the seismic political and social shifts occurring in Ireland in the tumultuous winter that saw the partition of Ireland and the formation of the Irish Free State.[3]

The 'race series' sought to document and explore the social changes occurring across the globe in the wake of the First World War, through the lens of education, art, revolution, and social work. This so-called 'race series' included issues published on Mexico, India and Russia, and *The Survey* charted the ways in which these cultures and nations were working towards defining and redefining their identities on a post-War stage. In the opening pages of "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro", the editor situates the following essays, articles, and artwork within this larger series, recalling the earlier issues. Beneath the contents, in a small section titled "The Gist of It" (presumably penned by Kellogg, if not Locke), reminds the reader that:

> The Survey is seeking month by month and year by year to follow the subtle traces of race growth and interaction through the shifting outline of social organisation and by the flickering light of individual achievement. There are times when these forces that work so slowly and so delicately seem to suddenly flower – and we become aware that the curtain has lifted on a new act in the drama that is part of all of us. Such, we believe, was the case with Ireland on the threshold of political emancipation, and the New Ireland spoke for itself in our issue of November 1921; with New Russia… in March 1923; and with the newly awakened Mexico, in May 1924. If The Survey reads the signs

[2] The term 'Negro Renaissance' had been used in other texts preceding this issue of the *Survey Graphic.* Jak Peake's article "Watching the Waters" includes a detailed discussion of the evolution of the term 'Harlem Renaissance' and charts the instances of the use of 'Negro Renaissance', 'New Negro Movement' and the concepts that accompany these terms.

> aright, such a dramatic flowering of a new race-spirit is taking place close at home – among American Negroes, and the stage of that new episode is Harlem.[4]

This small preface recognises that the events occurring in Harlem were part of a wider wave of racial or national awakening and places the episode of "flowering" in Harlem, and the subsequent documentation within the issue, in dialogue with these earlier issues and the "race growth" of those nations. The early suggestion of Ireland in the prefatory statement is of particular interest to this study, wherein the relationship between the Irish Literary Renaissance and the Harlem Renaissance is the central theme, and this direct link between Ireland and Harlem gives scope to assess the ways in which these special issues of *The Survey* are linked, and if it is possible to evidence the influential relationship between the two. There is little written of the Irish issue, compared to the relatively well-researched Harlem issue, due to its significant part in the composition of *The New Negro,* the oft-termed 'bible of the Harlem Renaissance'. Bob Johnson, in his article "Globalizing the Harlem Renaissance: Irish, Mexican and 'Negro' renaissances in *The Survey,* 1919-1929" places the Harlem Renaissance in a "world-historical context" through the investigation of three of *The Survey's* race issues, and this article offers useful preliminary insight into the often-overlooked Irish issue and as such will be called upon to support the discussion going forward.[5]

Under the direction of Paul Underwood Kellogg, *The Survey* published weekly issues from 1909, converting to a twice monthly format in 1921, which saw the magazine split into separate enterprises: *Survey Midmonthly* and *The Survey Graphic.*[6] *The Survey* had roots in several other publications concerned primarily with charitable organisations and philanthropy, and continued to operate in a similar vein, dealing broadly with "social interpretation" covering social work,

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[4] Paul U. Kellogg, "Harlem: Mecca of the new negro", *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925
[5] Bob Johnson, "Globalizing the Harlem Renaissance: Irish, Mexican and 'Negro' renaissances in The Survey, 1919-1929", Journal of Global History, (2006): 170
[6] <https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/eras/civil-war-reconstruction/survey-associates-inc/>

education, health, race relations and housing. The audience of the magazine was not necessarily far reaching, mostly made up of a "a small core of social reformers, academics, missionaries, and bureaucrats who comprised the progressive coalition in these years" despite this "*The Survey* was no minor affair either intellectually or politically".[7] However, the Harlem issue hugely surpassed the sales of the regular *Survey* issues, achieving over 42,000 sales which would have reached a far larger audience, likely breaking through the usual "small core" of readers.[8]

The editors of the 'race series' worked in collaboration with George William Russell and Alain Locke to oversee the production of these special editions. George William Russell (1867-1935), better known as A.E., was given special mention for his generous contribution to the Irish issue and was awarded the lead article "Irish Anticipations". A.E. (sometimes written as AE or Æ) was a prolific writer, poet and painter and prominent figure in the Irish Literary Renaissance that had flourished in the decade before *The Survey's* Irish issue. Despite his contribution to the events of that renaissance, his work and role has been perhaps unfairly neglected through the passage of time. A.E. often hosted "at homes" in Dublin where the frontrunners of the Irish literary scene would meet and share ideas, he held a lifelong friendship with W.B Yeats, and was "a generous supporter of emerging writers such as Padraic Colum, Francis Ledwidge, James Stephens, Frank O'Connor, Ella Young, Katharine Tynan, and Patrick Kavanagh, and published some of James Joyce's early stories that later became part of Dubliners (1914)."[9] In a short biography of Russell, Daniel Mullhall states that "The capaciousness of his intellect and his irrepressible presence in Dublin during those tumultuous first three decades of the twentieth

[7] Bob Johnson, "Globalizing the Harlem Renaissance: Irish, Mexican and 'Negro' renaissances in The Survey, 1919-1929", Journal of Global History, (2006): 156.
[8] George Hutchingson, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Harlem Renaissance,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 34.
[9] Daniel Mullhall, "George William Russel (A.E.) (1867-1935)", *The Green Book: Writings on Irish Gothic, Supernatural and Fantastic Literature,* No. 13 (Bealtaine 2019), pp. 43-51.

century led to him to be described as "that myriad-minded man", poet, painter, journalist and public man."[10] Born in Lurgan, County Armagh, A.E. had wide-ranging interests, and was drawn to mystics, myth and the supernatural as well as the more earthly subjects of agriculture and education.[11] A.E. was an enthusiastic advocate of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, (IAOS) set up by Sir Horace Plunkett in 1894. It is within this organisation that A.E. spent most his working life, initially as an "organiser of cooperative banks in rural Ireland" and as a writer and editor of the IAOS's publication *Irish Homestead*. The Irish issue of *Survey Graphic* covers the matters of agriculture and art, economics and education, mythology and politics and this diversity of subject matter reflects A.E.'s personal interests and his work at the *Irish Homestead* which is woven throughout the issue. The focus on agriculture will be explored further in the last section of this chapter.

Alain Leroy Locke is credited with the concept of the Harlem issue, and the "painstaking collaboration in its preparation".[12] Locke was the first Black Rhodes scholar and was associated with other prestigious universities in the United Kingdom and the United States, including periods of time spent at Oxford University, Harvard University and Howard University, where he taught as a professor of Philosophy.[13] Locke has come to be known as the 'Dean' of the Harlem Renaissance, through his role in "institutionalizing the Harlem Renaissance", of which his contribution to the *Survey Graphic* played a key role.[14] Kellogg had enlisted the assistance of Locke to this landmark issue at an event held at the Civic Club Dinner in November 2021,

[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Paul U. Kellogg, "Harlem: Mecca of the new negro", *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925
[13] See: Jeffery C. Stewart's biograph of Alain Locke for full details of his formal education, *The New Negro: The Life of Alain Locke,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
[14] Bob Johnson, "Globalizing the Harlem Renaissance: Irish, Mexican and 'Negro' renaissances in The Survey, 1919-1929", Journal of Global History, (2006) And Jeffery, Stewart, *The New Negro: The Life of Alain Locke,* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press)

in which Locke had acted as master of ceremonies. The event hosted many notable figures from the Harlem literary scene, of which some later submitted contributions to the special issue, including: "W. E. B. Du Bois and the African-American poets James Weldon Johnson, Countee Cullen, Georgia Douglas Johnson and Gwendolyn Bennett."[15] That night Kellogg approached Locke over the special issue.

The November 1921 issue of *The Survey* set a template for the later issues in the 'race series', becoming a prototype for the following annual renaissance issues over the next decade. The layout, content and subject matter of that initial issue is echoed across the subsequent issues. In the previous chapters, this thesis has examined how the artistic and political efforts of Ireland could be seen as a guide for the artistic movements occurring in Harlem in the 1920s, I believe that this influential relationship can be extended to include the two special magazine issues in question. The Irish issue provided the *Survey,* and the Harlemites involved in the Harlem issue with the formula to document their renaissance whilst in progress. Although a United States publication, and New York company, the *Survey,* through their interest in Ireland contributed to the creation of the framework for one of the most notable texts of the Harlem Renaissance.

Despite its role in establishing the 'race series', the Irish issue is, in Johnson's view, "a less impressive publication than those to come".[16] However, I would disagree with Johnson's claim that this issue was a "less impressive" feat than those that followed.[17] I aim to extricate some of the arguably impressive elements of the Irish publication in the following discussion. This issue featured a range of perspectives, and by the sheer timing of the issue, it captured the anticipation of a nation on the cusp of independence. Furthermore, the rural content reveals a

[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid: 161.
[17] Ibid.

lot about the dynamics at play between the largely rural Ireland and the powers that reside in the metropoles within Ireland and England, giving insight into the colonial relationship and the more intricate power struggles within Ireland. The issue also "contained the work of important Irish intellectuals, artists, and activists, including, among others, the philosopher and writer, A. E.; the leading figure in rural reconstruction, Horace Plunkett; the dominant figure of the Irish Renaissance, W. B. Yeats; and the soon-to-be executed leader of the Irish resistance, Erskine Childers."[18]

Versions Of Newness

This section intends to explore the ways in which the Irish and Harlem issues of the *Survey Graphic* present the work of the Irish Literary Renaissance, and the Harlem Renaissance. The movement known as the Irish Literary Renaissance had reached its peak in the decades previous to the publication of the Irish *Survey Graphic* issue, having achieved important work in reviving Gaelic cultural pride and finding a home for Irish theatre in Dublin's Abbey Theatre. The momentum built by that movement bolstered the huge political shifts that were occurring in 1921, which were at long last were coming into fruition. It appeared to the American progressive reader of the *Survey* that Ireland's political work was 'done'; the drive towards independence and Home Rule had been achieved, and as such looked to be a real-life example that the slow progress driven by art and literature can be an effective tool for freedom. At the time of the Harlem Issue, the events of the Harlem Renaissance were in full swing, with the immense outpouring of creativity captured within the pages of the Harlem issue. Both of the *Survey* issues in question can be distilled in essence to their attention on "newness": the Irish issue concentrates on the birth of a new nation, and a new Irishman, and the Harlem issue heralds in the "New Negro"; both issues proclaim the coming of a cultural change in progress.

[18] Ibid.

The contributors to *Survey Graphic* make a series of predictions concerning how the cultures will develop to their own independent identity, through ardent self-expression and in the case of the Irish issue, a return to an ancient past. This section will focus on the lead articles of both issues; "Harlem" penned by Alain Locke, and "Irish Anticipations" by A.E. in addition to "Ireland Returns to Her Fountains" written by James Stephens and the full-length study "Enter the New Negro" also by Locke, in order to assess the how language, art, myth and politics were approached as means to reconstruct a new representation of their people and nation.

Before proceeding further into the discussion of these texts, I will outline the concepts of 'nationalism', 'cultural and political nationalism' and the 'imagined community' which all have some applicability to the discourses about Ireland and Harlem in *The Survey*, and beyond. Both are places in which the cultural and political identity of different ethnic groups was being created and re-created. However, Ireland's position as a (newly) postcolonial country, undergoing a partition from Northern Ireland, is of course, vastly different to that of the New York City district of Harlem. Eric Taylor Woods provides a succinct overview of the differences between 'political nationalism' and 'cultural nationalism': "Cultural nationalism generally refers to ideas and practices that relate to the intended revival of a purported national community's culture. If political nationalism is focused on the achievement of political autonomy, cultural nationalism is focused on the cultivation of a nation. Here the vision of the nation is not a political organisation, but a moral community."[19] Although there is much to say of the political nationalism that was present in both Ireland and Harlem, within the context of this thesis, this chapter will mainly call upon the work of intellectuals and artists who sought to present their vision for the production of a "moral community", which can be applied to both locations. Benedict Anderson's concept of the "imagined community" is significant here, in

[19] Eric Taylor Woods, "Cultural Nationalism", *State of Nationalism*: https://stateofnationalism.eu/

which he proposes a definition of the "nation" as an "*imagined* [community] because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of communion"[20]. This concept is useful within the confines of this chapter, in which the discussion will chart the predictions and aspirations written into the pages of the *Survey,* about the communities to which they belonged and wished to carry forward into a new era.[21]

In the opening articles "Irish Anticipations" and "Harlem", A.E. and Locke write respectively of how their cultures *will* be in the future, discussing the ways that education *will* look, how language *will* be wielded, and how the political sphere could shift in favour of their pursuit of freedom. Both authors acknowledge that their nation and culture is undergoing a transformation, the 'old' ways and types have departed, but the 'new' versions have not yet arrived. The titles of these articles give this much away – Locke awaits the entrance of a "New Negro" and A.E. writes the anticipation of an Ireland yet to come. A.E. begins his predictions with the following caveat: "My vision of the future can be likened only to that of an artist who tries to depict a coast from a boat on a tossing sea… there is nothing I can do but speculate on the outcome of national character which changes but little through all fluctuations of circumstance, and anticipate the survival of movements which have been growing to power during the past quarter of a century."[22] Speculation and anticipation indeed set the tone for the Irish issue as a whole. The contributors of many of the opinion pieces set out their projections for how Ireland will recover herself in freedom: Erskine Childers gives serious discussion to

[20] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised ed. (London: Verso, 2016.): 20.

[21] There is much more to say of Nationalism, nation-building and culture which is beyond the scope of this chapter, see "Location of Culture", Homi K. Bhabha, "Orientalism", Edward Said and State of Nationalism for more in-depth discussion.

[22] Paul U. Kellogg, "What would the Irish do with Ireland?" auth. A. E., 'Irish anticipations', *Survey Graphic,* vol. XLVII, no.9, November 1921:291.

the formation of the "Government Under Dail Eireann" and Lionel Smith-Gordon ponders on the "Economic Consequences of Freedom". These articles are punctuated with creative offerings from W.B. Yeats, and Padraic Colum with their hopeful poetry "To Ireland in the Coming Times" and "The Fair Hills of Eire O".

Locke and A.E. present their tentative predictions for the future with similar approaches which are rooted in the present moment but reflecting upon the awareness of the cultural stirrings they are experiencing or have recently experienced in the shift of the status quo. For Ireland, this shift is tangible and more obvious to the reader. Within this issue the sense of the genuine uncertainty that lay ahead for a nation on the cusp, within touching distance of attaining their long fought for independence, is palpable. With that closeness to the event, the fresh argument or discussion is certainly 'what now?'. Once the fight is over, and the dust settles on the battlefield, Ireland must work out what peace looks like and how to rebuild their nation. A.E. proposes that there are "four great currents of energy and thought in Ireland" these are as follows: political, intellectual, economic and "The fourth of these currents animates the proletarians in Ireland who have been adopting the methods of organization and social ideals".[23] Of these four "currents of energy" the political goal was straightforward: to secure Irish liberty; the second off these currents was intellectual, which refers to the creation of "the intellectual referring to the creation of "Irish culture based on the great Gaelic tradition".[24] The return to Gaelic tradition is a common theme that is present throughout most of the Irish issue, with the exception of Richard Rowley's counter piece "Ulster's Position".[25] The extent of contributors' focus on Gaelicism does, however, differ. In "Ireland Returns to her Fountains", James Stephens writes a manifesto of an optimistic complete and thorough return to a Gaelic past. In

[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Paul U. Kellogg, "What would the Irish do with Ireland?", *Survey Graphic,* November 1921.

this piece, Stephens proposes that Ireland will be a haven separate from England and where Irish culture will once again flourish, never to look back to the colonial past. Stephens argues that it is necessary to reject the English language in favour of Gaelic:

> She will be driven to attain the necessary solitude by imposing the barrier of language between the two peoples, and the very first parliament that Ireland gets will set enthusiastically to the task of re-Gaelicizing the nation…. Given the return of Ireland to her natural language and this is almost absolutely certain: There will follow in a few generations the almost total disappearance of Irish literature in the English tongue…. The influx of several million new speakers will break up the Irish language as we now know it, and further generations must elapse before Irish is recast and capable of modern literary usage.[26]

Stephens acknowledges that with the return to Gaelic will come at the cost of a literary output, which will stall until such a time that the language can be spoken with the level of skill needed for artistic interpretation.[27] A.E. on the other hand, offers a far more sober prediction as to how the "re-Gaelizing" of Ireland will occur, commenting that: "I think it is certain an Irish government will foster a knowledge of Gaelic, that it will be taught in every Irish school and the next generation will be bilingual. I do not think English will ever be superseded."[28] The attention to language is interesting, as with all colonial and post-colonial peoples, the language of the oppressor is here cast in doubt. However, after four hundred years under British rule, English may not be the ideal language of freedom but had become the naturalised language after such a big gulf of time. However, as discussed in previous chapters, we can conclude for Ireland, like so many other colonial places that the language is spoken in a hybrid way, with unique grammatical rules and rhythm such as the unique patois spoken across the Caribbean. The English language as used by the Irish was perhaps never fully incorporated. Stephens made

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[26] Paul U. Kellogg, "What would the Irish do with Ireland?" auth. James Stephens., 'Ireland Returns to her Fountains', *Survey Graphic,* November 1921.
[27] According to fluentirish.com, the output of Irish language plays peaked in 1950-70 and has now seen a steep decline once again. https://fluentirish.com/irish-language-plays-dramas/
[28] Paul U. Kellogg, "What would the Irish do with Ireland?" auth. A. E., 'Irish anticipations', *Survey Graphic,* November 1921.

the suggestion that English could not be the appropriate mouthpiece of freedom, as it is England that they are freeing themselves from. As such, a rejection of English is expected in both pieces, with A.E. providing a more moderate approach, acknowledging that there cannot be a time wherein the English language in Ireland will be totally obsolete, however much that is wanted. A knowledge of Gaelic will suffice, and a future of bilingualism is predicted and favoured.

In "Ireland Returns to her Fountains", Stephens writes a bold and ambitious prediction for how this new Ireland will look and feel. He speaks of grand changes, of Ireland taking a period of reflection, escaping inwardly to assess their culture and politics, cutting off connections to the outside world and working wholly on rediscovering her identity. The repeated personification of Ireland throughout the piece, as Ireland is referred to as "she" or "her", underpins the way that Stephens, and perhaps the peers he represents, view the work that needs to be done in order to restore Ireland. This work is in the form of deliberate and prolonged introspection in order to protect the fledging nation from harmful outside influence, and to ensure a true rejection of the colonial trappings that have been forced upon the nation for centuries. To a modern reader, A.E. appears to have a more balanced interpretation, despite his romantic outlook. There is a logical undertone to his writing, and a recognition that one cannot wholly undo the work of centuries of British rule – a view which has arguably been proven correct in many ways over the passage of time. A.E. recognises the need to break free from the chains of colonialism that are upheld by the English language and ill-fitting systems of government – in favour of increased cantons and local county rule, decentralisation and nationalising the land.

The emphasis on artistic self-expression is found within the Irish issue of the *Survey Graphic*. James Stephens's piece begins by asserting the following: "More than any other activity of man the arts require peace and leisure in order to function successfully, and, notwithstanding her

very great vitality, Ireland has had no peace or leisure for a number of centuries."[29] This sentiment would certainly resonate with the black community in Harlem, having after hundreds of years the opportunity to express their individual selves through art and literature in the period after emancipation, migration and war. Stephens claims that through the return to Gaelic, the Irish contribution to English Literature would decline, but this would be of no loss to that rich catalogue. Stephens writes that "the wonder is not that she has given so much to common culture but that she [Ireland] has been able to give anything at all", through the constant and unyielding struggles of colonialism.[30] The Irish, throughout the Irish Literary Renaissance were attempting to undo colonial bonds using a language that disadvantaged their potential for creative self-expression. Stephens compared the Irish using English language with "something of the awkwardness with which one handles a recently acquired instrument. They often did good work, they seldom did great work, and it is only within the last fifty years that the Irish mind has learned to express itself easily and powerfully and artistically in the foreign tongue". The notion that the Irish have not been able to convey themselves appropriately for several centuries gives insight into the power of language in post-colonial discourse, and the length of time needed for post-colonial nations to gain proficient artistry of the English language in order to express their desire for freedom. In the half century prior to the Irish issue, we see the explosion of imagination that was the Irish Literary Renaissance, and the work of W.B. Yeats and his peers; and the establishment of an Irish national theatre.

Where Stephens promoted a period of introspection so that Ireland can recover from her colonial wounds, and create a new Irish literature based upon the heroic sagas, A.E. once again counters this with a comparatively sombre suggestion. As below:

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[29] Paul U. Kellogg, "What would the Irish do with Ireland?" auth. James Stephens., 'Ireland Returns to her Fountains', *Survey Graphic,* November 1921.
[30] Ibid.

> The Gaelic tradition, an almost untapped fountain of beauty, will affect poetry, drama, romance, music, painting and the arts applied to industry so that we may expect houses, their furniture, carpets, decoration, pottery and ornament gradually to take on a national character evolved from a study of ancient Irish ornament. I also expect that the complete triumph of nationalism will generate its own antitoxin, and great numbers of young men will begin to ransack world literature and science for truth and bring the aged and the new thought of the world into Ireland, not to submerge the Gaelic culture but to enrich it.[31]

A.E. proclaims that the return to Gaelic tradition will influence the extraordinary as well as the extremely ordinary, stating that the Gaelic tradition will colour not only the public forums, galleries, and theatres but also the interior of every Irish home. The attention to Irish homes is of significance here, to note that the work of the Irish artist is not entirely a public exercise but will intimately affect the private lives of each citizen of Ireland, and in turn their personal expressions of identity. A. E's choice to make this small but not inconsequential zoom into the homes of the Irish people at this time, serves to remind the reader of the *Survey* of the lives of the average Irish citizen and the hope that, following independence, every element of their existence will be impacted. The survey, and other discussion of Ireland at this time, takes a broad vantage point, looking at the large political events, and this snapshot grounds the piece, reminding the reader of the people and lives connected to the tumultuous island. A.E. also imagines that the youth will be keen to "ransack world literature and science" to bring it back to enrich Gaelic culture, which is in direct opposition to Stephens more extreme desires for complete isolation. The important part here is that A.E. acknowledges that this worldly information will not 'submerge' the newly resurrected culture, that is to say, overrun or dilute the efforts of the Gaelic culture as the British colonialism did for the centuries before.

