African American Literature Rediscovered

First publication of previously unknown Zora Neale Hurston short stories

It was somewhat of a sensation when the Chronicle of Higher Education reported the discovery of previously unknown stories by the African American writer Zora Neale Hurston (http://chronicle.com/article/The-Newly-Complicated-Zora/125753). Hurston is one of the most important writers of African American literature of the 20th century, whose work has significantly influenced contemporary multicultural American literature. Prof. Dr. Glenda R. Carpio and Prof. Dr. Werner Sollors were surprised to find these texts by the author of the famous novel Their Eyes Were Watching God (1937) in the spring of 2010 almost by coincidence when they were team-teaching a course at Harvard University. They made their finding when perusing microfilms in search of contexts for literature and culture of the twenties and thirties.

The five new stories by Zora Neale Hurston, which were not included in The Complete Short Stories of Zora Neale Hurston, will now appear in a special issue of the journal Amerikastudien / American Studies. Since 2002 this journal has been published for the German Association for American Studies (GAAS) at the University of Regensburg, with Prof. Dr. Udo Hebel, the chair of American Studies, as General Editor. The issue presents not only the short stories by Hurston and two previously unknown Hurston letters but also new texts by the contemporary African American writers Jamaica Kincaid and Ishmael Reed. There are also a number of original articles on current developments in African American literary studies by renowned scholars from the U.S. and Germany.

The Chronicle of Higher Education story by Harvard professors Carpio and Sollors shows that the new Hurston stories set in New York during the Harlem Renaissance may change the popular image of Zora Neale Hurston and African American Literature between the world wars. So far Hurston was associated mainly with African American literature and folklore of the southern rural United States. Now we see an urban-cosmopolitan side of her enmeshed in the life of the modern city of New York.


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African American Literary Studies: New Texts, New Approaches, New Challenges

Guest Editors GLENDA R. CARPIO and WERNER SOLLORS

UDO J. HEBEL Preface
G. CARPIO & W. SOLLORS Foreword

New Texts

Five Harlem Short Stories by Zora Neale Hurston
“The Book of Harlem,” “Monkey Junk,” and “The Back Room”
—introduced by GLENDA R. CARPIO & WERNER SOLLORS—
“The Country in the Woman” and “She Rock”
—introduced by GENEVIEVE WEST—
JAMAICA KINCAID, “America”
Defending Hurston against Her Legend: Two Previously Unpublished Letters
—introduced by CARLA CAPPETTI—

New Approaches to Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Wright, and the Harlem Renaissance
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FRANK MEHRING The Visual Harlem Renaissance; or, Winold Reiss in Mexico
ERNEST J. MITCHELL II “Black Renaissance”: A Brief History of the Concept
STEPHAN KUHL Guilty Children: Richard Wright’s Savage Holiday and Fredric Wertham’s Dark Legend

New Directions and New Challenges
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KENNETH W. WARREN On What Was African American Literature?
ISHMAEL REED Ethnic Studies in the Age of the Tea Party

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