Fauset, Jessie Redmon (1882-1961) Encyclopedia Article

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Writer Jessie Redmon Fauset represented the emergence of an authentic African-American voice in American literature. Fauset corresponded with W.E.B. Du Bois while she attended language courses at Cornell University. Impressed by her writing, Du Bois invited Fauset to join the staff of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP) magazine, *The Crisis*. As literary editor from 1919 to 1926, Fauset encouraged black writers, serving as a mentor to such artists as Langston Hughes, who said she was one of the "midwives" of the Harlem Renaissance. Fauset wrote four novels, *There Is Confusion* (1924), *Plum Bun* (1929), *The Chinaberry Tree* (1931), and *Comedy, American Style* (1933). Racial identity was a major theme of Fauset's work. Her writing stressed her belief that middle class African Americans could overcome prejudice but not self-loathing. Through her characters, Fauset revealed the complex literary and artistic lives of Harlem Renaissance figures, including herself. Hoping to mitigate racism, she wanted to enlighten white Americans about the realities of African-Americans' experiences. Fauset also developed *The Brownies' Book*, a monthly publication for black children in 1920 and 1921. Fauset's novels were reprinted during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement.

Further Reading:

Allen, Carol. *Black Women Intellectuals: Strategies of Nation, Family, and Neighborhood in the Works of Pauline Hopkins, Jessie Fauset, and Marita Bonner.* New York, Garland Publishing, 1998.

McLendon, Jacquelyn Y. *The Politics of Color in the Fiction of Jessie Fauset and Nella Larsen.* Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1995.

Sylvander, Carolyn Wedin. *Jessie Redmon Fauset, Black American Writer.* Troy, New York, Whitston Publishing Company, 1981.