

## AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE IN TRANSITION, 1900–1910

*African American Literature in Transition, 1900–1910* offers a wide ranging, multidisciplinary approach to early twentieth century African American literature and culture. It showcases the literary and cultural productions that took shape in the critical years after Reconstruction in the immediate decade after *Plessy v. Ferguson* legalized racial segregation, but before the Harlem Renaissance, the period known as the nadir of African American history. It uncovers the dynamic work being done by Black authors, painters, photographers, poets, editors, boxers, and entertainers to shape “New Negro” identities and to chart a new path for a new century, as they advocated for civil and political rights, even as they turned inward to strengthen and fortify the infrastructures of their own communities. The book is structured into four key areas: Black publishing and print culture; innovations in genre and form; the race, class, and gender politics of literary and cultural production; and new geographies of Black literary history. These overarching themes, presented through the introduction of established figures and movement alongside lesser known texts and original research, offer a radical reconceptualization of this critical but understudied period in African American literary history.

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## AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE IN TRANSITION

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Across 17 authoritative volumes and featuring over 200 of today's foremost literary critics and social historians, *African American Literature in Transition* offers a critical and comprehensive revisionary analysis of creative expression by people of African descent. Reading transtemporally from the origins of "African American literature" by the first peoples calling themselves "African Americans," this series foregrounds change, and examines pivotal moments, years, decades, and centuries in African American literature and culture. While collectively analyzing both far-reaching and flash-forward transitions within four centuries, the multi-volume series replaces conventional historical periodization in African American scholastic and literary anthologies with a framework that contextualizes shifts, changes, and transformations in African American literature, culture, politics, and history.

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EDITED BY

SHIRLEY MOODY-TURNER

*Pennsylvania State University*



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*Preface*  
*African American Literature in Transition*  
Joycelyn K. Moody, General Editor

When I accepted the invitation to act as Series Editor for African American Literature in Transition, Barack Obama had several months more to serve as President of the United States. The US was in a time of tremendous transition, we knew, but the extent of the impact of the coming election and its outcomes on the lives of African Americans, we had yet to learn. In the years since, dozens of today's foremost literary critics and social historians have traced across this authoritative multi-volume series revisionary analyses of creative expression by peoples of the African diaspora. Reading transtemporally, African American Literature in Transition foregrounds change, and examines pivotal moments and eras in African American history and historiography, literature and culture, art and ideology. The contributors explore four centuries of far-reaching as well as flash-forward transitions, to replace conventional literary periodization with a framework that contextualizes shifts, changes, and transformations affecting African American people.

Taken singly or together, the more than 200 chapters of the series provide not customary synopses of African American literature but unprecedented, detailed analyses – each expansive, in-depth, engaging. Every contributor finds their perfect pitch. Where contributors are musicians, then, to quote John Lovell, Jr.'s *Black Song: The Forge and the Flame*, “music raise[s] both performer and audience far above routine emotion; the elderly throw away their sticks and dance.”

The central aim of African American Literature in Transition is to reorient readers' expectations of the literary critical and appreciative experience. The series emphasizes the importance of reading intertextually, transhistorically, and interdisciplinarily. In this way, we foster readers' comprehension of ways in which legal cases such as the *Dred Scott* Decision and *Plessy v. Ferguson*, for example, were forecast in David Walker's 1829 *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* and have reappeared in *Solitary: My Story of Transformation and Hope*, by Albert

Woodfox (2019). Truly distinctive, African American Literature in Transition offers rich demonstrations of how to read Black creative expression as a sequence of shifting contexts and dynamic landscapes – as, in Toni Morrison’s words, “an ever-widening circle of hope.”

I offer sincere gratitude to Ray Ryan at Cambridge University Press for selecting me to spearhead this project, and to Cassander Smith for seeing it through with me. I am grateful to Edgar Mendez and Cambridge interns Caitlin Gallagher and Rebecca Rom-Frank. I appreciate the enthusiastic support of my family, friends, and colleagues over the years: especially Lorraine Martínez, Roxanne Donovan, Kimberly Blockett, Barbara Neely, Cynthia Lockett, Rhonda Gonzales, T. Jackie Cuevas, and Howard Ramsby II. Colleen J. McElroy and my uncles Charles and Glenn inspire me in ways they cannot imagine. My son and my parents influence everything I undertake. To the African American Literature in Transition volume editors and contributors: your dedication to tracing transitions with me made all the difference.

