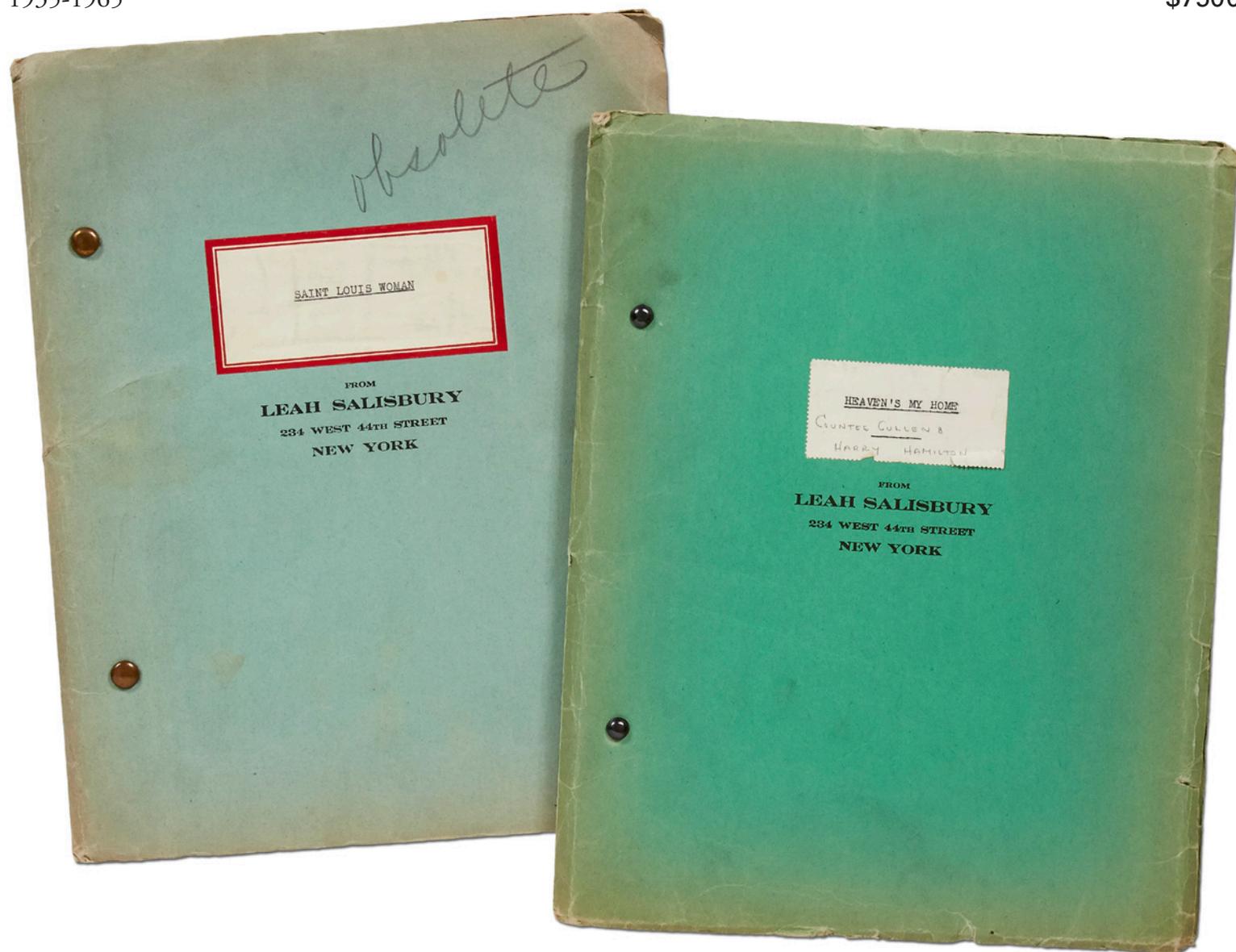


Countee Cullen

Two Playscripts

1935-1965

\$7500



Two original playscripts from the poet Countee Cullen, a central figure of the Harlem Renaissance, including the unproduced play *Heaven's My Home* and *Saint Louis Woman*, a stage adaptation of Arna Bontemps' novel *God Sends Sunday* on which he collaborated with Bontemps and Langston Hughes, and which was later adapted into a Broadway musical. Overall about near fine sunning to the wrappers and general edge wear including nicks and tears.

After early success as a celebrated poet of the Harlem Renaissance, Cullen turned his attention to adapting of his lone novel, *One Way to Heaven*, in collaboration with writer Harry Hamilton. While the play was never produced despite much effort from his literary agent Leah Salisbury. Cullen finally found success with *Saint Louis Woman*, an adaptation of Arna Bontemps' novel *God Sends Sunday* on which he collaborated with the author beginning in the mid-30s. The copy contained here was revised by Langston Hughes who was brought in by Bontemps because of his experience writing scripts. The play debuted at the Karamu Theatre in Cleveland in 1935 for a short run before being adapted into a musical eleven years later on Broadway starring Pearl Bailey with songs by Johnny Mercer and Harold Arlen, including "Come Rain, Come Shine."

Despite the play's modest success, the endeavor to bring it to Broadway no doubt contributed to Cullen already declining health. Among the stressors was friction with Hughes who altered much of the original story (likely prompting the note scrawled on the front of the script's front wrapper "obsolete"). Then came a deal between Bontemps and Hughes giving Hughes a sizable slice of the royalties on the production for his work, and finally a slew of bad press from the black community over the depiction of some of the play's less-than-favorable black characters which they said reinforce negative stereotypes and resulted in Lena Horn pulling out of the show. Sadly Cullen died just three months shy of the musical's Broadway debut.

Interesting items from the late-career work of a central figure of the Harlem Renaissance. Provenance available upon request.

Details:

1. *Heaven's My Home*. 110p. 1935. Carbon typescript in bradbound printed green wraps of his literary agent Leah Salisbury with paper label on the front wrap. An unproduced play adapted from his novel *One Way to Heaven* written in collaboration with Harry Hamilton.
2. *Saint Louis Woman*. 112p. [Circa 1935]. Carbon typescript in bradbound printed green wraps of his literary agent Leah Salisbury with a paper label on the front wrap along with a note in pencil that reads "obsolete." A stage adaptation of Arna Bontemps' novel *God Sends Sunday* on which he collaborated with Cullen. This copy states "revised by Langston Hughes" on the title page. The play was adapted into a musical a decade later debuting on Broadway in 1946 starring Pearl Bailey and with songs by Johnny Mercer and Harold Arlen, including "Come Rain, Come Shine." It debuted several months after Cullen's death. [BTC#401014]

