African American Periodical Poetry (1900-1928)

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Data Essay

Introduction

This dataset is a collection of poetry published in magazines by African American writers in the early twentieth century. The collection currently contains about 750 poems, all of which are out of copyright in the U.S., with the bulk of the poetry published in fourteen different magazines, including both Black-oriented and edited magazines like *The Crisis*, *Opportunity*, and *Black Opals* as well as 'mainstream' (predominantly White) magazines like *Survey Graphic*, *The Liberator*, and *Palms*. The dataset includes information on authors' biographies, poetic form, topics and themes, the names of editors (including guest editors and co-editors), as well as republication information.

```
//| echo: false
Inputs.table(search, {
   width: [50, 50, 50, 50, 50],
  layout: "fixed",
  rows: 25,
  sort: "year",
  reverse: false,

  format: {
    /*RecreationVisits: x => d3.format('.2s')(x),*/
    year: x => d3.timeFormat(x),
    text: x => {
      const words = x.split(' ');
      return words.slice(0, 15).join(' ') + (words.length > 15 ? '...' : '');
    }
    // author_birth: x => d3.timeFormat(x),
    // author_death: x => d3.timeFormat(x),
    // gr_num_ratings_rank: x => html`<div style='background:${color(x)}'>${d3.format('.2s')
  }
})
```

Magazines were a crucial part of the landscape of literary publishing in the U.S. during the early twentieth century. Magazines with often very large national readerships helped writers find their audience, and opportunities to work as editors help position established writers in positions of power and authority in the American publishing industry.

The broader goal is to collect materials from both predominantly Black and predominantly White (or "mainstream") magazines, to enable researchers to understand the changing shape of African American poetry in and out of the American mainstream. We'll explain some specific dimensions of the collection we've put together below, including how to search and sort through the material. Under a separate tab, we'll also suggest some possible classroom exercises that might make this collection useful for students who are learning about African American poetry for the first time. However, first we'll briefly introduce the concept of African American American Periodical Poetry.

African American Periodical Poetry: a Bit of Background

In their poetry, African American writers argued for Civil Rights, challenged the unjust practices and racialized violence that were prevalent in American life, and worked out new and distinctive aesthetic concepts. At the beginning of the twentieth century, African American poetry was not so much a 'literary' movement as it was a part of popular culture, with hugely popular and influential figures like Paul Laurence Dunbar and an important element of African American Vernacular writing and performance linked to the oral tradition (Ramey, *A History of African American Poetry*, 2019). However, by the 1920s, changes in the style and function of the poetry was evident, and these changes can be readily traced in poetry published in periodicals.

The overall conception of this project borrows from Modernist Periodical Studies, led by scholars such as Sean Latham ("The Rise of Periodical Studies," 2006), Robert Scholes and Clifford Wulfman (*Modernism in the Magazines*, 2010), and Adam McKible and Suzanne Churchill (*Little Magazines and Modernism*, 2005). It is also deeply invested in the field that has come to be known as Black Digital Humanities scholarship; we hope our work will be legible as in the vein of Kim Gallon's "technology of recovery" ("Making a Case for the Black Digital Humanities, 2016), where an important goal is to make under-studied materials accessible and legible to a broad readership, including readers outside of academia. Other scholarship that has influenced our own includes the *Colored Conventions Project* (Foreman, Casey, and Patterson, 2021), and Roopika Risam's *New Digital Worlds*(2018). And more generally, we see our work as continuing to fill in a continuing problem of the "Archive Gap," where minoritized writers often continue to be under-studied and under-curated in major digital collections, with knock-on effects for quantitative analysis based on textual corpora (see Singh, "Beyond the Archive Gap," 2020).

Why These Particular Periodicals? The Black Press and the Advent of "Crossover" Publications

We have attempted to build a comprehensive collection of African American periodical poetry from the early 20th century, arranging it so that visitors to this site can search and sort based on their own research questions. We believe that the creation of this collection will allow both

serous scholars as well as students and those new to the field to see the full richness and range of African American poetry from this period in new ways.

