Locke, Alain (1886-1954) Encyclopedia Article

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In 1925, Alain Locke, a relatively obscure 39-year-old professor of philosophy at Howard University, transformed the American literary landscape when his special issue of the *Survey Graphic* familiarized the nation with the literati of the Harlem Renaissance. Later expanded into the anthology *The New Negro,* Locke's sampling of the best African American literature of the 1920s helped launch the reputations of poets Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes. After the publication of *The New Negro,* Locke joined James Weldon Johnson as one of the two elders of African American literature. He encouraged black writers to address themes relating to their own culture and history in their works, and to strive for artistic perfection. His efforts significantly influenced the leading black authors of the day, including Nella Larsen, Zora Neal Hurston, and Wallace Thurman. Later in life, Locke became one of the chief interpreters of the movement he helped to launch, and his 1936 publications, *Negro Art—Past and Present* and *The Negro and His Music,* were seminal works in the field of cultural pluralism.

Further Reading:

Harris, Leonard, editor. *The Philosophy of Alain Locke: Harlem Renaissance and Beyond.* Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1989.

Linnemann, Rusell, editor. *Alain Locke: Reflections on a Modern Renaissance Man.* Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1982.

Locke, Alain LeRoy. *The New Negro: An Interpretation.* New York, Arno Press, 1968.

Washington, Johnny. *Alain Locke and Philosophy: A Quest for Cultural Pluralism.* Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1986.

——. *A Journey Into the Philosophy of Alain Locke.* Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1994.