Political progress is very much at the core of both A.E. and Alain Locke's lead pieces: the shared aim for political freedom for Harlemites, that aim was to be able to participate in

[31] Paul U. Kellogg, "What would the Irish do with Ireland?" auth. A. E., 'Irish anticipations', *Survey Graphic,* vol. XLVII, no.9, November 1921.

American democracy; and in the case of Ireland, establishing a new form of government suitable for the newly instated Home Rule. Both consider the ways in which their 'New negro' and 'new Irishman' will partake in politics. A.E. provides comprehensive advocation for increased rural cooperations stating that "The principle of cooperation is dominant in the economic sphere in Ireland, made so by the farmers, and when a principle becomes dominant it multiplies images and shadows of itself in men's minds everywhere, and this principle has affected and is bound to affect not only Irish labor [*sic*]but Irish legislators".[32] The attention to the agricultural sector is unsurprising when considering A.E.'s longstanding commitment to the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, and the notion of upturning the system of power in favour of smaller councils, county-level government and a conscious decentralisation and departure from elite bureaucracy could have been an exciting prospect to the American progressive reader of the *Survey.* A.E. goes on to temper his excitement for the introduction of Home Rule, as follows: "I rather dread an Irish government, with its coming long overdue, beginning work with the ferocity of the new broom, trying to justify the sacrifices made to obtain power by attempting in five years what more placid states would consider well achieved in twenty-five."[33] As Ireland stared down the barrel of their long earned political freedom, this kind of sober scepticism is not unexpected, but it is with this political freedom that should, in the opinion of A.E., usher in a new age of growth stimulated by increased engagement with the ancient heroic sagas that contributed to their new state of being.

Harlem

A similar vein of anticipation can be extracted from Locke's "Enter the New Negro", Locke declares that Harlem "is neither slum, ghetto, resort or colony, though it is in part all of them.

[32] Paul U. Kellogg, "What would the Irish do with Ireland?" auth. A. E., 'Irish anticipations', *Survey Graphic,* November 1921.292.
[33] Ibid: 292.

It is – or promises to be – a race capital".[34] Harlem is presented as being a "centrifugal locale for black people around the globe": the home to Africans, African-Americans and West Indians".[35] The nature of the Harlem Renaissance was a largely pan-African endeavour occurring on North American soil. The United States offered an interesting site for this renaissance to take place, and in this way, it is vastly different to the Irish case. Bob Johnson comments that: "The demographic realities of race in the United States, where African-Americans comprised less than 10% of the national population, did not point towards the formation of a post-colonial nation-state as in Ireland, where Celts comprised a vast majority of the national population… black activists in Harlem articulated a narrative of race and nation built on racial pluralism that was more in keeping with American conditions."[36] James Weldon Johnson offers comprehensive insight into "The Making of Harlem" in the pages that follow "Enter the New Negro", echoing the sentiment that "Harlem will become the intellectual, the cultural and the financial centre for Negroes of the United States, and will exert a vital influence upon all Negro people."[37] The Harlem Renaissance was less connected to the land than the earlier Irish movement: Harlem hosted the racial awakening that was taking place in an intellectual and creative sphere. In the Irish case, the Irish were fighting to reclaim their culture and land, whereas the Harlemites were working towards reclaiming racial identity and integrating into existing systems.

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[34] Paul U. Kellogg, "Harlem: Mecca of the new negro", auth. Alain Locke "Enter the New Negro" *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925.
[35] Jak Peake, "'Watching the Waters": Tropic flows in the Harlem Renaissance, Black Internationalism, and other currents." *Radical Americas* 3, 1 (2018): 13. And Paul U. Kellogg, "Harlem: Mecca of the new negro", auth. Alain Locke "Enter the New Negro" *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925: 633
[36] Bob Johnson, "Globalizing the Harlem Renaissance: Irish, Mexican and 'Negro' renaissances in The Survey, 1919-1929", Journal of Global History, (2006): : 170.
[37] Paul U. Kellogg, "Harlem: Mecca of the new negro", *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925

In both "Harlem" and "Enter the New Negro", Locke presents a rejection of the past, giving particular attention to the departure of the "old" stereotypes, and a "revision of 'Negro' identity and the African-Americans' role in the imagined national community".[38] This revision was based upon an active departure from the harmful narratives that had dominated in the century previous. Locke states that "The day of "aunties," "uncles" and "mammies" is equally gone. Uncle Tom and Sambo have passed on….and it is time to scrap the fictions, garret the bogeys and settle down to a realistic facing of facts.[39] Moving consciously away from the "sentimentalism" and "stock figures" is of much import in Locke's study, which aims to assess and present the New Negro not as a "formula" but a human being. In addition to these stereotypes, Locke declares that:

> [The] Negro has been… something to be argued about, condemned or defended, to be "kept down," or "in his place," or "helped up," to be worried with or worried over, harassed or patronized, a social bogey or a social burden. The thinking Negro even has been induced to share this same general attitude, to focus his attention on controversial issues, to see himself in the distorted perspective of a social problem…. Little true social or self-understanding has or could come from such a situation.

The "Old Negro" was reduced to a social problem that was at a loss to be 'solved' by white allies and race leaders alike. Locke proposes that the artistic blossoming occurring in Harlem was the key to progress, and that changing attitudes, increased race pride and an outpouring of self-expression would see the birth of the New Negro. The importance of self-expression to the progression of national and racial identity cannot be understated; for Ireland, the slow work of cultural production fuelled the national pride which saw the mammoth changes in the political sphere. In a similar manner, the increased self-expression in Harlem promised to hold the same type of potential in equipping the Black population with the tools necessary to move toward

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[38] Bob Johnson, "Globalizing the Harlem Renaissance: Irish, Mexican and 'Negro' renaissances in The Survey, 1919-1929", Journal of Global History, (2006):171.
[39] Paul U. Kellogg, "Harlem: Mecca of the new negro", auth. Alain Locke "Enter the New Negro" *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925: 631.

racial equality. In the Irish case, the fight was against Britain, and de-Anglicizing their culture through the return to Gaelic tradition. For Harlem, however, the resistance is directed inward, to achieve physical and ideological freedom. The rejection of these stereotypes needed to be countered in the images – within art and print, but also their bodies and actions in order to undo the knots of these stock characters. The serious artistic and poetic studies of Negro life within the *Survey Graphic* demonstrate not only the "renewed and keen curiosity" that was thriving at the time of publication, but the departure from damaging caricatures to enriching portrayals. More attention will be given to the *Survey Graphic* illustrations in the next chapter.

Locke offers the idea of a different kind of political engagement for the American Negro, working towards their community being "initiated" into American democracy, to have an active part in the running of the nation. Unlike Ireland, the Harlem mission is not aiming towards creating a new nation, but reinvigorating a new culture to which the American Negro can belong, a subsect of American culture that does not exist alone but as part of the wider American culture. In Harlem, the shifts that created the conditions for the flowering of creative energy were not so obvious, occurring below the surface, and this social progress was imperceptible to many: "Harlem represents the Negro's latest thrust towards Democracy. / The special significance that today stamps it as the sign and centre of the renaissance of a people lies, however, layers deep under the Harlem that many people know but few have begun to understand."[40]

Contrasting Utopias: Rural vs. Metropolitan Living

The key difference between the Irish and Harlem cases can be distilled into their relationship to the land, and this informs the ways the communities march forward on their path to freedom

[40] Paul U. Kellogg, "Harlem: Mecca of the new negro", *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925.

through creative self-expression. Ireland had retained an enduring link to the nation's mythology through the centuries of oppression, and that mythology is intrinsically linked to the Irish landscape. "The American Negro", however, had had their cultural mythology largely systematically stolen, and been removed from the locations from which the mythology was born from, compared to the relationship the Irish held with the myths and traditions that were carefully upheld throughout the country's colonial rule.[41] The displaced African-Americans, West Indians and Africans will not have had this relationship with Harlem, instead they turn to art, music, and poetry, to rhythm and dance to communicate with the nearly lost connection to Africa – the spirituals live on, and it is in this aesthetic space of Harlem that their cultural renaissance was hosted.

The Irish issue of the *Survey* contains consistent and clear references to the rural farming culture in Ireland that appear on almost every page, in varying degrees throughout the articles, as well as in the poetry and images. These rural endeavours shape the issue as a whole, with active members from the IAOS contributing to the issue, brought on board by A.E. in his capacity of editor of the IAOS magazine, *The Irish Homestead.* Sir Horace Plunkett, founder of the IAOS, penned "A Message to the Farmers of Ireland" which forms the longest contribution to the issue by far, and makes a strong and persuasive argument for the creation and support of agricultural cooperatives. This article is illustrated with photographs of the traditional farming methods that were being utilized at the time of publication, including an image of donkey-pulled carts and rudimentary tools, in the background of the image a contrasting scene is visible - of modern steam run factories to which the donkey cart is making a delivery.[42] The images demonstrate

[41] Ibid.

[42] Paul U. Kellogg, "What would the Irish do with Ireland?" auth. Horace Plunkett 'A Message to the Farmers of Ireland', *Survey Graphic,* November 1921: 320.

the issues with modernising the farming sector in "the region of primitive tools and habits".[43] Other images from within the issue also focus on the rural lifestyle, images of the "Potato Digger" as painted by Paul Henry and the "Irish Types", painted by Power O'Malley, an Irish-born American immigrant artist, capture the portrait of an "Aran Fisherman" alongside three other portraits. This focus on the landscape and agricultural practices of Ireland raises the question of how, and to what extent the rural / metropolitan dichotomy features in the Irish Literary Renaissance, and within the context of this study, the Harlem Renaissance. It can be postulated that, superficially, the cultural and political movements in Ireland were promoting a move *towards* rural life: cooperatives, self-sufficiency, and an appreciation for the Irish countryside. Conversely, the Harlem Renaissance was actively moving *away* from the rural American South, a place which would have held a significant trauma for the African-American community. Harlem fostered a metropolitan life rich with the possibilities of industry and continued modernisation.

The Irish Literary Renaissance is characterised by a romantic and nostalgic view of the 'peasant' life of rural Ireland. However, the content of the Irish issue of the *Survey* suggests that the rural connection runs deeper than romanticism and mere sentimentalism. The rural past that was recollected in the plays and poetry of W.B. Yeats and Lady Gregory, according to the pages of the Irish issue, appears to be present and playing an active part in driving forward and carving out a new national character. Lionel Smith-Gordon writes in the "Economic Consequences of Freedom" writes: "For the real wealth of Ireland lies unquestionably, so far as the near future is concerned, in her agricultural resources. In soil, climate, proximity to markets and all similar ways, Ireland is more favourable than almost any other country."[44] It is

[43] Paul U. Kellogg, "What would the Irish do with Ireland?" auth. A. E., 'Irish anticipations', *Survey Graphic,* November 1921: 317.
[44] Ibid: 314.

with this wealth that the key to the nation's progress and self-sufficiency could lay. The Irish issue of the *Survey,* at first glance, seems to cater to the agricultural specialist, but when considering the issue in its entirety, these articles are carefully interspersed with poetry and illustrations. The overall structure of the *Survey* suggests that there is much to be revealed about the future of Ireland as seen by those driving their main economic income: the farmers. Ireland's cultural and political future relies heavily on the rural sector, and the lives of those working and living amongst the Irish countryside.

The Harlem *Survey Graphic,* on the other hand, is almost entirely a study of the urban New York district, and as one would expect the articles focus on the largely cosmopolitan affairs of Harlem. Despite this, there are references to the rural American South throughout, from which much of the Harlem community had been relocated. Rudolph Fisher's short story "The South Lingers On" serves as a useful example of the ways in which the rural history remained a continuing presence in the consciousness of the Harlem community. The story approaches the remnants of the rural life that had been left behind and reveals the nuances of the characters' relationships between their former rural and current urban lives. On the surface, the Great Migration was a mass exodus, driven by flight from the violence of Jim Crow, commonplace lynching and economic hardship, and although this is certainly a theme that is present within the story and the neighbouring articles of the *Survey,* Fisher reveals the ways in which the characters are holding on to aspects of their Southern past. Leonard J. Deutsch states that: "The South lingers on in terms of attitudes toward religion, education, and morality".[45] "The South Lingers On" features five vignettes of Harlemites as they settle into their new lives in Harlem. This story appeared later in Alain Locke's *The New Negro* under the title "Vestiges: Harlem Sketches". Fisher's study of integration and assimilation to an evolving African American

[45] Leonard Duetche, "Streets of Harlem": The Stories of Rudolph Fisher"", *Phylon,* (Clarke Atlanta University: 1960), vol. 40, no.2: 161.

culture illustrates the ways in which the 'old-fashioned' and out-dated ways of the American South persisted in the characters psyche. In the first vignette the reader is introduced to Ezekiel Taylor, an aging preacher, who appears to have recently arrived in Harlem after his congregation had steadily declined in favour of the Northern prospects. Ezekiel exclaims that: "For such is the kingdom of heaven," mused Ezekiel Taylor. "No. The Kingdom of Harlem… Harlem the city of the devil – outpost of hell."[46] The quick transformation of "Heaven" to "Harlem" and then to "Hell", demonstrates the swift ways in which the illusion of Harlem as a location of hope deteriorated. Harlem had represented a type of utopian destination to which the realities fell far from expectation. The Harlem revealed to the reader is one nearly devoid of religion, where unholy practices take place, and the prominence of the church had fallen out of favour. As the vignette continues, Ezekiel finds himself drawn to a prayer meeting held by fortune-seeking Reverend Ealey, and it is there that he is welcomed by members of his old congregation who are hungry for the familiar and comforting "old-time religion" that they have been promised by Rev. Ealey – a restoration of Harlem's promise.[47]

In another vignette, a young man, Jake, is seeking employment but is struggling to find work with his limited experience working in the agricultural driven South. Here he is being quizzed by an employment clerk:

> "What kind of work you looking for, buddy?"
> "No purtickler kin', suh. Jes' work, dass all."
> "Well, what can you do?"
> "Mos' anything, I reckon."
> "Drive a car?"
> "No, Suh. Never done dat."
> "Wait table?"
> "Well, I never is."
> "Run elevator?"
> "No suh."
> "What have you been doing?"

[46] Paul U. Kellogg, "Harlem: Mecca of the new negro", auth. Alain Locke "Enter the New Negro" *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925: 644.
[47] Ibid: 645.

> "Farmin'."
> "Farming? Where?"
> "Jennin's Landin' Virginia. 'At's wha' all my folks is fum."
> …
> "Oh – migrant." In the clerk's tone were patronization, some contempt, a little cynical amusement and complete comprehension.[48]

Fisher captured the dynamic of the rural and urban push and pull that was housed within the bodies and minds of the African American migrants, towards and away from their rural past. The urban life offered opportunities of better working conditions, and economic growth. However, Fisher's narrative exposes the difficulties felt by those newly arrived migrants seeking employment when the agricultural sector had ill equipped them for manufacturing and metropolitan careers. Despite the apparent discrimination, and lack of experience, Jake holds hope for Harlem yet: "Jake had greater faith in Harlem. Its praises had been sounded too highly – there must be something."[49] "The South Lingers On" demonstrates parts of the complexity of the migrants' arrival in Harlem, and how the echoes of the rural south live on in Harlem and continue to colour the experiences in this district.

Elsewhere in *Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro,* the contributors discuss the districts booming enterprise. James Weldon Johnson contributes a thorough assessment of Harlem's development into the "Negro metropolis" it had become in "The Making of Harlem". Johnson states that:

> Harlem is indeed the great Mecca for the sight-seer, the pleasure-seeker, the curious, the adventurous, the enterprising, the ambitious and the talented of the whole Negro world; for the lure of it has reached down to every island of the Carib Sea and has penetrated even into Africa…. Harlem is not merely a Negro colony or community, it is a city within a city, the greatest Negro city in the world. [50]

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[48] Paul U. Kellogg, "Harlem: Mecca of the new negro", auth. Rudolph Fisher "The South Lingers On" *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925: 647.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Paul U. Kellogg, "Harlem: Mecca of the new negro", auth. Alain Locke "Enter the New Negro" *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925: 635.

Johnson's opening of his article reads like a manifesto for Harlem as the race capital of the United States of America and beyond. Harlem is home to social and economic opportunity, amenities, and amusement. For Johnson, and the readers of the *Survey,* the city of Harlem represents the ultimate urban district for black people across the globe. The Caribbean immigrants living and working in Harlem also revelled in the city as a centre for creative self-expression and cultural nationalism. Harlem housed a large number of Caribbean immigrants, who followed an extended route taken by African Americans travelling northward in the Great Migration. These Caribbean Harlemites were tenacious in business, art and politics but despite the prevalence of the Caribbean people in the developing Harlem scene, their presence within the pages of the *Survey Graphic* is somewhat obscured. W.A. Domingo's contribution to the issue, titled "The Tropics in New York" outlines this border migration from an alternative South: the Caribbean.[51] In the essay Domingo charts the demographic changes to Harlem's West Indian population and the trials and tribulations of the integration into these English-speaking black communities, struggling with discrimination from within and outside the black community. One of the main sources of the animosity between the Caribbeans and African-Americans, according to Domingo: "There is a general assumption that there is everything in common among West Indians, though nothing can be further from the truth."[52] This attitude of imposed homogeneity, in addition to the Caribbean migrants' tendencies to push forward politically, and in business, to positions thought out of reach by their American counterparts resulted in some friction between the groups. Domingo goes on to state that:

> Coming to the United States from countries in which they had experienced no legalized social or occupational disabilities, West Indians very naturally have found it difficult to adapt themselves to the tasks that are, by custom, reserved for Negroes in the North. Skilled at various trades and having contempt for body service and menial work, many of the immigrants apply for positions that the average American Negro has been schooled to regard as restricted to white men only with the result that through their

[51] Ibid: 648.
[52] Ibid: 648.

> persistence and doggedness in fighting white labor, West Indians have in many cases been pioneers and shock troops to open a way for Negroes into new fields of employment.[53]

The Caribbean contingents of the Harlem Renaissance evidently had a militant streak, beyond the pioneering and persistent entry into employment; these migrants often led the way in political endeavours too.[54] The more militant factions that existed at the time of the *Survey Graphic* issue were omitted from this publication, likely due to Locke's own views of the subject and his attitude toward uplifting the black society through showcasing the best of the art, literature and poetry. Marcus Garvey, the self-proclaimed "president of the continent of Africa", only gets a brief mention in the *Survey Graphic,* within this Caribbean-centred essay as an example of the reasons for the prejudice that existed towards West Indians attempting to solve the "American race problem".

Jamaican born W.A. Domingo borrowed the title of his essay from Claude McKay's poem of the same name, which was inset into the double page spread along with "Subway Wind" inset on the lower right-hand page. These two poems share a wistful longing for the tropical shores of the Caribbean from within the metropolitan New York. In "The Tropics in New York" the speaker looks fondly on a shop window full of familiar tropical fruit bringing memories of their homeland, set behind the glass of the grocery window. The poem depicts this sadness filled longing for the familiarity of their Caribbean home. "Subway Wind" displays a similar longing but also captures McKay's possible disdain for the city life, beginning with the dirty, grey Subway trains with "sick and heavy air", the "wind" is personified, trapped beneath the city "moaning for fields and sea". The poem transports the reader from the bowel-like subway tunnels to the open, sun-soaked shores of the Caribbean, sweet-smelling and calm:

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[53] Paul U. Kellogg, "Harlem: Mecca of the new negro", auth. W.A. Domingo "The Tropics in New York" *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925: 649.

[54] These militant groups share many similarities to that of the Irish militant groups such as the Irish Republican Brotherhood, strikingly like the African Blood Brotherhood in name and action.

Islands of lofty palm trees blooming white
That lend their perfume to the tropic sea,
Where fields lie idle in the dew drenched night,
And the Trades float above them fresh and free.[55]

Both poems support Domingo's assessment of the Caribbean in Harlem, giving a sense of the Caribbean migrants' experience in the district, beyond the generalised account of their efforts of integration of the essay.

Whilst Harlem played host to the blossoming cultural, artistic revival of the early 1920s, the famed district itself was the adopted home of those who had arrived in the city via the southern states of the U.S. the Caribbean or directly from the African continent. In the Irish case, the fields and cities of Ireland were the homelands of the participants of the Irish Literary Renaissance. This connection to the physical land that hosted the cultural and political movements is particularly of interest when considering the role of legend and myth in both the Harlem and Irish Literary Renaissance. The Irish Literary Renaissance owes much of its progress to the work of Standish O'Grady, who penned *History of Ireland: The Heroic Period,* a collection of the history and legends of Ireland, and his later more creative retelling of these tales such as *Cuchulain and his Contemporaries*, captured the imaginations of Lady Augusta Gregory and W.B. Yeats amongst other frontrunners of the Irish Literary Renaissance. Cornelius Weygandt writes that "the writers of 'The Irish Literary Revival' found the material for their reshaping of old legend into poetry and drama, and in Lady Gregory's 'Cuchulain of Muirthemne' and 'Gods and Fighting Men' these legends have been given artistic form of such distinction that the two books bid fair to take rank with the 'Morte D'Arthur' and the

[55] Paul U. Kellogg, "Harlem: Mecca of the new negro", auth. W.A. Domingo "The Tropics in New York" *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925: 649.

'Mabinogion.'"[56] Standish O'Grady is credited often as the 'Father of the Celtic Revival', due to his role in reawakening the folklore that had continued to reside in the minds and traditions of rural folk, O'Grady's retelling elevated these myths and legends in an Epic fashion and put them back into public imagination. It is these legends, which occur within the Irish landscape, along with the persistent work of political nationalism that laid the ground for the bursting of creativity that was the Irish Literary Renaissance, which was concerned with the simple dignity of the Irish peasant and their existence in the rural Irish countryside. In the context of the *Survey Graphic,* published two decades after the height of the Irish Literary Renaissance, these legends and myths were still called upon by contributors to communicate the history of, and the hope for the new nation. A.E. closes his lead article with the following statement:

> It is only a faith with me that something great will come out of my country. I cannot believe that the legend of the Gael, which began among the gods, will die out in some petty peasant republic or dominion as a river which rose among the mountains might eddy at last in mud flats and the sewage of squalid cities. What began greatly I think will end greatly, and there will be some flare-up of genius before the torch of the Gael is extinguished and it becomes like the torch once held by the Greeks and other races of genius which are now but memories in Eternal Mind.[57]

For Harlem, the myth and legend that survived the transatlantic slave trade and beyond was passed through oral tradition and provided the ancestral links to Western Africa. Much of this oral tradition is also present throughout the diasporic communities of the Caribbean, that had also gathered in Harlem. These folktales and spirituals were "the two most widely known Black folk expressions; both had explicit references to slave culture, and both (perhaps because of these references) initially found little acceptance by Black intellectuals or the Black middle class." [58] Leonard Diepeveen has discussed the prevalence of folktales in the Harlem

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[56] Cornelius Weygandt, "Irish Literary Revival", *The Sawnee Review,* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1904), vol 12, no. 4: 421.
[57] Paul U. Kellogg, "What would the Irish do with Ireland?" auth. A. E., 'Irish anticipations', *Survey Graphic,* vol. XLVII, no.9, November 1921: 294.
[58] Leonard Diepeveen, "Folktales in the Harlem Renaissance", *American Literature,* vol. 58, no. 1, (March 1986).