The Black Press. First and foremost, we believe that in order to understand how African American poetry developed and grew in the years covered by this project, it's important to engage with the primary venue through which that poetry was published and read – the Black press. For many poets in this Anthology, African American-oriented periodicals were the first destination for poetry. Magazine publication was how Black poets found readers and developed a sense of community, and the collections we have produced for this project hopefully show some powerful emerging networks and conversations about the role of literature in civil rights activism, questions of aesthetics, and questions of language. Also, at least until the mid-1920s, publication in mainstream venues like *Poetry* or *Vanity Fair* was extremely rare for African American poets, so venues like *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* were often the best way to get published.

To be sure, the poetry published by these magazines is of quite varying quality and importance to literary historians. Rather than evaluate or curate the materials based on our particular tastes or preexisting consensus, our aspiration here is to make _all_of the periodical poetry we can find accessible to readers with the hope that it will be helpful to different kinds of research projects and questions. Putting everything together in one place, as we have attempted to do here, can sometimes reveal alignments and patterns that might not have previously been visible. What might readers discover? What new questions can we ask?

1900-1920: A somewhat overlooked era in African American poetry. The field of African American periodical poetry was quite active in the first two decades of the 20th century, though many of the magazines where poetry was published were not well-preserved, and are today only available in fragments. Two important magazines from the first decade of the twentieth century that have been been well-preserved and digitized are *Voice of the Negro* (Atlanta and Chicago, 1904-1907) and *Colored American Magazine* (Boston and New York, 1900-1908). Both printed a considerable amount of poetry, and we have included a substantial number of poems from these magazines in our current collection (note: our collection of poetry from these two magazines is not quite complete). W.E.B. Du Bois also edited two magazines that appeared only briefly in this period, *Moon Illustrated Weekly* (1905-1906), and *Horizon: A Journal of the Color Line* (1907-1910). *Horizon* did not appear to print much in the way of poetry; *Moon Illustrated Weekly* printed poems only occasionally. Both magazines have only been partially preserved. At present, those magazines are sparsely represented in our collection.

The Crisis became a major vehicle for poetry publication starting in 1910, under Du Bois' editorship. It was an especially important venue for Georgia Douglas Johnson, who published more than 30 poems in the magazine during this period; we also see substantial numbers of poems published by writers like James D. Corrothers, Joseph S. Cotter, and Lucian B. Watkins – writers who were well known at this time, but who subsequently dropped off the critical radar. Du Bois himself published several notable poems in *The Crisis* during this period, and these

poems are included in our collection. One particularly active theme in late 1910s poetry is World War I (see the Glossary in a separate tab for other themes).

The 1920s: *The Crisis*, *Opportunity*, and *The Messenger*. There were three very large and successful African American magazines in the 1920s, all published in New York but with national circulations: *The Crisis*, *Opportunity*, _and *The Messenger*. With *The Crisis*, there appears to have been a steady build-up of interest in poetry through the 1910s, leading up to Jessie Fauset's taking on the role of literary editor between 1919-1926. With her work at *The Crisis*, Fauset brought a serious literary sensibility to the magazine and a considerable increase in quality.

With regards to *Opportunity*: as biographers for writers like Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes have documented, the racially-integrated *Opportunity* "prize" dinners in 1924, 1925, and 1926 seemed to function at least in part as coming out parties for emerging writers, helping to create a sense of excitement about African American poetry both within the Black community and beyond it. White editors and publishers like Paul Kellogg and Horace Liveright attended a particularly important dinner at the Harlem Civic Club in March of 1924, which led to the idea of the special issue devoted to African American writing in *Survey Graphic* (March 1925), guest-edited by Alain Locke.

