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Shared

Existence:

**African American Visual Artists, Writers, and the Black Experience
1920-1940**

Background

New Negro Harlem Renaissance

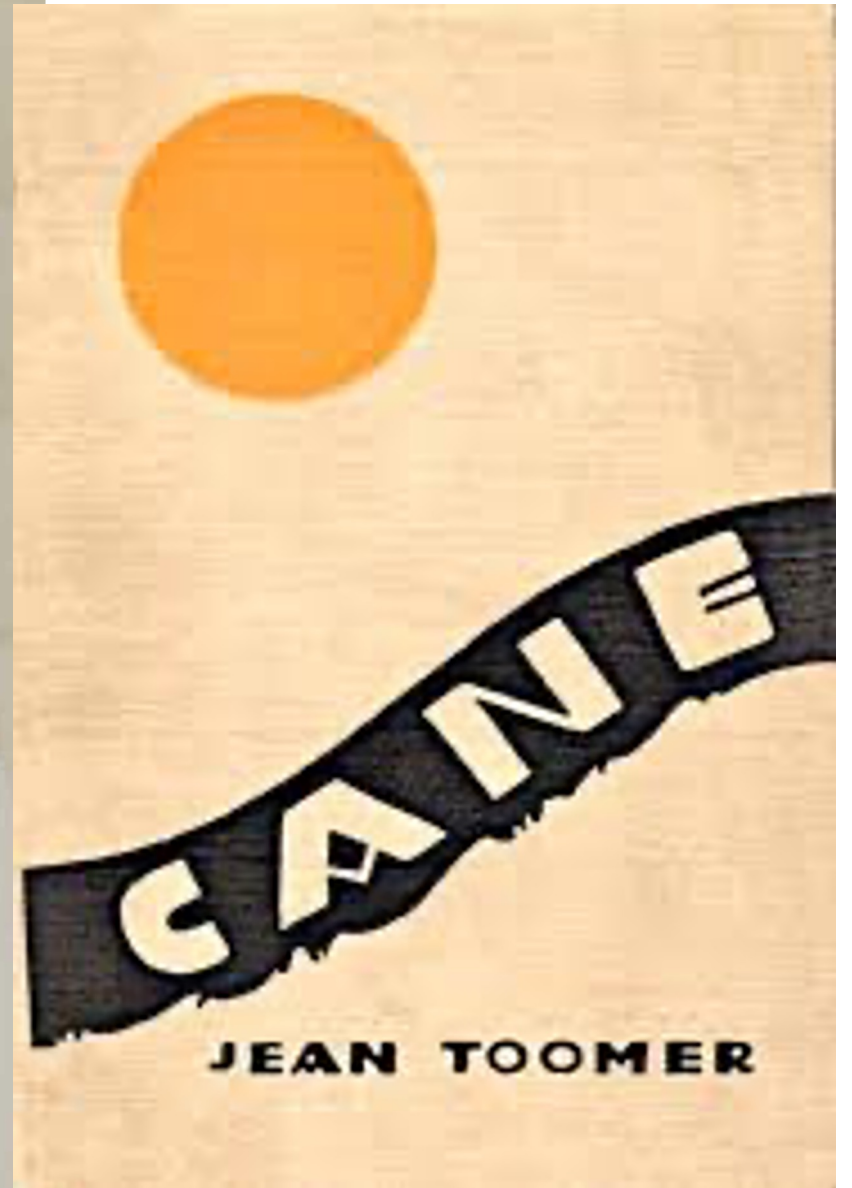
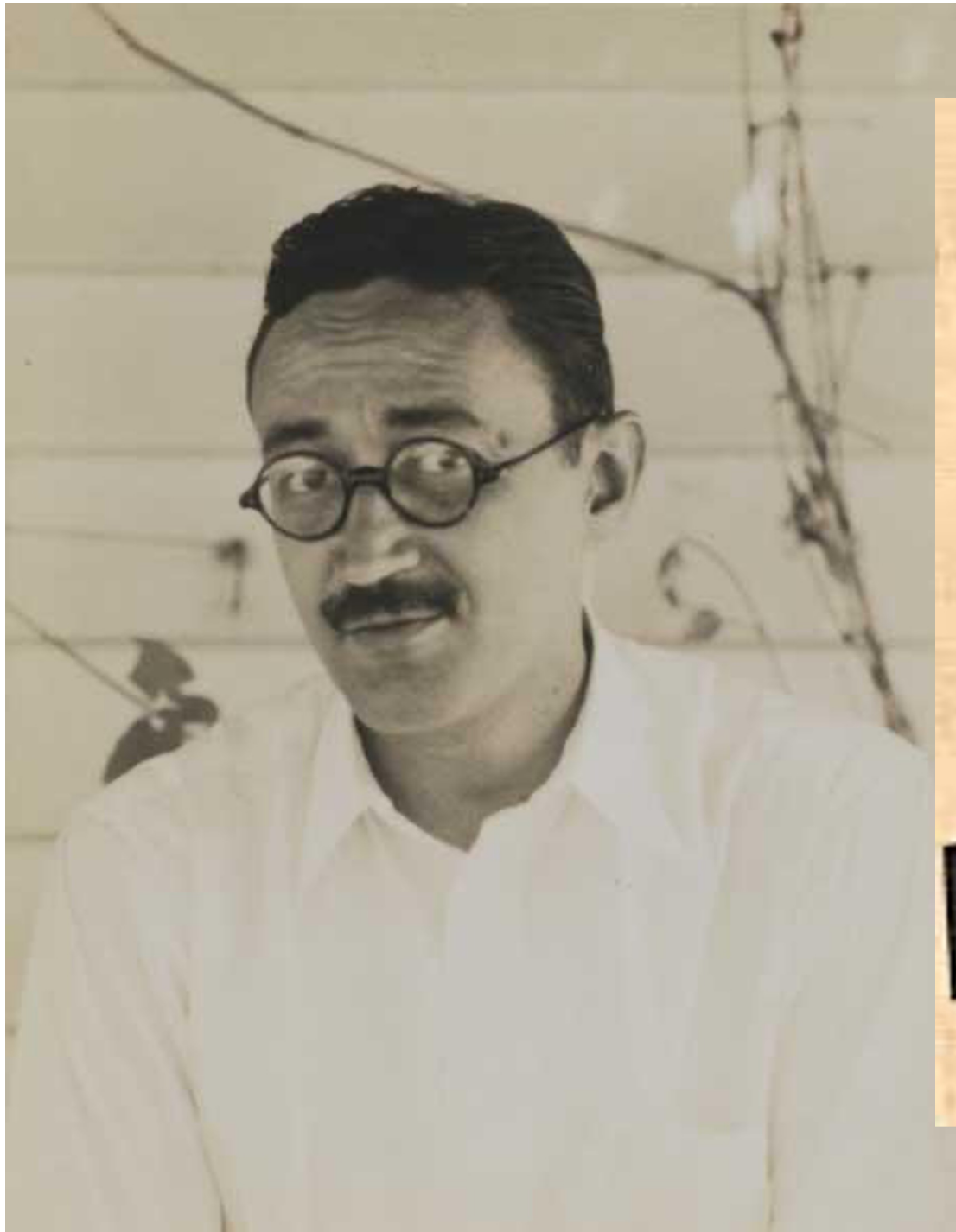
- The Harlem Renaissance originates with the **New Negro Movement**, a social and intellectual movement among Blacks at the end of the 19th century.
 - The “**New Negro**” was the new persona Blacks claimed for themselves. It was how they distinguished themselves from minstrel images – the plantation negroes: uncle tom, sambo, and mammy.
- Blacks wanted new representations of themselves both politically and artistically.

