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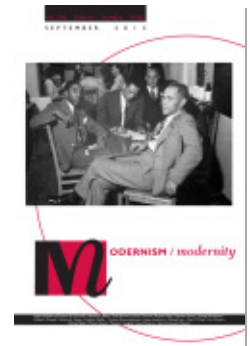
Questionnaire Responses

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ments of the productions of the Harlem Renaissance? How is what might be deemed a “multilingual mode of study” vital for our present day work on the movement? The prospect of a center for the study of the Harlem Renaissance is terribly intriguing for future scholarly endeavors.

Houston A. Baker is Distinguished University Professor and a professor of English at Vanderbilt University. He has served as president of the Modern Language Association of America and is the author of articles, books, and essays devoted to African American literary criticism and theory. His book *Betrayal: How Black Intellectuals Have Abandoned the Ideals of the Civil Rights Era* (2008) received an American Book Award for 2009.

Emily Bernard

How have your ideas about the Harlem Renaissance evolved since you first began writing about it?

My ideas about the Harlem Renaissance haven't changed much in the last twenty years, but they have expanded. I began reading and writing about the Harlem Renaissance while I was still in college. I was initially drawn to it because of its surfaces—stylish people in attractive clothing, the elegant interiors and exteriors of its nightclubs and magazines. Style drew me in, but as I began to read and write more, it wasn't the style itself but the intriguing degree of importance assigned to the issue of style that kept me interested in the Harlem Renaissance. I was fascinated by the assumption that was prevalent during the time that aesthetics could impact—even transform—the social and political position of black people in the United States. Those who believed in the inextricable dynamic between art and politics did so ardently, and so did those who believed the opposite. The wars that were waged over this issue in the pages of newspapers, magazines, books, and correspondence have long been the inspiration for my own professional passion.

For years, I have been interested in the role that whiteness played in the construction of the New Negro. Primarily, I have been curious about the way that anxieties about whiteness circulated—and continue to circulate—around Carl Van Vechten. I believe that the discussions occasioned by the role Van Vechten played in the lives and careers of black artists, as well as the firestorm generated by the publication of his 1926 novel *Nigger Heaven*, are mirrored in current controversies over racial identity, particularly as it relates to cultural authority and authenticity. The debates over art that reflect the ideological fissures and inconsistencies of the Harlem Renaissance period are still foundational to the construction of racial identity as it continues to evolve. I imagine that my interest in the Harlem Renaissance will remain steady as long as I can continue to locate connections between the period when the Negro was in vogue and the role that blackness plays in American culture in the twenty-first century.

436 What figures, connections, or areas of inquiry require further attention or reflection? What aspects of the Harlem Renaissance are we missing or ignoring?

Much interesting work is being done to expand our acquaintanceship with important but relatively unexamined figures of the period. A biography of Harold Jackman—which includes a comprehensive collection of his correspondence—is currently under way. Thomas Wirth is spearheading the development of an online collection of the correspondence of Countee Cullen that will contribute layers to our appreciation of Cullen and his world. Biographies of influential and productive writers, like Jessie Fauset and Wallace Thurman, are needed. More studies on the role of women in this male-dominated movement in general are needed. More work on the roles played by class, gender, and sexuality in the New Negro movement and the ways each determined its course would be illuminating. There has been surprisingly little work done on the importance of theater during the Harlem Renaissance. The lives and work of actors like Rose McClendon, Abbie Mitchell, and Fredi Washington merit serious attention.

The James Weldon Johnson Collection, housed at the Beinecke Library at Yale University, contains an enormous amount of material related to the Harlem Renaissance that has yet to be explored. For instance, there is a rich and substantial collection of Chester Himes correspondence waiting to be assembled and annotated. There is more material waiting to be explored at other archives, such as the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York, the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University in Washington, D.C., and the Countee Cullen/Harold Jackman Memorial Collection in Atlanta.

Emily Bernard is a professor of English and of ALANA U.S. ethnic studies at the University of Vermont. She has received grants and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research, and the Ford Foundation. Her most recent book is *Carl Van Vechten and the Harlem Renaissance: A Portrait in Black and White* (2012).

Anne E. Carroll

What figures, connections, or areas of inquiry require further attention or reflection?

I started learning about the Harlem Renaissance when I was a graduate student. I was drawn to the movement by the connections forged among its writers, artists, musicians, and performers. I came to understand many of its features as modernist: the innovativeness of its participants, the ways they challenged the beliefs and practices established by their elders, the ways they linked texts in various media to offer new images of African Americans and new ideas about how texts could do cultural work—or not. I taught courses in which my students and I explored the modernism of the Harlem Renaissance, and I argued—in classes and in my research—that understanding the Harlem Renaissance as modernist helps us better understand both movements.