

AAAS 520S/ARTHIST 554S

Harlem Renaissance

September 18

- Biographical Report IV: Winold Reiss.
- Biographical Report V: Miguel Covarrubias.
- Seminar Discussion: Winold Reiss and *Hallelujah!* (1929): Black portraiture & "representation."

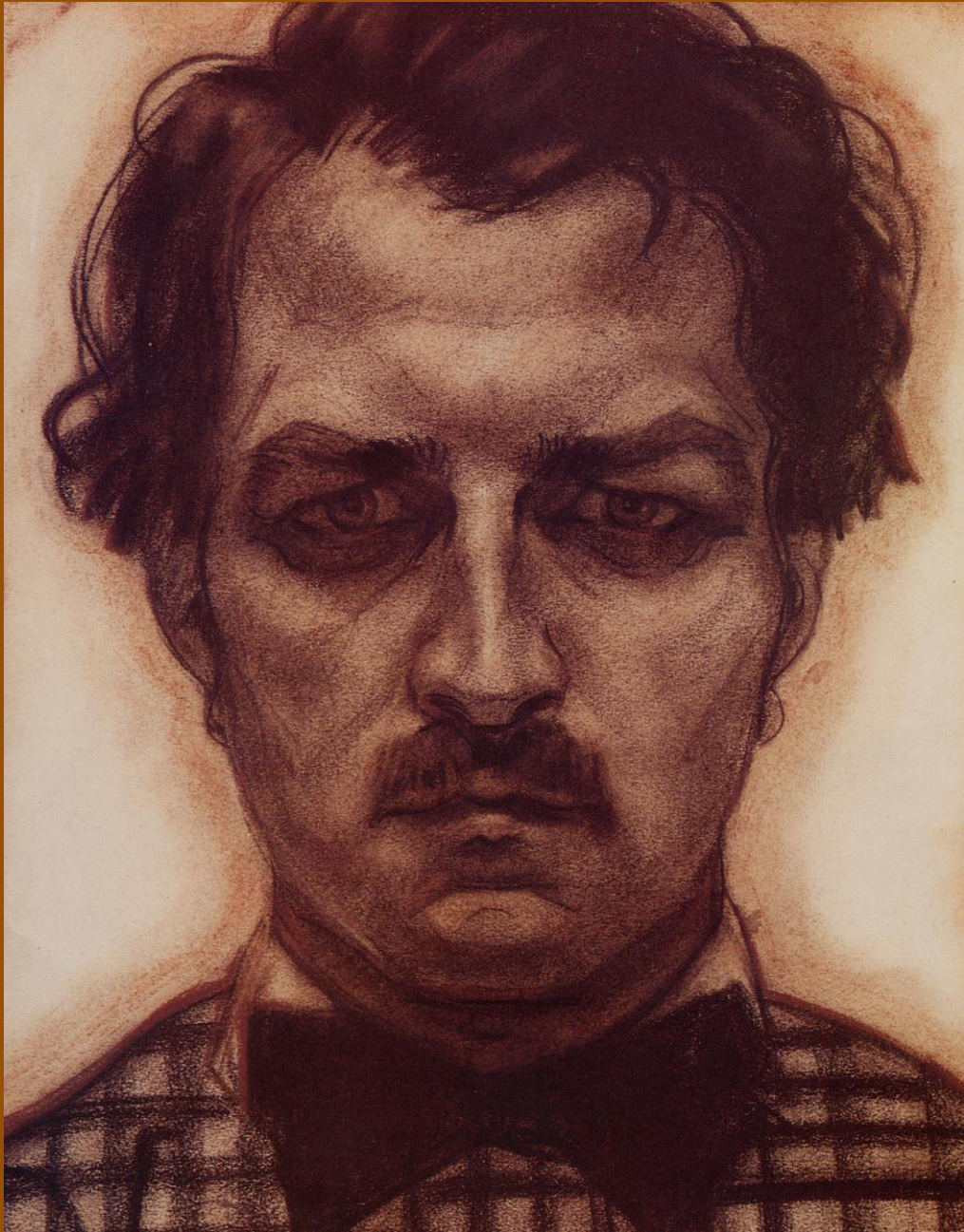


Above: Winold Reiss sketching a model, circa 1925.

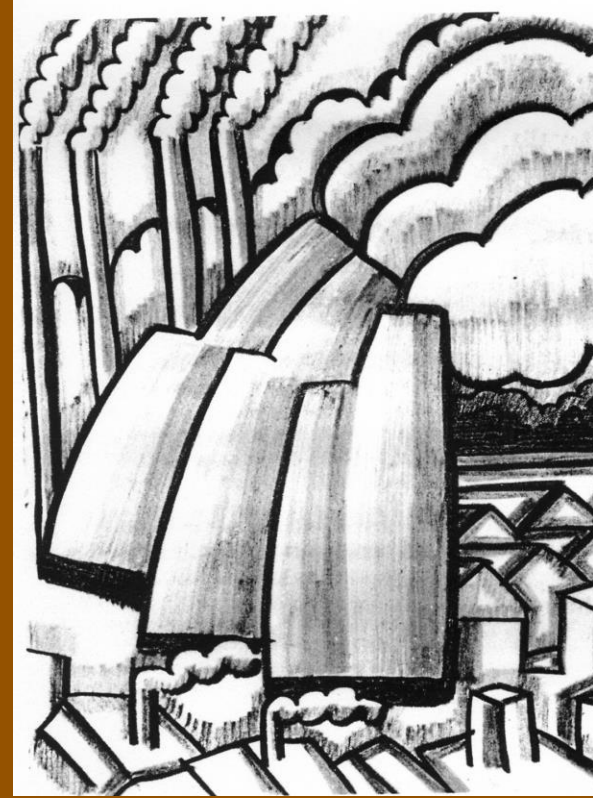
Far right: Director King Vidor with child actors on location in Memphis, TN during the filming of *Hallelujah*, 1929.

Near right: Miguel Covarrubias, circa 1927.





Winold Reiss (1894-1982), *Self-Portrait*, c. 1914. Pastel on paper.



Left: Winold Reiss, *Coffins & Crying Faces*, n.d. Ink on paper.

Center: Winold Reiss, *Four Prone Figures*, ca. 1921. Ink on paper.

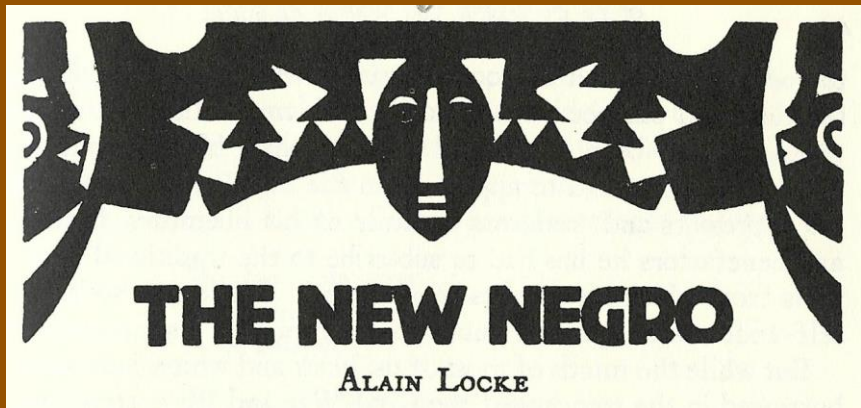
Right: Winold Reiss, *Red Factory* (Left), *Black & White Factory* (Right), n.d. Ink on paper.



Left: Winold Reiss, *City*, n.d. Mixed media on paper.



Right: Winold Reiss, End sheets for exhibition catalog. circa 1922. Ink on paper.