The mid-1920s as tipping point for African American poetry. As we've developed our collection of African American periodical poetry, it's become clearer and clearer that the mid- and late-1920s was a special moment of growth and recognition. First and foremost, there is the remarkable proliferation of African American general interest magazines like *The Crisis* and *Opportunity*, as mentioned above. The same period also saw the emergence of several African American *literary* magazines, including *Fire!!* in New York in 1926, *Black Opals* in Philadelphia in 1927-1928, and *Saturday Evening Quill* in Boston from 1928-1930. *Fire!!* ran for only a single issue; *Black Opals* ran for four issues, and featured many prominent names despite having a fairly tiny print run (250 copies of each issue were printed). *Saturday Evening Quill*, for its part, was essentially the house magazine for a vibrant African American literary social club active in the late 1920s in Boston. In the present collection, we have collected poems from each of these magazines.

Last but not least, several mainstream publications open their pages to special issues devoted to African American poetry during this period. The most prominent of these is undoubtedly the special March 1925 issue of *Survey Graphic* guest-edited by Alain Locke, which would become the basis for the hugely influential anthology *The New Negro: an Interpretation* (1925). There were also special issues dedicated to African American poetry published by modernist little magazines like *Palms* (guest-edited by Countee Cullen), as well as *The Carolina Magazine*, which did excellent issues on African American poetry, guest-edited by Lewis Alexander. This growing engagement from the mainstream was also reflected of course in the fact that mainstream commercial publishers in New York and Boston were also publishing significant quantities of African American poetry during this time period. Success in periodical publication often led to book-length poetry collections – Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and James Weldon Johnosn all published book-length collections of poetry with mainstream New

York publishers in the subsequent years. (Sadly, writers who were women did not appear to have this same benefit.)

Alongside the Special Issues described above, Claude McKay published a number of poems, especially in Max Eastman-edited magazine, *The Liberator* (not to be confused with William Lloyd Garrison's magazine of the same name from the mid-19th century). McKay is somewhat anomalous in that he published much more outside of the Black press than he did within it (though he is certainly well-represented in *The Crisis*).

Where Did the Data Come From? Who Collected It?

The texts that form the basis of the data in this dataset come from a variety of sources, including publicly available resources like _HathiTrust _and *Archive.org*. We also relied on the digitized versions of _Saturday Evening Quill _at the University of Delaware's library. And a colleague at North Carolina State University, Madhusudan Kutti, was kind enough to send us a digitized copy of the 1926 special issue of *Palms* we have included in the collection; it was not available elsewhere. Our own work entailed reading the issues, locating poetry published in them, and creating text versions. We also made an effort to describe the poetic form, mark down thematic tags ("Progress and Racial Uplift"; "Motherhood"; etc.). (See the Glossary of Themes and Forms Tab for more)

The lead researcher on this project is Amardeep Singh, a professor of English at Lehigh University. He has been creating digital projects related to minoritized writers for several years, beginning with projects like "Claude McKay's Early Poetry" and "Women of the Early Harlem Renaissance." Since 2022, he has been developing a larger project called "African American Poetry: A Digital Anthology" (AAPADA), a Scalar project that aims to be a comprehensive collection of poetry by Black writers that is out of copyright. The poems collected for this dataset are also presented in simple text versions on AAPADA.

Kate Hennessey, a Lehigh University graduate student, assisted with the collection of the data as well as the editing and formatting of poems during the spring of 2024. Other Lehigh graduate students have been involved with the project, either as paid graduate research assistants or as students in seminars, whose research and editing skills have at times been added to the project (with full credit and permission). Other recent students who have contributed to the project include Miranda Alvarez Guillen and Christian Farrior. Several of the students involved in the project are people who identify as Black.

Explore the Data

```
//| echo: false
//| output: false
aa_poetry_data = d3.csv("https://raw.githubusercontent.com/melaniewalsh/responsible-datasets-
```

```
//| echo: false
//| output: false


filtered = aa_poetry_data.filter(function(penguin) {
  return bill_length_min < penguin.bill_length_mm &&
         islands.includes(penguin.island);
})
```

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color = d3
  .scaleLinear()
  .domain([0, 100, 300])
  .range(["#cafcc2", "#fce7c2", "#eb9494"])
```

African American Periodical Poetry

```
//| echo: false
viewof search = Inputs.search(aa_poetry_data, {
  placeholder: "Search"
})
```