Renaissance, and the development of the perception of folktales and spirituals and their usefulness in their role in regenerating Black culture. Diepeveen claims that "When Harlem Renaissance critics and artists turned to the past it was to transform the past into something useful for the present, such as 'rehabilitating the race in world esteem from that loss of prestige for which the fate and conditions of slavery have so largely been responsible.'" The Harlem Renaissance further used the past as a way to affirm the new 'deep feeling of race'; for instance, the African heritage became a way of expressing part of the race's psyche."[59] Like in the case of the Irish, these folktales, legends and myths had survived through the oral tradition, but for Harlemites, these myths had lost some connection to the spaces in which they were created but gained association with the American South and the perils of slavery, especially true of the African-American Spiritual, sung in both city and field. The content of *Harlem: Mecca of The New Negro* makes reference to the folklore that persisted through the centuries, and created the basis for renewed cultural identity, from forming the roots of jazz, the framework of visual arts and dance, and into the narratives of the literature that poured out of Harlem during the 1920s.

Conclusion

There is much one can gleam from analysing these two special issues side by side, and what they reveal about the literary renaissances that accompany both spaces. The contributors to both issues write their new nation into the existence and prophesise on the members of their fledgling society with hope and determination. Through this examination of the *Survey Graphic,* we can appreciate the shared experience and the uniqueness of both Ireland and Harlem in their transformative periods. The next chapter will revisit these issues to discuss the interartistic

[59] Leonard Diepeveen, "Folktales in the Harlem Renaissance", *American Literature,* vol. 58, no. 1, (March 1986).

nature of the *Survey Graphic*, and the ways that art, image, and performance interacted with text in both the Irish Literary Renaissance and especially in the Harlem Renaissance.

Chapter Four: A Visual Renaissance – Investigating Images and Text.

Chapter Four

The discussion that follows will shift focus away from the written word to the visual arts that accompanied the two renaissances that are at the core of this thesis: The Harlem Renaissance and the Irish Literary Renaissance. This chapter aims to investigate the less discussed Irish art and illustration from the earlier literary movement, and to discuss the ways in which the visual arts were treated comparatively within the two movements and aims to explore and analyse the artistic output that flourished alongside the literary and political boom in Harlem in the 1920s and 1930s. Throughout the following discussion I will assess the ways in which the intellectuals from within the Irish and Harlem Renaissances were considering how art and artists should best represent their communities. We will first situate the discussion of how the artistic output in the United States was being interpreted during the Harlem Renaissance, before revisiting the *Survey Graphic* to explore the Irish case – applying the same investigation of art and representation.[1] The chapter will then explore the foremost African-American illustrator of the Harlem Renaissance, Aaron Douglas and the short-lived, and highly aesthetic publication *Fire!!*[2]

The Function of Art

The Harlem Renaissance is often described as a literary and political movement, but there was a wealth of art that was not only produced during this great outpouring of creativity, but alongside it too. The artists responsible for creating these visual works were socialising and working in the same circles as the political and literary leaders, and their work became interwoven in the fabric of the Harlem Renaissance. Artists such as Aaron Douglas, Winold Reiss, Miguel Covarrubias and Richard Bruce Nugent, amongst others, captured this vibrant

[1] Paul Kellogg, ed. *Survey Graphic,* (issues "What Would The Irish Do with Ireland?", "Mexico: A Promise" and "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro".
[2] Wallace Thurman, ed. *Fire!!*, vol. 1 ed. 1, 1926.

age of jazz, reinvention and creativity in their illustrations, portraits and ethnographic 'types', which adorned the dust jackets of novels, punctuated political magazine articles and decorated promotional and informative pamphlets with their incidental graphics. However, these important visual contributions have at times failed to survive through the reprinting and reproduction of magazines and new book editions "eliminated their original dust jackets, animated with the bold and dynamic illustrations that had attracted so many readers in the 1920s and 1930s."[3] As many of these visual accompaniments were omitted, and involved in a type of "historical amnesia", the significance of these richly visual documents has not been extensively investigated by Harlem Renaissance scholars.[4] The artwork has more often been seen in a supporting role, secondary to the text, adding embellishment that closely followed the authors words. It is my aim within this chapter to navigate this interconnected visual and literary scene, to explore the significance of the visual arts during the Harlem Renaissance and analyse how the relationship between the image and text has endured in Harlem Renaissance scholarship.

This relationship between image and text is the focus of Martha Jane Nadell's book *Enter the New Negroes: Images of Race in American Culture,* a significant book-length study that will support my discussion of the images and text that follows.[5] Nadell's study begins by unpacking the representation of the 'Old Negro' as the oft caricatured, stereotypical figure that persisted through the late 1800s and early 1900s. This figure was depicted in image and text and worked as an oppressive force to perpetuate the grotesque perception of African Americans.[6] Nadell then charts the evolution of the visual arts in relation to the texts they accompanied over the next four decades, and how this evolution contributed or responded to cultural shifts. This

[3] Caroline Goesler, *Picturing the New Negro: Harlem Renaissance Print Culture and Modern Black Identity*, e-book, (Laurence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2007): 2.
[4] Ibid: 2.
[5] Martha Jane Nadell, *Enter the New Negroes: Images of Race in American Culture,* (Harvard: Harvard University Press: 2005.)
[6] Ibid: 19.

chapter is examining particular works that employ both text and image – either in the form of illustration or decoration – to create a hybrid visual document, as well as applying this visual art analysis to Irish art and artists to explore how, and to what extent visual art informs and supports the text. Nadell borrows the term "interartistic" from Wendy Steiner to describe this type of work, by which she is defining as "publications that concretely mix word and image and foreground the relationship between the two media."[7] This relationship between image and text invites a discussion to extend to the relationship between artist and author (although at times they are one and the same in the case of Richard Bruce Nugent). The role of the artist went beyond that of creating images for only commercial purpose, but to join with the authors to create a "dynamic black identity that drew anew on an ancient past to participate with vigor [sic] in shaping contemporary American culture."[8] The illustrations and other visual material sought to represent the black experience in the United States, in a way that harmonised and emphasised the written word. These artists also contended with the parallel issues that surround the concepts of creating or recreating identity and the representation of black folk that the writers of the Harlem Renaissance did. It is this larger question of representation that forms the basis for this chapter, with the *how, what* and *who* being of equal concern. *Who* is the right person or artist to record and represent the black American experience? *How* should the black folk in America be represented? *What* forms of visual art are appropriate to reflect and document black folk?

These questions were a contentious topic for the leading thinkers of the Harlem Renaissance, with radically differing views being held within the Harlem scene. George S. Schuyler wrote a piece for the *Nation,* in 1926: "The Negro Art-Hokum"[9], in which he questioned the need for a

[7] Ibid 7.
[8] Caroline Goesler, *Picturing the New Negro: Harlem Renaissance Print Culture and Modern Black Identity*, e-book, (Laurence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2007): 1.
[9] George S. Schuyler, "The Negro-Art Hokum," *Nation* 122 (June 16, 1926): 662–3.

separate and distinct African American artistic and literary tradition. This piece made the argument that the art, literature and drama created by African Americans was of no more significance than that created by their white counterparts. The case presented in this article was that, in a country made up of immigrants, the African American artist should be considered as 'American' as the third or fourth generation European American, and that the work produced by these African Americans should be equal to, and identical to that of the Caucasian American in quality and merit. Schuyler states "Aside from his color, which ranges from very dark brown to pink, your American Negro is just plain American. Negroes and whites from the same localities in this country talk, think, and act about the same."[10] Schuyler's views fail to wholly consider the treatment of these two groups; the contrasting privilege and disadvantage that the colour divide made possible. Schuyler continues: "the word 'Negro' conjures up in the average white American's mind a composite stereotype of Bert Williams, Aunt Jemima, Uncle Tom…. and the various monstrosities scrawled by the cartoonists. Your average Aframerican no more resembles this stereotype than the average American resembles a composite of Andy Gump, Jim Jeffries, and a cartoon by Rube Goldberg."[11] The caricature and stereotype referred to here are an important visual reference to how the African American had been depicted in popular culture and advertising which represents this 'Old Negro' type, rejected by the likes of Alain Locke in the seminal *Survey Graphic* the year before. Whilst Schuyler recognised that the stereotypes based upon race have persisted in the American imagination and within visual arts, he concludes that "All Negroes; yet their work shows the impress of nationality rather than race."[12] In this essay, Schuyler more or less disregards the significance of the West Indian community in Harlem, and their part in producing a culturally rich literary output that sparked the wider American imagination, which will be discussed further later in the chapter.

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[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] George S. Schuyler, "The Negro-Art Hokum," *Nation* 122 (June 16, 1926): 662–3.

In response to Schuyler's essay, the poet Langston Hughes was asked to provide a counterstatement by the editor of the *Nation.* Hughes obliged and penned "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" which articulates the core struggle of the Harlem Renaissance artist to express their unique position as African Americans.[13] Hughes opposes Schuyler's claim that the "American Negro is just plain American", that is to say assimilated fully with the white American.[14] Hughes places this issue of homogenisation and 'colour blindness' as the obstacle to the black artist's success: "But this is the mountain standing in the way of any true Negro art in America—this urge within the race toward whiteness, the desire to pour racial individuality into the mold of American standardization, and to be as little Negro and as much American as possible."[15] The concept of melting down and dismantling the "racial individuality" in order to fill the established mould of the European tradition of arts and letters captures the complex issue of who (and how) representation of black folk should be approached. If the "Negro Artist" must turn "toward whiteness", Hughes suggests they must turn their backs on their blackness. Hughes goes on to describe the ways in which the African American, Caribbean and African black artists can contribute to a new tradition: "To these the Negro artist can give his racial individuality, his heritage of rhythm and warmth, and his incongruous humor that so often, as in the Blues, becomes ironic laughter mixed with tears."[16] With this, Hughes indicates that these artists should go beyond just contributing literature and visual arts but that they should do so in a distinctly racial manner, in a form of radical self-expression. In the essay, Hughes contemplates the role of music, art, drama and literature as an interconnected web of creative material, born out of the black experience. Hughes's own poetry explores the treatment of black folk as he had experienced himself and explores the rhythms of jazz and tom-tom drums. This

[13] Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain", The Nation, The Nation, June 1926. Accessed through poetry foundation.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.

discussion of the arts as a whole underpins the 'interartistic' nature of the Harlem Renaissance. Hughes continues:

> The road for the serious black artist, then, who would produce a racial art is most certainly rocky and the mountain is high…. 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.[17]

With this, Hughes once again reiterates his view that it is the responsibility of the black artists to depict black life without constraints. Hughes also puts forward his predictions of how the future of the visual arts will develop: "within the next decade I expect to see the work of a growing school of colored artists who paint and model the beauty of dark faces and create with new technique the expressions of their own soul-world."[18] The new school of artists was arguably emerging and active at the time of "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" was published and this chapter will focus on these artworks and leading figures of the Harlem scene had been commenting upon their contribution to this body of work.

Alain Locke, writing a year earlier than the *Nation* essays, offers another view of the representation of black folk in visual art in his essay "To Certain of our Philistines" published in the *Opportunity* in May 1925.[19] The essay was written in response to poor reviews of the images included in the popular *Survey Graphic* issue "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro". These portraits, by German artist Winold Reiss, had caused some debate amongst the black community, due to the perceived unflattering depiction of his subjects, in particular the portrait of "The Two Public School Teachers".[20] Jeffery C. Stewart writes of the controversy in *The*

[17] Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain", The Nation, The Nation, June 1926. Accessed through poetry foundation.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Alain Locke, "To certain of our philistines.", *Opportunity,* vol. 3 ed. 29, May 1925.
[20] Paul U. Kellogg, Winold Reiss, *Two Public School Teachers,* "Harlem: Mecca of the new negro", *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925: 687

New Negro: The Life of Alain Locke, explaining that Locke had received a letter from Elise McDougald, following the display of the portrait at an exhibit in the New York Public Library. In the letter McDougald states that "One Mr. Williams wondered if the whole art side of the issue were a 'piece of subtle propaganda to prejudice the white reader' He told us that should he meet those two schoolteachers in the street, he would be afraid of them'".[21] In response, Locke wrote a defence to his editorial choices, beginning by declaring that:

> Too many of us still look to art to compensate the attitudes of prejudice, rather than merely, as is proper, to ignore them…. I believe this drawing reflects in addition to good type portraiture of its sort, a professional ideal, that peculiar seriousness, that race redemption spirit, that professional earnestness and even sense of burden…. I do not need to appeal to race pride, but only to pride of profession to feel and hope that "The Two School Teachers" in addition to being "good drawing"' is finely representative.

For Locke, his choice to employ Reiss to capture the "soul and spirit of a people" did not depend on Reiss belonging to his community, rather his artistic prowess and skill placed him in the position to portray the Harlemites.[22] Reiss's German heritage removed him from the deep-rooted "American racial iconography" that the American artists would have been faced with. Instead, Reiss's European outlook "gave him a unique perspective and access to European modernist traditions with which to depict a New Negro, one that transcended even American Negro aesthetic notions of "representativeness.""[23] Whilst Hughes and Schuyler debated who was best suited to represent the community, Locke promotes the sort of representation above all else: "To rid ourselves of this damaging distortion of art values by color-line, we shall have to draw the culture-line sharply and without compromise, and challenge, without hope or expectation of quarter, our own Philistines." [24] Locke prioritised representatives of a

[21] Jeffery C. Stewart, *The New Negro: The life of Alain Locke,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
[22] Paul U. Kellogg, "Harlem: Mecca of the new negro", *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925: 651.
[23] Jeffery C. Stewart, *The New Negro: The life of Alain Locke,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
[24] Alain Locke, "To certain of our philistines.", *Opportunity,* vol. 3 ed. 29, May 1925

professional class, without an emphasis on beauty to be the images that communicated his version of the New Negro.

The *Crisis* magazine, the publication associated with the NAACP, ran a symposium on the subject in 1926. Editor W.E.B. Du Bois asked a series of questions under the title "The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed?" Du Bois first put these questions to the readers of the *Crisis* in February 1926 issue, which were prefaced by a short paragraph introducing the symposium[25]. In this introduction, Du Bois states that "There has long been controversy within and without the Negro race as to just how the Negro should be treated in art – how he should be pictured by writers and portrayed by artists."[26] The seven questions puts forward to the readers and responders of the *Crisis* are much the same as the questions this chapter is aiming to investigate – how will the 'New Negro' be represented in art? Du Bois frames his queries heavily around the perceived negative representations of African American life, clearly concerned with the prevalence of authors and visual artists of the Harlem Renaissance focusing on the "sordid, foolish and criminal among negroes".[27] The symposium garnered many responses in the following months, from Carl Van Vechten, Jessie Faucet and others, considering this topic from the perspective of those actively participating in the movement. The following discussion will expand these questions of representation, applying them in order to examine the artistic output that accompanied the Irish Literary Renaissance that took place four decades prior, revisiting the highly visual *Survey Graphic* race series.

Irish ArtIn this section we will return our attention to the *Survey Graphic* race series discussed in depth in Chapter Three. The *Survey Graphic* provides a good example of the ways in which the visual arts interacted with the social and political shifts during the Irish, Mexican and

[25] W.E.B Du Bois, "Opinions", *The crisis*, February 1926. Accessed through Hathi Trust.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.

Harlem renaissances. The increase in visual contribution and stylistic editorial choices also indicates the progression of this interartistic product and the consumer attraction to these highly visual publications. This trend is also broadly traceable across similar publications in North America.

The 1921 issue of *Survey Graphic* titled "What Would the Irish do with Ireland?" was arguably the least graphic issue of the issues that formed the race series. The publication makes use of photography, landscape painting, portraiture, comic strip type cartoons and incidental artwork.[28] The high prevalence of photography, mainly recording the rural Irish landscape and the pre- and post-industrial advances, create the impression of a journalistic report piece in which the image is used to support the text. The photography was taken in a documentary style, that is to say the images were taken as during significant events or special environments. This style does not invite particular creative analysis, nor does it say much about the reconstruction of individual identity. However, these images do record the important technological and social improvements that accompanied Ireland's creative and political success. The other visuals, were moreaesthetic contributions that were included primarily as information, rather than to exhibit the artistic culture of Ireland.Rather these pieces were used to communicate the social and ethnic 'types' to the U.S American readers.

The Irish *Survey Graphic* issue, like the Mexican and Harlem issues that followed, included a series of 'types', which served to represent the Irish population in one way or another. The "Irish Types" were situated in roughly the middle of the issue and took a generous four page spread; each page dedicated to one painting. These paintings were the work of Power O'Malley, an Irish American artist born in Ireland in 1877 and spent his childhood and early adulthood in

[28] Paul U. Kellogg, "What would the Irish do with Ireland?" auth. A. E., 'Irish anticipations', *Survey Graphic,* vol. XLVII, no.9, November 1921.

Ireland before emigrating to New York around the turn of the twentieth century. In the later pages of the *Survey Graphic,* Padraic Colum comments on the field of Irish Art in the essay: "Tendencies in Irish Art". In this essay Colum considers the artistic contribution to the issue, including Power O'Malley. He writes:

> Then there is Power O'Malley, who lives in New York and whose pictures were on exhibition there in the spring. Mr. O'Malley gives us neither the heroic nor the faerie Ireland. His best work is in his interiors. These have a solidity, a sense of being lived in, of being formed for definite usage, that is remarkable. He is the painter of solid chimney- nooks, of weighty flagstones, of deep windows, of nooks and recesses, and of everything that makes the smoke-stained Irish house a place to be remembered. His landscape, too, is fine; he knows the blues that make the Irish twilight lovely.[29]

This assessment of O'Malley's artworks gives the impression of an artist who is concerned with accurately capturing the Irish home and landscape, without the filters of mythology. Instead, he paints with an awareness of the Irish sentiment and experience, perhaps coloured with some nostalgia. Power O'Malley's paintings were not commissioned especially for the *Survey Graphic* special edition (as was the case for the later issues) but were pre-existing works that were borrowed from the collection of J.I.C. Clarke. I can assume that these particular paintings, titled *Little Sheila, An Aran Islander, Aran Fisherman,* and *Sadness Draped in Red,* were selected for their representative and symbolic qualities that would depict an appropriate anthropological assessment of the rural Irish population.[30] The portraits create the sense of a working-class pastoral community, which is in keeping with the written content of the issue which primarily promoted the agricultural sector in Ireland, as influenced by the guest editor A.E. The "Irish Types" were presented to the reader in isolation, except for their titles displayed below the image. The lack of supporting text and analysis suggests that these images were

[29] Paul U. Kellogg ed. Padraic Colum, "Tendencies in Irish Art", "What would the Irish do with Ireland?", *Survey Graphic,* November 1921: 345.
[30] Ibid.

presented as the primary information and privileged above the written word. The portraits depict two male subjects and two female, with all portraits capturing the upper portion of the subject, seated at a very slight angle.

The first portrait, *Little Sheila,* presents the reader with a young girl, probably between eight to eleven years old, this initial display of youth speaks to the textual material of the magazine – of an Ireland ready to embark on a refreshed future, as a New Ireland, and the young girl can be seen as representative of this sentiment. Furthermore, *Little Sheila* is clothed in a dark skirt, with a heavy woven shawl draped about her shoulders, her hands folded neatly in her lap. The expression on her face is painted with a certain stillness and warmth, her gaze is facing outward toward the viewer and her soft features are framed by neat but un-styled dark hair which contrasts her fair skin. The two following portraits: *An Aran Islander* and *Aran Fisherman* differ somewhat, depicting two older gentlemen dressed in traditional Aran clothing, with their gaze directed across the painting, not meeting the eyes of the viewer. O'Malley captures the weathered creasing of their skin; their expression is once again one of quiet stillness and neutrality. However, the subjects sit tall and appear grounded. The inclusion of Aran islanders relates to a larger fascination with the remote islands, situated off the coast of Galway, which was very prevalent in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the time in which the Irish Literary Renaissance was in full bloom. The Aran Islands, although sparsely populated at this time, drew the attention of many Irish Nationalists who were keen to experience the unique "Irishness" of the Islands' community. The Aran Islands represented an uncorrupted heart of Ireland, set away from the mainland and as such were seen as a repository of the ancient customs, culture and language that Irish Nationalists wished to uncover on the mainland.[31] J.M. Synge, the playwright and poet, recorded his account of his visits to the islands between 1898-1901 in

[31] Tim Robinson, Introduction to Aran Islands: J.M Synge. *Aran Islands,* (London: Penguin edition, 1992).

Aran Islands. Synge was encouraged by W.B. Yeats to visit the islands, to witness and experience a way of life that had not yet been expressed in literature. Synge writes in his introduction: "In the pages that follow I have given a direct account of my life on the islands, and of what I met with among them, inventing nothing, and changing nothing that is essential."[32] Published alongside Synge's four-part account were illustrations by Jack. B. Yeats, whose artwork is also found on the pages of the *Survey Graphic.* Jack. B. Yeats' drawings mirror the traditional dress painted by O'Malley's, characterised by the white undershirt overlaid by a dark waistcoat, neck scarf and woollen hat. The editorial choice to include the Aran Islanders within the "Irish Types" in the *Survey Graphic* demonstrates how the Irish guest editor, with the probable assistance of permanent editor, Paul Kellogg, wished to present the Irish population to the Northern American readership: as the idealistic, rural Irish epitome that was believed to exist in Aran.

[32] J.M Synge. *Aran Islands,* (London: Penguin edition, 1992).

Power O'Malley, *Little Sheila.* Fig. 1

The final image by O'Malley was of a middle-aged woman, titled *Sadness draped in Red,* the suggestive title perhaps does say something about the solemn way that O'Malley, and by extension, Irish Americans viewed Ireland. The figure, like the image of *Little Sheila,* is enveloped in a woollen shawl, covering her head and shoulders. We can assume from the title this shawl is red. Her expression also stares out to meet the viewer, but her face is coloured by

a slight melancholy. These images were selected to reflect the population plainly, and coloured with a sense of this sadness, which can sit as incongruous in a magazine which is characterised by hope and a force of change for the future. However, when considering the symbolic significance of the Aran Islands, these images do reflect the sentiment of a renewed Irish identity.