Clockwise from upper left: Sans serif font designed by Winold Reiss, circa 1920.

Winold Reiss, Book jacket design for Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, Inc., 1925).

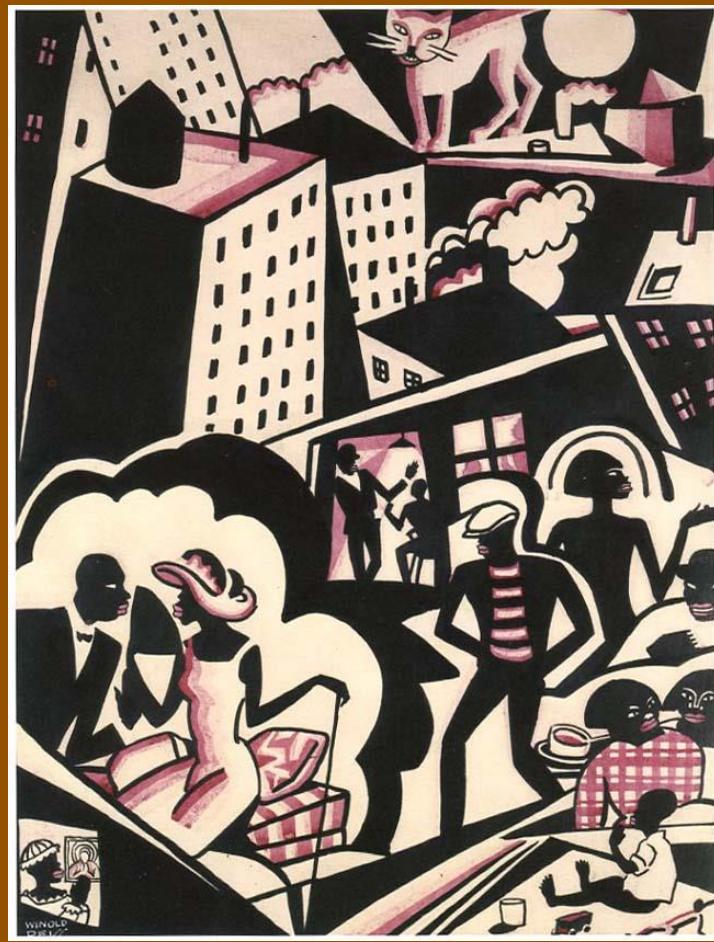
Winold Reiss, Pictorial header for Alain Locke's essay "The New Negro," in Locke's *The New Negro* (1925).

Winold Reiss, Africanesque decorative vignette, circa 1925.





Left: Winold Reiss, *Dawn in Harlem*, 1924-25. Mixed media on paper.



Center: Winold Reiss, *Interpretations of Harlem Jazz*, 1924-25. Mixed media on paper.

Right: Page from J. A. Rogers, "Jazz at Home," 1924-25. All from from the *Survey Graphic* special issue, "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro," March 1925.

The origin of the present jazz craze is interesting. More cities claim its birthplace than claimed Homer dead. New Orleans, San Francisco, Memphis, Chicago, all assert the honor is theirs. Jazz, as it is today, seems to have come into being this way, however: W. C. Handy, a Negro, having digested the airs of the itinerant musicians referred to, evolved the first classic, the Memphis Blues. Then came Jasbo Brown, a reckless musician of a Negro cabaret in Chicago, who played this and other blues, blowing his own extravagant moods and risqué interpretations into them, while hilarious with gin. To give further meanings to his veiled allusions he would make the trombone "talk" by putting a derby hat and later a tin can at its mouth. The delighted patrons would shout, "More, Jasbo. More, Jas, more." And so the name originated.

As to the jazz dance itself: at this time Shelton Brooks, a Negro comedian, invented a new "strut," called Walkin' the Dog. Jasbo's anarchic airs found in this strut a soul mate. Then as a result of their union came The Texas Tommy, the highest point of brilliant, acrobatic execution and nifty footwork so far evolved in jazz dancing. The latest of these dances is the Charleston, which has brought something really new to the dance step. The Charleston calls for activity of the whole body. One characteristic is a fantastic fling of the legs from the hip downwards. The dance ends in what is known as the "camel-walk"—in reality a gorilla-like shambling—and finishes with a peculiar hop like that of the Indian war dance. Imagine one suffering from a fit of rhythmic ague and you have the effect precisely.

The cleverest Charleston dancers perhaps are urchins of five and six who may be seen any time on the streets of Harlem, keeping time with their hands, and surrounded by admiring crowds. But put it on a well-set stage, danced by a bobbed-hair chorus, and you have an effect that reminds you of the abandon of the Furies. And so Broadway studies Harlem. Not all of the visitors of the twenty or more well-attended cabarets of Harlem are idle pleasure seekers or underworld devotees. Many are serious artists, actors and producers seeking something new, some suggestion to be taken, too often in pallid imitation, to Broadway's lights and stars.

This makes it difficult to say whether jazz is more characteristic of the Negro or of contemporary America. As was shown, it is of Negro origin plus the influence of the American environment. It is Negro-American. Jazz proper however is in idiom—rhythmic, musical and pantomimic—thoroughly American Negro; it is his spiritual picture on that lighter comedy side, just as the spirituals are the picture on the tragedy side. The two are poles apart, but the former is by no means to be despised and it is just as characteristically the product of the peculiar and unique experi-



Two Drawings by Winold Reiss

ence of the Negro in this country. The African Negro hasn't it, and the Caucasian never could have invented it. Once achieved, it is common property, and jazz has absorbed the national spirit, that tremendous spirit of go, the nervousness, lack of conventionality and boisterous good-nature characteristic of the American, white or black, as compared with the more rigid formal natures of the Englishman or German.

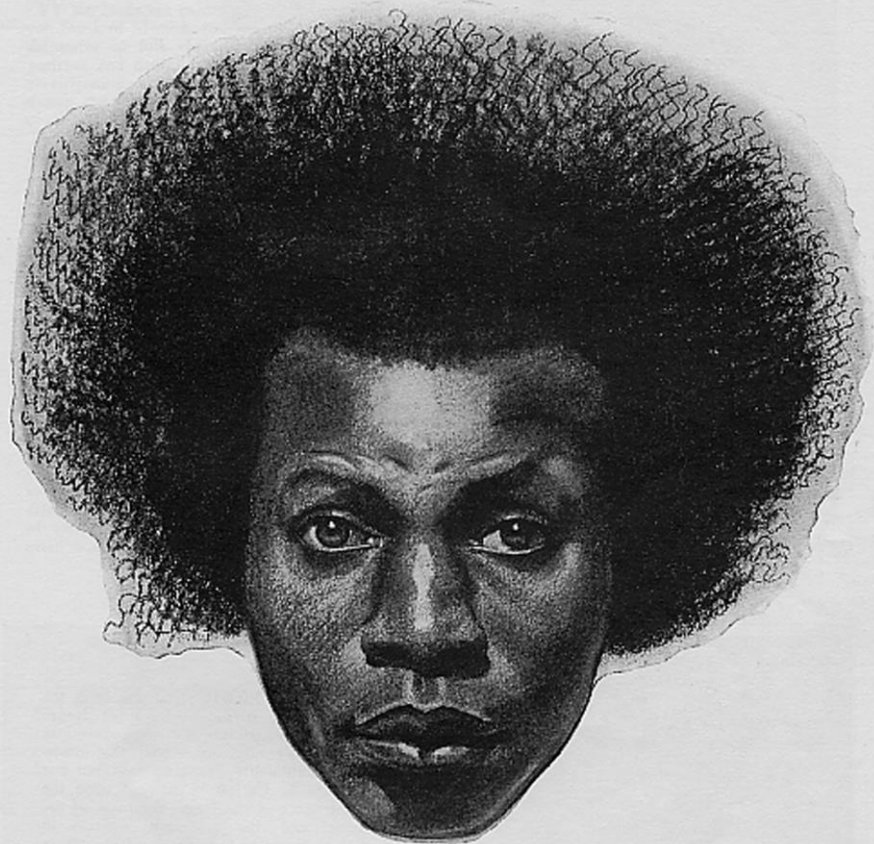
But there still remains something elusive about jazz that few, if any of the white artists, have been able to capture. The Negro is admittedly its best expositor. That elusive something, for lack of a better name, I'll call Negro rhythm. The average Negro, particularly of the lower classes, puts rhythm into whatever he does, whether it be shining shoes or carrying a basket on the head to market as the Jamaican women do. Some years ago while wandering in Cincinnati I happened upon a Negro revival meeting at its height. The majority present were women, a goodly few of whom were white. Under the influence of the "spirit" the sisters would come forward and strut—much of jazz enters where it would be least expected. The Negro women had the perfect jazz abandon, while the white ones moved lamely and woodenly. This same lack of spontaneity



