Retelling the Classics: The Harlem Renaissance, Biblical Stories, and Black Peoplehood

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African American Studies | African History | Biblical Studies | Literature in English, North America, Ethnic and Cultural Minority

Description, Abstract, or Artist's Statement
Applying social identity theory to the process of creating peoplehood can illustrate the positive power that literature has in uplifting marginalized communities by showing their worth. James Weldon Johnson’s “The Creation” and Zora Neale Hurston’s Moses, Man of the Mountain, both composed during the Harlem Renaissance, offer one way to create Black peoplehood by creating depictions of God’s love for His Black people through the repurposing of biblical stories. Through the implementation of social identity theory to Hurston’s Moses, Man of the Mountain and Johnson’s “The Creation,” I argue that these two authors addressed the need among African Americans to be viewed, and to see themselves, as a unified people after a history of exclusion from the dominant group. Johnson’s poem depicts a human-like God with infinite love for His people which would have told Black people that they were important to the God who created them. Hurston forged connections between the Hebrews in the Exodus and African Americans to show their worth and potential as a people through the special place that God’s attention gave them. Both works helped to establish Black people as people who deserved a positive, unique social identity because of God’s love.

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The Harlem Renaissance was a period between World War I and the Great Depression when black artists and writers flourished in the United States. Critics and historians have assigned varying dates to the movement's beginning and end, but most tend to agree that by 1917 there were signs of increased cultural activity among black artists in the Harlem area of New York City and that by the mid-1930s the movement had lost much of its original vigor. Major New York-based publishing houses began to search for new black voices and print...
their poems, short stories, and novels. Books featuring contemporary or historical retellings of Bible characters or Biblical stories NOT set in the Biblical timeline. Score. A book’s total score is based on multiple factors, including the number of people who have voted for it and how highly those voters ranked the book. All Votes Add Books To This List. No aspect of the Harlem Renaissance shaped America and the entire world as much as jazz. Jazz flouted many musical conventions with its syncopated rhythms and improvised instrumental solos. Thousands of city dwellers flocked night after night to see the same performers. Harlem brought notice to great works that might otherwise have been lost or never produced. The results were phenomenal. The artists of the Harlem Renaissance undoubtedly transformed African American culture. But the impact on all American culture was equally strong. For the first time, white America could not look away. Harlem, 1900 to 1940, an African American Community The Schomburg Center at the New York Public Library has prepared an outstanding online exhibit on the Harlem Renaissance. The Black Renaissance was a cultural movement with The Harlem Renaissance being at the center of that movement. The Harlem Renaissance was an intellectual, social, and artistic explosion centered around the Harlem neighborhood in Manhattan, New York City spanning the Mid 1910s till the early 1930s. Podcast link: https://kite.link/rmkDPW7.