Drop Capital letters from *Survey Graphic,* "What Would the Irish Do with Ireland?". Fig 2.

The incidental graphics that decorate the issue are of note in this discussion of the interartistic nature of the publication. These graphics are easy to overlook when assessing each issue of the race series in isolation, but when comparing across the issues we can see how the graphics have been carefully curated in each issue to create a sense of the nation discussed. In the pages dedicated to discussion of the reformed Government structure, the four County Shields were used in the corners of the article, as well as inset between sections at the foot of the page.[33] Throughout the Irish issue are subtle references of Celtic symbolism, especially prevalent in the decorative lettering and ornate dividing footers between some articles. The drop capitals that signify the beginning of each piece are adorned with Celtic filigree design, reaching beyond the inset initial and stretching up towards the title. These incidental graphic details not only add

[33] Paul U. Kellogg, ed. Erskine Childers "The Government Under Dail Eireann" "What would the Irish do with Ireland?", *Survey Graphic,* November 1921: 295.

an aesthetic value to the pages of the *Survey Graphic* but serve to reiterate and reinforce the notion that the 'New Ireland' that was being debated within the text was firmly rooted in a return to Celtic roots. These incidental graphics functioned similarly in both the Mexican and Harlem issues of *Survey Graphic,* although they remained uncredited to the artist or editor responsible for their considered choices. In the many graphic publications that came out of Harlem during the 1920s this type of incidental decoration was characterised by geometric shapes, African mask miniatures and bold stylised fonts. However, as the creative moment in Harlem progressed, the artists responsible for creating these decorations were credited within the contents pages along with the other contributors to the publication - this is true for *Fire!!* edited by Wallace Thurman, which will be discussed further on in this chapter.[34] The move to acknowledge the artists with these minor aesthetic features (in comparison to the main illustrations, photography and portraiture) demonstrates how the Harlem scene appreciated and understood that these 'decorative' features themselves carried the message of a distinctly 'Negro' aesthetic, linked to this African and geometric design. These decorations indicate a shift in the attitude and emphasis on visual art and the artist.

This discussion has situated the visual art in the 1921 issue of *Survey Graphic,* and the relationship between the image and the text. Overall, the images worked to support the textual material and as such these images were secondary to the text, even when the images were presented in isolation their presence in the publication reinforced the content of the magazine, which was to promote a return to a Celtic / Gaelic ancient past.

[34] Wallace Thurman, ed. *Fire!!*, vol. 1 ed. 1, 1926

Visualising Harlem

The years between the publication of the *Survey Graphic* issues: "What Would the Irish do with Ireland?" and the famed "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro" saw two significant figures of the Harlem Renaissance come on board with *Survey* operations. The Mexican Issue, titled "Mexico, A Promise", published in May 1924 saw contributions from the German Winold Reiss and cover art by the young Mexican artist Miguel Covarrubias.[35] It is useful to briefly examine the interartistic developments that were in publication both before and running concurrently with the seminal Harlem *Survey Graphic* in order to assess the growing culture of visual arts in print culture. In "Mexico, A Promise", Winold Reiss was employed to produce a set of "Mexican Types", which Reiss presented after travelling in Mexico in 1921, contributing portraits of three men and one landscape called "glimpse of a Market town".[36] These "types" were sketched in pencil, with incredible accuracy capturing the subjects' facial features with a rich realism, which was not quite to the photorealistic extent seen in his "Harlem Types", yet Reiss still captures a bold humanity in his works. This version of realism is contrasted by Reiss's signature two-dimensional clothing, wherein outline and rough shading indicate the contours of the body. Martha Nadell comments on Reiss's style, in *Enter the New Negro*:

> His style and interest in ethnographic "types" were also influenced by German art movements and by the developments in German museum culture and the European art world. The mid-nineteenth century had seen the founding of ethnographic museums in a number of German cities…. Reiss was also influenced by a new style of German art called the Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity). The aim of this movement was the "exact and straightforward, three dimensional depiction of the subject matter" that

[35] Paul Kellogg, "Mexico a promise", *Survey Graphic,* vol. 52 no. 3, May 1924 and Bob Johnson's article, "Globalising the Harlem Renaissance" puts these three Survey issues in dialogue, charting some of the social and publication developments between the issues. See the article for more in depth discussion. Bob Johnson, "Globalizing the Harlem Renaissance: Irish, Mexican and 'Negro' renaissances in The Survey, 1919-1929", Journal of Global History, (2006): : 170

[36] Paul Kellogg, "Mexico a promise", *Survey Graphic,* vol. 52 no. 3, May 1924: 153.

> emphasised the "outer reality of the subject rather than the inner version of the artist" and often depicted individuals in their work environments."[37]

Nadell's assessment of Reiss's European influences work to explain how Reiss was a well-placed artist to undertake the task of representing the Mexican and later Harlem "types". Reiss's skillset allowed him to depict his subjects in a precise and visually accurate way, unconcerned with the pursuit of beauty and aesthetic pleasure, rather Reiss sought to present an uncomplicated version of 'reality'. In contrast to the striking realism achieved by Reiss in the Mexican *Survey Graphic,* is the cover artist Miguel Covarrubias, the multi-talented Mexican caricaturist. Covarrubias' cover for the issue did not take the form of a caricature however, the artwork instead is a bold design of a stylised Eagle, with wings outstretched, holding a turquoise snake in its beak, perched on top of a cactus. Below the cactus are symbolic wave-like lines with the initials M.C. either side. Both Reiss and Covarrubias were significant figures in the paradoxically controversial and treasured depictions of the New Negro.

Miguel Covarrubias arrived in New York in 1923, aged just nineteen. Despite his youth, his lack of formal training in the arts and the apparent language barrier, Covarrubias's distinctive caricatures soon graced the pages of popular magazines such as *Vanity Fair* and *The New Yorker*[38]. By 1925, Covarrubias's success led to a published collection of his caricatures based upon his celebrity acquaintances, titled *The Prince of Wales and Other Famous Americans.*[39] In December 1924, a few months before the release of Alain Locke's editorial landmark *Survey Graphic* issue, *Vanity Fair* published a double page spread dedicated to capturing the "New Negro"; their character, appearance and interests. Miguel Covarrubias provided eight sketches

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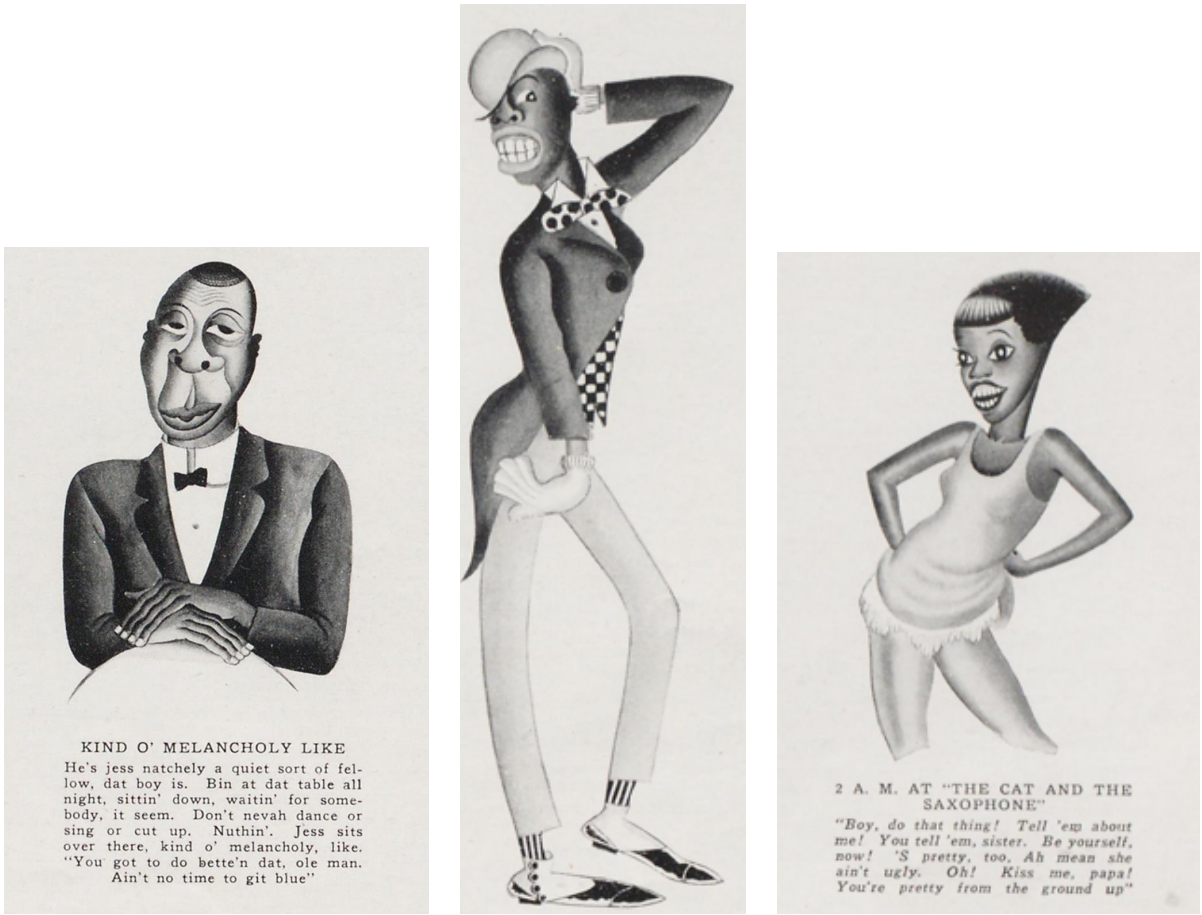
[37] Martha Nadell, *Enter The New Negro: Images of Race in American Culture,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004): 45.
[38] *Vanity Fair,* (New York, 1920-1930). And *New Yorker,* (New York, 1920-1925).
[39] Miguel Covarrubias, *The Prince of Wales and Other Famous Americans,* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1925).

to the magazine, which were accompanied by captions penned by the Caribbean poet and author Eric Walrond. The feature, "Enter, The New Negro, a Distinctive Type Recently Created by the Coloured Cabaret Belt in New York", introduced the readers of *Vanity Fair* to this vibrant New York scene where the 'New Negro' was reinventing themselves. Although the subheading to the feature read: "Exit, the Colored Crooner of Lullaby's, the Cotton Picker, the Mammy-Singer and the Darky Banjo Player, for so Long Over-Exploited Figures on the American Stage", the sketches produced by Covarrubias can appear to play to the stereotypes that were declared extinct in the title. Covarrubias' distinctive style is characterised by exaggeration of the expression and form:



Miguel Covarrubias, Three Sketches. Fig 3.

In the three images above, it is clear to see the amplified facial features: the enlarged lips, nose and teeth. The posed body of the central figure, introduced to the readers with the words "See dis Strutter!" arguably has echoes of archetypal figure of the minstrel Jim Crow: through the subtle placing of the hand to the head, the angle of the hat and the bevelled leg in addition to the exaggerated teeth and lips.[40] The clothing is of note too, the striped socks and polka dot kerchief feature on both images, transformed here with a bold polka dot bow tie, and the striped socks remain, retaining the orginal echoes of Jim Crow Of course, the figure in Covarrubias' image is slick and clean - nothing like the popular image of Jim Crow – however, this polished version could itself be making a comment on the progress of black people, the figure turns his head in the opposite direction to that of the minstrel picture, suggesting a rejection of the harmful stereotypes that had prevailed in the previous years. Whilst it is possible that Covarrubias' position as a new immigrant would have made him naïve to these nuanced American stereotypes, and that these similarities are mere coincidence, his involvement in the Harlem scene makes that unlikely.

The captions provided by the Guyanese-born Eric D. Walrond, attempt to capture the vernacular of the "New Negro", written with non-standard spelling and grammar. His captions reveal some of the businesses the patrons of the cabaret clubs visited, assisting in the understanding of Covarrubias' drawings. The above figure of a woman, dressed in a short flapper style dress is captioned: "2 A.M at 'The Cat and Saxophone'", the image suggests an overt sexualisation of this subject; her dress is gathered around her waist, exposing her somewhat scandalous upper thighs, which is matched by the suggestive text from Walrond. The voyeuristic image, combined with the recommendations of where and when to find such a character, present this spread as a tour guide for the Cabaret scene. Covarrubias' work for *Vanity Fair* attracted some

[40] *Vanity Fair,* (New York: December 1924): 61.

criticism. Caroline Goesler writes in *Picturing the New Negro: Harlem Renaissance Print Culture and Modern Black Identity,* "Those who despised Covarrubias's work were primarily African American critics of an older generation, like Du Bois, who categorized his imagery as frivolous entertainment at best and demeaning caricature at worst."[41] W.E.B. Du Bois reviewed another of Covarrubias' spread of illustrations for *Vanity Fair* in June 1927, titled "Dark Denizens of Harlem Haunts". Du Bois assesses the sketches, titled in a scathing description: "corpulent blues singer, the waiter whose dancing feet are no menace to his well-filled tray, . . . the 'hard boiled' gambler and the lithe brown jazz dancer."[42] Goesler credits Du Bois' distaste of Covarrubias work to the "artist's distortion of black physiognomy" with demeaning connotations of caricature, "regardless of the degree of his exaggeration or comic dimension." W.E.B. Du Bois did not care to "distinguish between the comic caricature of Covarrubias and what he identified as the "distressingly ugly and crude caricatures conceived by" the white artist Alexander King for W. C. Seabrook's *The Magic Island".*[43] In addition to the distorted figures, I would argue that the content of Covarrubias' sketches displeased Du Bois and his wider circle. The fascination with the cabaret scene highlighted to the wider American audience that the "New Negro" was exclusively found within the seedier underbelly, engaging in gambling, excess and unsavoury activities. For Du Bois, and the "older generation" who favoured uplifting portrayals of black folk, focusing on education, professionalism and intellect, the depictions created by Covarrubias and supported by Walrond interrupted the narrative put forward by politics of uplift.

How did it come to be that a Mexican artist and a Caribbean writer were chosen to illustrate and announce the arrival of this new African American? Considering once again how the

[41] Caroline Goesler, *Picturing the New Negro: Harlem Renaissance Print Culture and Modern Black Identity*, e-book, (Laurence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2007): 159.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.

arguments surrounding how the black people should be represented were becoming increasingly heated - based largely on who was in the privileged position of creating visual and textual records of the changing community – this *Vanity Fair* feature was bound to be received with varying levels of controversy. However, it should be stated that both Walrond and Covarrubias were participants in the Harlem scene, moving in the same social and creative circles as many of the younger generation of black artists and intellectuals, and their supporters. Carl Van Vechten was an early and consistent supporter of Miguel Covarrubias' career. In the preface to *The Prince of Wales and Other Famous American's,* Carl Van Vechten writes of his influential role in Covarrubias' success:

> My friend Sherrill Schell hailed me on the telephone to request me to examine some drawings by a Mexican boy who had recently arrived in New York. ".... I thought perhaps you might introduce him to some New York subjects."… Schell arrived at the appointed hour, accompanied by what appeared to be a youth just out of the adolescent stage, so shy, indeed, that he immediately began to bombard me with a volley of quite unrecognizable English… That afternoon, too, I began to use the telephone in his behalf, and for the next few days I made appointments for him to meet H. L. Mencken, Waldo Frank, Avery Hopwood, Eva Le Gallienne, and a great many others. … As soon as Covarrubias had drawn a few local faces I invited him to join me one day for lunch at the Algonquin where he was acclaimed at once, held, indeed, almost a reception. From that moment he was launched—as I knew he would be: one glance at his drawings sufficed to exhibit indelible proof of his prowess.[44]

From this introduction to Covarrubias' speedy ascent to fame, boosted by Van Vechten, it is clear that his talent for caricature, and his ability to capture the spirit of a person, established the inexperienced adolescent in with the frontrunners of the art scene in New York. Van Vechten continues to describe the success of Covarrubias' caricatures, stating that "his caricatures almost invariably go deeply behind the mere sculptural formation of the face. They

[44] Carl Van Vechten, Preface: Miguel Covarrubias, *The Prince of Wales and Other Famous Americans,* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1925).

are often a complete criticism of a personality."[45] Despite Covarrubias' status as a new immigrant, without a good grasp of the language and awareness of his subjects he: "frequently… was actually ignorant as to whether his model was actor, painter, or author". Covarrubius held the ability to provide an assessment of their character through his sketches, perhaps because of his detachment from his subjects. This detachment is perhaps akin to that experienced by Reiss. Reiss' European education and style, and focus on an objective style made him a good fit to represent the modern African American. Perhaps Covarrubias' depictions should be treated similarly; where Reiss' style aimed to capture a visually accurate recreation of his subjects, Covarrubias' caricature captured an accuracy of atmosphere and persona of his subjects. The factor that separates Covarrubias and Reiss, however, was the contrast between the professional, educated type presented by Reiss and the raucous Cabaret scenes presented by Covarrubias.

After the publication of the Mexican *Survey Graphic* and the December 1924 *Vanity Fair,* Winold Reiss, Alain Locke and editor Paul Kellogg joined forces to produce the ground-breaking issue "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro", which would have been in development whilst the *Vanity Fair* features were in production too. It can be assumed that this issue would have been highly anticipated across the Harlem community, with the readers and contributors ready to view the most thorough record of black Harlem yet. This issue, published in March 1925 was an altogether more visual affair than that of the Irish issue, the artworks included were more vibrant and expressive – due to Locke's influence and the employment of Winold Reiss as a resident artist for the magazine. There was also a stronger stylistic design throughout the magazine, with more graphic elements across the issue than in earlier issues. Walter Von Ruchteschell, Mahonri Young, Malvin Gray Johnson and Winold Reiss were among some of

[45] Carl Van Vechten, Preface: Miguel Covarrubias, *The Prince of Wales and Other Famous Americans,* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1925).

artists providing contributions. There was less emphasis on and use of photography, although still included in articles such as "The Making of Harlem" by James Weldon Johnson, which serves as a good example of the *Survey's* classic essayist style, with a social and historical discussion of the Harlem neighbourhoods demographic post Great-Migration. [46] The photographs that punctuate the article were provided by Paul Thompson, a documentary photographer whose work was prevalent in magazines in the 1910s and 1920s in New York.[47] The images are somewhat more sophisticated than those included in the earlier Irish issue, with more interest created in the angles and content, with what would now be considered a form of street photography, candidly capturing the quiet and hustle of Harlem avenues. Inset amongst the photographs in this article is a small, rectangular observation by Malvin Gray Johnson, of the passage behind the grand housing blocks, in which washing is hanging between the houses adds a small glimpse of the "less beautiful streets" of Harlem.[48] There feels to be a departure from the strictly documentary images, as found in the Irish Issue, rather this Harlem issue seems to bring a deliberate insight into the artistic movement within Harlem. This could be, in part, due to the boom of printing and illustrative technology and the advancement of these sectors in the intervening years between the publications.

