



# Revelations: American History, American Myths

*Nathan Irvin Huggins*

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## **Revelations: American History, American Myths** Nathan Irvin Huggins

At the time of his death in 1989, Nathan Irvin Huggins ranked among the most influential and important historians in America, a scholar who was universally hailed as the leading chronicler and critic of the Harlem Renaissance. Now, in *Revelations*, readers will find a celebration of Huggins' many contributions to American history. It offers a superb collection of his finest articles, reviews, and essays, works that span the entire spectrum of his thought on the African-American experience.

Whether he is discussing the literary style of Langston Hughes, the leadership roles of W. E. B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, and Martin Luther King, Jr., or the African-American contribution to the "common culture" of America, Huggins is at his eloquent best, by turns passionate and poignant, witty and reflective. Among the many moving pieces, readers will find a tour of the slave castles of the West African coast in which Huggins describes places like Goree Island and Elmina as a collective and horrific Plymouth Rock of the African-American past. There is a powerful new introduction to his seminal book *Black Odyssey*, which assesses the major writings on slavery over the past two decades, and an illuminating look at the experience of free blacks in a slave society, whose rights were continually challenged or taken away. And, of course, Huggins' discussion of the Harlem Renaissance reveals the life of the city, the vibrancy that set the tempo and style for the decade that F. Scott Fitzgerald called "The Jazz Age." Bessie Smith, Louis Armstrong, "Jelly Roll" Morton, Duke Ellington--all were changing American culture in profound and permanent ways, transforming it into something fresh and new and forever different--something uniquely American.

Prepared by his widow, Brenda Smith Huggins, *Revelations* also features an insightful appreciation by Lawrence Levine that appraises Huggins's unique contribution to American history, and an envoi by Leon Litwack that paints a moving portrait of Huggins the man. Framed between is the fruit of a lifetime of reflection on topics as diverse as the art of Alain Locke, jazz, Paul Robeson, the Civil Rights Era, and the nature of history itself.

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