Key Dates & Events

- 1910 – 1940* - The Great Migration.
- 1914 - 1919 – WWI; There were many attacks on Black troops returning from the war. Summer of 1919 is termed Bloody Summer because of the “race riots” occurring throughout the U.S.
- 1919 – Marcus Garvey founds the UNIA, Claude McKay publishes “If We Must Die” in *Liberator*.
- 1920 – Langston Hughes publishes *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*.
- 1923 – Jean Toomer publishes *Cane*

Key Dates & Events

- 1925 – *The New Negro* is published by Alain Locke.
- 1926 – Langston Hughes publishes *The Weary Blues*; James Weldon Johnson publishes *God's Trombones*.
- 1928 – Duke Ellington's Band appears at the Cotton Club; The Harmon Foundation's exhibition of works by Black artists opens.
- 1929 – Fats Waller's *Aint Misbehavin'* opens on Broadway; The Depression begins.
- 1934 – Aaron Douglass' *Aspects of Negro Life* murals are commissioned.
- 1937 – Zora Neale Hurston publishes *There Eyes Were Watching God*.







CANE

JEAN TOOMER

KARINTHA

A woman with dark, curly hair and large hoop earrings stands with her arms outstretched, wearing a white dress with a vibrant floral and tropical print. She is positioned in the center of the frame against a background of a sunset over a hazy, mountainous landscape. The sky is a mix of soft pinks, oranges, and blues, with the sun low on the horizon, creating a warm, atmospheric glow.

Her skin is like dusk on the
eastern horizon,

O can't you see it, O can't you
see it,

Her skin is like dusk on the
eastern horizon

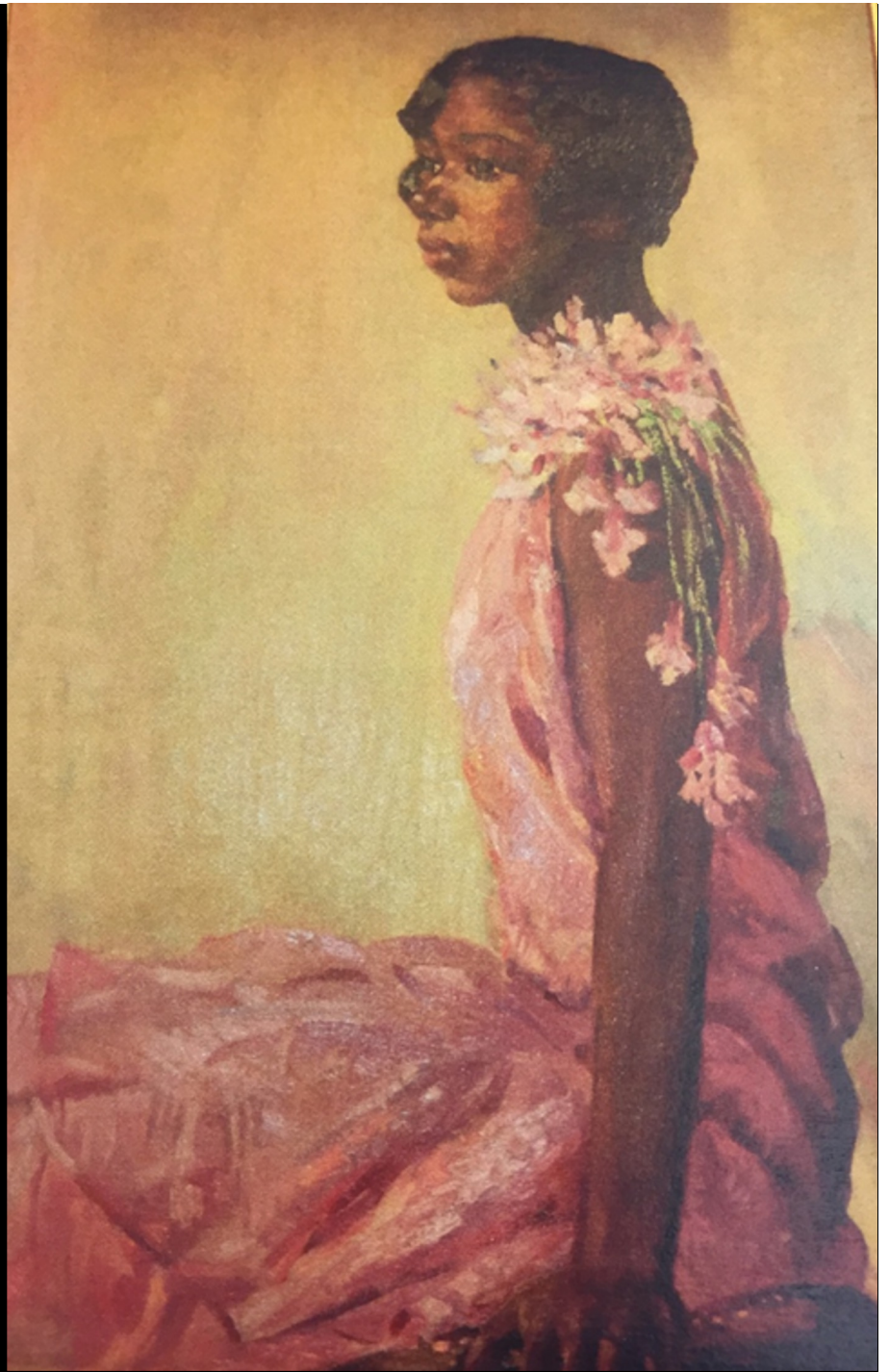
...When the sun goes down.



