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# Oblique Scriptures of Harlem. The "Niggeratti Manor" and Wallace Thurman's *Infants of the Spring* (1932).

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## Résumé

In the 1910s and 1920s, Harlem is the destination of two important migratory movements: the Great Migration of African Americans from the South of the United States, and a migratory wave internal to the city of New York, consequent to the anti-"vice" policies of Progressive Era Reform. During this time, Harlem progressively becomes the largest black American urban settlement in the United States, a Black Metropolis animated by political, artistic, economic, and social life.

In 1926, a group of young black writers and artists based in the neighborhood, among whom Wallace Thurman, Richard Bruce Nugent, Zora Neale Hurston, Aaron Douglas and Langston Hughes, self-edited and published a magazine titled *FIRE!! Devoted to Younger Negro Artists*. The magazine took a polemical stance against what the young black artists saw as the disciplined heteronormative injunctions of the New Negro intellectuals and part of the emerging black middle-class, towards their sexual and social mores. In a polemical editorial penned by Wallace Thurman, *FIRE!!* reclaimed in prophetic tones the notorious representations of improper, sexualized black characters from *Nigger Heaven* (1926), a novel by white author, photographer, and Harlem Renaissance patron Carl Van Vechten. Both Thurman and Nugent put in fictional form episodes from their lives in the apartment, which they dubbed the "Niggeratti Manor."

In this paper I study Wallace Thurman's novel *Infants of the Spring* (1932) and the space of the "Niggeratti Manor" as sites of inscription of black and queer apperceptions of, and orientations within, the Black Metropolis and its antagonizing discursive representations. Using the work in queer, antiracist and feminist phenomenology by Sara Ahmed, I chart the points of pressure against which the black/queer body fails to extend in the city, and the disorienting re-orientations the black queer artist manages to redefine.

**Mots-Clés:** literature

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