

Library
Liberty University
Lynchburg, Va. 24506

Cornerstones



An Anthology of
African American
Literature

edited by
Melvin Donalson

Pasadena City College/UCLA



St. Martin's Press
New York

PS
153
NS
C69
1996

Sponsoring editor: Nancy Lyman
Development associate: Susan Cottenden
Managing editor: Patricia Mansfield Phelan
Project editor: Diana M. Puglisi
Production supervisor: Joe Ford
Art director: Lucy Krikorian
Text design: Levavi & Levavi
Cover design: Patricia McFadden
Cover art: Courtesy of Jacob Lawrence and Francine Seders Gallery, Seattle WA

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 92-83973

Copyright © 1996 by St. Martin's Press, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, except as may be expressly permitted by the applicable copyright statutes or in writing by the Publisher.

Manufactured in the United States of America.

0 9 8 7
f e d c b

For information, write:
St. Martin's Press, Inc.
175 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10010

ISBN: 0-312-09530-9

Acknowledgments

Samuel W. Allen. "Harriet Tubman," "Benin Bronze," and "About Poetry and South Africa." Samuel Allen © 1987. Reprinted with the permission of Samuel Allen.

Maya Angelou. Excerpts from *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou. Copyright © 1969 by Maya Angelou. Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.

Michael Awkward. "The Crooked with the Straights" by Michael Awkward. Reprinted from *May All Your Fences Have Gates: Essays on the Drama of August Wilson*, edited by Alan Nadel by permission of the University of Iowa Press, copyright 1994 by University of Iowa Press.

Houston A. Baker, Jr. "There Is No More Beautiful Way: Theory and the Poetics of Afro-American Women's Writing." From Houston Baker and Patricia Redmond, eds., *Afro-American Literary Study in the 1990s*, pp. 135-155. Copyright © 1989 University of Chicago Press. Reprinted by permission of The University of Chicago Press and the author.

James Baldwin. "Previous Condition." "Previous Condition" was originally published in COMMENTARY collected in *Going to Meet the Man* © 1965 by James Baldwin. Copyright renewed. Reprinted with permission of the James Baldwin Estate.

Toni Cade Bambara. "A Tender Man" from *The Sea Birds Are Still Alive* by Toni Cade Bambara. Copyright © 1974, 1976, 1977 by Toni Cade Bambara. Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.

Acknowledgments and copyrights are continued at the back of the book on pages 990-994, which constitute an extension of the copyright page.

It is a violation of the law to reproduce these selections by any means whatsoever without the written permission of the copyright holder.

Through the years,
for all of those pre-dawn mornings
when he went to work to support me,
and for all of those late-night discussions
when she encouraged me,
I dedicate this book to my parents,
Wilbert and Dorothy Donalson

Contents



PREFACE xiii

PART ONE The Oral Tradition 1

OVERVIEW 3

LYRICS 11

Spirituals 11

- "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" 11
- "Go Down Moses" 11
- "Steal Away to Jesus" 12
- "Roll, Jordan, Roll" 12

Blues 13

- "St. Louis Blues" 13
- "Hard Times Blues" 14
- "Mamie's Blues" 14
- "Backwater Blues" 15

Pop Lyrics 15

- Marvin Gaye** (1939–84) "What's Going On" 15
- Stevie Wonder** (1950–) "Living for the City" 17
- Siedah Garrett** (b.?) 18
- Michael Jackson** (1958–) "Man in the Mirror" 19

Rap Lyrics 22

- Gil Scott-Heron** (1949–) "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised" 22
- Public Enemy** (1988–) "Fight the Power" 24
- Queen Latifah** (1970–) "U.N.I.T.Y." 26

ORATIONS: SPEECHES AND SERMONS 28

- Sojourner Truth** (1797–1883) "Address to the First Annual Meeting of the American Equal Rights Association" 28
- Frederick Douglass** (1817–95) "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" 30
- Ida B. Wells-Barnett** (1862–1931) "Lynch Law in All Its Phases" 34
- Mary McLeod Bethune** (1875–1955) "A Century of Progress of Negro Women" 47

- Martin Luther King, Jr.** (1929–68) "Love, Law, and Civil Disobedience" 50
Cecil L. Murray (1929–) "Making an Offer You Can't Refuse" 59
Barbara Jordan (1936–) "Who Then Will Speak for the Common Good?" 62
Jesse Jackson (1941–) "Common Ground and Common Sense" 66
Suzan D. Johnson Cook (1957–) "God's Woman" 76