Alain Locke's editorial influence saw this issue's visual components increase from that of the Irish and Mexican issues, the "Harlem Types" increased from four portraits to seven, with an

[46] Martha Nadell, *Enter the New Negro: Images of Race in American Culture,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004): 45.
[47] Paul Thompson's name appears on the door of a Greenwich Bookshop, signed by 242 other artists, publishers, writers and notable people who lived in Greenwich village. It places Paul Thompson as someone who was known and popular in the New York scene, and his documentary photography is seen across many publications in New York. Not much else can be found of his biography, but this is an interesting record. See here for more information:
https://norman.hrc.utexas.edu/bookshopdoor/home.cfm#1
[48] We can assume this New York trained artist is that of the "M. Gray Johnson" credited with the image on page 637 of the issue.

additional "Four Portraits of Negro Women".[49] The "Harlem Types" were accompanied by three paragraphs, that situated the work of Winold Reiss and his talent in the depiction of human psychology and physiognomy. The supporting text was certainly more extensive than that given to either the Irish or Mexican issues. This text, presumably written by Locke, give explanation to the feature without discussing any particular image, which, as in the previous two cases, are still given general titles. Locke introduces Reiss' images, below the imposing portrait of *Congo: a familiar of the New York Studios*, stating that Reiss "has aimed to portray the soul and spirit of a people."[50] On the following page, nestled within the smaller studies of these Harlem subjects, Locke continues:

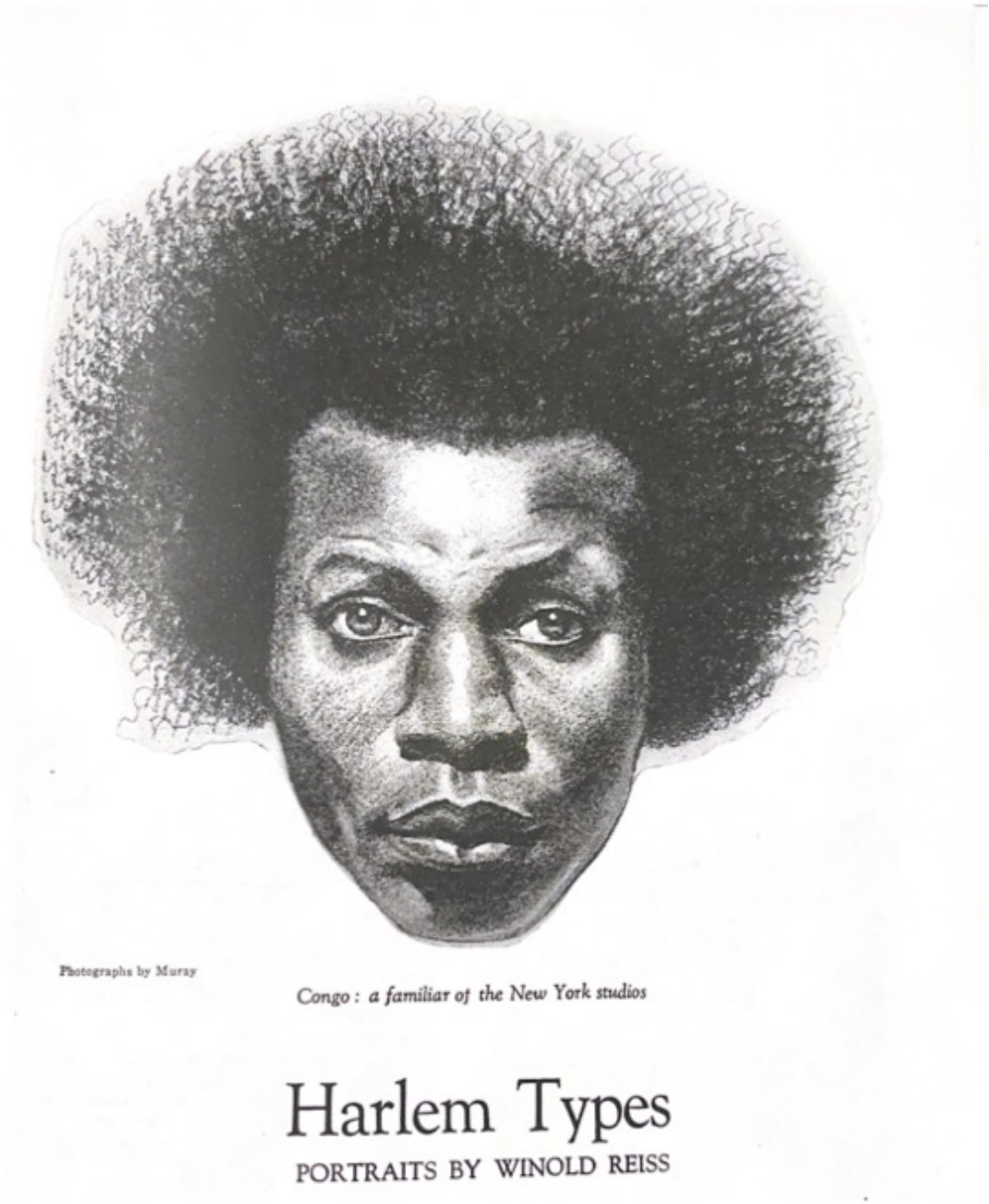
> Contentions stand doubly in the way of artistic portrayal of Negro folk; certain narrowly arbitrary conventions of physical beauty, and as well, that inevitable inscrutability of things seen but not understood. Caricature has put upon the countenance of the Negro the mask of the comic and the grotesque, whereas in deeper truth and comprehension, nature or experience have put the very opposite, the serious, the tragic, the wistful.[51]

Locke's textual account of the portrayal of black folk, and the ways in which their image has been misrepresented is briefly given in this text. The notion of Eurocentric ideals of beauty, as well as damage of decades of poor-quality caricature had inhibited the proper portray of African Americans. This is central to not only these "Types" but across the issue as a whole. The pointed attack towards the form of caricature as responsible for the "comic" and "grotesque" depictions of black folk seems to speak directly to the likes of Miguel Covarrubias and his efforts at *Vanity Fair*. Locke states that Reiss is a "master delineator of folk character by wide experience and definite specialisation… he somehow subtly expresses the type, and without being any the less

[49] Paul U. Kellogg, "Harlem: Mecca of the new negro", *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925: 651-654 and 685-688.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.

human, captures the racial and the local".[52] This high praise of Reiss' artistic skill is evident in the images, but do the "types" achieve what Locke claims they do? The images themselves were made up of seven portraits: two full-page images bookended the series, with the other five arranged over the middle pages. The portraits mostly depicted younger Harlemites*: A mother and Child, Young America: native-born, A boy Scout, Girl in the White Blouse* and *College Lad* all suggest a focus on the next generation of "New Negros". The two full page images, *Congo: a familiar of the New York Studios* and *A College Lad* are of particular note for their dramatically different impressions of black men. To start, *Congo*, is presented on the first page of the feature as a dark-skinned disembodied head, floating on the page with the eyes fixed out towards the viewer. The effect of this separated head is somewhat unnerving, but the expression itself is neither smiling or frowning, the lips appear lightly pursed, and the general impression is one of neutrality. The figure sports a full afro which Martha Nadell compares to "a halo". The natural hair in combination with the "lack of bodily anchor" do suggest elements of primitivism, of a "Noble Savage" presented to the American reader. [53]

[52] Ibid.
[53] Martha Nadell, *Enter the New Negro: Images of Race in American Culture,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004): 46.



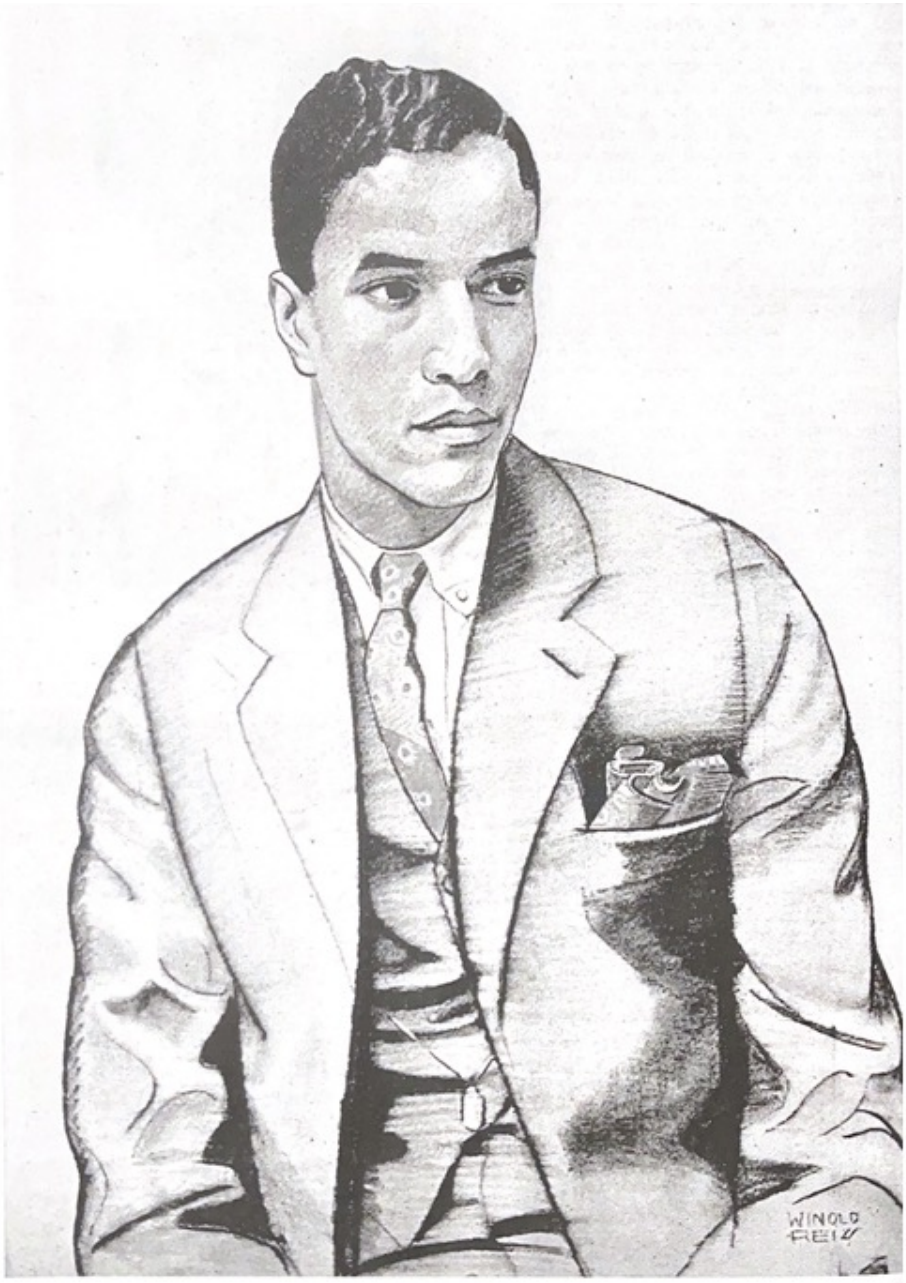
Photographs by Murray

Congo : a familiar of the New York studios

Harlem Types

PORTRAITS BY WINOLD REISS

Winold Reiss, *Congo: a familiar of the New York Studios.* Fig 4



A college lad

Winold Reiss, *A College Lad,* fig 5

In contrast, the final portrait of the series is of *A College Lad,* a full torso study of a young light-skinned black gentlemen. This subject differs from *Congo* in nearly all aspects: The afro is replaced here by controlled set waves, parted smartly; his head is turned slightly to the side,

with a soft gaze leading off centre; his expression is calm and authoritative. This "type" is educated, properly dressed in a three-piece suit, drawn in Reiss' outline style, but more "naturalistically rendered" than that of the five other sketches and his previous work for *Survey Graphic.*[54] He also wears a watch on a chain attached to his vest, with a neat pocket square in his breast pocket, which conveys hints of the subject's class and status. This image appears visually complete and therefore depicts an attractive young man belonging to a higher status than that of the subject of *Congo.* This divide between the first and last images suggest to the reader that there is a progression between the two figures, wherein the *College Lad* represents the civilised version of the savage *Congo* image. This void between the two images was not coincidental: Nadell notes that in correspondence between Locke and a *Survey* associate editor, Sara Merrill, she wrote: "I think the series accomplishes a definite purpose as it stands. The college lad is the type farthest removed that the man from the Congo…. A wide span between the two."[55] Here, one can argue that Reiss did not adhere to his usual objective and straightforward style of drawing, evident in his choice to capture just the head of the first subject and omit the body, which has the result of depicting this subject as less than human, this counters Locke's supporting text. The "Harlem Types" capture both the physical and social aspects of these figures, that are on opposing ends of a scale that is broadly depicting the supposed advancement of the typical, to some extent, stereotypical black man. This series of images gives insight into how the composition, and accompanying text coalesce to present a rounded impression of black folk, that is coloured by the artists, writers and editors own political and aesthetic inclinations.

[54] Martha Nadell, *Enter the New Negro: Images of Race in American Culture,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004): 48.
[55] Ibid.

Despite this slight discordance with the aims of the "Harlem Types" the effect of Locke's commitment to capturing the spirit of the Harlem community and providing new visual representation of black folk was clear. Perhaps too constrained by the format of the *Survey Graphic,* and Kellogg's format of the established Race Series, Locke took up the project to turn the magazine issue into a book-length anthology, an idea put forward by publisher Albert Boni. Locke went on to build upon the work of this famous issue by later reproducing much of the work, as well as expanding the graphic elements in *The New Negro,* published in the same year. *The New Negro* revised the relationship between the image and the text from that of the *Survey Graphic,* removing the interwoven images inset into essays, instead the "anthology juxtaposes word and image as equivalent creative expressions about the New Negro and ultimately *by* the New Negro."[56] The anthology also shifted the content away from the *Survey Graphic* toward an artistic and literary selection of essays, image, prose, poetry and samples of the dramatic arts, moving away from the dominant social and historical concerns of the magazine.[57] Most notably, the inclusion of Aaron Douglas' artwork in the anthology perhaps fulfilled the aim of pursuing expressions of African American art *by* African American Artists.

Aaron Douglas

This next section will explore Aaron Douglas' role in the recreation of a black aesthetic and his connections with magazines, literature and theatre. Aaron Douglas was born in Topeka, Kansas in 1899. He studied Fine Art at the University of Nebraska before taking a teaching position at a high school in Kansas City, Missouri. Douglas had a keen interest in the growing social and

[56] Martha Nadell, *Enter the New Negro: Images of Race in American Culture,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004): 54.
[57] Martha Nadell writes an excellent description of the ways in which Locke transformed the *Survey Graphic* into the book length anthology, which although the discussion is pertinent to this chapter, there is sufficient existing research available. For more information see chapter two of Martha Nadell, *Enter the New Negro: Images of Race in American Culture,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004)

aesthetic movement in New York, but postponed travelling to the city until after the publication of the landmark *Survey Graphic* issue. Douglas was urged to relocate to New York after Charles S. Johnson's office reached out to him, in search for African American writers and artists. Upon his arrival in New York, it did not take long for Douglas' work to begin appearing in the magazines of the NAACP and National Urban League: *Crisis* and *Opportunity*, respectively. Following the success of the *Survey Graphic* issue, Johnson and other influential leaders in Harlem arranged for Douglas to study under Winold Reiss who encouraged him to look to African Art as a source of inspiration and cultural identity. In addition to the study of African Art, Reiss introduced Douglas to his own modernist techniques from Europe, and with this Douglas began to develop his own distinctive style and visual language. Once established in the Harlem scene, Douglas' received many commissions for illustrations, cover art, magazines and eventually large-scale murals.

W.E.B. Du Bois was a keen supporter of Aaron Douglas and his artistic career, and in 1926 tasked Douglas with the creation of the pamphlet for Krigwa Players (or Krigwa Players Little Theatre Company). The Krigwa company was set up by Du Bois and Regina Anderson as an off-shoot of *Crisis* dedicated to the dramatic arts. The name of the group is an acronym for Crisis Guild of Writers and Artists, (C.R.I.G.W.A, changed from 'C' to 'K', probably for aesthetic reasons). Ahead of the first season of productions, a pamphlet was circulated to promote the company and their aims and values. The image created by Aaron Douglas was dense with symbolism (fig 6). The image depicts a silhouetted androgenous figure seated, cross-legged, in the centre. The figure is surrounded by depictions of two pyramids positioned to the top left with the sphinx at the top right. Nestled around the figure are leaf and flower designs, and a large palm tree. This arrangement of these objects, associated with ancient Egyptian art situate the work of Krigwa with the advanced civilisations of the African continent. The depiction of the central figure is also drawn "in a manner that recalls ancient Egyptian

figuration."[58] The figure is somewhat ambiguous, holding an African tribal mask in one hand, with the head depicted in profile, turned in a flat view where the distinctive African features are easily read. Douglas' use of typification works not only to make the race visible but to create a racial type that was readily identifiable by the viewer and readers of the pamphlet. In an interview later in Aaron Douglas' life, he explained this replication of the Egyptian style:

> There is a certain artistic pattern that I follow… I used the Egyptian form, that is to say, the head was in perspective in a profile flat view, the body, shoulders down to the waist turned half way, the legs were done also from the side and the feet were also done in a broad perspective… the only thing that was not specifically taken from the Egyptians was an eye… so you saw it in three dimensions. I avoided the three dimension and that's another thing that made it sort of unique artistically.[59]

The effect of the Egyptian style, evoking the success and civilisation of Africa counters the Western view that may assume the undeveloped, tribal-based communities. The style also translates excellently to print culture, allowing for bold designs to be recreated in larger scale publication for magazines, pamphlets and book illustrations. The text that accompanies the image holds the manifesto for Krigwa, as a centre for dramatic interpretation of "Negro life". The text states that the mission of Krigwa is to hold space "where Negro actors before Negro audiences interpret Negro life as depicted by Negro artists", essentially, Krigwa was aimed to be a Negro enterprise, created *for, by* and *about* black life. It is likely that this sentiment is responsible for Douglas' own success in the movement, for he represented an artistic ideal in that he produced depictions of black folk, for black folk whilst being part of the unique African American community.

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[58] Caroline Goesler, *Picturing the New Negro: Harlem Renaissance Print Culture and Modern Black Identity*, e-book, (Laurence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2007): 30.
[59] David Levering Lewis ed, *The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader,* "Aaron Douglas Chats about the Harlem Renaissance", (London: Penguin Group, 1994).

Aaron Douglas, *Krigwa Players Pamphlet.* Fig 6

Aaron Douglas' instantly recognisable artwork is testament to the strength of his visual language, in which he utilised Egyptian symbolism, silhouette and geometric design to communicate the racialised art he produced. This artistic formula served Douglas well throughout his initial years in Harlem, and proved to be a commercially viable enterprise. Aaron Douglas produced magazine covers for many of the popular publications that circulated in Harlem in the renaissance period. One of his early covers for *Opportunity* was released in June 1926 in this image a male figure is silhouetted in a shade of dark, navy blue with a striking outline of red surrounding the figure, creating a glow about the body.[60] The figure is set against a light pink blush background and in the lower portion of the image, below the line of the knees are once again pyramid motifs, cast against a rising or setting sun drawn in red. The features of the figure are instantly recognisable through the creation of a black racial type: the profile of the face show pronounced lips, flared nostrils, and a sharp jaw line, which are emphasised with bold white to add dimension. These features and the dark skin communicate that this is an image of a black man, of African descent, and it is this clear and concise visual language skilfully developed by Douglas that led to his commercial success. Douglas secured many commissions for illustration in books and magazine and became one of the foremost artists of the Harlem Renaissance. Despite Douglas' commercial endeavours, he continued to create work that set out to represent the "New Negro" in novel and sensitive ways. Goesler comments upon this dynamic between the artist and the commercial sector: "his efforts as an illustrator working the divide between art and commercialism contribute significantly toward understanding illustration in Harlem Renaissance and American visual culture as a powerful modernist medium that has too often been overlooked".[61]

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[60] Aaron Douglas, cover art, *Opportunity,* July 1926.
[61] Caroline Goesler, *Picturing the New Negro: Harlem Renaissance Print Culture and Modern Black Identity*, e-book, (Laurence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2007): 22.

Aaron Douglas also created art in response to the blossoming literary and dramatic culture he witnessed in Harlem. Douglas produced a series of prints that were inspired by Eugene O'Neill's play *The Emperor Jones.* This play is the focus of chapter two of this thesis, but we will briefly revisit the images created in the context of this visual chapter. The four prints were titled "Emperor Jones, or Bravado", "Defiance", "Flight", "and "Surrender" which capture the downfall of the self-professed "Emperor" of the small West Indian island after the uprising of his oppressed subjects. Two of these images were reproduced for the February 1926 issue of *Theatre Arts Monthly,* displayed within an essay titled "The Negro and The American Stage" by Alain Locke. Locke provided a short commentary on the two images. Below the copy of *Bravado,* the following supporting text is printed:

> In a striking series of interpretive designs based on Eugene O'Neill's *Emperor Jones,* the young Negro artist Aaron Douglas, has recaptured the dynamic quality of tragedy and terror. There is an arbitrary contrast of black masses and white spaces; and the clash of broken lines become highly expressive in suggesting the proximate collapse of the Emperor's throne and the fear it inspires. [62]

Locke's considerations of the image, in relation to the acclaimed play highlight the dialogue between artists, writers and intellectuals in Harlem in the 1920s. This relationship of influence, response and analysis is evidence of a rich culture of exchanging ideas and creativity which characterised the movement. The attention here on image brings into focus the important role these illustrators had in not only representing the New Negro, but in the aesthetic and commercial success of the writers and social leaders of the era.

[62] Edith J.R. Issacs, *Theatre arts monthly*, vol. 10 no. 2, February 1926.

Fire!!

Aaron Douglas aligned himself with the likes of Wallace Thurman, Zora Neale Hurston and Richard Bruce Nugent who together formed a group that represented a 'younger generation' of Harlem artists. This group, amongst other, were a self-conscious collective of writers, artists, and poets' intent on tackling the same issues of black representation than those that had come before. Unlike the 'older generation', to which Du Bois belonged, this group did not prioritise creating 'flattering' or 'uplifting' depictions of black people and the black community. Rather their collective aims were to express black people as complete, complex beings. This radical group put forward their own publication, *FIRE!!* which was a wholly self-conscious, highly aesthetic magazine. The magazine only ran for one premier issue, and was met with mixed reviews, before the headquarters of the magazine, rather ironically, was damaged badly in a fire, marking an end to the very short-lived publication. The magazine was a radical publication, filled with modernist sensibilities, it did not have a clear thematic structure, nor did it privilege particular form; it gave equal space and weighting to poetry, drawing, essay and prose. The content, was on the whole, far more risqué than the contemporary magazines in circulation, which set this racy publication apart from the rest.

Aaron Douglas, Untitled Sketch from *FIRE!!* Fig 7.

Douglas produced the cover art, incidental graphics and three sketches to the magazine. The cover art was much in his usual Egyptian inspired two-dimensional style; the design is striking in red ink on a black background. In red, a side view of a sphynx is inset in the profile of an African face, created in the negative space. The facial profile has few details except the ear and earring that connects to the back end of the sphynx. This interconnectedness of the two images of man and sphynx, with the figure of the male face a representative of African Americans and the sphynx representing the civilised, culturally rich African history. Usually, Douglas has presented these two concepts as separate, with the objects of the sphynx or pyramids occupying the background of his images. However, here they form one whole image, and one would not be visually complete without the other. Douglas' main contribution the main body of the magazine are three sketches, which are vastly different to his usual style of illustrations. The drawings, simply named "Three Drawings" in the contents page, were also unaccompanied by any textual information. Without titles or descriptions, it would be fair to assume that these sketches were "types" found in the US: the preacher, painter, and waitress. These sketches took the form of 'contour drawings' created with single uninterrupted lines, they do not employ any shading or bold lines. The sketches lacked the authority of Douglas' usual work characterised by strong geometric design, instead these works have an almost shaky quality, with a sense of movement in the figures. These figures, depicting these unnamed types do step into the territory of caricature, with exaggerated form and racialised features. These drawings invite speculation of who the subjects are, and how they speak to the "Younger Negro Artists" to which the publication was devoted. The first sketch depicts a preacher, captured in proud stance, chin raised up and stood behind a lectern. The presence of an apparently religious figure within the pages of the bohemian magazine is interesting and perhaps at odds with some of the more risqué content. The second drawing is that of an artist absorbed in his work and facing an easel, this image could be interpreted as a form of self-portrait, wherein Aaron Douglas himself is

representative of all Harlem artists. The pages of *FIRE!!* seemed a fitting place for this experimental art form. Richard Bruce Nugent similarly contributed daring art to the issue, depicting highly sexualised and androgynous nude figures. His work is reminiscent of the Aubrey Beardsley, a comparison drawn by Nadell. Nugent's images combined the distinctly black features with the curves and shapes of Art Nouveau images. Aaron Douglas later commented upon the brief venture of *FIRE!!:* "And we, just a little bunch of us, were daring enough to come forth with a thing like that. It was outrageous, outlandish and everything else for us to do that."[63] It was indeed an outrageous publication, and although it did not survive, this magazine provides insight into the changing ways that black representation was being dealt with among the next generation of black artists.

Conclusion

The issue of representation and renewed national and community identity were contentious topics across the Irish and Harlem renaissances. This chapter has endeavoured to trace the relationship between image and text in publications that set out to discuss and debate the issue of racial representation. This chapter has examined the ways that some artists and their art has set about undoing and recreating representation of Irish and Black people. The next chapter will follow the discussion of this chapter, to focus on the unique Caribbean contribution to the Harlem Renaissance.

[63] David Levering Lewis ed, *The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader,* "Aaron Douglas Chats about the Harlem Renaissance", (London: Penguin Group, 1994): 124.