Laura Wheeler Waring (1887-1948)

Portrait Study
1929 o/c

Private Collection, New York





Charles Alston (1907-1977),
Girl in a Red Dress, 1934.

Oil on canvas

Images of the Black Rural South

Reapers

Black reapers with the sound of steel on stones
Are sharpening scythes. I see them place the
hones

In their hip-pockets as a thing that's done,
And start their silent swinging, one by one.

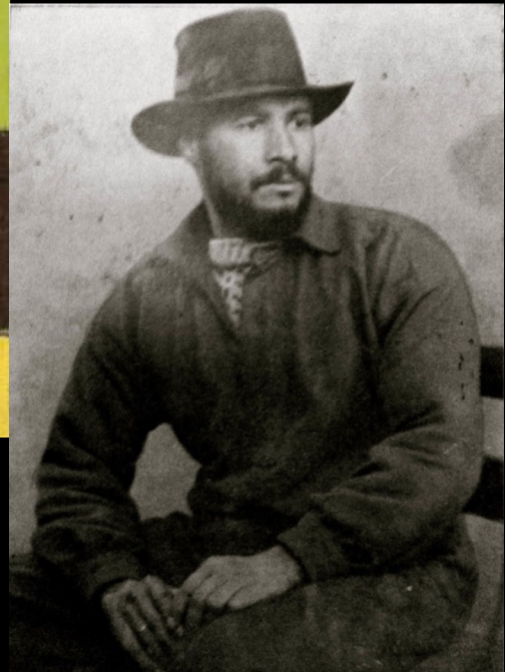
Black horses drive a mower through the
weeds,
And there, a field rat, startled, squealing
bleeds.

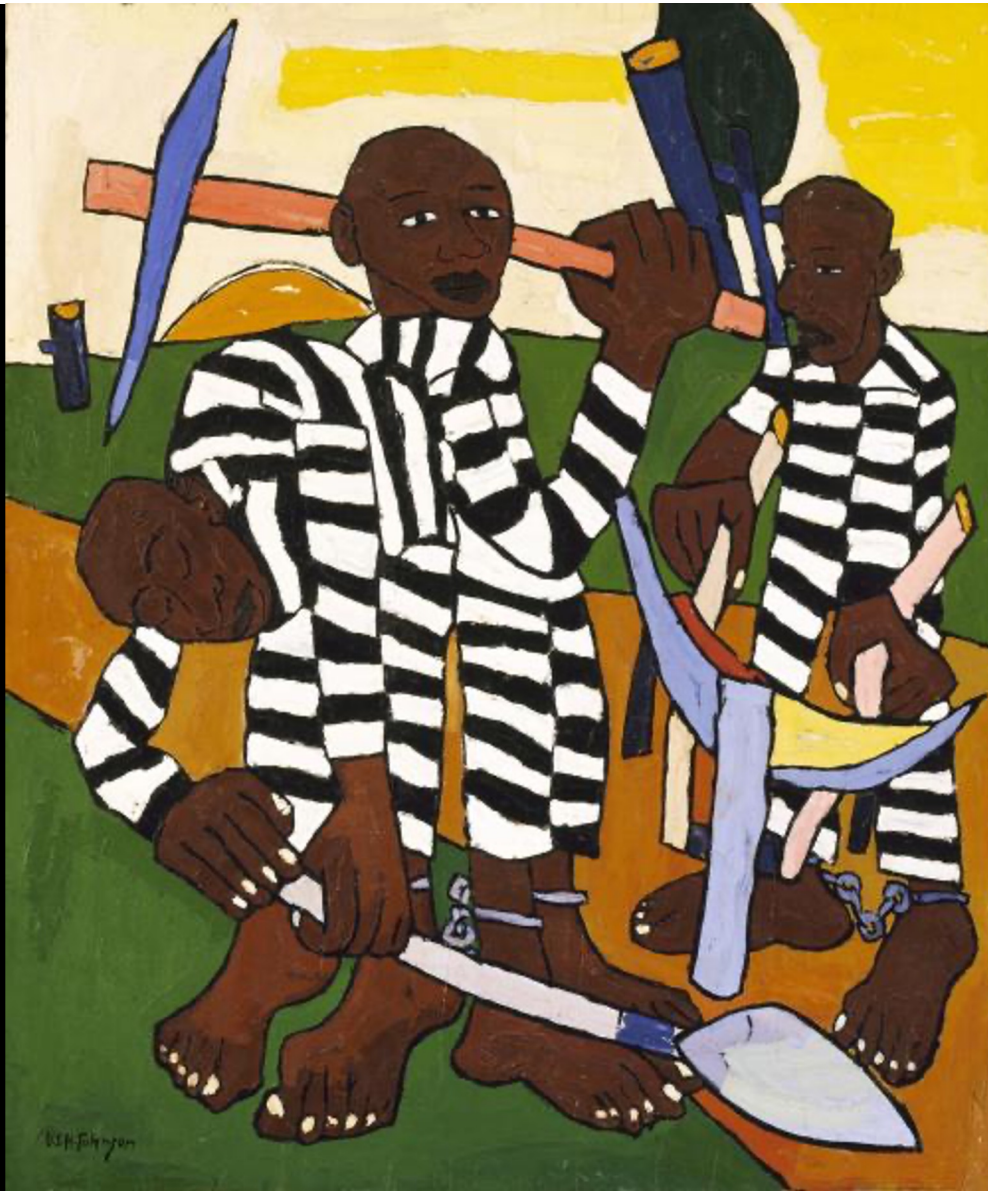
His belly close to ground. I see the blade,
Blood-stained, continue cutting weeds and
Shade weeds and shade