Winold Reiss, *Hot Chocolates*, 1929. Crayon and pastel on paper.



Winold Reiss, Front & rear cover (featuring a portrait of the classical singer Roland Hayes) of *Survey Graphic*'s special issue "Harlem, Mecca of the New Negro," March 1925.



Photographs by Murray

Congo : a familiar of the New York studios

Harlem Types

PORTRAITS BY WINOLD REISS

HERE and elsewhere throughout this number, Winold Reiss presents us a graphic interpretation of Negro life, freshly conceived after its own patterns. Concretely in his portrait sketches, abstractly in his symbolic designs, he has aimed to portray the soul and spirit of a people. And by the simple but rare process of not setting up petty canons in the face of nature's own creative artistry, Winold Reiss has achieved what amounts to a revealing discovery of the significance, human and artistic, of one of the great dialects of human physiognomy, of some of the little understood but powerful idioms of nature's speech. Harlem, or any Negro community, spreads a rich and novel palette for the serious artist. It needs but enlightenment of mind and eye to make its intriguing problems and promising resources available for the stimulation and enrichment of American art.

Left: Winold Reiss, First page of "Harlem Types: Portraits by Winold Reiss" (featuring "*Congo: a familiar of the New York studios*" (from the *Survey Graphic* special issue, "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro," March 1925.

Right: Winold Reiss, *Congo: a familiar of the New York studios*, 1925. Pencil, charcoal, & pastel on paperboard.





Mother and child



Young America: native-born

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CONVENTIONS stand doubly in the way of artistic portrayal of Negro folk; certain narrowly arbitrary conventions of physical beauty, and as well, that inevitable inscrutability of things seen but not understood. Caricature has put upon the countenance of the Negro the mask of the comic and the grotesque, whereas in deeper truth and comprehension, nature or experience have put there the stamp of the very opposite, the serious, the tragic, the wistful. At times, too, there is a quality of soul that can only be called brooding and mystical. Here they are to be seen as we know them to be in fact. While it is a revealing interpretation for all, for the Negro artist, still for the most part confronting timidly his own material, there is certainly a particular stimulus and inspiration in this redeeming vision. Through it in all likelihood must come his best development in the field of the pictorial arts, for his capacity to express beauty depends vitally upon the capacity to see it in his own life and to generate it out of his own experience.

WINOLD REISS, son of Fritz Reiss, the landscape painter, pupil of Franz von Stuck of Munich, has become a master delineator of folk character by wide experience and definite specialization. With ever-ripening skill, he has studied and drawn the folk-types of Sweden, Holland, of the Black Forest and his own native Tyrol, and in America, the Black Foot Indians, the Pueblo people, the Mexicans, and now, the American Negro. His art owes its peculiar success as much to the philosophy of his approach as to his technical skill. He is a folk-artist of the brush and palette, seeking always the folk character back of the individual, the psychology behind the physiognomy. In design also he looks not merely for decorative elements, but for the pattern of the culture from which it sprang. Without loss of naturalistic accuracy and individuality, he somehow subtly expresses the type, and without being any the less human, captures the racial and local. What Gauguin and his followers have done for the Far East, and the work of Ufer and Blumenschein and the Taos school for the Pueblo and Indian, seems about to be done for the Negro and Africa; in short, painting, the most local of arts, in terms of its own limitations even, is achieving universality.



