

Carl Van Vechten photographs

Carl Van Vechten (1880-1964) was an American writer, collector, and photographer. After graduating from the University of Chicago in 1903, he became a writer for the *Chicago American* and later a music and dance critic for the *New York Times*. His writing career helped him forge relationships with celebrities, particularly those associated with the Harlem Renaissance and the modernist movement. During the early 1930s, Van Vechten took photographs of his famous acquaintances and friends with a 35 mm Leica camera. His collection features portraits of individuals such as Langston Hughes, Gertrude Stein, Zora Neale Hurston, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Alfred A. Knopf.

All photos are courtesy of the Library of Congress.

This hat was hand-made by Brittany Johnson, Costume Shop Manager in the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies at Kennesaw State University. The hat emulates a late 1920s and early 1930s style that hugs the head. The mannequin [right] is wearing a dress fashioned in 1920s style. Opposing the large skirts, restrictive corsets, and heavy decorations of previous decades, women's fashion of the 1920s lacked curves and layers and often sported dropped waists.

Items in this exhibit case demonstrate racial stereotypes of African Americans during the 1920s. This 78-rpm phonograph record [left] contains two songs by Mamie Smith and is called a race record. Race records were musical selections specifically targeted toward African Americans and were generally limited to genres such as blues, jazz, comedy, and religious spirituals. This 1926 issue of the *Ladies' Home Journal* [right] features an advertisement for Aunt Jemima's pancake mix. The advertisement appeals to white consumers by portraying Aunt Jemima as an enslaved woman from the antebellum South whose pancake recipe has "that matchless plantation flavor."

Periodicals of the 1920s informed and entertained audiences through news articles, contemporary literature, illustrations, and advertisements. A few of the most popular periodicals included *Liberty*, *The Cosmopolitan*, and *Collier's*. These publications reveal the interests and attitudes of urban American consumers during the 1920s.

MODERNIST POETS

Two of the most well-known modernist poets were Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot. In 1908, Ezra Pound published his first volume of poetry in Venice entitled *A Lume Spento*. This collection of forty-five poems alludes to many works that influenced his writing, such as Dante's *Purgatory*. T.S. Eliot's poem, "The Waste Land," was published in 1922 and edited by Ezra Pound. Eliot demonstrated his gratitude to Pound by dedicating "The Waste Land" to him. These mid-twentieth-century editions of Eliot's and Pound's poems were published by Faber & Faber, the publishing house that Eliot directed from 1925 until his death in 1965.

Eliot, T.S. *Collected Poems, 1909-1935*. London: Faber & Faber, 1936.

Pound, Ezra. *A Lume Spento & Other Early Poems*. London: Faber & Faber, 1965.

WORDLESS NOVELS

Wordless novels by Frans Masereel and Lynd Ward address societal issues through powerful woodcut illustrations.

Masereel's wordless novel, *Die Passion eines Menschen*, was first published in 1918 and illustrates the discrepancy between the wealthy and the poor in an industrialist society. *Die Sonne*, appeared one year later and represents the path of eternal seeking. Lynd Ward's first wordless novel, *God's Man*, reveals the fate of an artist seduced by greed.

Masereel, Frans. *Die Passion eines Menschen 25 Holzschnitte*. Munich: Kurt Wolffe, 1924.

Masereel, Frans. *Die Sonne*. Stuttgart, Germany: Reclam Verlag, 1961.

Ward, Lynd. *God's Man*. New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, 1929.

HARLEM RENAISSANCE

Writers of the Harlem Renaissance used poetry and prose to tell stories of the African American experience. Countee Cullen's "The Ballad of the Brown Girl" won second place in the Witter Bynner Poetry Contest for undergraduate students in 1923 and was officially published in 1927. Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem* reveals the raw, sensual side of the Harlem Renaissance movement while Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* is a quasi-autobiographical novel that depicts the complexities of interracial heritage.

Cullen, Countee. *The Ballad of the Brown Girl: An Old Ballad Retold*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1927.

Larsen, Nella. *Quicksand*. 1928. Facsimile of the first edition. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1969.

McKay, Claude. *Home to Harlem*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1928.

SCIENCE

Scientific texts during the 1920s expressed contrasting views on the use of eugenics theories to improve society. H.S. Jennings's *Prometheus: Or, Biology and the Advancement of Man* and Bertrand Russell's *Icarus: Or, the Future of Science* are part of the "To-Day and To-Morrow" series published in London and New York. Both authors warn readers of the dangers that eugenics poses to the future of science. In *The Pivot of Civilization*, Margaret Sanger advocates for women's right to birth control yet relies on eugenics theories to support the argument.

Jennings, H.S. *Prometheus: Or, Biology and the Advancement of Man*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner; New York, E.P. Dutton, 1925. Reprinted 1927.

Russell, Bertrand. *Icarus: Or, The Future of Science*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1924.

Sanger, Margaret. *The Pivot of Civilization*. New York: Brentano's, 1922.

FUGITIVE MOVEMENT

Most poems written by writers of the Fugitive Movement were first published in their journal, *The Fugitive*. Many of these works were later published as individual volumes of poetry or in anthologies. *Fugitives: An Anthology of Verse* (1928) contains a history of the Fugitive movement along with select poems from the eleven most prominent writers of the group. *Chills and Fever* (1924) was one of John Crowe Ransom's most well-known volumes of poetry. This first-edition copy was published by Alfred A. Knopf. *Laura and Francisca* (1931) by Laura Riding is a fine-press volume of poetry published by the Seizin Press. In 1927, Laura Riding and Robert Graves founded the Seizin press in London, and from 1930 to 1935, the press operated in Majorca, Spain.

Fugitives: An Anthology of Verse. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1928.

Riding, Laura. *Laura and Francisca*. Deyá, Majorca: Seizin Press, 1931.

Ransom, John Crowe. *Chills and Fever*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1924.