FOLKTALES 81

- "Why Negroes Are Black" 81
 "Why Women Always Take Advantage of Men" 82
 "Ole Massa and John Who Wanted to Go to Heaven" 84
 "What Smelled Worse" 86
 "Who Ate Up the Butter?" 86
 "The Bear and the Rabbit" 88
 "Tar Baby" 88

PART TWO Poetry 91

OVERVIEW 93

A FOCUSED STUDY: GWENDOLYN BROOKS (1917–) 100

- "The Mother" 101
 "The Children of the Poor" 102
 "The Bean Eaters" 104
 "A Bronzeville Mother Loiters in Mississippi. Meanwhile, A Mississippi Mother Burns Bacon." 104
 "The Boy Died in My Alley" 107

A Critical Perspective

- George Kent** (1920–82) "Gwendolyn Brooks' Poetic Realism: A Developmental Survey" 109

POETRY SELECTIONS 123

- Phillis Wheatley** (1753–84) "On the Death of a Young Gentleman" 123
 "To S. M., A Young African Painter, on Seeing His Works" 124
Frances E. W. Harper (1825–1911) "Bury Me in a Free Land" 125
 "A Double Standard" 127
Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1906) "When Malindy Sings" 128
 "We Wear the Mask" 130
 "Sympathy" 130
Anne Spencer (1882–1975) "White Things" 131
 "Black Man O' Mine" 132

- Fenton Johnson** (1888–1958) "The Ethiopian's Song" 132
 "To an Afro-American Maiden" 133
Claude McKay (1889–1948) "If We Must Die" 134
 "The White House" 135
 "America" 136
Sterling Brown (1901–89) "Children of the Mississippi" 136
 "Return" 138
 "Sharecroppers" 139
Langston Hughes (1902–67) "As I Grew Older" 140
 "Afro-American Fragment" 142
 "Mother to Son" 143
 "Georgia Dusk" 143
 "Democracy" 144
Countee Cullen (1903–46) "Heritage" 144
 "The Wise" 148
 "Yet Do I Marvel" 148
 "From the Dark Tower" 149
Robert Hayden (1913–80) "Night, Death, Mississippi" 149
 "El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz (Malcolm X)" 151
Samuel W. Allen (1917–) "Harriet Tubman" 152
 "Benin Bronze" 155
 "About Poetry and South Africa" 156
Derek Walcott (1930–) "Storm Figure" 157
 "Elsewhere" 159
 "Blues" 160
Etheridge Knight (1931–91) "For Freckle-Faced Gerald" 161
 "Dark Prophecy: I Sing of Shine" 162
 "For Black Poets Who Think of Suicide" 163
Sonia Sanchez (1934–) "Blk/Rhetoric" 163
 "Summer Words of a Sistuh Addict" 165
 "elegy" 166
Henry Dumas (1934–68) "Afro-American" 168
 "Black Star Line" 170
Jay Wright (c. 1934–) "The Appearance of a Lost Goddess" 170
 "Journey to the Place of Ghosts" 172
 "Benjamin Banneker Helps to Build a City" 174
Haki R. Madhubuti (1942–) "But He Was Cool or: he even stopped for green lights" 178
 "Womenblack: We Begin with You" 180
 "Black Manhood: Toward a Definition" 181
Nikki Giovanni (1943–) "The True Import of Present Dialogue, Black vs. Negro" 182
 "Age" 184
 "Adulthood II" 186
 "Love: Is a Human Condition" 187
Quincy Troupe (1943–) "South African Bloodstone" 187
 "After Hearing a Radio Announcement: A Comment on Some Conditions" 189

- Wanda Coleman** (1946–) “Dear Mama” 190
 “In This Waking” 191
 “Shopping Bag Lady” 192
Rita Dove (1952–) “Particulars” 192
 “After Reading *Mickey in the Night Kitchen* for the Third Time Before Bed” 194
 “Your Death” 195

PART THREE Fiction 197

OVERVIEW 199

A FOCUSED STUDY: ALICE WALKER (1944–) 208

- “Her Sweet Jerome” 210
 “A Sudden Trip Home in the Spring” 214
 from *The Color Purple* 222

A Critical Perspective

- Barbara Christian** (1943–) “Alice Walker: The Black Woman Artist as Wayward” 225