A Boy Scout

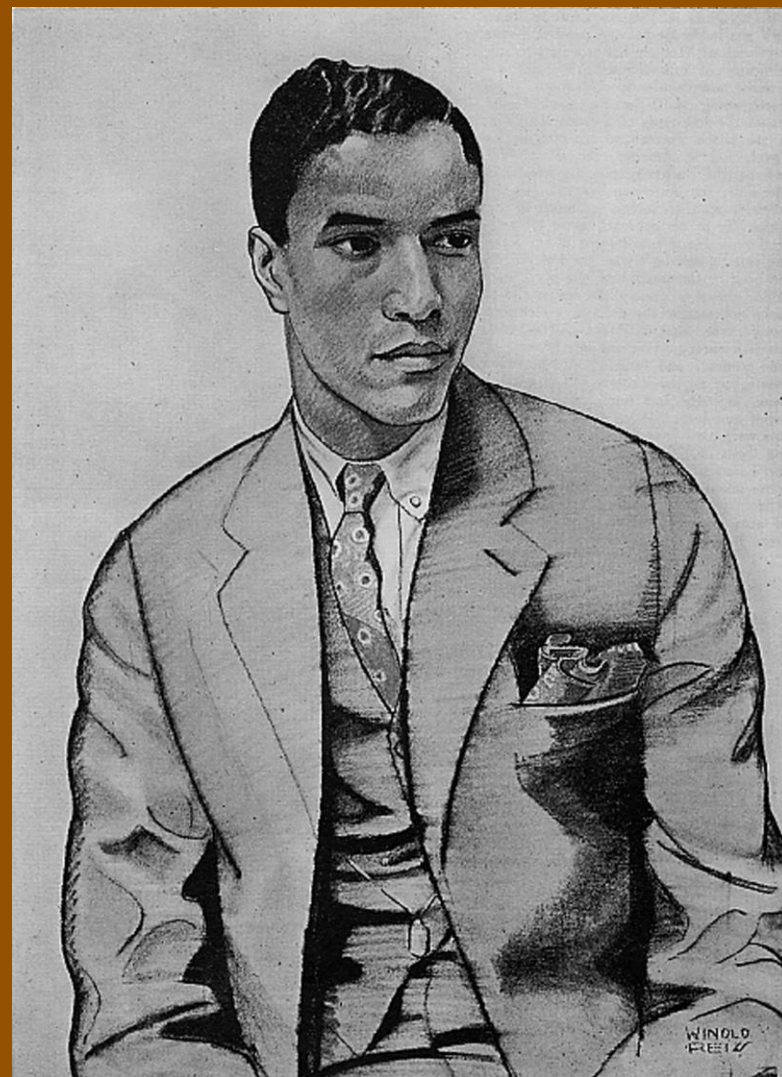


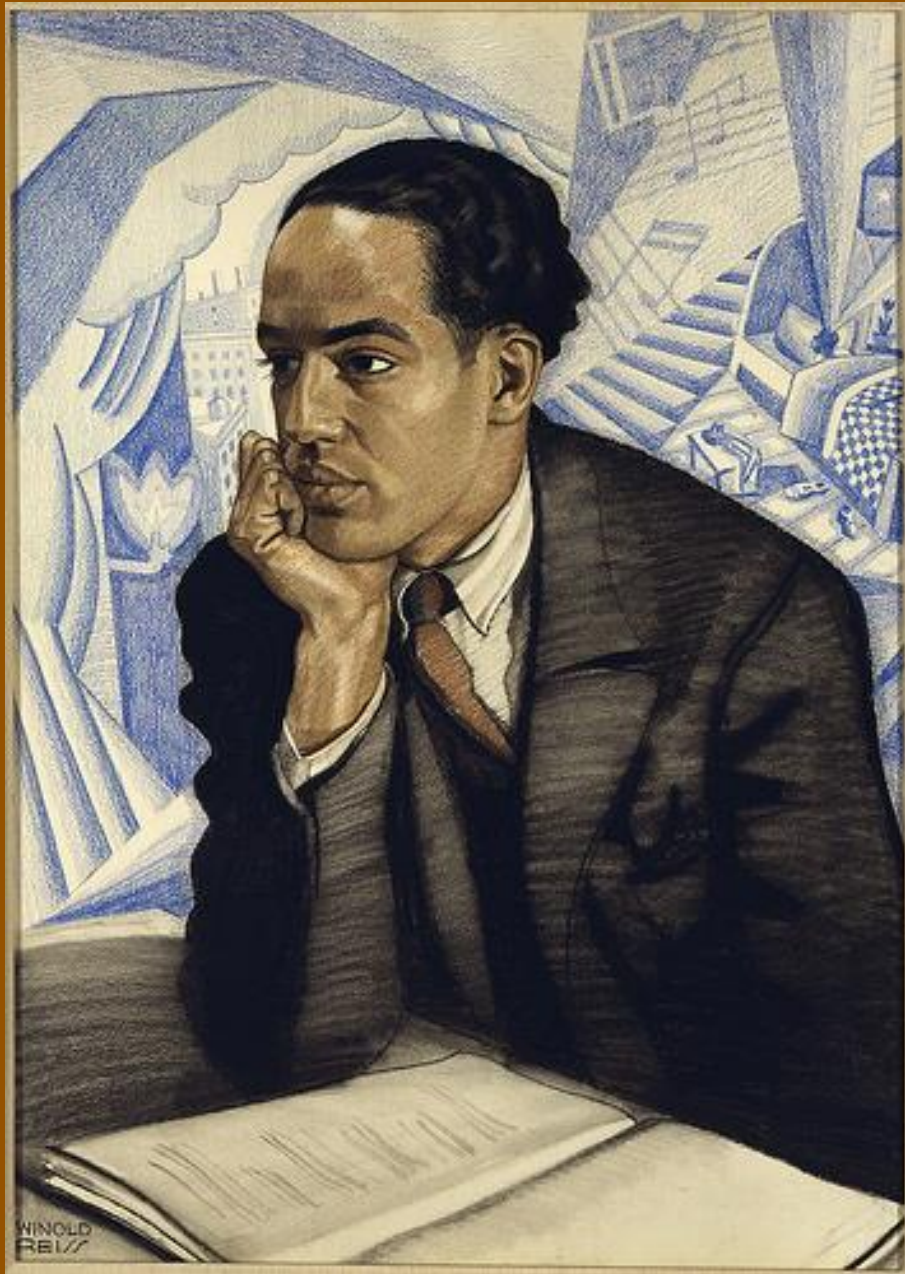
A woman lawyer



Girl in the white blouse

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Left: Winold Reiss, African American poet & playwright *Langston Hughes*, 1925. Pastel on illustration board.

Right: Winold Reiss, *The Actress (Fannie Belle DeKnight)*, c. 1927. Pastel on Whatman board.





Left: Winold Reiss, *Portrait of Sari Patton*, 1925. Pastel on Whatman board.

Right: Winold Reiss, *Two Public School Teachers*, 1925. Pastel on Whatman board.





Left: Winold Reiss, Sociologist & college administrator Charles S. Johnson (1893-1956), 1925. Pastel on paperboard.



Right: Winold Reiss, *Harlem Girl I*, 1925. Pencil, charcoal & pastel on paperboard.



Above: Winold Reiss, *Brothers-in-Arms at Zapata's Headquarters, Cuernavaca, Mexico (or Zapatista Soldiers)*, 1920. Pastel on paper.

Right: Winold Reiss, *Clumsy Woman*, 1927-28. Mixed media.

