



THE FUGITIVE MOVEMENT

In the years following World War I, a group of men at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, met regularly to discuss poetry and philosophy. In fall 1921, members of the group including Allen Tate, Donald Davidson, and John Crowe Ransom began writing poetry, which they later published in a journal called *The Fugitive*. During its three-year publication, *The Fugitive* included contributions from well-known writers such as Robert Penn Warren and Laura Riding – the only woman

“Fugitive.” Scholars often debate the significance of the name “Fugitive,” because it is unclear what the Fugitives were escaping in their poetry. They took pride in their status as wanderers and nonconformists, and many opposed industrialization in favor of traditional, agrarian values. Although the legacies of some Fugitive poets like Allen Tate have been tainted by their racist views, their collective work influenced the trajectory of early twentieth-century American poetry.



MODERNIST POETRY

Modernist poetry departs from traditional forms of writing and self-expression. Influenced by European art movements such as symbolism, expressionism, and surrealism, modernist poets of the early twentieth century employed methods of literary experimentation that included free verse, stream of consciousness, disconnected imagery, and complex allusions. The radical

nature of modernist poetry influenced writers for decades. Despite its attempts to uproot tradition, the modernist style eventually became the established norm from which later writers chose to depart. Nonetheless, modernist poetry ignited a spirit of rebelliousness that persists among writers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.



HARLEM RENAISSANCE

The Harlem Renaissance was a period of prolific artistic and literary development in urban, African American communities across the United States, most notably, Harlem in New York City. Partially fueled by the cruel realities of discrimination, racial violence, and deteriorating economic opportunities in the South, African Americans sought to establish a renewed sense of identity and self-expression that pushed back against


oppression. The Harlem Renaissance birthed the literary and artistic works of Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Billie Holiday, Countee Cullen, Nella Larsen, Duke Ellington, and others. Works of the Harlem Renaissance presented diverse black experiences to mainstream audiences and demonstrated the power of artistic expression to advance social change.



WORDLESS NOVELS

Wordless novels express the power of social and political issues through black and white woodcut illustrations. The concept of wordless novels was born out of German Expressionism and influenced by black and white cinemas. Early wordless novels were created by artists including Frans Masereel, Otto Nückel, and Lynd Ward. Focused on themes such as labor, wealth,

war, and political corruption, wordless novels explored the fate of the individual pitted against the machine culture of post-World War I society. Despite their brief period of popularity during the early twentieth century, wordless novels served as predecessors to modern-day graphic novels.



SCIENCE AND SOCIAL ENGINEERING

During the 1920s, promoters of pseudoscience and social engineering sought to improve society by controlling methods of reproduction. Often, the underlying goal of these ideas was the creation of an improved human race. Advocates of social engineering based their arguments on eugenics theories that touted the biological superiority of certain races over others. They opposed the reproductive rights of those they considered “unfit,” such

as ethnic minorities, people in poverty, or individuals with mental health issues. Even birth control pioneer Margaret Sanger used eugenics theories to support arguments in her book *The Pivot of Civilization* (1922). Eugenics theories led to thousands of forced sterilizations in the early twentieth century and helped fuel the genocidal policies of the Nazi party in the 1930s and 1940s.