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Gay Rebel of the Harlem Renaissance: Selections from the Work of Richard Bruce Nugent

Richard Bruce Nugent

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Richard Bruce Nugent (1906–1987) was a writer, painter, illustrator, and popular bohemian personality who lived at the center of the Harlem Renaissance. Protégé of Alain Locke, roommate of Wallace Thurman, and friend of Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston, the precocious Nugent stood for many years as the only African-American writer willing to clearly pronounce his homosexuality in print. His contribution to the landmark publication *FIRE!!*, “Smoke, Lilies and Jade,” was unprecedented in its celebration of same-sex desire. A resident of the notorious “Niggeratti Manor,” Nugent also appeared on Broadway in *Porgy* (the 1927 play) and *Run, Little Chillun* (1933)
Thomas H. Wirth, a close friend of Nugent’s during the last years of the artist’s life, has assembled a selection of Nugent’s most important writings, paintings, and drawings—works mostly unpublished or scattered in rare and obscure publications and collected here for the first time. Wirth has written an introduction providing biographical information about Nugent’s life and situating his art in relation to the visual and literary currents which influenced him. A foreword by Henry Louis Gates Jr. emphasizes the importance of Nugent for African American history and culture.

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