

merit. Overall, *Citizen of the World* makes an important contribution to the growing scholarship on Du Bois's post-1930s radicalization.

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PETER KERRY POWERS *Goodbye Christ?: Christianity, Masculinity, and the New Negro Renaissance*

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In *Goodbye Christ?*, Peter Kerry Powers focuses on how Countee Cullen, W.E.B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, James Weldon Johnson, Oscar Micheaux, and Richard Wright negotiated facts about gender, sexuality, class, religion, the Black Church, modernism, relationships, education, the fiction they wrote, and the intertextual relationships between these variables. He argues that previous scholars have often misread important aspects of the Harlem Renaissance, stating that this cultural movement was successful; started in 1903, not 1923; lasted until the mid-1930s, not 1929; and was always deeply informed by religion, particularly Christianity.

Specifically, Powers argues that these nonreligious or unconventionally religious Black authors of the Harlem Renaissance used their literary works to critique, negotiate, and refine their feelings toward Christianity, generally, and the unique nature of the Black Church, specifically. He also argues that audiences could relate to and appreciate the messages in such texts because the authors grew up learning about the mores and sources of Black Christianity and because they used these throughout their works. Powers divides all Black Americans into two groups: the educated, heathenistic, and elite, and the uneducated, religious, poor. Powers continues to argue that church leaders were deeply suspicious of people with formal education. From his analysis of literary texts and to his comments about Du Bois's notion of the "Talented Tenth," Powers makes it clear that Black people faced legitimate and heartfelt struggles when it came to relationships with other Black people and Black institutions. These struggles, *Goodbye Christ?* claims, are also present in the work of contemporary Black intellectuals Ta-Nehisi Coates, Henry Louis Gates Jr., and Cornel West. To these men, we could add Alice Walker's fiction and non-fiction, including her articulation of womanist theology, as a challenge to both Black theology and regular (i.e., White) theology.

*Goodbye Christ?* shows a lack of familiarity with important academic work and misses important opportunities for scholarly conversations, especially interdisciplinary ones. Historians have long acknowledged and appreciated the

all-encompassing role religion has played in African American history. In addition to the literary researchers Powers cites, scholars working in history, critical race theory, gender studies, and religious studies have works Powers should have utilized, given his topic. Powers engages mostly with the primary texts under study. Where he does engage with existing scholarship, his writing style and system of citations make it difficult at times and impossible at other times to consult his sources. His paraphrasing of authors includes more of his own thoughts than the author he cites. For example, Powers writes, "For bell hooks, Micheaux's manipulation of the relationship between audience and spectacle decomposes stereotypical images of African Americans" (115). Unfortunately, *Goodbye Christ?* also suffers from being dense in most places with its ambiguous pronouns, contradictions, obscure diction, unorganized and sprawling paragraphs, and the ongoing meta discourses about what Powers says he has argued or will be arguing yet never quite actually argues.

Powers also assumes that readers are already thoroughly familiar with the films, poems, short fiction, and nonfiction referenced. Because of these characteristics, *Goodbye Christ?* will be most useful to scholars of early twentieth-century literature and is likely only partially accessible to graduate students and experts familiar with the Harlem Renaissance and its basic texts. Some historians will find *Goodbye Christ?* limited in its usefulness: it does not look at causality or context, in addition to its lack of engagement with other relevant primary or secondary sources. Most problematic in terms of context and analysis is Powers's uncritical use of the word "Negro," his assertion that stereotypical images of Black people served a positive purpose, and his analysis that equates Black victims of lynching with martyrs. Powers would leave less informed readers believing that the Black community existed within two completely monolithic, homogenous groups at odds with one another. Powers never even approaches an acknowledgment of prevailing conditions during the Harlem Renaissance that prompted Rayford Logan and other historians to deem the era from c. 1870 to 1930 "the nadir of American race relations."

Taking its title from Langston Hughes's poem "Goodbye, Christ," which expresses fear, disappointment, and suspicion toward Christianity, Powers effectively serves to remind historians of US history and scholars of African American studies that much work remains. We still need more secondary works for there to be something of a comprehensive literature on the Harlem Renaissance. There is also a dearth of scholarship when it comes to acknowledging Black people and atheism, as noted by Christopher Cameron's work. While disappointing, Powers aims for the kind of cultural studies analysis historians often shy away from and would do well to adopt more often.

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