



# And Bid Him Sing: A Biography of Countee Cullen

*Charles Molesworth*

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While competing with Langston Hughes for the title of “Poet Laureate of Harlem,” Countée Cullen (1903–46) crafted poems that became touchstones for American readers, both black and white. Inspired by classic themes and working within traditional forms, Cullen shaped his poetry to address universal questions like love, death, longing, and loss while also dealing with the issues of race and idealism that permeated the national conversation. Drawing on the poet’s unpublished correspondence with contemporaries and friends like Hughes, Claude McKay, Carl Van Vechten, Dorothy West, Charles S. Johnson and Alain Locke, and presenting a unique interpretation of his poetic gifts, *And Bid Him Sing* is the first full-length critical biography of this famous American writer.

Despite his untimely death at the age of forty-two, Cullen left behind an extensive body of work. In addition to five books of poetry, he authored two much-loved children’s books and translated Euripides’ *Medea*, the first translation by an African American of a Greek tragedy. In these pages, Charles Molesworth explores the many ways that race, religion, and Cullen’s sexuality informed the work of one of the unquestioned stars of the Harlem Renaissance.

An authoritative work of biography that brings to life one of the chief voices of his generation, *And Bid Him Sing* returns to us one of America’s finest lyric poets in all of his complexity and musicality.

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