```
//| echo: false

/*Inputs.table(search, data)*/

Inputs.table(search, {
  layout: "fixed",
  rows: 50,
  sort: "year",
  reverse: false,
  format: {
    /*RecreationVisits: x => d3.format('.2s')(x),*/
    year: x => d3.timeFormat(x),
    text: x => {
      const words = x.split(' ');
      return words.slice(0, 15).join(' ') + (words.length > 15 ? '...' : '');
    }
```

```
  }
})
```

How to Use

How might this dataset – and the collection of texts behind it – be used?

There are any number of ways this collection might be used.

Literary Prestige and Canonization. While some poets saw their careers and reputations take off during the peak years of the Harlem Renaissance, other writers were largely left by the wayside. By examining the **"Prize-Winning"** keyword under "Themes," users can zoom in on poems and poets who dominated the literary prize contests at magazines like _Opportunity _and _The Crisis _starting in the mid-1920s. Another way of exploring the impact of individual poems might be to note poems that were republished in multiple venues (see the column **"Second Venue"** in the dataset along those lines). The fact that a poem was repeatedly reprinted might be an indication of its literary cachet and social impact.

Gender. Another use might be to study changing gender distributions over the time period at issue. In the early years of the 20th century, poetry published in magazines like _Colored American Magazine _and *Voice of the Negro* was overwhelmingly dominated by poets who were men. By the 1920s, there was a significant uptick in poetry by women; how and where this was occurring could be studied in greater detail.

Another intriguing question is the role of editors who were women. Jessie Fauset played an important role at *The Crisis* through the 1910s through the mid-1920s; editors who were women also played important roles at *Colored American Magazine* (Pauline Hopkins), and *Black Opals* (Nellie Bright, Gwendolyn Bennett).

As of this writing, we are unaware of any African American poets from this period who identified as transgender or non-binary in our collection. If we come to learn more about authors' gender identity that might lead us to add additional gender identity categories, we will do that.

Poetic Form. Scholars interested in the evolution of African American poetic forms in the early 20th century might want to explore our Poetic Form column. At the beginning of this period, most published poetry by Black poets was in rhymed, accented verse (often using the **Common Measure**); following the dominant trend in American poetry in the mid-1920s, there was an explosion of **Free Verse** in many of the magazines. The collection also contains a large number of African American **Sonnets** (written throughout the period), as well as experiments with the **Blues**, **Elegies**, and a number of other forms.

The Impact of Editors and Author-Editors. Editors played a huge role in encouraging African American poets in these various magazines. Some editors were also poets themselves. The poet Countee Cullen was on the masthead as an Associate Editor at *Opportunity* during the peak of his fame (1927-1928); he also guest-edited a special issue of the little magazine *Palms* in 1926, which probably informed his subsequent decision to edit the 1927 collection, *Caroling Dusk*. Jessie Fauset, Gwendolyn Bennett, and Lewis Alexander were all poets who also served as guest-editors or associate editors in various magazines during this period.

Predominantly Black vs. Predominantly White Publications. We have marked whether the magazines where poems where published were "predominantly White" or "predominantly Black." In the 1920s in particular, there was a striking increase in the number of predominantly White publications that ran special issues devoted to African American poetry. Some of these were especially high-impact events (especially the special issue of *Survey Graphic* in March 1925). This too could be studied, especially in connection with other attributes (for instance, one sees that the *Survey Graphic* special issue mentioned above was especially influential; but the issue is far more lopsided towards poets who were men than one sees in predominantly Black publications from the same time period).

White poets? As magazines like *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* became more prominent as national publications in the 1920s, they also had a substantial readership that was White. And with Countee Cullen playing a prominent role as an Associate Editor at *Opportunity* in 1927-1928, there were quite a few poets who were White publishing in these magazines. At present, we have excluded these writers from the collection. A future version of this project might include White poets who engaged with racial justice issues in the Black press (there were many who did, and their work has not been given much critical attention).