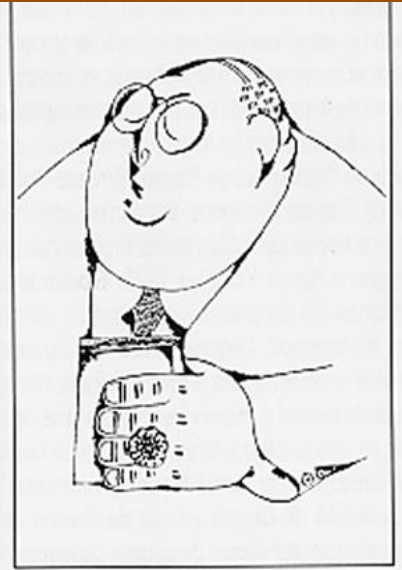




DIEGO RIVERA (3) 1923



DR. ATL (4) 1923

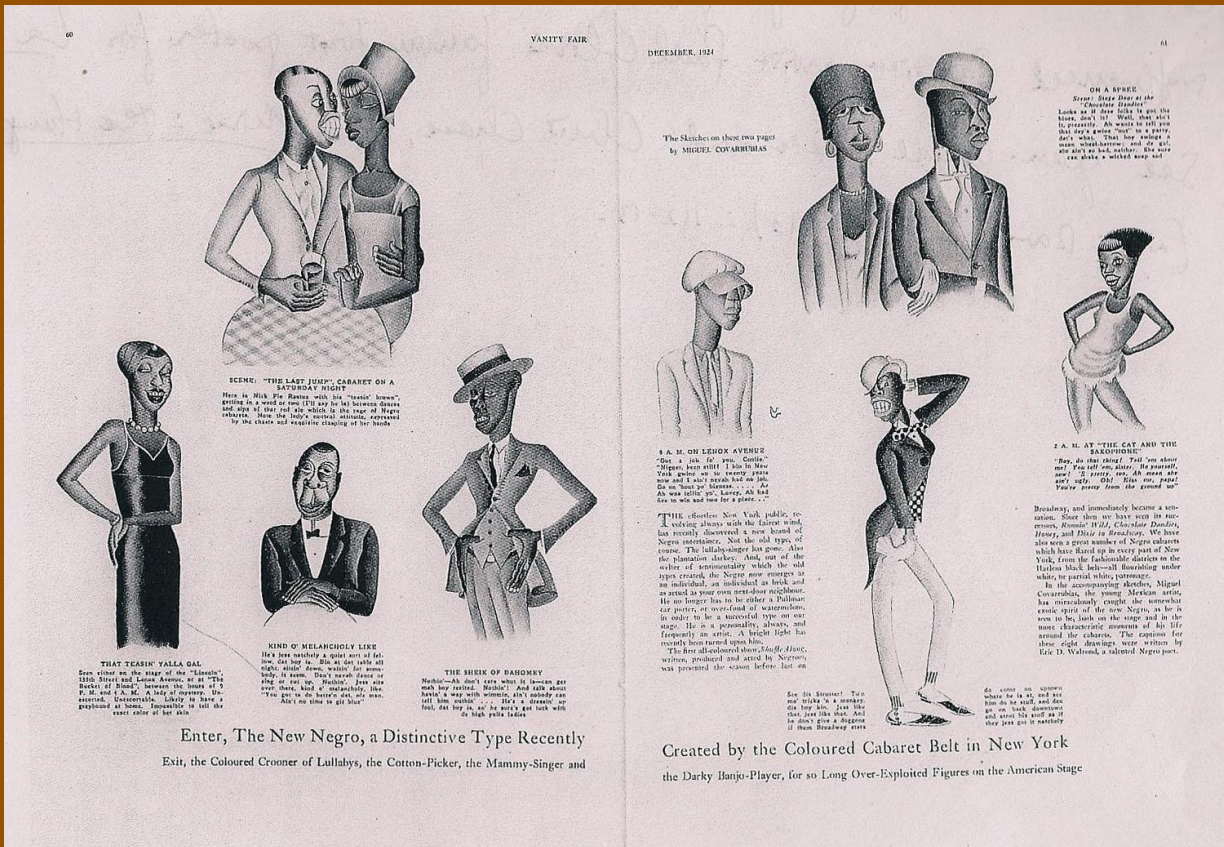


GENARO ESTRADA (5) 1923



Left: Miguel Covarrubias, *Self-portrait (The Murderer)*, c. 1925. Ink on paper.

Above: Miguel Covarrubias, (Clockwise beginning upper left) Caricatures of Diego Rivera, Dr. Atl, Genaro Estrada, Carlos Merida, Manuel Rodriguez Lozano, & Jose Juan Tablada, 1923. Ink on paper.



Left: Miguel Covarrubias, Illustrations for *Vanity Fair*, December 1924.

Center: Miguel Covarrubias, *Carl Van Vechten: A prediction*, n.d. Ink on paper.

Right: Miguel Covarrubias, *Christmas Card/Self-Portrait (for Carl Van Vechten)*, 1925. Mixed media on paper.



Left: Miguel Covarrubias, *Woman in Blue Dress*, 1926.
Oil on masonite.



Right: Miguel Covarrubias, *Rhapsody in Blue*, 1927.
Mixed media.

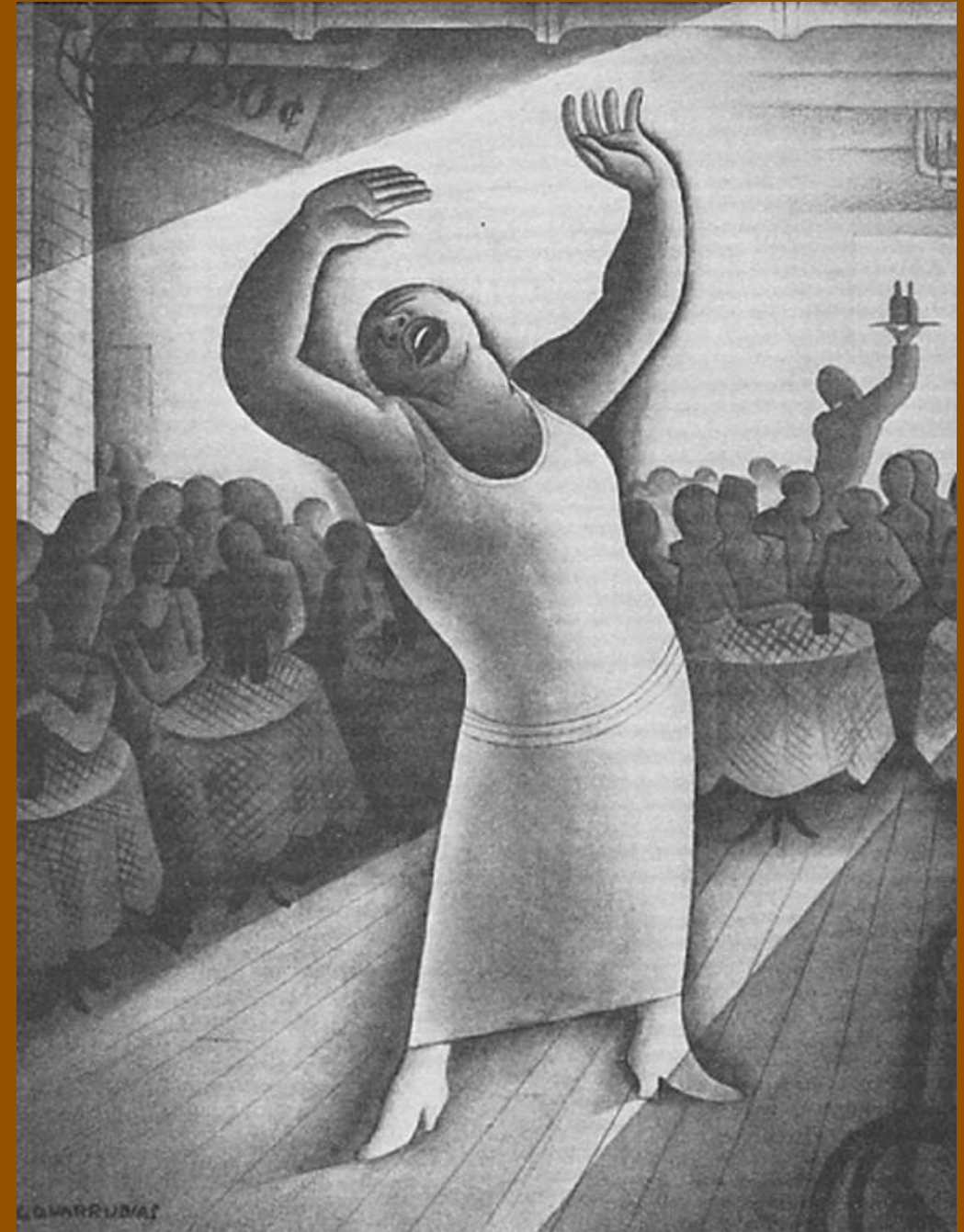
NEGRO DRAWINGS



MIGUEL COVARRUBIAS

Miguel Covarrubias, Facsimile of the the cover of *Negro Drawings* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928).

Miguel Covarrubias, *Blues Singer* (1926) from *Negro Drawings* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928).

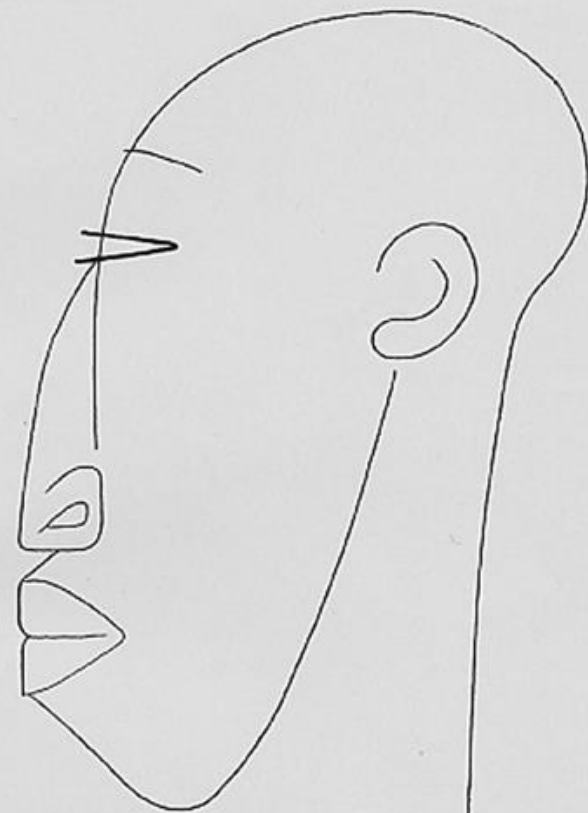




COVARRUBIAS

Left: Miguel Covarrubias, *Waiter* (from *Negro Drawings*), 1928.