FICTION SELECTIONS 241

- Harriet E. Wilson** (1808–70) “A Friend for Nig” 241
William Wells Brown (1815–84) from *Clotel*, or, *The President's Daughter* 246
Charles W. Chesnutt (1858–1932) “The Sheriff's Children” 252
Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins (1859–1930) “A Dash for Liberty” 262
Sutton E. Griggs (1872–1933) from *Imperium in Imperio* 268
Jessie Fauset (1882–1961) “Mary Elizabeth” 275
Nella Larsen (1891–1963) from *Passing* 281
Jean Toomer (1894–1967) “Theater” 293
Zora Neale Hurston (1901–60) “Sweat” 297
Wallace Thurman (1902–34) “Emma Lou” 306
Richard Wright (1908–60) “The Man Who Killed a Shadow” 317
Chester Himes (1909–84) “One More Way to Die” 326
Ann Petry (1911–) “The Witness” 331
James Baldwin (1924–87) “Previous Condition” 344
John A. Williams (1925–) “Son in the Afternoon” 355
Toni Morrison (1931–) “Recitatif” 360
Ishmael Reed (1938–) from *Japanese by Spring* 374
Toni Cade Bambara (1939–) “A Tender Man” 380
J. California Cooper (c. 1940–) “Happiness Does Not Come in Colors” 395
John Edgar Wideman (1941–) “Doc's Story” 406
Octavia Butler (1947–) from *Kindred* 412
Gayl Jones (1949–) “White Rat” 424
Gloria Naylor (1950–) “Lucielia Louise Turner” 430
Terry McMillan (1951–) “Zora” 440

- Walter Mosley** (1952–) from *Devil in a Blue Dress* 447
Jess Mowry (1960–) “Crusader Rabbit” 452

PART FOUR Drama 459

OVERVIEW 461

A FOCUSED STUDY: AUGUST WILSON (1945–) 469

Fences 470

A Critical Perspective

- Michael Awkward** (1959–) “‘The Crookeds with the Straights’: *Fences*, Race, and the Politics of Adaptation” 518

DRAMA SELECTION 525

- Pearl Cleage** (1948–) *Hospice: A Play in One Act* 525

PART FIVE Nonfiction 545

OVERVIEW 547

A FOCUSED STUDY: W. E. B. DU BOIS (1868–1963) 556

- “Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others” 558
 “The Talented Tenth” 566
 “The Souls of White Folk” 578

A Critical Perspective

- Marcus Bruce** (1955–) “Black and Blue: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Meaning of Blackness” 588

AUTOBIOGRAPHY 597

- Olaudah Equiano** (c. 1745–97) from *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* 597
Harriet Jacobs (1813–97) “The Perils of a Slave Woman's Life” 618
Booker T. Washington (1856–1915) from *Up from Slavery* 632
Malcolm X (1925–65) from *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* 648
Maya Angelou (1928–) from *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* 674
Itabari Njeri (1953–) “Has-beens Who Never Were” 689

CULTURAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAYS 706

- Benjamin Banneker** (1731–1806) “Letter to Thomas Jefferson” 706

- David Walker** (1785–1830) from *Walker's Appeal in Four Articles Together with a Preamble to the Colored Citizens of the World, but in Particular and Very Expressly to Those of the United States* 709
- Martin R. Delany** (1812–85) from *The Condition, Elevation, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States, Politically Considered* 715
- Mary Church Terrell** (1863–1954) "What Role Is the Educated Negro Woman to Play in the Uplifting of Her Race?" 728
- Marcus Garvey** (1887–1940) "An Appeal to the Conscience of the Black Race to See Itself" 733
- Ralph Ellison** (1914–94) "What America Would Be Like without Blacks" 736
- Amiri Baraka** (1934–) "Malcolm as Ideology" 742
- Audre Lorde** (1934–92) "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" 755
- David Levering Lewis** (1936–) "The Harlem Renaissance" 762
- Kwame Toure** (1941–) and **Charles V. Hamilton** (1929–) "Black Power: Its Need and Substance" 782
- Angela Davis** (1944–) "We Do Not Consent: Violence against Women in a Racist Society" 795
- Ron Simmons** (1950–) "Some Thoughts on the Challenges Facing Black Gay Intellectuals" 805
- bell hooks** (1952–) "Revolutionary Black Women: Making Ourselves Subject" 820
- Michael Eric Dyson** (1958–) "The Culture of Hip-Hop" 835

