on margins half way down the page—all of these taken together give this publication a distinct and attractive look, communicating on the visual level the journal editors' ambition to make a difference.

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Glenda R. Carpio and Werner Sollors, eds., *African American Literary Studies: New Texts, New Approaches, New Challenges*. Special Issue of *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 55.4 (2010). 232 pages.

African American Literary Studies: New Texts, New Approaches, New Challenges, a special issue of the journal of the German Association for American Studies, guest edited by Glenda R. Carpio and Werner Sollors, offers a stimulating combination of literary texts and critical contributions by leading African American studies scholars from the United States and Germany. The temporal and thematic scope of the publication ranges from the Harlem Renaissance to contemporary performance poetry. The articles address many significant issues in the most recent African American studies debates, such as the transnational paradigm and "the end of African American literature."

The issue opens with five short stories by Zora Neale Hurston, reprinted for the first time since their appearance in black magazines in the 1920s and 1930s. This section is remarkably attractive to any Harlem Renaissance scholar not only because of the previous scarce availability of the material but also because the short stories challenge the most common classification of Hurston as a folk-inspired artist, whose texts represent black communities in the American South. The works published in *Amerikastudien/American Studies* are all set in the Northern urban context and mostly deal with the problem of the Great Migration and the dichotomies of rural/urban and private/public. They are preoccupied with the influence of migration on black gender relations, which is especially visible in multiple representations of naïve sugar daddies, mulatto gold-diggers, and rough Southern women. Most stories are written in an experimental style that combines the biblical verse, the folk vernacular, and the black urban idiom, which was later developed and perfected in Hurston's masterpiece, *Moses, Man of the Mountain*. The text "Back Room" stands out from the other reprinted works and Hurston's output in general, since it represents the dilemmas of an urban, upper-class emancipated black woman and is written in standard English and traditional interior monologue. The stories are accompanied by useful introductions by Glenda R. Carpio, Werner Sollors, and M. Genevieve West, as well as by two previously unpublished Hurston

letters, introduced by Carla Cappetti. Interestingly, this part of the issue is concluded with an essay by Jamaica Kinkaid, who daringly admits that she has "never liked her writing" and criticizes Hurston's representations as limited in their humanity and unchangeable (600).

The following section continues with a focus on Hurston, moves to the Harlem Renaissance in general, and ends with an essay on Richard Wright. Daphne Brooks introduces a less known pursuit of Hurston, that is her recorded singing performances, which she produced as an anthropologist doing her research in the South. Brooks argues that through these recordings, Hurston undermines the hegemonic boundaries between the researcher and the object of study, outsider and insider, performer and listener, individual and community, as well as folklore and modernity, and she "illuminates the critical instrumentality of sonic black womanhood" (624). In the subsequent essay, Frank Mehring analyzes the work of Winold Reiss, an important German presence in the Harlem Renaissance, whose illustrations were used by Alain Locke in his seminal anthology *The New Negro* (1925). The text focuses on Reiss's three-month stay in Mexico in 1920 and the way it developed his interest in non-European cultures and racial representations. The following article, by Ernest Julius Mitchell II, continues the focus on the Harlem Renaissance. Mitchell discusses different names that were used to refer to the outburst of black artistic creativity in the 1920s and 1930s, especially the shift from the original "(New) Negro Renaissance" to "Harlem Renaissance," popularized in the 1960s. He claims that the change of the name also translated itself into a change in the understanding of the phenomenon: from the international, interracial, and intergenerational project envisioned by Locke to the black only movement in the 1920s in Harlem, which ended in failure. The section ends with an essay exploring the intertextual connection between Richard Wright's *Savage Holiday* and social psychiatrist Fredric Wertham's novel *Dark Legend*. Contrary to the common assumption about Wright's postwar shift from the social to the psychological orientation, Stephan Kuhl's reading reveals the interdependence of the personal and the environmental in Wright's later fiction.

The issue concludes with an especially interesting section that presents "New Directions and New Challenges" in African American studies. In the first article, George Hutchinson interrogates the concept of transnationalism and the black diaspora as used in contemporary American studies and argues that the elision of the nation-state has frequently been too idealistic and myopic. He also claims that the transnational paradigm has been decisively shaped by American understandings of black identity, such as the one-drop rule, which resulted in the exclusion of other experiences and codifications of race. Hutchinson's discussion is illustrated with a wide range of examples of black transnationalism, ranging from Caribbean blacks and Afromestizos to Afro-Deutsch

identity. In the following text, Jeffrey Ferguson challenges another dominant African American studies concept, the blues. He contests the attempts to use the blues aesthetic as the grounding paradigm for reading African American cultural tradition. Ferguson briefly outlines the history of the blues, its significance and uses by African American artists and scholars, and argues that the contradictory meanings and over-generalized definitions of the blues preclude its effectiveness as a single explanatory paradigm for the black tradition. He concludes with a reference to the recent controversial publication by Kenneth W. Warren, *What Was African American Literature?* (2011), which has provocatively begun the debate about "the end African American literature." Also George Blaustein's essay alludes to and embraces Warren's iconoclastic thesis, which is illustrated in his text with an analysis of Paul Beatty's satirical fiction. Warren himself has also contributed to the issue with a short essay that justifies his audacious thesis. He claims that African American literature was a concept determined by the logic of the Jim Crow regime and was meant as a vehicle of racial uplift. In post-Civil Rights America, it has lost its legitimacy and cannot be anymore the basis of representation for such an increasingly class-divided group as black Americans. Warren's claim is one of the most radical voices that contributes to a larger social debate about the post-racial character of American society that began with the Barack Obama campaign and to the recently renewed academic discussion of racial representation, a need for which has been articulated for example in Gene Andrew Jarrett's "The Problem of African American Literature" (2007). The section ends with a personal essay by Ishmael Reed, which indirectly challenges Warren's thesis. Reed traces back the origins of Black Studies, claims that "the phasing out of Ethnic Studies is a huge step backwards in American intellectual life" (753), and hence, implicitly disputes the claim about the end of African American literature. Whereas many critics perceive the election of the black president as a milestone towards a post-racial society, Reed argues that it led to a powerful backlash, most visibly embodied by the Tea Party movement.

African American Literary Studies: New Texts, New Approaches, New Challenges is a noteworthy combination of literary texts, personal essays, and scholarly analyses, which outline and address the most current issues, dilemmas, and questions in the field of African American studies. Its first part will be of special relevance to the scholars interested in the Harlem Renaissance, whereas the concluding section, which presents the new directions in the field, is a must-read for any researcher of American culture. Thanks to a number of essays that contain transatlantic perspectives and intertextual readings, the issue will be especially interesting for European Americanists.

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