Right: Miguel Covarrubias, *Head* (from *Negro Drawings*), 1928.



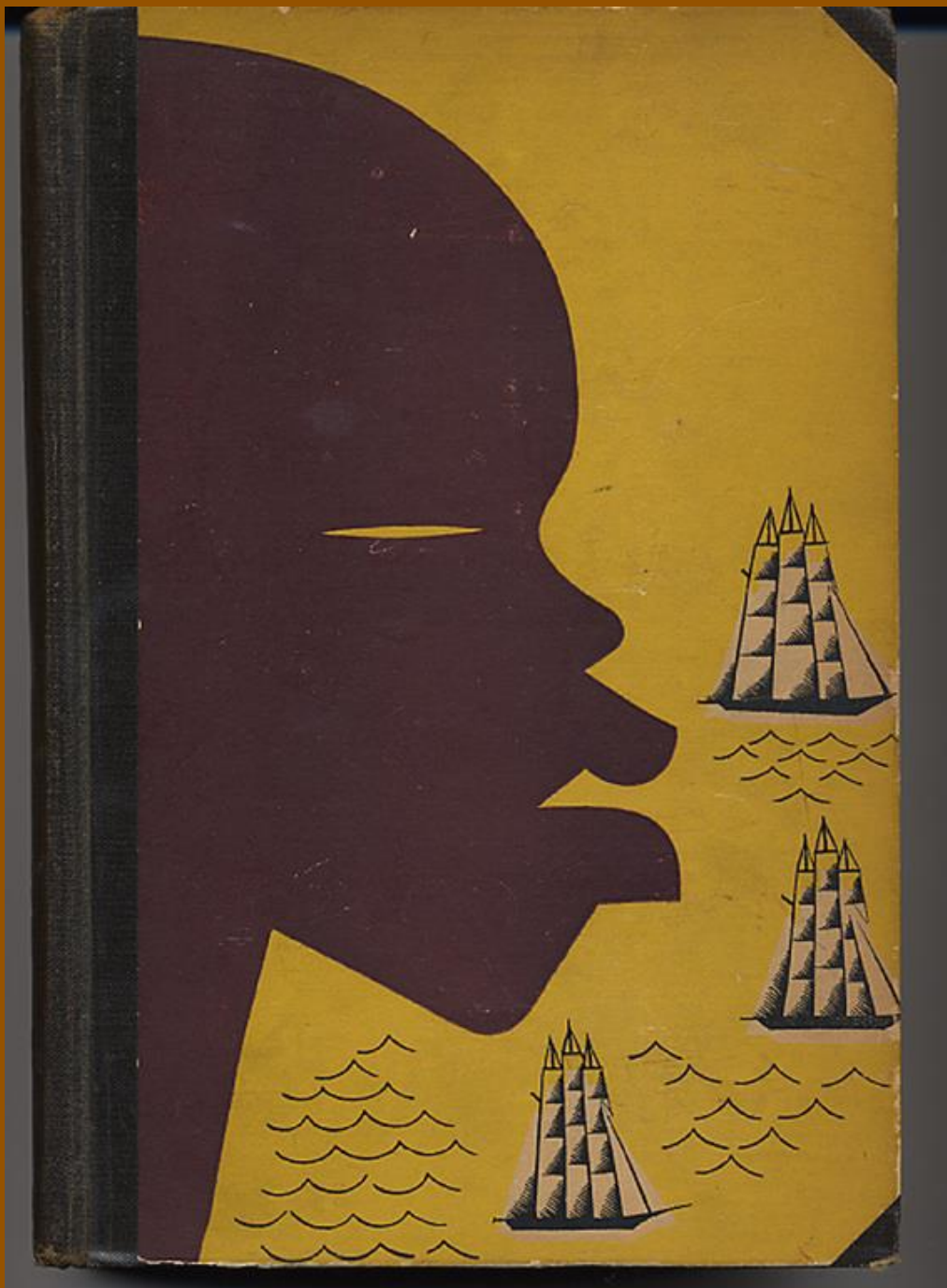
COVARRUBIAS



Left: Miguel Covarrubias, *At LeRoy's* (from *Negro Drawings*), 1928.

Right: Miguel Covarrubias, *Woman with Basket* (from *Negro Drawings*), 1928.



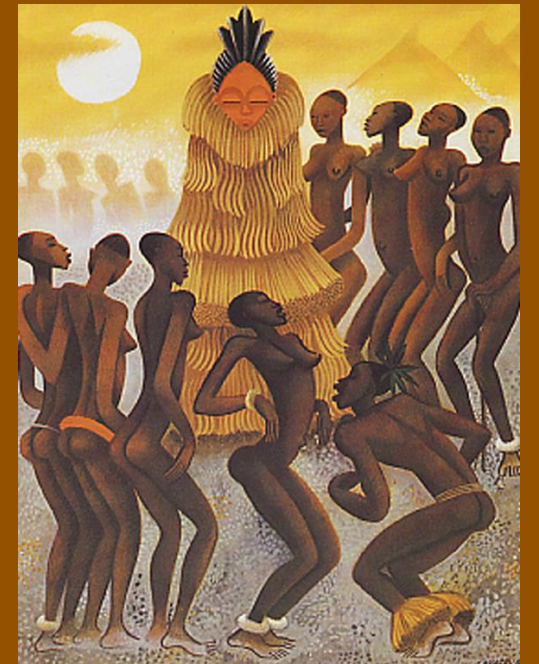


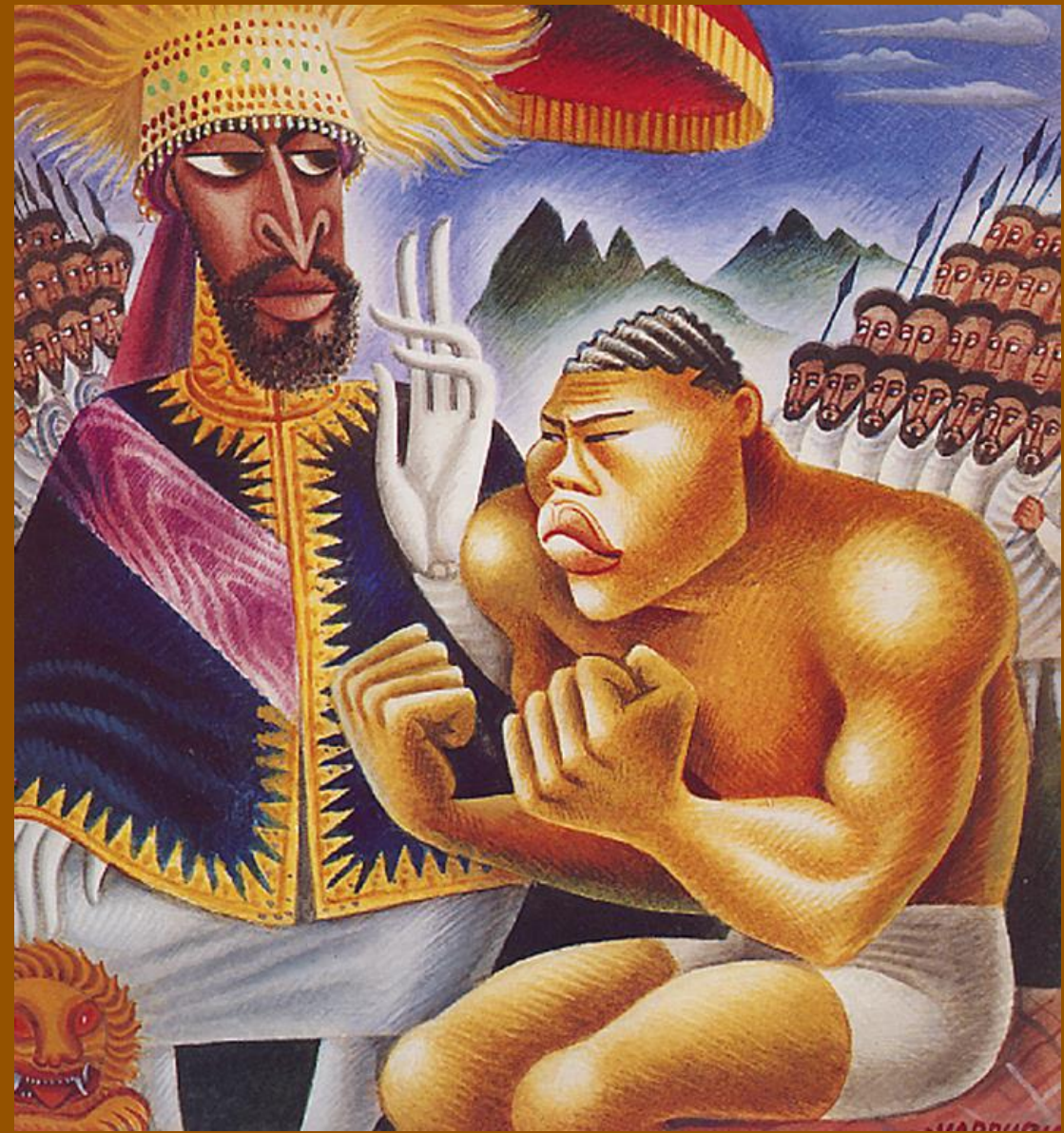
Left: Miguel Covarrubias, Bound cover of *Adventures of an African Slaver*, 1928.