Chapter Five: “The Tropics in New York”

Chapter Five

This chapter aims to explore the ways in which the Caribbean migrants in New York contributed to the Harlem Renaissance, in shaping the culture, language and politics of the era. This chapter shifts the focus of the thesis away from the relationship between the Irish Literary Renaissance and the Harlem Renaissance, to focus on the historically overlooked Caribbean contingents. This chapter will be centred on two prominent texts from the Harlem Renaissance, by Caribbean migrants: *Home to Harlem,* by Claude McKay and *Tropic Death* by Eric Walrond. We will first situate the influx of Caribbeans to Harlem by briefly reviewing some prominent Caribbeans who were vocal during the Renaissance era, after this I will endeavour to examine the conditions of a Caribbean upbringing that primed McKay and Walrond for a politically radical and creative output. This chapter will then explore some of the shared thematic links between McKay's and Walrond's works, such as belonging, hybridity, tropical landscapes and finally discuss the ways in which their texts were vessels for poignant criticism of the neo-imperialism that was overspilling into the Caribbean basin from the USA in the 1920s.

Radical Caribbeans

The Great Migration saw thousands of African Americans relocate from the Southern states to the Northern, urban districts like New York, in the pursuit of improved race relations, economic prospects and quality of life. In addition to this significant movement of black folk, an influx of Caribbean and African migration came from the extended global south to the northern metropole of New York, with the majority settling in and around the vibrant neighbourhood of Harlem. The demographic of Harlem underwent huge shifts during the first two decades of the twentieth century when African Americans and Caribbeans, alongside other minority groups, gathered in the district living and working amongst each other. These conditions facilitated an

exciting cross-cultural exchange that is the topic of this chapter. It is useful here to briefly revisit the landmark edition of the *Survey Graphic,* "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro" to get a sense of the state of migration in Harlem in the first half of the 1920s.[1] The first section of this seminal text is subtitled "The Greatest Negro Community in the World", and it is within these pages where the ethnic make-up, employment opportunities and experience of Harlemites was written about with fervour: James Weldon Johnson and Charles S. Johnson debate the demographic and physical changes to Harlem, the conditions of the workers and the employment, Rudolph Fisher contributes his short story *The South Lingers On* which deals with the trials and tribulations of the Southern migrants arrival and assimilation to New York. It is fitting then, that W.A. Domingo's essay "The Tropics in New York" follows these musings on the so-called "greatest Negro community", with the perspective of the Caribbeans; their numbers, experience, merits and challenges.[2]

W.A. Domingo was born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1889 and received his tuition on the island, in an English colonial-run school. Domingo travelled to the USA in 1912, where he became a prominent socialist figure, initially primarily advocating for social reform in Jamaica. His contribution to the *Survey Graphic* provides insight into the changing environment of Harlem upon the continued arrival of black Caribbeans who brought with them their diverse cultural backgrounds, thirst for business and colonial backgrounds. The first barrier for Caribbean immigrants, Domingo claimed, was the confrontation of the fierce "American brand of race prejudice", which came with the strict residential segregation along colour lines, that in turn denied the unique cultural identity of their island homelands.[3] The result of this enforced homogeneity, that restricted the expression of the diverse "tradition, culture, [and] historical

[1] Paul U. Kellogg, "Harlem: Mecca of the new negro", *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925.
[2] Paul U. Kellogg, "Harlem: Mecca of the new negro", auth. W.A Domingo, "The Tropics in New York" *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925.
[3] Ibid: 648.

background", was the pervading assumption among the African Americans, and others, that all Caribbeans were alike despite coming from distinct countries and communities.[4] Domingo comments that "West Indians regard themselves as Antiguans or Jamaicans as the case might be, a glance at the map will quickly reveal the physical obstacles that mitigate against homogeneity of population; separations of many sorts, geographical, political and cultural tend to make and crystallise local characteristics."[5] The experience of this type of cultural erasure extends to the historical accounts of the Harlem Renaissance, which has only recently begun to be addressed, wherein many of the Caribbean writers, artists and intellectuals were unduly absorbed into the African American canon and history despite their heritage. Although Domingo reflects upon how Caribbeans are "swallowed up in Black Harlem", he also credits their presence in the district as what separates Harlem from "Pittsburgh, Washington, Chicago with large aggregations of American Negroes."[6] The English-speaking Caribbean community in Harlem brought with them diverse backgrounds, but they did share some commonalities in their status as colonial subjects, and the advantages that forming a racial majority in their homeland held. Domingo observed how Caribbean migrants seemed to be more ambitious in their business ventures, and were less incumbered by the "color-line" that determined the occupation of African Americans:

> While American Negroes predominate in forms of business like barber shops and pool rooms in which there is no competition from white men, West Indians turn their efforts almost invariably to fields like grocery stores, tailor shops, jewelry stores and fruit vending in which they meet the fiercest competitors of white business concerns.[7]

[4] Ibid: 648.
[5] Ibid: 648.
[6] Ibid: 648.
[7] Ibid: 649.

Whether it be their disregard of or rebellion toward the "color-line", the Caribbean businessmen were not impeded by the status-quo that had held black businesses from establishing. As these migrants were not accustomed to the racial discrimination to the same degree, and in their own homelands their occupations determined by their race, it is apparent that this Caribbean spirit fuelled the establishment of successful black-owned businesses in Harlem that could cater for the black community. "The Tropics in New York" illustrates the ways in which Caribbean migrants were complex outsiders from within the Harlem community, who had significant impact on the culture of the neighbourhood and in turn the explosion of art and literature coming out of the area. The colonial education, resistance to racial segregation and experience of living in a racial majority allowed these Caribbean folk to be the trendsetters, political leaders and great documentarians of the Harlem Renaissance, and the cross-cultural exchange will be further explored later in this chapter.

The Caribbean condition arguably primed many migrants to be drawn to radical politics as a means to improve the race relations in the USA and in their home countries. Many British Caribbean radicals contributed significantly to the radical politics and the accompanying literary production, with Caribbeans being responsible for the founding, editing and contributing to "publications including the *Voice*, the *Crusader*, the *Emancipator*, *Opportunity*, the *Messenger*, and the Universal Negro Improvement Association's *Negro World*."[8] Some of these radical Caribbeans, who were predominantly involved in socialist politics included Claude McKay and Eric Walrond, whose works we will consider in further detail later in the chapter. Hubert Harrison, an immigrant from St. Croix, earned the moniker "father of the Harlem Renaissance", established the Liberty League and the accompanying newspaper, *The Voice,* which paved the way for the many organisations that followed in pursuit of a new race

[8] Lara Putnam, "Provincializing Harlem: The "Negro Metropolis" as Northern Frontier of a Connected Caribbean", *Modernism/modernity,* Volume 20, Number 3, September 2013, p.469.

conscious society, that appealed to the masses of black folk beyond the "talented tenth" and the selective uplift politics that had prevailed.[9] Other Caribbean radicals, such as Cyril Briggs, who arrived from St Kitts in 1905, and W.A. Domingo who created the African Blood Brotherhood for African Liberation and Redemption (ABB). This was an organisation that was fiercely anticolonial and anticapitalistic and was characterised by organised defence against racial violence. The ABB began as an independent radical organisation but later joined ties with the Communist Party. All these radical figures were also at some point working in relation to Marcus Garvey and the UNIA, but most did relinquish their support as Garvey became more fantastical about his pan-African goals. In Chapter One, many of these prominent figures were discussed in relation to Irish history, literature, politics and militancy; wherein Harrison, Garvey and Briggs all called upon Ireland as an example to boost their own efforts towards freedom and away from oppressive regimes. It was perhaps the kinship between colonised countries that placed Ireland as a bolster for their own aims. In this short introduction to the work of radical Caribbeans, we can see that the Caribbean region exported educated, rebellious spirited folk pursuing economic success, who when faced with the horrors of Jim Crow segregation took up their posts as radical politicians, carving a new path that would better facilitate a reimagining of black self-expression.

The delineation of race, ethnicity and nationality is particularly significant when examining Caribbean literary contribution to the USA in the 1920s and beyond. To extend the notion that the USA enforced a harsh "color-line", Heather Hathaway, author of *Caribbean Waves: Relocating Claude McKay and Paule Marshall,* proposes that race, either 'white' or 'black' became the primary descriptor and ethnic categorisation was a secondary descriptor.[10] Due to

[9] There is a more complete discussion of Harrison in Chapter One, and therefore this introduction is brief. Please see chapter one for more information.
[10] Heather Hathaway, *Caribbean Waves: Relocating Claude McKay and Paule Marshall,* (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1999).

this crude preference for binary descriptors, many African Caribbean people were misclassified as African American or as just 'black', which fails to acknowledge the cultural, national and ethnic differences. Hathaway claims that this binary outlook risks "reducing the plurality of black American identities to a monolithic entity based upon skin colour".[11] This monolithic approach also does not allow for consideration of the impact of migration, wherein the relocation from the Caribbean and the subsequent full or partial assimilation to the new community had a permanent transformative effect. Hathaway proposes that this transformation occurs the moment the migrant steps foot in the new location, and that the relationship to their 'home', and their sense of belonging will forever be altered. The Caribbean authors, artists and dramatists embody this hybridity, and their lack of belonging extends to their own catalogue of work and as such, the contestations of to which tradition of arts and letters they should belong has been the topic of debate that peaked in the late 1990s Hathaway suggests that the Caribbean literary contributions perhaps do not belong to the USA or to the Caribbean, but could more broadly belong to a diasporic tradition of arts and letters. [12] Although this is a useful and novel approach that intends to extract these Caribbeans from the African American canons, this chapter will not attempt to repatriate these works to the Caribbean or to a diasporic community and will rather explore the complexity of the migrant condition, as well as assessing the ways in which the hybrid culture is manifested in the literature produced during the Harlem Renaissance.

The radical Caribbeans at the centre of this chapter, Claude McKay and Eric Walrond share many similarities in their Caribbean upbringing, and their peripatetic lifestyle and careers: both

[11] Heather Hathaway, *Caribbean Waves: Relocating Claude McKay and Paule Marshall,* (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1999), 4.
[12] For a comprehensive discussion of the scholars who have debated this see page 39 of J. Dillon Brown, "Escaping the Tropics Through New York: Eric Walrond and Claude McKay in the American Grain," *The Global South*, Fall 2013, Vol. 7, No. 2: 39.

writers experienced their childhoods in the tropics, emigrated from the Caribbean as young adults and moved in socialist circles in New York and beyond. In the last few decades, McKay and Walrond have "been held up as exemplars of black transnationalism, in which their peripatetic careers illustrate the restless, expansive networks of diasporic connection forged in the early part of the twentieth century."[13] Both authors produced landmark publications of the Harlem Renaissance: Claude McKay's collection of poetry *Harlem Shadows* and Eric Walrond's short story collection *Tropic Death* mark significant moments in the literary movement, as well as being "active editors, writers, agitators, and *bon vivants* in and around Harlem during the first part of the century."[14] Due to their role as important participants in the Harlem Renaissance, the authors distinct Caribbean backgrounds was largely eclipsed, and until relatively recently they have been considered as African American writers. To counter this narrative, without unduly erasing the impact of the USA, a review into Claude McKay and Eric Walrond's early life and career will situate the following discussion of their respective seminal works, *Home to Harlem* and *Tropic Death.*

Claude McKay was born in the Clarendon Parish of Jamaica, in Jamaica in on 15th of September 1889. McKay was the youngest child of eleven children, though only seven of his siblings survived into adulthood. McKay's father, Thomas McKay owned over one-hundred acres of land, amassed gradually after the initial plot was gifted upon marriage to McKay's mother, Hannah Ann. Hannah Ann was remembered by Claude as "very sweet-natured" and "fond of books", a love that was inherited by Claude. Winston James, the author of the latest McKay biography retells the legends that surrounded his mother's family, which according to McKay's close friend Max Eastman, were relayed to McKay throughout his childhood. The story goes

[13] Heather Hathaway, *Caribbean Waves: Relocating Claude McKay and Paule Marshall,* (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1999): 4.
[14] J. Dillon Brown, Escaping the Tropics Through New York: Eric Walrond and Claude McKay in the American Grain," *The Global South*, Fall 2013, Vol. 7, No. 2, p.39.

that his maternal ancestors were bold even through their violent removal from Madagascar, and through their transportation to Jamaica, the family "resolved not to be broken up and sold separately. Each member would kill himself or herself if their demand was not met".[15] These demands were ill received at the slave markets and the family were impossible to sell, as a result the family were sent together to the hills of Clarendon. This heroic mythology that runs in the blood of the McKay family must have fuelled Claude's own rebellious spirit, and his "militant love of freedom"[16]. According to Claude, his father was "honest, stern even to harshness, hard working, beginning empty-handed he coaxed a good living from the soil, bought land, and grew to be a comparatively prosperous small settler."[17] Although Thomas was illiterate, his small-holding turned into a good sized farming enterprise, and the McKays were a prosperous family and this privileged economic position allowed Thomas to qualify in the incredibly restricted voting system with his minority black vote representing the black majority population.

The McKays were upwardly mobile, and in spite of their dark complexions belonged to the Jamaican middle class, and their wealth afforded them independence. Their class position was rare in Jamaica during the turn of the century, where colourism was intricately linked with social class. Winston James notes that "wealth, power and professional jobs went with whiteness and lightness; poverty, powerlessness and menial, poor paying jobs were associated with dark skinned people. The McKays violated this pattern."[18] Claude McKay grew up in a family undergoing social transformation, climbing from one class to the next, but still nourished by the cultural and ideological traces of generations gone by. Thomas McKay was a "firm

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[15] Winston James, *Claude McKay: The Making of a Black Bolshevik*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022.) 14.
[16] Ibid: 14.
[17] Claude McKay, "Claude McKay Describes His Own Life,", Mānoa, 2019, Vol. 31, No. 2, *Displaced Lives: Fiction, Poetry, Memoirs, And Plays From Four Continents* (2019): 103.
[18] Winston James, *Claude McKay: The Making of a Black Bolshevik*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022.) 15.

believer in education", and ensured his eight surviving children received a good education, which ultimately was the key for the next generation to be "propelled into the upper echelons of socioeconomic ladder". [19]

When Claude McKay was seven years of age, he was sent to be educated by his elder brother, Uriah Theodore, who more commonly went by the nickname U.Theo. He was the headmaster of the local school in Mount Clarey, and he took responsibility for Claude's academic and political education. It was under U. Theo's tuition that Claude McKay developed a love for books, literature, history and music, which was nourished by his brother. U. Theo was a committed free-thinker, who admired the working-classes and held strong feelings regarding the exploitation of labourers. These attitudes differed to that of their parents, and U. Theo shared his progressive ideas with his youngest sibling, actively encouraging Claude to develop his intellectual character. Claude McKay credits his education in Mount Clarey as "a great formative period in his life", and we can see how the exposure to progressive politics primed McKay to more radical political leanings later in his life. Another significant tutor in McKay's life was the Englishman Walter Jekyll, who had been a neighbour to McKay's short-lived apprenticeship in craftsmanship in Browns Town. McKay had no interest in the passions of his father or brothers, who had taken careers in farming, teaching and preaching. None of these vocations appealed to McKay, and whilst floundering he was introduced to Mr. Jekyll by his trade master by means of their common interest in literature. Walter Jekyll was a Cambridge graduate, where he received an education in music, literature, foreign languages and philosophy. McKay shared his poetry with Mr. Jekyll who supported McKay's use of Jamaican dialect in his poems (he had thought his poetry in 'straight English' was repetitive). Although

[19] Claude McKay, "Claude McKay Describes His Own Life,", Mānoa, 2019, Vol. 31, No. 2, *Displaced Lives: Fiction, Poetry, Memoirs, And Plays From Four Continents* (2019): 103. And Winston James, *Claude McKay: The Making of a Black Bolshevik.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022.), 15.

McKay was unsure of this development, Mr. Jekyll thought the potential of recording Jamaican dialect in this way was significant and that it would prove lucrative. This initially troubled McKay, who would have to push against his colonial education, but buoyed their quasi tutor-student relationship, McKay saw the beauty in his vernacular and continued to emulate dialect through his poetry and prose. *Songs of Jamaica,* McKay's first poetry collection was published in 1911, and the funds generated from the sales financed his immigration to the United States of America. [20]

Pursuing a government push for "scientific agricultural education", McKay arrived in Tuskegee in 1912 to study agriculture. McKay was unimpressed with the "semi-military, machine-like existence" at Tuskegee, he transferred to Kansas State College.[21] In those early years after his emigration, McKay found the USA to be the site of horrific and shocking racism. The "depth and intensity" of the prejudice, segregation and the "stinking southern underbelly". [22] Unaccustomed to this brand of race prejudice, unlike "the English sort, subtle and dignified, rooted in class distinction", that McKay was familiar with in Jamaica where colour and class were connected, the virulent and bitter racism had a profound effect on the young writer[23]. In an introduction to a selection of poetry, published in *Pearson's Magazine,* in 1922, McKay "describes his own life", and here recounts the horrors he experienced during those early years:

> In the South daily murders of a nature most hideous and revolting; in the North silent acquiescence, deep hate half-hidden under a puritan respectability, oft flaming up into an occasional lynching—this ugly raw sore in the body of a great nation."[24]

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[20] Winston James*, Claude McKay: The Making of a Black Bolshevik*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022.) 47.
[21] Claude McKay, "Claude McKay Describes His Own Life,", Mānoa, 2019, *Displaced Lives: Fiction, Poetry, Memoirs, And Plays From Four Continents* (2019), p.103.
[22] Winston James*, Claude McKay: The Making of a Black Bolshevik*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022.) 21.
[23] Claude McKay, "Claude McKay Describes His Own Life,", Mānoa, 2019, *Displaced Lives: Fiction, Poetry, Memoirs, And Plays From Four Continents* (2019), p.103.
[24] Ibid, 103.

It was under these conditions that McKay's creative output ceased, as he acclimatised to the realities of being black in the USA. We can assess that his reaction to the treatment of black people was instrumental in transforming McKay's form of Jamaican Fabian sensibilities, in which gradual victory over oppressive powers was favoured, to the more radically aligned figure he came to be known as. Winston James notes that: "It was not that unusual for a Caribbean migrant such as McKay to develop a more sharply defined racial consciousness as a result of living in the United States. In fact, this was the common experience of his fellow Black migrants."[25]

Claude McKay moved north to New York in 1914, where he discovered the black neighbourhood of Harlem and was relieved to be surrounded by people of his own race. Winston James boldly claims that "Harlem saved him."[26] The move certainly invigorated McKay, and being amongst black folk, after his time in Kansas was akin to paradise. Although McKay continued to engage in radical politics, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a full assessment, instead, we will end the biography at the point in which he was most absorbed in Harlem activity and explore the ways in which he brought his relationship with Jamaica, his tutorage and introduction to the USA into his written work.

Eric Derwent Walrond did not enjoy the stable childhood that McKay did. An embodiment of the diasporic Caribbean, Walrond was born in British Guiana (now Guyana) in 1898, his mother was a Barbadian immigrant, and his father was Guyanese. His parents, Ruth and William had moved to the South American coast seeking out better economic landscape, although they were not considered poor – William was a tailor by trade, and Ruth a devout missionary, but like

[25] Winston James, *Claude McKay: The Making of a Black Bolshevik*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022.): 203.
[26] Ibid: 201.

many other Caribbean families a migratory lifestyle provided more financial opportunities.[27] Eric Walrond spent the first years of his childhood in British Guiana, before circumstances necessitated another move, this time with his mother to Barbados, in 1906. His father had joined the swathes of West Indian men working on the construction of the Panama Canal, and as such Eric did not know him well. Five years later, Ruth and her son relocated once again to the Canal Zone to reunite with his father.

In 1918, when Walrond was turning twenty, he made his next move to New York. Arnold Rampersad notes that Walrond arrived in the city at an "auspicious moment for blacks in the city", when the Harlem Renaissance was nearly in bloom. As a young black man with "journalistic and literary interests" Harlem offered many opportunities for Walrond.[28] He began working for Marcus Garvey and perhaps he was drawn to the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) due to his sharing Caribbean roots with Garvey. Walrond started at the organisation's *Weekly Review* before ascending the ranks at the *Negro World* as Assistant and then Associate Editor. Although Garvey and Walrond may have been similarly aligned when he first immigrated, exposure to Harlem's cosmopolitan life and culture led him away. In 1925 Walrond was working as Business Manager for Charles S. Johnson's *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life,* the magazine associated with the Negro Urban League. During his decade in Harlem, Walrond wrote and published extensively in many prominent journals, that were circulating in the black community: *Crisis, Opportunity, The Messenger* in addition to some magazines and journals with majority white audiences, like *Vanity Fair* (as discussed in Chapter Four).[29] Socially, Eric Walrond was popular among the young creative circles in Harlem and

[27] James Davis. *Eric Walrond: A Life in the Harlem Renaissance and the Transatlantic Caribbean.* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2015): 11.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Owens, Imani D. "'Hard Reading': US Empire and Black Modernist Aesthetics in Eric Walrond's 'Tropic Death.'" *Melus* 41.4 (2016): 98-99.

would mix regularly with the likes of "Claude McKay, Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen and Wallace Thurman". [30] His relationships also extended to the elder generation of Harlem thinkers, such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Charles S. Johnson and Alain Locke, who supported his work. Locke included one of Walrond's short stories, "Palm Porch" in his seminal publication *The New Negro,* which later featured in *Tropic Death.*

Tropic Death was published in 1926 and represents Walrond's only major work of fiction. Despite the success of the book and a clear appetite for follow-up works, he failed to publish again. Walrond received funding from the Guggenheim Foundation for his next novel, which was again to be inspired by the West Indies and to some extent his troubled personal life interrupted his progress. After this time, Walrond disappeared from Harlem into partial obscurity following *Tropic Death,* he did continue to write despite spells of ill mental health, and moved to England. He finally settled in Wiltshire, to live out his days in a small village, far from his Caribbean origins. Although it has been argued that Walrond did not fulfil his potential, and was thought to have vanished from the Harlem scene where he was once so active, his peripatetic and restless childhood perhaps created a man who was not comfortable staying for too long in one place. Walrond's own relationship to the Caribbean was complex, and regarded his spiritual home as Panama, but the complicated experience of Afro-Caribbeans in the Canal Zone may have marred his view of the tropics from then on. By assessing his semi-nomadic lifestyle and career, we can see how Walrond and McKay were part of a migratory community, who struggled with finding a sense of belonging and home. Understanding some of McKay and Walrond's Caribbean upbringing, and subsequent migratory lifestyle highlights the ways in which this distinct "Caribbeanness" shaped their radical outlooks.