Frequency of publication and authorial prestige. Poets like Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen published many poems in several different magazines during this period (both predominantly Black and predominantly White magazines). But poets who are less well-known today were also highly prolific – one thinks especially of Georgia Douglas Johnson (who has approximately 50 poems represented in this dataset). However, some writers who published much less went on to have an outsized impact on the basis of relatively few poems – one thinks of Helene Johnson, Mae V. Cowdery, and Arna Bontemps along those lines.

Exploring lesser-known authors. Many poems in the dataset were published by poets who did not aspire to have careers as poets; they may have only published one or two poems. Others (such as Edward S. Silvera and Lewis Alexander) were accomplished poets who were well-known to their peers, but might have dropped off abruptly (Edward Silvera died quite young, at age 31). And there are a few authors who published five or more poems included in this collection about whom we have been able to find nothing (one such name might be Ann Lawrence [also known as Ann Lawrence-Lucas]; she published several thoughtful poems in *The Messenger* in the mid-1920s).

Exercises

Python

R

Discussion & Activities

1. Gender distribution over time or by venue.

First, sort the dataset by year. For each decade, check the gender of the poet. Is there an increase in poets who are women?

By venue. First, sort by Venue. Then compare the gender distribution in *The Crisis* against other predominantly Black publications like *The Messenger* or *Opportunity*. Were there magazines that tended to publish more poets who were women?

Another question to ask might be the influence of Editors who were women. Magazines like *Black Opals* and *The Crisis* between 1919-1926 had Editors or Associate Editors who were women. Did the presence of female Editors lead to more women getting published in the magazine?

Another venue question: how did gender distribution look in the special issues of predominantly White magazines like *The Carolina Magazine*, *Palms*, _or *Survey Graphic*?

2. Studying Poetic Form.

Poetic form has been tagged, somewhat subjectively and admittedly imperfectly, by the creators of this dataset, often with reference to Lewis Turco's *Book of Forms*(2020) as a guide.

Free verse. In the dataset, sort by Poetic form. Was there an increase in the number of poems tagged as Free Verse poems over time? When did that increase happen, and which magazines really seemed to embrace and encourage it?

Sonnets. One really striking feature of this collection is the prevalence of sonnets. Sonnets are often studied as a form associated with early modern love poetry – one thinks of Shakespeare's famous Sonnets along those lines. However, it was a form that was hugely popular among African American poets as well, including throughout the early part of the 20th century. Many African American poets adapted the form to align it with social justice themes.

First, sort the dataset by "Form," and perhaps paste just the poems tagged as

Sonnets into a new Google Sheet (there should be about 70 such poems).

Now, sort again by "Theme," and pick a Theme that you are especially interested in. (One we might recommend exploring might be "Progress and Racial Uplift").

Now, read some of the poems themselves. What patterns do you see?

No form – can you find one? Take a look at some poems that are currently not tagged according to form. Can you ascertain a form yourself? (Note: sometimes it can be interesting to paste the entire text of a poem into ChatGPT or another generative AI platform and ask for help determining poetic form. The answers are sometimes accurate.)

If you discover any poems that you believe are incorrectly tagged, or where we have not put down a tag, we would be grateful if you would let us know!

3. Themes and Topics.

We have tagged poems by Theme, with a focus on themes relating to social justice topics. In part, this area of focus relates to patterns that are observable within the poetry itself. That said, we also expect that these themes may help readers today see how these poems might be relevant to our present moment. As with form, this process of tagging by theme is admittedly somewhat subjective – it comes out of our own personal interpretations of the poems. Readers might disagree or think of very different ways of organizing the poems by theme.

(For example, we have not tagged the many seasonal and occasional poems in this collection – poems celebrating Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, etc. – though readers interested in those topics would likely find them simply by searching the collection for those keywords. We have also not tagged poems related to romantic love in the collection – there are many!). The general approach we have taken comes from the main *African American Poetry: A Digital Anthology* website, and a list of some of the prominent thematic tags (as well as an explanation of how we're defining them) can be found on the "Glossary of Themes and Forms" Tab.