Above: Miguel Covarrubias, Endpapers for *Adventures of an African Slaver*, 1928.

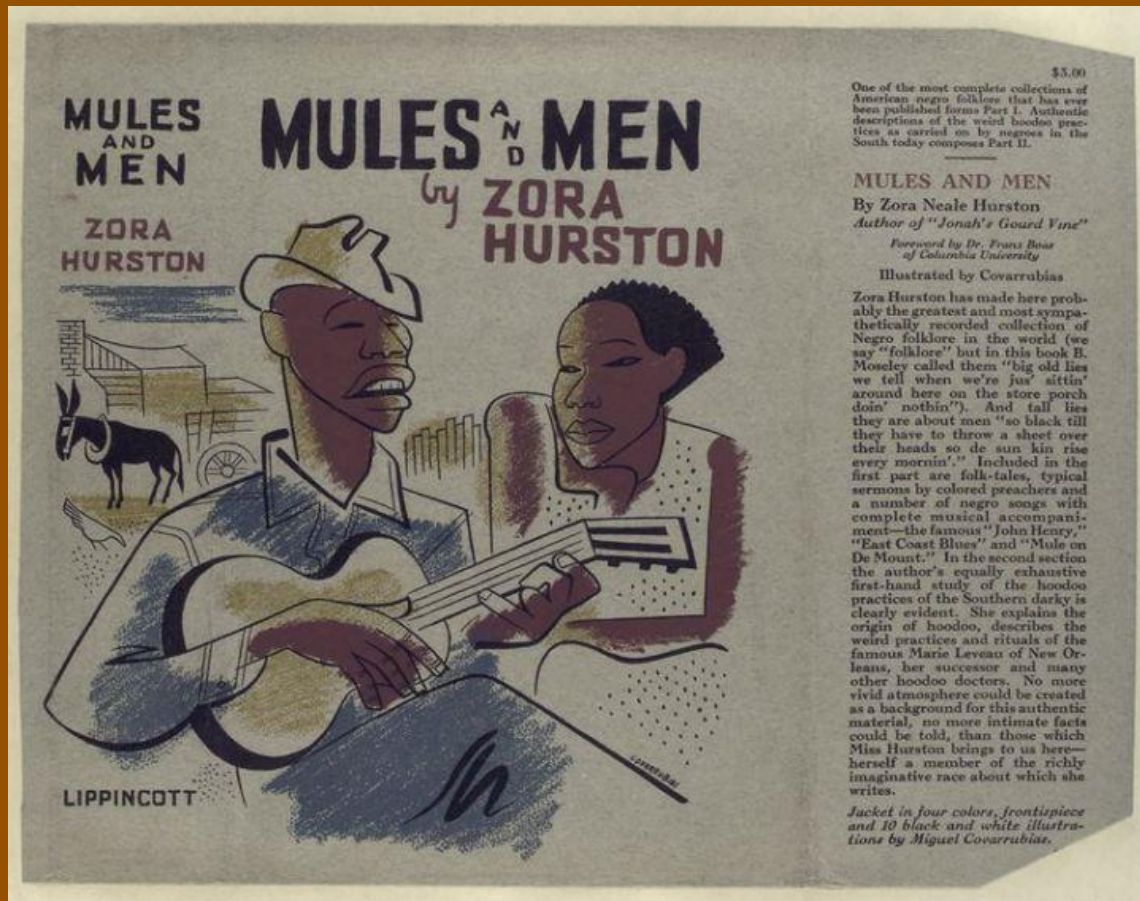
Right: Miguel Covarrubias, Illustration for Rene Maran's *Batouala*, 1932.





Left: Miguel Covarrubias, "To Hold as t' Were the Mirror Up to Nature," from *Vanity Fair* 1929.

Above: Miguel Covarrubias, *Haile Selassie versus Joe Louis* (from *Vanity Fair*), 1935.