[30] Eric Walrond and Arnold Rampersad, *Tropic Death.* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013): 12.

The Tropics in New York

Claude McKay's 1928 novel *Home to Harlem,* is one of his most successful works. The narrative charts the adventures of Jake Brown, a young African American navigating his life in and around the Jazz Age in New York.[31] The novel begins on a freighter ship, with Jake taking passage to New York. He is working as a stoker, and despises the poor hygiene and condition of the Arabs he is working with. This separation between the black, American Jake and the "other" immediately sets Jake as different among others: he was better, cleaner, more educated. Jake is also strong, newly single and desperate to return to his beloved Harlem. The plot jumps forward and back in time, as McKay reveals the circumstances that lead to Jake's homecoming. The young protagonist had been sent to Europe with the United States Army to Brest, France. His time serving in World War One did not satisfy Jake; denied of any proper 'action', Jake and his black regiment were conscribed to menial duties: cleaning, mopping and restocking supplies. These unexciting tasks replaced the visions of noble and heroic pursuits, and he quickly grew tired of the tedious work for a war he did not care to be part of. Jake deserted his regiment and made for London where he found a love, but part of him longed for home, and to be surrounded by people of his own race. Jake describes the violent skirmishes that his partner forbade him from being involved in, as they were based on racial discontentment. Upon arriving back in Harlem, the aim was for food, scotch, and girls - in that order. Lodgings were not an immediate concern over satisfying his hunger for familiar brown bodies. He engages the services of his "little brown" who he found at the Baltimore, a popular Cabaret, and Jake gives his last $50 as payment for her services. In the morning Jake finds she has declined payment and has given Jake a chance to restart his life in Harlem. Jake reconnects with old friends, but failed to get the details and name of his "little brown" and so he sought romantic engagement

[31] Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem,* (London: Vintage Classics, 2022).

elsewhere. Rose works as an entertainer in the Congo club, and offers to keep Jake as her 'Sweetman' but Jake refuses, finding employment as a Longshoreman instead. The story depicts Jake as someone who does well wherever he goes in life and is accepted in increasingly elite establishments across Harlem, from Cabarets to private Buffet Flats and speakeasys.

The plot follows Jake as he once again grows restless, and takes a job on the railroads, as a chef in the Pullman Porter. It is on the railway that Jakes meets Ray - a Haitian-born educated student, who has suspended his studies to make some money on the Pullman. Jake is drawn to Ray and appreciates his intelligence. The two form a friendship and they look out for each other, Ray shares his education and book learning with Jake and in return Jake shares his knowledge of his own social world that include drinking, drugs, gambling, and women, in and around the black, working class Harlem. This cross-cultural exchange between the Caribbean Ray and African American Jake exists in this transfer of knowledge that extends beyond political alignment. *Home to Harlem* reveals how language, music and food were exchanged with transformative consequences. McKay reveals how Jake adopts some of the West Indian vernacular he hears in Harlem. In Jake and Ray's first conversation Ray is musing over Sappho and imparting the first of many of his cultured lessons, as Jake fingers through the pages of Ray's book and exclaims:

> "Bumbole! This heah language is most different from how they talk it!"
>
> "Bumbole" was now a popular expletive for Jake, replacing such expressions a "Bull," "bawls," "walnuts," and "blimey." Ever since the night at the Congo when he heard the fighting West Indian girl cry, "I'll slap you bumbole," he had always used the word. When his friends asked him what it meant, he grinned and said, "Ask the monks"[32]

When Jake first heard the term, as conveyed earlier in the book, the attitude towards the fighting Caribbean girls was quite different:

[32] Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem,* (London: Vintage Classics, 2022): 81.

"The monkey-chasers am scrapping" Zeddy commented.

"In a language all their own", said Jake.[33]

The overtly racist connotations of "monkey-chasers" illustrates the prevailing attitude towards Caribbean folk, as described by W.A. Domingo in "The Tropics in New York". However, this dominant divide between African American and Afro-Caribbean did not stop the impressionable Jake: he liked the word and so he added it to his vocabulary. Jake's adoption of Caribbean dialect occurs "through a bilateral cultural exchange". Jake is unconcerned with the meaning of his new expletive, and as Alan G. Borst comments: "'Bumbole' expresses meaning and yet eludes traditional definition."[34] Jake is perhaps drawn to the power of the phrase, its defiant spirit or feeling which was embodied by the scrapping Caribbean women. This cultural exchange of language is informal, precedes the exchange of written word, and even intellectual idea.[35] The expletive perhaps better represents the rebellious Caribbeans, that the African Americans were consciously or unconsciously absorbing and making their own. The addition of the typically English exclamation "blimey" shows Jake's form when picking up language from his travels, a trait that McKay likely possessed himself during his various sojourns across the world.

Ray is responsible for the higher-brow cross-cultural exchanges. During their friendship, and especially during the long layovers and evenings aboard the Pullman, Ray imparts distinctly Caribbean knowledge, and shares with Jake some of his extensive education. Ray can be seen as a semi-autobiographical character, where McKay's own voice can be most clearly heard, especially through the rich intertextual nature of the novel. One of the instances of this intertextuality has often been discussed by scholars, wherein Ray recites the entire sonnet

[33] Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem,* (London: Vintage Classics, 2022): 61.
[34] Allan G. Borst, "Signifyin(g) Afro-Orientalism: The Jazz-Addict Subculture in *Nigger Heaven* and *Home to Harlem*," *Modernism/modernity*, Volume 16, Number 4, November 2009, p. 691 – 692.
[35] Ibid 691.

"Toussaint L'ouverture" by William Wordsworth. Toussaint L'ouverture was a Haitian general who was a prominent leader during the Haitian Revolution, and the factor that would be most shocking to Jake, was his dark complexion. Ray exposes Jake to the black heroic past of Haiti, and this was a signal point for Jake's black education:

> Jake sat like a big eager boy and learned many facts about Hayti before the train reached Pittsburgh. He learned that the universal spirit of the French Revolution had reached and lifted up the slaves far away in that remote Island; that Black Hayti's independence was more dramatic and picturesque that the United States'… For he first heard the name Toussaint L'ouverture, the black slave and leader of the Haytian slaves…
>
> "A black man! A black man! Oh I wish I was a soldier under sich a man!" Jake said simply.[36]

Ray's teachings lit up Jake's imagination: in an alternative land black folk were liberated and the notion of creating an independent culture was transformative to Jake's opinion of foreign blacks. His outlook had shifted, by the mere drips of information that Ray had relayed in their first conversation: "But now he felt like a boy who stands with the map of the world in colors before him, and feels the wonder of the world".[37] McKay's repeated use of "boy" highlights Jake's naiveté, and illustrates how Jake's lack of knowledge of his own race and the "romance of his race" has stunted his intellectual and emotional growth. Ray's education, and fondness for his Caribbean home had opened Jake's world view and illuminated the potential of black folk both in Harlem and faraway lands. McKay captured the feeling of black advancement in the North at this time, fuelled by new ideas of liberty and freedom from oppression, and disguised through Ray's voice, McKay was able to introduce his American readership to these Caribbean concerns too.

Although Jake was ignited by this small education by means of Ray's informal lessons, the Haitian also felt the burden of his knowledge. His colleagues on the Pullman nicknamed him

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[36] Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem,* (London: Vintage Classics, 2022), 82.
[37] Ibid 83.

"Professor" and this additional moniker illustrates how Ray's Caribbean migrant status and his education separate him from the other African Americans. Whilst his fellow waiters throw dice or play cards, Ray sits reading. His penchant for knowledge drives a wedge between him and his colleagues. It is perhaps these divides, and the gradual strain of Harlem that begin to disillusion Ray, who becomes increasingly aware of the complexities of his education. Whilst Ray and Grant, a colleague on the Pullman, sit by Jake's bedside whilst he was unwell, they discussed their conflicting opinions of a mutual known "P.I", which was a linguistic code for pimp. Grant expressed his disgust at the profession, whist Ray weighed a more liberal argument in the debate, suggesting that the profession is not only for the low-life and dark skinned, but that any human has potential for engaging in such business, and responds to Grant's simple claim that "education is what makes you fine!"[38]

> "No, modern education is planned to make you a sharp, snouty, rooting hog. A Negro getting it is an anachronism. We ought to get something new, we Negroes. But we get our education like our houses. When the whites move out, we move in and take possession of the old dead stuff. Dead stuff. That this age has no use for."[39]

Ray seems to be critically aware of his own education and knowledge and it's imperial and colonial connotations. Like McKay, his character is interested in high culture, of art and letters, but in the reality of Harlem his book learning has traces of a colonial bitterness. This sentiment is echoed through the Harlem Renaissance and the fascination in creating newness for black folk, with reinventing identity and independent culture. Ray feels his education is ill-fitting, and the burden of knowing it begins to weigh heavily on him, especially as he rides the railroad without his companion. Later Ray considers what he would do if he could undo his learning:

> "I don't know what I'll do with my little education. I wonder sometimes if I could get rid of it and go and lose myself in some savage culture in the jungles of Africa. I am a misfit- -as the doctors who dole out newspaper advice to the well-fit might say- a misfit with my little education and constant dreaming, when I should be getting the nightmare

[38] Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem,* (London: Vintage Classics, 2022), 149.
[39] Ibid: 149.

> habit to hog in a whole lot of dough like everybody else in this country. Would you like to be educated to be like me?"[40]

McKay highlights Ray's hopelessness, where before he was exalting the wonders of African civilisation to Jake, here he claims to want to disappear into a "savage culture in the jungles of Africa". Here we can identify a different type of cross-cultural exchange: as Ray attempts to assimilate and financially support his education, he grows dissatisfied and absorbs the dominant and ignorant sentiment towards foreign born black folk.

The cross-cultural exchange extends beyond the discussion above, in which we could regard the Caribbean authors, such as McKay and Walrond, amongst others, as record keepers of the Harlem Renaissance. In earlier chapters we discussed how Lady Gregory, W.B. Yeats and J.M. Synge acted as caretakers of the rural Irish peasant life, and how Synge in particular took great pains to capture and record Irish people and relay their existence in the Irish literary canon. Although Lady Gregory et al. were forerunners in the creation of the later named Irish Literary Renaissance, they did not necessarily belong to the groups to which they wrote about, they participated in a culture adjacent to the Irish peasant, but not amongst it. In this vein, we could extend this metaphor of the caretaker to the Caribbeans in Harlem, who captured the zeitgeist of the movement as it was happening. *Home to Harlem* provides a rich record of the Harlem social scene, especially the nightlife and as termed by Alan G. Borst the "jazz addict sub-culture"[41]. McKay not only contributed to the creative movement in Harlem but also wrote the moment, with a distinctly Caribbean lens, aside from his semi-autobiographical character, his attention to the shades of the Harlemites Jake encounters is meticulous. McKay uses terms like "Yaller" or "high Yaller", "Ofay" or "nut-brown" to describe skin tones, and goes further whilst considering Gin-Susy and her various visitors to her apartment: "Ancient black life rooted upon

[40] Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem,* (London: Vintage Classics, 2022):168.
[41] Allan G. Borst, "Signifyin(g) Afro-Orientalism: The Jazz-Addict Subculture in *Nigger Heaven* and *Home to Harlem*," *Modernism/modernity*, Volume 16, Number 4, November 2009, p. 692.

its base with all its fascinating layers of brown, low-brown, high-brown, nut brown, lemon, maroon, olive, mauve, gold. [42] Yellow balancing between black and white. Black reaching out beyond yellow. Almost to the brink of change."[43] Here the attention Mckay gives to describing the appearance of his characters is evident, and often there are certain attributes attached to the differing shades of black. Although these descriptors were not wholly uncommon in the era, it is notable that McKay's own experience of the entrenched colonial colourism in Jamaica may have made the writer even more attuned to the impact of skin colour than his African American contemporaries.

In addition to the complexities of skin colour and social status captured by McKay, his vibrant descriptions of Jake's night-time haunts sent shockwaves through the Harlem circles. As Jake dreams of Harlem, from across the Atlantic in London, it is the draw of the night life that cements his decision to head home:

> He brooded day and night.
>
> It was two years since he had left Harlem. Fifth Avenue, Lenox Avenue, and One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street, with their chocolate-brown and walnut-brown girls, were calling him.
>
> "Oh, them legs!" Jake thought.
>
> "Them tantalizing brown legs! … . Barron's Cabaret! ... Leroy's Cabaret! ... Oh, boy!"

Famously, W.E.B Du Bois was disgusted by McKay's novel, and left with a dirty feeling, he stated he needed to bathe after reading it. As McKay wrote about the unsightly aspects of Harlem, he pushed against the old guard of Harlem intellectuals whose own brand of race consciousness relied upon promoting talented, educated black folk. Thus, McKay's depictions of the seedy underbelly of Harlem provide a useful cultural reference for the social aspects of

[42] Ibid: 692.
[43] Claude McKay, *Home To Harlem,* (London: Vintage Classics, 2022): 36.

Harlem life, that fuelled and nurtured the artistic and literary boom. A significant portion of the first part of *Home to Harlem* takes place in the locations that Jake longs for, as well as many others as the ever-present threat of prohibition raids would shut down an establishment before another hot spot would take its place. The cabarets and speakeasys were a space where alcohol and drug use were rife, the men gambled, and the women prostituted themselves. Despite such activity, these locations were "important cultural institutions" in jazz age Harlem, and integral for the development of McKay's characters.[44] McKay's position as a Caribbean migrant in Harlem - with a radical political mind did not subscribe to promoting the cleansed version of Harlem, and although his writing may not be wholly realistic, a sense of the place is created that remains unseen in the pages of Alain Locke's *The New Negro,* and other seminal records of the movement.

Harlem in the 1920s was characterised by the various migrant communities: the African Americans who had relocated from the Southern States, the Caribbean diaspora who travelled to the metropolis from across the region, and the European migrants from Ireland and beyond. Harlem's new community had to navigate their own sense of belonging in the city, which McKay dealt with in his writing often. *Home to Harlem's* protagonist, Jake, is a restless and unrooted individual, and his solution to discomfort is to pack his few belongings and disappear to some place new. His constant movement is due to or perhaps caused by a relentless longing, for a person or place that may or may not exist. In London, he dreamt of Harlem, and after his relationship with Rose, Jake needed be on the move again and was physically moved by the unyielding rhythm of the Pullman. Ray experienced a more straightforward longing and

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[44] Kathleen Drowne, "Theah's Life Anywheres Theah's Booze and Jazz": Home to Harlem and Gingertown in the Context of National Prohibition, *Callaloo*, Volume 34, Number 3, Summer 2011, pp. 932.

homesickness for his beloved Haiti. Once again, we can assert that Ray's aches for his tropical homeland are shared by the author, and here Jake's peripatetic inclinations reflect McKay's own restless lifestyle. Ray's homesickness surfaces when his Pullman has an overnight stop in a bedbug-ridden lodging in Pittsburgh:

> He flung himself, across void and water, back home. Home thoughts, if you can make them soft and sweet and misty-beautiful enough, can sometimes snare sleep. There was the quiet, chalky-dusty street and, jutting out over it, the front of the house that he had lived in. The high staircase built on the outside, and pots of begonias and ferns on the landing. … All the flowering things he loved, red and white and pink hibiscus, mimosas, rhododendrons, a thousand glowing creepers, climbing and spilling their vivid petals everywhere, and bright-buzzing humming-birds and butterflies. All the tropic-warm lilies and roses. Giddy-high erect thatch palms, slender; tall, fur-fronded ferns, majestic cotton trees, stately bamboos creating a green grandeur in the heart of space. ... Sleep remained cold and distant. Intermittently the cooks broke their snoring with masticating noises of their fat lips, like animals eating. Ray fixed his eyes on the offensive bug-bitten bulk of the chef. These men claimed kinship with him. They were black like him. Man and nature had put them in the same race. He ought to love them and feel them (if they felt any-thing). He ought to if he had a shred of social morality in him.[45]

Here, in Ray's late night tormented thoughts, in this stream of consciousness passage his love for the colour and natural life of Haiti is revealed. In stark contrast to the bitter cold, dirty and infested bunks where he was detained, the Caribbean, even in his thoughts, offered a warm escape. Ray focuses on the "flowering things he loved", and the tropical plants that are associated with the Caribbean: "begonias… red and white hibiscus, mimosas, rhododendrons… vivid petals everywhere… tropic-warm lilies and roses."[46] This description of the voluptuous flowers illustrate the Caribbean as a location of natural excess, full of life and colour and the heavily scented blooms like hibiscus and roses would transport McKay's Caribbean readership to their island homes too. The realities of Pittsburgh interrupt Ray's fantasy, and he is acutely aware of his otherness, and the absurdity of segregation that has placed him among men that he

[45] Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem,* (London: Vintage Classics, 2022): 95.
[46] Ibid:95.

shares no commonalities: “These men claimed kinship with him. They were black like him.”[47]. Through Ray, McKay echoes the sentiment shared by W.A. Domingo, that all black migrants were hammered into a homogenous group, that denied their individual expressions of their heritage. This passage by McKay mirrors the poem “The Tropics in New York”, that sat inset in Domingo’s essay in *Survey Graphic,* and although more verbosely put in this section of *Home to Harlem,* the poem reflects upon the abundance of nature’s gifts:

> Bananas ripe and green, and ginger-root,
> Cocoa in pods and alligator pears,
> And tangerines and mangoes and grape fruit,
> Fit for the highest prize at parish fairs,
>
> Set in the window, bringing memories
> Of fruit-trees laden by low-singing rills,
> And dewy dawns, and mystical blue skies
> In benediction over nun-like hills.
>
> My eyes grew dim, and I could no more gaze;
> A wave of longing through my body swept,
> And, hungry for the old, familiar ways,
> I turned aside and bowed my head and wept.[48]

The speaker in McKay’s poem gazes through a grocer’s shop window at the rewards of the Caribbean; the sweet citrus, bananas and mangoes, and is swept away by memories of his home. The glass of the window is an inaccessible portal to his homeland, full of lush greenery and bountiful fruits. The speaker reminisces about the fruits that were so readily available, on “fruit trees laden by low-singing rills”. The scene of the fruit tree, heavy with produce, once again paints an image of the Caribbean as a land of plentiful beauty and nourishment. The ideal picture saddens the speaker: a “wave of longing through my body swept” illustrates the acute homesickness felt among Caribbean migrants in New York, who deeply feel their emotional and physical distance from their homes. McKay skilfully conveys this gentle yearning for home,

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[47] Ibid: 95.
[48] Paul U. Kellogg, “Harlem: Mecca of the new negro”, auth. W.A Domingo, “The Tropics in New York” *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925.

that may only exist in the memory of the migrants, and extends to the communities, language, and landscapes of the Caribbean.

Despite the theme of belonging being ever present through McKay's writing, the two friends, Jake and Ray, in *Home to Harlem* do experience fleeting moments of comfort in these foreign spaces. Ray is acutely aware of his complex relationship with Harlem. In the end of the second part of the novel, Ray decides to leave Harlem. He is tired of the railroads and felt his relationship was destined to settle soon, and his yearning heart was not yet content enough for marriage and fatherhood.

> Going away from Harlem. ... Harlem! How terribly Ray could hate it sometimes. Its brutality, gang rowdyism, promiscuous thickness…. He had known happiness, too, in Harlem, joy that glowed gloriously upon him like the high-noon sunlight of his tropic island home.[49]

Here, Ray recalls how Harlem was a site of complicated duality for Caribbean migrants. The district created opportunities for Ray to feel both ends of the emotional spectrum, feeling intense hatred and happiness. Ray compares the joy felt in Harlem to the generous warmth of Haiti, and with that comfort Ray could experience the tropics in Harlem. Ray's restlessness continued and is featured in McKay's following novel *Banjo* where Ray is living in Marseille, still unsatisfied by his existence as a black man in a racist society. Here, we can once again draw comparisons between McKay and Ray: although McKay's love affair with Harlem was long lasting, he continued to live a peripatetic life, spending time in England, North Africa, Russia and France with spells in Harlem in between. His transnational character collected material, inspiration and political radicalism along the way, which is traceable in his novels and poetry, and especially in the character of Ray.

[49] Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem,* (London: Vintage Classics, 2022): 164.

Imperial Critics

Eric Walrond presents the Caribbean region to his American readership in vastly contrasting ways to the McKay. Where McKay projected images of lush green hills, abundant fruits and the sustaining warmth of tropic sun, Walrond's *Tropic Death* conveys the region as the site of hunger, disease, brutality and oppressive heat. Eric Walrond's collection of short stories take place across the Caribbean, and reflect the authors own intimate knowledge of the region: four stories take place in Barbados, three are set in the Canal Zone in Panama, one story "The White Snake" takes place in his birthplace of British Guiana. "Tropic Death", the final tale of the collection occurs across three Caribbean locations, "the island of Barbados, a ship sailing for the Canal Zone and then in Panama itself".[50] Walrond's book offers a stark and brutal account of the Caribbean, and he does not attempt to make the region accessible to his American readership. As Jennifer Brittan notes: "Walrond offers no gateway text, no introductory topography. Rather than being escorted in and out of Walrond's Caribbean, we are dropped into its narrow confines and left in its underworlds", and the picture Walrond paints is a far cry from the beautiful destination held in the minds of the American audience.[51] Walrond complicates the hegemonic ideal of flourishing greenery and palm framed beaches of the region with his meticulously detailed accounts of the "the marl roads of Barbados, and the tenements of Colon, between life above and below deck on a steamship plying Caribbean waters".[52] The ten stories in *Tropic Death* share little similarity to one another but all share the persistent presence of death. Walrond's - at times - impenetrable prose also adds to the inaccessibility of his version of the Caribbean. The text is a modernist expression of the exploitation of black labour, and the

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[50] Eric Walrond and Arnold Rampersad, *Tropic Death*. (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013):11.
[51] Jennifer Brittan, "The Terminal: Eric Walrond, the City of Colón, and the Caribbean of the Panama Canal**",** *American Literary History***,** Volume 25, Issue 2, Summer 2013, p.299.
[52]James Davis. *Eric Walrond: A Life in the Harlem Renaissance and the Transatlantic Caribbean*. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2015): 159.

intricacies of class and race are exposed through the dialogue-heavy prose.[53] Walrond's commitment to the vernacular of each of his migratory Caribbean characters is apparent in the often transitory spaces like the city of Colón in Panama, the Barbadian port and aboard the Trans-Caribbean boats where the diverse Caribbean migrants were placed uncomfortably together. Walrond's own experience of the Panama Canal construction, which was concluded in 1914, undoubtedly influenced his collection *Tropic Death,* and nearly every story is coloured by the imminent connection of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The United States oversaw the final attempt to construct the canal taking over from the failed pursuits of the French and British to slice through the isthmus. J. Dillon Brown notes that *Tropic Death* captured "a sense of multifaceted geopolitical upheaval catalysed by the growing US presence in areas previously dominated by European colonialism."[54] The US presence in the Canal Zone featured heavily in two stories which I will take as case studies in this next section: "Tropic Death" and "Subjection".