Sort the collection by "Theme," and explore some of the Themes we have labeled. Do you agree or disagree with our approach?

Take a look at some poems that are currently un-Tagged. How might you tag them?

(*Again – any work researchers / students do here would be of interest to us, so please send it our way!*)

4. The Crossover Phenomenon

As mentioned above, the 1920s was a moment when predominantly White magazines and publishers opened their doors to African American writers for the first time – one might think of it as the seeds of integration of the publishing industry. Three such magazines that feature prominently in our dataset are *Survey Graphic*, *Palms*, and *The Carolina Magazine*.

We have tagged magazines in the dataset by Type of Venue, and the different venues could be compared and studied.

As a more advanced query, one could layer this question over top of the thematic question: did the poems published by African American authors in predominantly White venues look different thematically than poems published in predominantly Black venues like *The Crisis*. And how did the gender distribution compare?

5. Social Network Analysis.

This is a more advanced topic, but the seeds of a fairly complex social network should be visible in this dataset.

Researchers (and students) with skills constructing data visualizations using software like Gephi or Tableau might wish to extract just author information and venue information.

A more complex visualization could focus on the relationship between editors and authors (which gets even more interesting when the authors become editors).

5. Researching Unknown Authors.

As mentioned above, there are a number of authors in the collection about whom little is known. All told, there are about 100 poems in this collection, by 70 different authors, whose personal biographies have not been verified.

We have typically spent *some* time attempting to locate each of the unknown authors, but there is probably more that could be done, especially using reference texts like *Encylcopedia of the Harlem Renaissance* (a print reference text), "Who's Who?" type books, and Census information.

Pick an author about whom we haven't been able to find anything concrete (the "Author Bio" column is left blank for these). Try various ways of searching, including simple Google searches, searches in HathiTrust, WorldCat, and VIAF searches. Does anything come up? Can you verify the identity of the author?

Glossary of Topics

Glossary: Topics, Themes, and Forms

As we've been adding poetry to this collection, we've been marking various thematic areas of interest. These tags can be a good way to explore our collection and see patterns and begin to emerge between and among authors featured on this site.

Historical Events and Tribute Poems

- **World War I**. This tag will be especially interesting to readers interested in African American writers responding to World War I, especially in the 1910s. Some writers took a critical eye to how Black soldiers were treated, and the difficulty of mustering patriotic feeling in a society that treated Black folks as second-class citizens. *(14 poems with this tag)*
- **Spanish-American War**. Poems dealing with African American soldiers fighting in the Spanish-American war, including the Philippine War that followed (mainly 1900-1910).

- **Slavery**. Many of these writers were writing in living memory of the slavery era, and had relatives who had been enslaved. Paul Laurence Dunbar, for instance, was born to parents who had been enslaved. For Black writers in this period, grappling with the legacy of slavery was an important and ongoing topic. *(33 poems with this tag)*
- **Lynching and Racialized Violence**. Thousands of African American people were brutally murdered in extrajudicial mob killings – lynchings – in this period. This was a topic that was widely covered in the Black press, especially in magazines like *The Crisis*. A few poems directly address this horrific phenomenon. Under this tag, we also include poems dealing with racialized violence (such as race riots) that might not strictly speaking be understood as lynchings. *(21 poems with this tag)*
- **Frederick Douglass**. Tribute poems for Frederick Douglass.
- **Paul Laurence Dunbar**. Tribute poems for Paul Laurence Dunbar.
- **Abraham Lincoln**. Poems by Black poets commemorating President Abraham Lincoln.
- **Civil War**. Poems by Black poets reflecting on the Civil War (1861-1865).

Social and Political Themes