William H. Johnson
(1901-1970)

Sowing, ca. 1940
oil on burlap





William H. Johnson
(1901-1970)

Chain Gang, ca. 1939
oil on plywood

Images of the Black Rural South

Portrait in Georgia

Hair—braided chestnut,
coiled like a lyncher's rope,
Eye—fagots,
Lips—old scars, or the first red blisters,
Breath—the last sweet scent of cane,
And her slim body, white as the ash
of black flesh after flame.



Jacob Lawrence
The Migration Series, Panel no. 16: After a lynching the migration quickened,
1940–1941. egg tempura on board

The Great Migration

1910-1970

- The Great Migration was the relocation of approximately 6 million African Americans, from the rural south to the urban north.
- The Migration happened in phases, one of the largest taking place during WWI.
- Southern African Americans moved to cities like Chicago, Detroit, New York, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia.
- African Americans left the south for the following reasons:
 - Northern Industrial Recruitment
 - Lynching
 - Convict Leasing
 - Devastation of the Cotton Crop – Boll Weevil and Flooding
 - “Better” housing opportunities
 - Better education facilities.



Jacob Lawrence
The Migration Series, Panel no. 1: During World War I there was a great migration north by southern African Americans, 1940–1941. egg tempura on board



William H. Johnson
(1901-1970)

The Breakdown, ca. 1940-1941
oil on plywood



Jacob Lawrence

The Migration Series, Panel no. 7: The migrant, whose life had been rural and nurtured by the earth, was now moving to urban life dependent on industrial machinery, 1940–1941. egg tempura on board

Aaron Douglas,
*Aspects of Negro
Life:
Song of the Towers*,
1934



Images of the Black Urban North

Seventh Street (excerpt)

Money burns the pocket, pocket hurts,
Bootleggers in silken shirts,
Ballooned, zooming Cadillacs,
Whizzing, whizzing down the street-car tracks.

Archibald Motley, Jr., *Black Belt*, 1934 o/c





James Van Der Zee - "Untitled (West 127th Street, Harlem)", 1932 - Gelatin silver print Estimate: \$7,000 - 9,000. - Photo: Christie's Images Ltd 2011.



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J. Van Dusen 1925

Dancer, Harlem 1925

Archibald Motley, Jr., *Saturday Night*, 1935 o/c

