

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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★ **Miss Anne in Harlem: The White Women of the Black Renaissance.**

Kaplan, Carla (Author)

Sep 2013. 576 p. Harper, hardcover, \$28.99. (9780060882389). 813.

Frustrated by the lack of information about the strong-minded white women who played intriguing, often vexing roles in the Harlem Renaissance and who were known collectively as Miss Anne, Kaplan (*Zora Neale Hurston: A Life in Letters*, 2002) took up the challenge and through arduous research reclaimed astonishing and provocative lives. She presents six indelible portraits of taboo-breakers who were reviled as “either monstrous or insane” for their involvement in African American culture. Each biography is shaped by Kaplan’s vivid scene-setting, historical perspective, psychological sensitivity, narrative panache, and frank analysis of the virulent sexism and racism of 1920s America and the confluence in Harlem of grim social conundrums and a spectacular creative flowering. Kaplan’s audacious, contrary and tragic subjects include Texan Josephine Cogdell Schuyler, a spitfire journalist who married the controversial African American newspaper editor and writer, George Schuyler; Charlotte Osgood Mason, who established herself as a meddling patron of Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, and Alain Locke, “one of the chief architects of the Harlem Renaissance”; and scandalous steamship heiress Nancy Cunard, who, to the surprise of nearly everyone, edited the era’s “most comprehensive anthology of black life.” Kaplan’s meticulously documented and intrepid history of Miss Anne encompasses a unique vantage on the complexities of race and gender and a dramatic study in paradox.

— Donna Seaman