- **Race**. Many, many poems in this collection might be tagged as dealing with race in some way, so over time we have added additional differentiations for two especially important subtopics: **"Race: Identity formation"** and **"Race: Black Beauty."** *(100+ poems with some version of this tag)*
- **Racism**. Poems tagged with "racism" deal explicitly with racialized hostility, segregation, and its effects on the African American community.
- **Progress and Racial Uplift**. Poems thematizing racial progress, uplift, and the civil rights movement. *(Approximately 44 poems in the collection are tagged this way)*
- **Queer and Homoerotic**. Poems dealing with same-sex desire or LGBTQIA identities. Several important writers from this period are known from biographical evidence to have been LGBTQIA; here we have tagged only poems that seem to explicitly reflect same-sex or queer desire.
- **Motherhood**. This is a rich topic, especially for poets from the 1910s. Some of the most memorable poetry thematizing motherhood is written by Georgia Douglas Johnson. *(18 poems with this tag)*

- **Interracial, Multiracial, and Race Relations**. Poems dealing with relationships that cross racial borders, including friendships, antagonistic relationships, and romances. We also use this category for poems that reference mixed-race people, such as Georgia Douglas Johnson's "The Octoroon." *(21 poems with this tag)*
- **Religion**. Poems representing engagement with religion, including both the affirmative embrace of Christianity in the interest of civil rights and more critical engagements.
- **Labor.** Poems dealing with class and labor relations. *(approx. 30 poems with this tag)*
- **Travel, Migration and Great Migration**. This was a period in which many African American writers were on the move, and this tag references poems that deal with travel in Europe or Africa. It is also used for poems dealing with the Great Migration, the massive movement of Black folks from the U.S. south to northern amd midwestern cities that began in the early 1900s and continued through the 1940s. *(approx. 28 poems with this tag)*
- **Patriotism**. Poems exploring the often conflicted relationship many African American writers had with questions of patriotism and national pride.

Places / Regions / Institutions

- **Harlem**. As is well-known, Harlem was the epicenter of the Black cultural community that emerged in the 1920s, and many poets celebrated it in their writing, including Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, and many others.
- **HBCU**. Many Black writers from this period were associated with Historically Black Colleges and Universities in some way. Some – notably Langston Hughes – attended HBCUs and received degrees there. Others, including Alain Locke, W.E.B. Du Bois, Charles Johnson, and Zora Neale Hurston, taught at HBCUs. There are many references to universities like Fisk University, Howard University, Atlanta University, and so on in the poetry of this period.
- **Africa**. Poems that thematize Africa in some way. Imagining Africa was an important theme for many Black poets in the early 20th century – both those involved with the UNIA and Garveyism and more broadly. Africa was especially vivid to Langston Hughes, as he had a memorable visit to West Africa early in his career.

- **Caribbean.** Writers like Claude McKay and Eric Walrond had direct Caribbean connections, and often wrote about it in their works. But others – especially Langston Hughes – also engaged the Caribbean in their writing. The Caribbean was also important to Arthur Schomburg, who immigrated to the U.S. from Puerto Rico in 1891.

Other Themes and Forms

- **Sonnet**. Poems using the sonnet form. The sonnet form was highly prevalent in African American poetry during this period. Claude McKay famously used sonnets in many of his most influential political poems. Writers like Georgia Douglas Johnson and Carrie Williams Clifford also found the sonnet form appealing, again, in connection with social justice-oriented poetry. *(approx. 75 poems with this tag)*

- Various other poetic forms: **Common Measure**, **Villanelle**, **Terza Rima**, **Elegy**, **Ode**, **Haiku**, **Ballad**, **Free Verse**, **Blues**
- **Prize-winning poems.** Poems that won one of the poetry prize competitions from the mid-1920s, sponsored by either *The Crisis* or *Opportunity* magazine. *(32 poems with this tag)*
- **Music**. The emphasis on music in poems by Langston Hughes is well-known, but in fact many Black poets from this period were interested in the connections between music and lyricism.
- **Intertextual**. Poems that allude to other authors, including white authors.
- **Black Vernacular (AAVE).** Poems using AAVE. There were active debates at the time among Black poets about the use of language that was sometimes seen as caricaturing Black voices.
- **Poetry for children**. Many well-known African American writers of this period wrote poems for children on occasion, including especially Langston Hughes and Jessie Fauset.