## *Acknowledgments*

Thank you to Joycelyn Moody for her fortitude, vision, and commitment in bringing a series of this magnitude to fruition. I am grateful to the volume contributors for sharing their transformative research and scholarship and for bringing new attention to underexamined areas of African American literary history. I am grateful, too, for this volume's anonymous readers who provided valuable feedback that helped shape the volume this became. Thank you to Patrick Allen for compiling the chronology and to Sabrina Evans, Katie Warczak, and Cassander Smith for their keen research, insights, and editorial assistance in preparing this volume. Thank you to Edgar Mendez for his editorial assistance and to Ray Ryan for his continued support. Many thanks go to Mark Morrisson and the Department of English at Penn State University for the research support and time to complete this volume and to the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University, which provided me with an intellectual home to bring the main work of this volume to completion.

None of this would be possible without my family, past, present, and future. Thank you for walking this path with me and for breathing life into this work.

## *Chronology, 1900–1910*

- 1900 Pan African Conference held in London. Paris Exposition. New Orleans Race Riot. National Negro Business League founded. William McKinley elected President. Charles W. Chesnutt, *The House behind the Cedars*; Paul Laurence Dunbar, *The Love of Landry*; *The Strength of Gideon and Other Stories*; Pauline E. Hopkins, *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South* and “Talma Gordon”; Booker T. Washington et al., *A New Negro for a New Century*.
- 1900–4 Colored Co-operative Publishing Company.  
 1900–9 *The Colored American Magazine* published (Pauline E. Hopkins serves as editor, 1902–4).
- 1901 Harry T. Burleigh composes “Six Plantation Melodies for Violin and Piano.” Monroe Trotter founds *Boston Guardian*. Sutton Griggs founds Orion Publishing Company. Socialist Party of America founded. William McKinley assassinated; Theodore Roosevelt becomes president. Charles W. Chesnutt, *Marrow of Tradition*; Paul Laurence Dunbar, *Candle-Lightin’ Time* and *The Fanatics*; Sutton Griggs, *Overshadowed*; Henry Ossawa Tanner, *And He Vanished Out of Their Sight*; Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery*; Ellen F. Wetherell, *In Free America; or, Tales from North and South*.
- 1901–2 Pauline E. Hopkins, *Hagar’s Daughter*  
 1902 Jelly Roll Morton begins playing piano in Storyville, New Orleans. Paul Laurence Dunbar, *The Sport of the Gods*; Thomas Dixon Jr., *The Leopard’s Spots: A Romance of the White Man’s Burden – 1865–1900*; Sutton Griggs, *Unfettered*; Bert Williams and George Walker, *In Dahomey*.

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- 1902–3 Pauline E. Hopkins, *Of One Blood* and *Winona*
- 1903 Ford Motor Company founded. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*; Paul Laurence Dunbar, *In Old Plantation Days*; Susie Taylor King, *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp*.
- 1904 *AME Church Review* calls for a “New Negro Renaissance.” Sigma Pi Phi founded. Mary McLeod Bethune opens the Daytona Literary and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls (later Bethune-Cookman University). Theodore Roosevelt reelected. William Stanley Braithwaite, *Lyrics of Life and Love*; Paul Laurence Dunbar, *Li’l Gal*; Mary Church Terrell, “Lynching from a Negro Point of View.”
- 1904–7 *The Voice of the Negro* published
- 1904–14 Building of Panama Canal
- 1905 Niagara Movement. *Chicago Defender* founded by Robert Abbott. Nashville’s Streetcar Boycott. Charles W. Chesnutt, *The Colonel’s Dream*; Thomas Dixon Jr., *The Clansman*; Paul Laurence Dunbar, *Lyrics of Sunshine and Shadow*; Sutton Griggs, *The Hindered Hand; or, The Reign of the Repressionist*; Pauline E. Hopkins, “The Dark Races of the Twentieth Century.”
- 1906 Anna Julia Cooper removed as principal of M Street High School. Brownsville Affair. Atlanta Race Riot. Madame C. J. Walker opens hair-care business. Death of Paul Laurence Dunbar. Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity founded. W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Color Line Belts the World”; Paul Laurence Dunbar, *Joggin’ Erlong*; Bert Williams, *Abyssinia*.
- 1907 Alain Locke is first African American Rhodes Scholar. Nathaniel Love, *Life and Adventures of Nat Love*; Lizelia Augusta Jenkins Moorner, *Prejudice Unveiled: and Other Poems*; Priscilla Jane Thompson, *Gleanings of Quiet Hours*.
- 1908 Jack Johnson becomes first African American heavyweight champion of the world. Springfield Race Riot. National Association of Colored Nurses founded. William H. Taft elected president. William Stanley Braithwaite, *The House of Falling Leaves with Other Poems*.

- 1909 National Negro Conference. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) founded. W. E. B. Du Bois, *John Brown*; Henry Ossawa Tanner, *Christ and His Mother Studying the Scriptures*.
- 1910 Bert Williams joins Ziegfeld's Follies. *The Crisis* begins publication. National Urban League founded.
- 1910–30 "The Great Migration" of more than 1 million southern Blacks to northern and western cities