It is not surprising that the radical Caribbean author of *Tropic Death* takes a critical stance toward the foreign authority of the United States in the region. In the Canal Zone, the presence of the USA can certainly be seen as a neo-imperial entity, and Dillon Brown states that "there is ample reason to do so: the US is a behemoth on the world stage, let alone in the region it patronizingly considers its own backyard."[55] This overspill of US power was seen throughout the Caribbean at pivotal moments throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s: Cuba, Haiti and Puerto Rico were all subject to U.S. neo-imperialism and military presence which had a significant impact on the culture of the countries, and in some countries their presence remains

[53] Ibid.
[54] J. Dillon Brown, Escaping the Tropics Through New York: Eric Walrond and Claude McKay in the American Grain," The Global South, Fall 2013, Vol. 7, No. 2, p.39.
[55] Ibid.

to this day. At the "conceptual centre"[56] of Walrond's book is the story "Subjection", which is undoubtedly the most overt criticism of violent U.S. imperialism in the collection. The criticism is three-fold: the destruction of the environment of the isthmus, exploitation and violence of Caribbean workers, and the "manipulation of official narratives" which all worked for the benefit of the U.S. project. In "Subjection" the young migrant Ballet, is murdered after intervening in a brutal attack upon a fellow worker by a corrupt U.S. marine, and his death is distorted on the official record. The story opens in the harsh, dusty "sunbaked" construction zone in Toro Point. Ballet takes a moment to unbend himself from the discomfort of manual labour and witnesses the Marine engaged in a vicious beating. Ballet remarked to his fellow workers:

> Irrefutably, by its ugly lift, Ballet's mouth was on the rising rebellion which thrust a flame of smoke into the young Negro's eyes.
>
> "Look at he, dough", he said, "takin' exvantage o' de po' lil' boy. A big able hog like dat."[57]

Walrond immediately foreshadows Ballet's rebellious intentions, and his attempts to draw attention to the attack failed, his fellow workers chose to turn a blind eye in an act of self-preservation. Walrond use of non-standard spelling and grammar to reproduce the accent and dialect of his characters is testament to his commitment to bring the Caribbean to his United States audience. The clipped speech and complicated appearance of the text led W.E.B. Du Bois to describe *Tropic Death* as "hard reading" in his review and despite the difficultly felt in reading the prose, his reflections on the collection were very positive. Amongst the blows to the Panama earth, the Marine continued to beat the young worker: "I'll show you goddam

[56] Owens, Imani D. "'Hard Reading': US Empire and Black Modernist Aesthetics in Eric Walrond's 'Tropic Death.'" *Melus* 41.4 (2016):98-99.
[57] Eric Walrond and Arnold Rampersad, Tropic Death. (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013): 99.

niggers how to talk back to a white man".[58] Here Walrond makes the imported United States brand of racism, and the Jim Crow laws that allowed for the severe mistreatment of black folk, overtly clear. The U.S. Marines and military took the plantation model to the Caribbean basin, taking the role of overseer and placing the migrant workers as their chattel. The Caribbean migrants gathered at the Canal Zone were unaccustomed to this harsh enforcement of the colour line, and were unfamiliar with the racist expectations of the Marine-come-overseer. Walrond's exposition reveals that the young worker, aptly named Mouth, spoke out of turn to the Marine leading to his vicious lesson. Walrond describes the condition of the boy during his attack:

> A ram-shackle body, dark in the ungentle spots exposing it, jogged, reeled and fell at the tip of a white bludgeon. Forced a dent in the crisp caked earth. An isolated ear lay limp and juicy, like some exhausted leaf or flower, half joined to the tree whence it sprang. Only the sticky milk flooding it was crimson, crimsoning the dust and earth. [59]

Walrond describes Mouth's injured body in relation to the damaged environment around him, the force of the "white bludgeon" caused the parched earth beneath to dent, which demonstrates the level of violence used in the attack. The injured ear, half hanging off is compared to a "leaf or flower", removed from its natural base, and spilling the "sticky" crimson blood which stained the dusty earth. Walrond's connection to the environment here reflects the destruction caused during the construction of the canal. In "Subjection" the workers are clearing the jungle to make way for the machinery to move the stony ground beneath. The young boy's beaten body is here an extension of the tropical environment, both taking blows at the expense United States progression. Unlike his peers, Ballet could not stand idle and allow for the onslaught to continue, and deaf to warnings not to, approached:

> "Yo' gwine kill dat boy," said Ballet, staggering up to the marine.
> "You mind yer own goddam business, Smarty, and go back to work," said the marine. He guided an unshaking yellow-spotted finger under the black's warm, dilating nostrils. "Or else-"[60]

[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid: 100.
[60] Ibid: 101.

Ballet's actions succeed in ending the altercation, but his intervention would cost him his life. The following day, Ballet makes his way back to the construction zone and across the water to work, and once again brushes off warnings from Mouth, this time urging him to stay home and avoid the wrath of the Marine. However, when the Marine spots Ballet through the crowd, his fate is sealed:

> Afraid, unable to fathom the gleam penetrating the depths of the man's eyes, Ballet started running.
>
> "Stand up and take yer medicine, yer goddam skunk," cried the marine; "hey, stop that man-"[61]

Walrond juxtaposes Ballet's fear with the "gleam" in the Marine's eyes, and conveys the sense of sport for the American. The use of "medicine" is interesting here and suggests that Ballet's obstinance constitutes a sickness or disease, to be treated and cured with foreign aid by way of the American Marines bullets. Walrond's critical voice is strong here: the American presence in Panama was authoritative, violent and corrupt. Whether this was true to his personal experience or not, his adolescence and early adulthood around the Canal Zone would have coloured his depictions in "Subjection". In the moments before Ballet's death, the Marine once again declares his neo-imperial intentions: "I'll teach you niggers down here how to talk back to a white man. Come out o' there, you black bastard."[62] The attention to location, "down here" reiterates the white marine's presence in the black-dominated region, yet the U.S. imported racism empowers his violent depravity. Ballet is shot three times whilst hiding in an outbuilding. The closing lines of "Subjection" read:

> In the Canal Record, the Q.M. at Toro Point took occasion to extol the virtues of the Department which kept the number of causalities in the recent native labor uprising down to one.[63]

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[61] Ibid: 110.
[62] Ibid: 111.
[63] Ibid.

The manipulation of the records highlights the corruption present at the Canal Zone, of which Walrond was undoubtedly aware during his time in Panama. Ballet's attempts of escape only afforded the Marine a witness-free crime, wherein the records could be amended, and the murder rebranded as heroism.[64] Walrond's overt criticism of the US presence in Panama is clear in "Subjection", and taking the midpoint of the collection seems significant here, with all stories thereafter being tainted by the injustice of this story.

The final story in *Tropic Death,* follows the journey of the eight-year-old Gerald and his Mother, Sarah, as they sail across the Caribbean Sea to reunite with his father in Panama. This story certainly shares some similarities with Walrond's own life, and likely many other Caribbeans whose fathers departed for the Canal Zone. As a child in Panama, Walrond's schooling continued, and he became fluent in Spanish. The Canal Zone at this time was a "point of convergence for different races, ethnicities, social classes, linguistic and religious backgrounds".[65] In addition to the diverse mixing of Afro-Caribbeans, the dominant presence of the United States in the construction of the canal made the Canal Zone a complicated place for Walrond to spend his youth. His experience of the Canal Zone had a profound effect on the young writer, and it shaped his successful collection of short stories *Tropic Death.* His writing career begun in Panama, working at the *Panama Star and Herald* where he reported on the happenings in and around the construction area.[66] "Tropic Death" is less overtly critical of the pursuits of the United States, but the tension between the new 'neo-imperial' power and the entrenched authority of British Colonialism are notable. The United States is not directly referenced on many occasions, however, the presence of the United States in the region

[64] J. Dillon Brown, Escaping the Tropics Through New York: Eric Walrond and Claude McKay in the American Grain," *The Global South,* Fall 2013, Vol. 7, No. 2, p.39.
[65] Ibid: 28.
[66] Eric Walrond and Arnold Rampersad, Tropic Death. (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013): 11.

underpins much of the action: the separation between Gerald, his mother and sisters and their estranged father in Panama is driven by the economic opportunities for migrant workers and thus the cause of the poor conditions in and around the city of Colón. Sarah, the "anxious" mother does her utmost to protect her children, leaving her daughters in Barbados and taking Gerald to Panama to seek out her ""a wufless stinkin' good fuh nutton vergybin'" of a husband, an undependable tailor who had gone ahead of his family to Panama but failed to send money back to Barbados to support them.[67] Sarah is conveyed as committed to God and her mission, concerned with respectability and incredibly loving. James Davis, Walrond's biographer, asserts that the mother is "fashioned after Walrond's own".[68] Sarah and Lucian's relationship is under strain, and this comes to head whilst their community celebrates the coronation of the new monarch:

> Sea on top of sea, the Empire mourned the loss of a sovereign; and to the ends of the earth, there sped the glory of the coronation….. But it wasn't raining, the sun was shining, and it was the day of the queen's coronation. On that galvanised roof the sun bristled. Flaky, white – the roof burned, sizzled.

The giddy celebrations that accompanied the coronation, and here celebrated by the dislocated British colonial subjects in Panama, bubbled beneath the surface and overspilled to the violent altercation caused by Lucian quarrelling. Walrond's harsh description of Colón, in contrast to the parades and parties in celebration of the British monarchy highlight the discordance between the excess and suffering of the "black upholders of the crown".[69]

The titular death was to be Lucian's, who had contracted leprosy and was confined in hospital. Here, at the closing of the story and the collection Walrond delivers more criticism of the USA

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[67] Eric Walrond and Arnold Rampersad*, Tropic Death*. (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013): 172.
[68] James Davis. *Eric Walrond: A Life in the Harlem Renaissance and the Transatlantic Caribbean.* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2015): 178.
[69] Eric Walrond, and Arnold. Rampersad. *Tropic Death*. (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013): 183.

in Panama: “Oh, dese Yankees don’t cyah wuh de do to yo’ – dey don’t cyah. Duh wouldn’t even giv’ yo’ a drop o’ hot wattah, if yo’ ask me. No, dey end try nutton else.”[70] Lucian has been quarantined in a “high box, square, gauze-encased and white”, ahead of his transportation to a leper colony. Lucian is permitted the last visit from his wife and child, and uses his few words to place blame on the United States for his condition, and his fate in the leper colony in Palo Seco. In the final lines, Walrond’s sentiment toward Panama is set out:

> “An’ yo’ mus’ tek good cyah o’ yo’self, heah Sarah, an’ don’t le’ nobody tek exvantage o’ yo’, yo’ heah, dis is a bad country – “
>
> “Yes Lucian” [71]

It is not clear if Walrond’s own experience led to his critical view of Panama, and by extension the United States intervention in the country, but these closing lines do convey the complicated relationship the author had with the transitory place. Despite the criticisms of the United States in Panama and across the Caribbean region, for both McKay and Walrond, the USA represented a place of opportunity and creative nourishment. Their contribution to the Harlem renaissance was significant, and their Caribbean condition likely gave them the tools to question and critique the United States through their fiction.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has explored contributions of Caribbean writers Claude McKay and Eric Walrond to the movement that has come to be known as the Harlem Renaissance. Their works have become synonymous with this cultural movement, however, as the discussion in this chapter has endeavoured to highlight, their writing reflects a distinctly Caribbean perspective which has been shaped by their upbringing and experiences of migration. Their

[70] Eric Walrond and Arnold. Rampersad. *Tropic Death*. (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013): 100.
[71] Ibid: 183.

engagement with Harlem society and the United States breed of racism reveals a critical stance that differed from many of their African American contemporaries.

The chapter has demonstrated how their Caribbean heritage influenced their literary output, embedding the landscapes, cultural frameworks, and political ideologies of the Caribbean within Harlem's artistic sphere. Despite asserting their distinct Caribbean identity, McKay and Walrond were frequently grouped within a homogenised view of the Harlem Renaissance. Nevertheless, their works provide essential critiques of U.S. imperialism, African American politics, and racial dynamics, offering perspectives that extended beyond the boundaries their contemporaries observed. McKay and Walrond’s voices played a vital role in shaping Harlem’s literary scene that reflected their lived experiences as Caribbean migrants and their complex negotiation of racial and social identities in the United States.

Conclusion

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the cultural crossings between Ireland, the Caribbean and Harlem, through an investigation of theatre, literature and visual art. This study placed the Irish Literary Renaissance in dialogue with the Harlem Renaissance, in order to assess the evidence of a shared relationship between these two significant literary and cultural movements. Both cultural movements are characterised by their shared aim to revive and renew their respective cultural and national identity through proposing and creating new representations of Irish and black life respectively. In order to explore these connections, this thesis engaged with a range of sources to analyse how these relationships and shared ambitions manifested in the literature, plays, poetry and art produced during the period. By placing the two renaissances in dialogue, this thesis sought to investigate if connections existed, and if so, what the nature of this transatlantic relationship was. This thesis has focused predominantly on the Harlem Renaissance and the ways in which it has been informed by the Irish Literary Renaissance, and more broadly, Ireland, Irish politics and the Irish experience, as well as interrogating some of the important contributions made from Caribbean writers and intellectuals. The rationale for this research came from observing gaps in the extant scholarship in the field of Harlem Renaissance study, namely, to include the Caribbean as an active contributor to the Harlem Renaissance, where the region had been somewhat obscured in previous scholarship. This research has aimed to examine the individuals, groups and communities working to deconstruct and replace harmful stereotypes of Irish and black people, to assess the differing approaches that were adopted in addressing this task across the Harlem Renaissance and in the period after the Irish Literary Renaissance.

This concluding section will reflect upon the key outcomes of this exploration and will consider the broader implications in this area of study. The discussion in the preceding chapters has built

upon the understanding of these influential movements and works to contribute to the broader and extant discussions about cultural solidarity, resistance, and the reclamation and recreation of national and cultural identity across transatlantic communities.

Chapter One has sought to explore the influences of the Irish Literary Renaissance on the Harlem Renaissance. Through an investigation of some of the significant moments where the Irish Literary Renaissance and the Harlem Renaissance intersected, specifically considering the years between 1900 and 1920. The Abbey Theatre's 1911 tour of the United States was discussed as an event that inspired the next generation of playwrights, including Irish-American dramatist Eugene O'Neill, and exposed audiences to new styles of performance marked by the understated acting style. This chapter also surveys the changing demographic in Harlem, and the Irish struggle for independence and instances of transatlantic solidarity. By resituating links between Ireland and Harlem and focusing on the intervening period between the perceived end of the Irish Literary Renaissance and the birth of the Harlem Renaissance, this chapter has built upon Tracey Mishkin's book *The Irish and Harlem Renaissances: Language, Identity and Representation* through assessing the impact of one renaissance on the other by looking past the boundaries of the two renaissances.[1]

Eugene O'Neill's 1920 play, *The Emperor Jones*, has been the focus of Chapter Two. This play served as a good example of the three intersecting areas of study in this thesis: Ireland, Harlem and the Caribbean.[2] O'Neill constructs a black protagonist in a tragic role that was unlike the minstrelsy that was common in the era, and in doing so created a controversial new representation of African Americans. The analysis in this chapter provides refreshed

[1] Tracy Mishkin, *The Harlem and Irish Renaissances: Language, Identity and Representation,* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 1998).
[2] Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones*, (Digireads.com book: Digireads Publishing, 2009).

perspective on a play that had largely fallen out of favour, seen as no more than a "racist relic".[3] The discussion in this chapter looks past the immediate primitivist and atavistic readings of the play, and sought to demonstrate how the play was received by the intellectual leaders of Harlem Renaissance, and the progress it may have made for black actors – namely Charles Gilpin and Paul Robeson. The play gives contrasting representations of black folk: the phoney emperor who falls from grace; and the forest dwelling island natives who are depicted in mid-uprising. This chapter muses upon how *The Emperor Jones* experimented with allegory, expressionism and the ways in which the play captured the arguments surrounding race and representation in the Harlem Renaissance.

The third chapter built upon Bob Johnson's article "Globalising the Harlem Renaissance: Irish, Mexican and 'Negro' Renaissances in The Survey, 1919-1929", by conducting a further investigation into two issues of the *Survey Graphic*: the November 1921 issue titled "What will the Irish do with Ireland?" and the seminal March 1925 issue "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro"[4]. These issues formed part of a larger "race series" that explored local cultural revivals in Ireland, Mexico, Harlem and Russia. The contributors to the Irish and Harlem issues wrote their new nations and communities into existence, prophesising how their communities will move forward with their new freedoms. This chapter asks: Did the Irish, African American and Caribbean people share parallel experiences in the early twentieth century, and how is this represented in cultural discourses, literary or otherwise? This chapter compares and contrasts these two issues and considers the ways in which the Irish and Harlem issues took similar steps toward reimagining the representation of their people in politics, art and literature. The *Survey Graphic* contains a range of sources, from social commentary that is interwoven with poetry

[3] Nia Reynolds, "The Emperor Jones Is a Racist Relic", *The Guardian,* Tuesday 4th September 2007. https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2007/sep/04/theemperorjonesisaracist
[4] Paul U. Kellogg, "What would the Irish do with Ireland?", *Survey Graphic,* Nov. 1921. And Paul U. Kellogg, "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro", *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925.

and short fiction. This chapter provides a close reading of the two introductory articles to analyse how the guest editors presented the "New Ireland" and the "New Negro". This discussion provides a new perspective of the two renaissances. This chapter offers a nuanced understanding of the contrasting utopias that are suggested in the issues: Rural vs. Metropolitan living, an area that had not yet been explored in the existing scholarship.

Chapter four continues the investigation of the two *Survey Graphic* issues, but shifts focus away from the text, and towards the graphic components of the highly illustrated magazines.[5] The chapter explores the ways in which artists were seeking to overturn derogatory stereotypical images of Irish and African American folk. This chapter conducts visual art analysis to assess the images: portrait 'types', caricature, and symbolic illustration and the role of the artist in producing new visual representation of Black and Irish people. This chapter extends the work of Martha Nadell, and her book *Enter the New Negros: Images of Race in American Culture,* and utilises the framework proposed by Nadell to apply the visual analysis to Irish art presented in the *Survey Graphic.*[6]

The final chapter sought to investigate the following questions: what is the extent of the Caribbean involvement in the Harlem Renaissance and radical movements within the era specifically? And, to what extent are Caribbean people, artists and radicals represented in the art and fiction available in the era? In order to examine these questions, this chapter takes an in depth look into two Caribbean writers who contributed significantly to the Harlem Renaissance. These writers, Claude McKay and Eric Walrond, had been historically absorbed into the African American canon and the literary criticism that followed. This chapter set out to reassess

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[5] Paul U. Kellogg, "What would the Irish do with Ireland?", *Survey Graphic,* Nov. 1921. And Paul U. Kellogg, "Harlem: Mecca of the new negro", *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925.
[6] Martha Nadell, *Enter the New Negroes: Images of Race in American Culture*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

how their Caribbean heritage and upbringing influenced their writing, and how their migrant experience allowed them to put forward new representations of African Americans and Caribbeans to United States readers. This analysis addresses the gaps left in Tracy Mishkin's book, which neglected to properly acknowledge the Caribbean contribution to the Harlem Renaissance. The discussion of *Tropic Death* and *Home to Harlem* contribute to existing scholarship and make explicit the impact of Caribbean artists on the Harlem Renaissance.[7]

While this research offers valuable insights into the recreation of identity and the politics of representation, some limitations should be acknowledged. In an effort to not replicate the work of Tracy Mishkin, this research did not directly compare the Irish Literary Renaissance with the Harlem Renaissance and as such missed the opportunity to consider more literature produced during that period. However, this research instead asked what connections existed between the nations (Ireland and the United States of America) and what instances of influence, inspiration and solidarity can be seen. This thesis took a broad approach to methodology and source texts, which allowed this research to explore the many iterations of Irish, Caribbean and Harlem connections in the context of two renaissances, however, it was outside the scope of this study to examine more texts by African American authors, playwrights and poets. This presents the opportunity for further research into the politics of representation in the USA and how the relationship with Ireland continued (or not). Future researchers may wish to ask: Did the Irish and African Americans continue to share a relationship of solidarity into the Civil Rights Movement? What other transatlantic or global connections exist that aid in the pursuit of freedom after periods of oppressive governance? This research has demonstrated the connections that exist between Ireland, Harlem, and the Caribbean through an investigation that hinged on two renaissances. However, this has raised questions about the usefulness of viewing

[7] Eric Walrond and Arnold. Rampersad, *Tropic Death*. (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013) and Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem,* (London: Vintage Classics, 2022).

these renaissances as separate and unique events, but rather, as suggested by Alain Locke and Paul Kellogg, part of a wider global movement. Perhaps future research could work to deconstruct the boundaries of the Irish Literary Renaissance and the Harlem Renaissance, along with other comparable episodes in Mexico and France, to assess how cultural and national identity was adapting and changing on a global scale in the interwar period. Building on the insights presented in this thesis, further studies might attempt to break the boundaries of race as well as location.

Ultimately, this research has underscored the importance of literature, poetry, plays, art and political radicalism in creating renewed identity and reimagined cultural or national representation after periods of oppression. At a time where the humanities continue to be underfunded, and their importance eclipsed, this thesis has illustrated the power of the arts as a political tool of expression that gives voice to the previously voiceless, and it has shown how it can serve to these communities by changing societies and shaping history. One hundred years on from the Harlem Renaissance, marginalised communities, immigrants and the "caretakers" of these groups should continue to turn to art and literature as a means to carve out independent identity, for self-expression and to capture their unique and shared experiences. This thesis has put forward a discussion of the cultural crossings of Ireland, the Caribbean and Harlem through an investigation of key texts. In conclusion, this thesis has highlighted the shared struggles of these significant cultural movements in Ireland and Harlem, which sought to dismantle the oppressive stereotypes through literature, art, and performance. These movements, though distinct in their geography, history and context, shared a common mission: to reclaim representation, redefine identity, and assert agency over their narratives.

Bibliography

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