

**The Muse in Bronzeville: African American Creative Expression in Chicago, 1932–1950**

By ROBERT BONE and RICHARD A. COURAGE. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2011. Pp. xx, 302. Cloth, \$75. Paper, \$29.95.

In 1986 Robert Bone first proposed the notion of a black Chicago Renaissance—a period of literary, artistic, and cultural productivity centered in the city's black South Side neighborhood known as Bronzeville. This Chicago Renaissance emerged during the Great Depression, about the time that the New Negro (or Harlem) Renaissance declined, and it continued to flourish until roughly 1950. This cultural shift was both geographic and generational, and with it Chicago became a new epicenter of black American life, artistic expression, and thought. Begun by Bone a quarter century ago and faithfully completed by his former student Richard Courage, *The Muse of Bronzeville* offers the liveliest and most sweeping scholarly account of the black Chicago Renaissance to date. It is a transformational study of African American literature and culture, a significant contribution to the historiography of black Chicago, and a crowning achievement of Bone's pioneering career in black studies.

Interdisciplinary in approach, *The Muse of Bronzeville* weaves together archival research, textual and visual analysis, cultural history, and biographical sketches, to survey the tangled histories of black migration, popular culture, visual arts, literature, performance, and social science. A valuable resource that is clearly written, engagingly detailed, and richly illustrated, it should be of interest to students and scholars at a variety of levels in myriad fields of cultural and historical study. It reframes the artistic development of such figures as Richard Wright, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Charles White within local contexts and communities. In so doing the authors attend to the lives and work of numerous individuals and institutions deserving of greater consideration within black Chicago history, literary and cultural studies, and art history. Among such are novelists Willard Motley, Frank Yerby, and Arna Bontemps, poet Frank Marshall Davis, visual artists Margaret Taylor Goss Burroughs, Charles Seabee, and George Neal, and pioneering dancer and anthropologist Katherine Dunham.

Organized around a principle of “generational analysis” and reaching back to Reconstruction, the cultural and intellectual history offered by Bone and Courage proves far broader and deeper than the dates in the book's title suggest. Part 1, “An Account of Origins,” lays out key Progressive Era–New Negro foundations from which the Chicago Renaissance grew and against which many of its artists and writers reacted. This section illuminates a series of sometimes surprising connections among an interracial network of local and national institutions, from Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute to the National Urban League, Sears and Roebuck, and the Art Institute of Chicago. Bone and Courage emphasize especially the influences of Robert Park, Charles S. Johnson, and the Chicago School of Sociology, as well as the Julius Rosenwald Fund, which supported the

studies and development of some of the nation's most promising black artists, writers, and scholars from the Great Depression through the post-World War II era.

Part 2, "Bronzeville's Social Muse," explores the "changing generational dynamics" among black artists in Chicago, while continuing to bring black Chicago's cultural history of previous generations into sharper focus (page 9). Generational transitions in the arts reflected major historical changes in Chicago itself, as new migrants flooded the Black Belt, the Depression deepened, and the labor movement and Communist Party gained traction within Bronzeville. The authors extensively examine the cross-fertilization of arts, historical research, and social sciences that shaped the era's "documentary spirit," fostered through the Works Progress Administration's (WPA) arts projects, particularly the Illinois Writers' Project and the Federal Art Project. Within and beyond the WPA, the book explores a range of intersecting genres and influences, sacred and secular: the new gospel music of Thomas Dorsey and Mahalia Jackson; Gordon Parks's documentary photography; the modernist poetry workshops that helped launch the career of Gwendolyn Brooks; and the production of hybrid texts like Richard Wright's *12 Million Black Voices*, shaped by Marxism, sociology, and the documentary impulses of the period.

Within and between generations, Bone and Courage survey an array of figures and works with differing—and sometimes conflicting—economic backgrounds, political affiliations, intellectual influences, and aesthetic principles. This diversity makes for a nuanced analysis of black arts and letters in Chicago that refuses to reduce literary or cultural history to rigid periodization, categorization, or organizational membership. The book is not exhaustive in its study of the Chicago Renaissance, but this merely suggests the richness of the period's history that remains to be excavated, both in Chicago and farther afield. In its conclusion, *The Muse in Bronzeville* indicates, too, avenues for further investigation into the generational links and transformations in African American literature and culture, and the continuing impact of Bronzeville's mid-century renaissance on American history.

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**The Trial of the Haymarket Anarchists: Terrorism and Justice in the Gilded Age**

By TIMOTHY MESSER-KRUSE. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. Pp. viii, 236. Cloth, \$90. Paper, \$30.

In 1886 an Illinois jury convicted eight Chicago anarchists of conspiring in the May 4 bombing at Haymarket Square that killed policeman Mathias Degan. Most Haymarket historians argue that the court convicted the eight men for their beliefs