



# **The Ideologies of African American Literature: From the Harlem Renaissance to the Black Nationalist Revolt**

*Robert E. Washington*

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## **The Ideologies of African American Literature: From the Harlem Renaissance to the Black Nationalist Revolt** Robert E. Washington

This book embarks on new intellectual terrain as the first systematic and theoretically grounded sociological study of African American literature. It examines the impact of race relations, as well as other social and political forces, on the development of the dominant ideological outlooks of African American literature. Spanning the fifty year period from 1920 to 1970, encompassing the mass northern movement, urbanization, and modernization of the African American community, and culminating in the civil rights revolution, it is the first sociological study that situates black literary discourse, and the major black American literary intellectuals (e.g. Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Amiri Baraka), in the social and political developments of American race relations. By analyzing the formation, influence, and decline of each of the five dominant schools of black literary discourse over those five tumultuous decades, it explains how black literary production not only reacted to ? but also was shaped and constrained by ? the racial caste system.

The book concludes with a theoretical chapter that links the dominant black literary outlooks to white American culture. Rejecting the simplistic notion that all cultural expression by black Americans reflects the community's social consciousness, this theoretical discussion sets forth a comparative analytical framework for understanding the social locations and functions of the different spheres of African American cultural production.

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