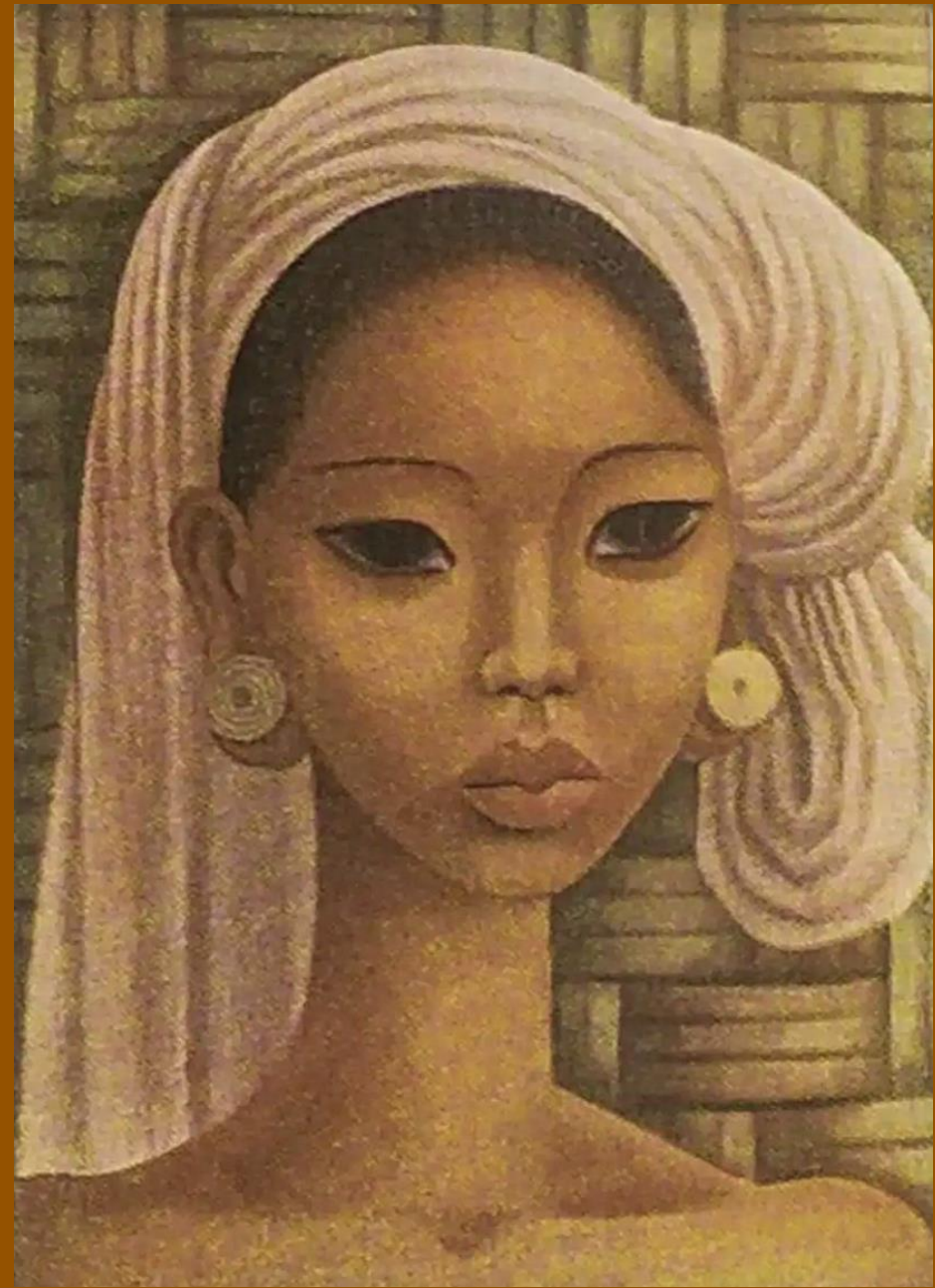


Left & right: Miguel Covarrubias, Book jacket & interior illustration for Zora Neale Hurston's *Mules and Men*, 1935.

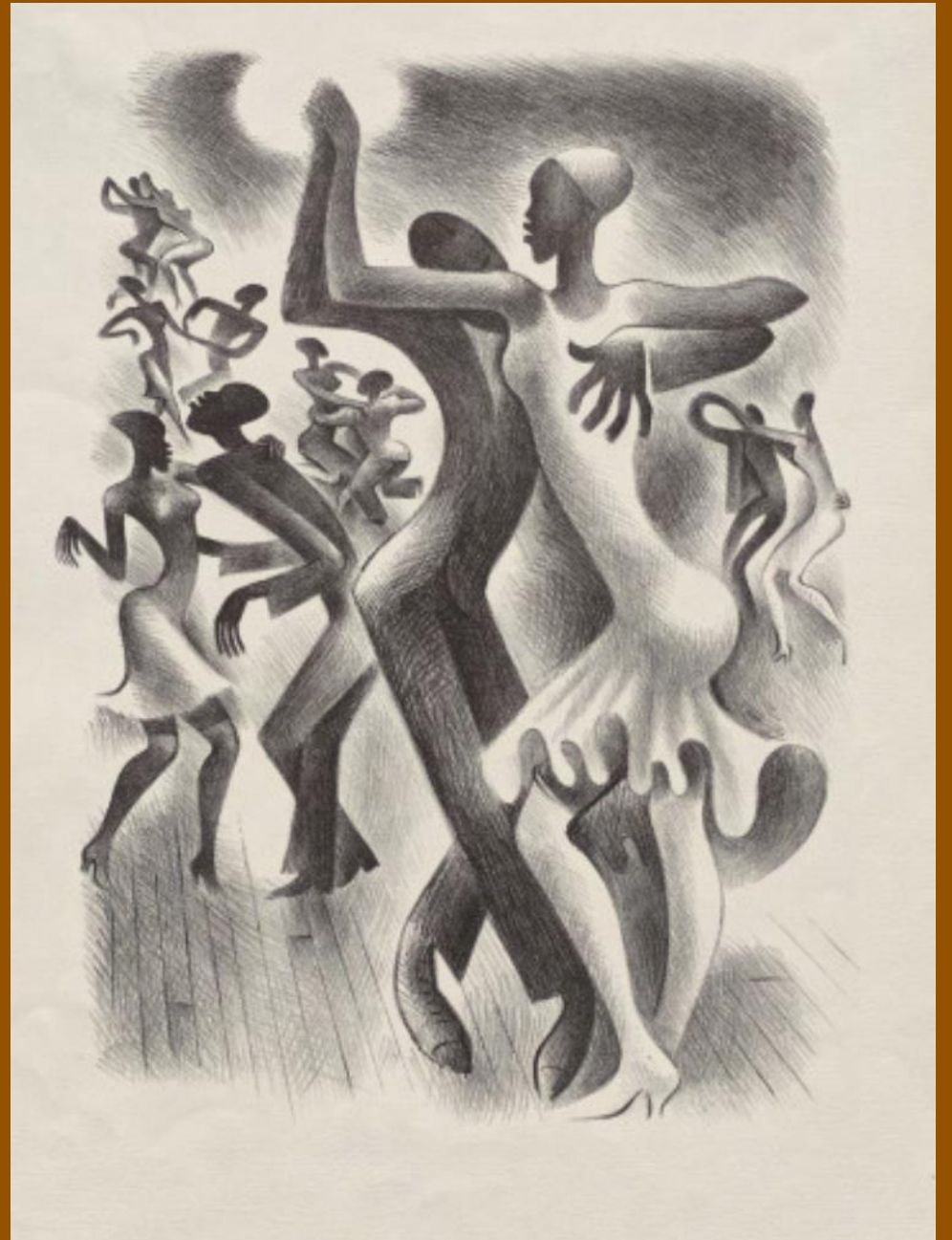


Left: Miguel Covarrubias, *Baris-Gede, Ceremonial War Dance* (from *Island of Bali*), 1937.

Right: Miguel Covarrubias, *Portrait of Ayu Ktut* (from *Island of Bali*), 1937.



Miguel Covarrubias, *Lindy Hop*, 1936. Lithograph.





Left: Poster for *Hallelujah*, 1929.

Above: King Vidor (1894-1982).



Left: Film still from *Hallelujah* (1929), featuring Fannie Belle DeKnight, Daniel L. Haynes, Victoria Spivey, & Harry Gray.



Above: Okeh Records advertisement for Victoria Spivey's recording *Black Snake Blues* (1926).



Above left: Publicity photograph from *Hallelujah* (USA, 1929, King Vidor, dir.), featuring director King Vidor & actors Honey Brown & Daniel Haynes.



Above right: Production photograph from *Hallelujah* (USA, 1929, King Vidor, dir.), featuring director King Vidor & actors Daniel Haynes & Nina Mae McKinney.

Right: Nina Mae McKinney (1912-1967), Screen & stage actress.



Publicity photograph from *Hallelujah* (USA, 1929, King Vidor, dir.), featuring Black & White cast members & crew, Memphis, TN, 1928.





Production photographs from *Hallelujah* (USA, 1929, King Vidor, dir.), featuring Black cast members, including Assistant Director Harold Garrison, Memphis, TN, 1928.



Film stills from *Hallelujah* (USA, 1929, dir. King Vidor), featuring William Fontaine, Nina Mae McKinney, Daniel Haynes, & Fannie Belle de Knight.



Film stills & production photography from *Hallelujah* (USA, 1929, dir. King Vidor).