PART SIX Literary Criticism and Theory 845

OVERVIEW 847

- Houston A. Baker, Jr.** (1943–) "There Is No More Beautiful Way" 856
- Valerie Smith** (1956–) "Form and Ideology in . . . Slave Narratives" 863
- Henry Louis Gates, Jr.** (1950–) "The Blackness of Blackness: A Critique of the Sign and the Signifying Monkey" 880
- Michael Thelwell** (1939–) "Toward a Collective Vision: Issues in International Literary Criticism" 913
- Larry Neal** (1937–81) "The Black Arts Movement" 925
- Charles Johnson** (1948–) "Being and Race" 937
- Hazel V. Carby** (1948–) "Rethinking Black Feminist Theory" 958
- Charles I. Nero** (1956–) "Toward a Black Gay Aesthetic: Signifying in Contemporary Black Gay Literature" 971

INDEX 995

Preface



What Is African American Literature?

Generations of black scholars, critics, and writers have wrestled with the difficult task of defining the unique body of creative and factual writing that is broadly referred to as African American literature. Some have sought to assess the literature on the basis of various literary standards, but these efforts often generate new debates about which standards to apply—standards outside black culture, inside black culture, or somewhere in between. Others have pondered the value and meaning of various labels—such as *Negro*, *colored*, *Afro-American*, *Pan-African*, *black*, and *black American*—in defining the literature. These debates about standards and labels continue in the 1990s, particularly among academic and political leaders. While enlightening to some extent, they suggest that no single definition of African American literature can possibly satisfy everyone.

Thus, the question remains: *What is African American literature?* As far as this anthology is concerned, the answer is a broad one: African American literature is a body of written and oral works, created by writers who share both a black African heritage and a unique American experience, that defines and celebrates black history and culture. Although this definition of the literature does not clear away the clouds of debate, it will become obvious to readers of *Cornerstones* that African American literature not only reflects that unique American experience but also demands from its audience an intimate, subjective response. Possessing an extraordinary range of tones, topics, and styles, African American literature, whether it speaks gently or screams passionately, challenges and provokes response and action.

Distinguishing Features of the Literature

Among the most distinguishing features of African American literature is its inclusiveness. That is, the literature embraces a wide spectrum of authors and literary genres. In addition to the traditionally recognized genres of poetry, fiction, and drama, African American culture gives equal recognition to literature of the oral tradition and nonfiction prose. Indeed, in black literature, works of the oral tradition and nonfiction are regarded as having influenced the other literary genres.

THE ORAL TRADITION

For nearly four centuries, the oral tradition has served as the creative core of black literature, providing black writers with a rich array of expression. Originating in the oral tradition are the vivid metaphors, sophisticated rhythms,

witty double meanings, haunting symbols, resonant repetition, playful improvisation, and other features of African American literature. Similarly, black oral forms have inspired the content, tone, and structure of speeches, sermons, poetry, slave narratives, fiction, and drama, as have the multiple meanings of such black cultural activities as "playing the dozens" and "signifyin'."

Black oral forms are especially noted for their representation of multiple meanings, as in the proverbs "The blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice" and "Every shut eye ain't sleep, and every good-bye ain't gone." Handed down over the centuries by generations of African Americans seeking to understand the world, these and other black oral expressions have merged with the written literature in such works as Wallace Thurman's novel *The Blacker the Berry* (1929), Shirlee Haizlip's autobiography *The Sweeter the Juice* (1994), Michael S. Harper and Anthony Walton's poetry anthology *Every Shut Eye Ain't Asleep* (1994), and Itabari Njeri's autobiography *Every Good-bye Ain't Gone* (1991).

THE COLLECTIVE VOICE OF NONFICTION

While the oral tradition has served as a major creative force in African American literature, it is in nonfiction that the African American experience has been most fully defined and explored by black writers. This genre provides a forum for issues and concerns to find public expression, and through it black writers have addressed the collective struggles of African Americans for centuries in slave narratives, autobiographies, and essays. Whether promoting racial separation (as in Marcus Garvey's "An Appeal to the Conscience of the Black Race to See Itself") or racial integration (Ralph Ellison's "What America Would Be Like without Blacks"), or advocating tolerance of sexual orientation (Ron Simmons's "Some Thoughts on the Challenges Facing Black Gay Intellectuals"), contemporary black nonfiction continues to define the black American experience as well as the dualities of the African American self and community.

The Importance of African American Literature

Perhaps most importantly, African American literature encompasses the breadth of the struggles, achievements, and roles of blacks in shaping American society. As black critic Valerie Smith acknowledges, "The political nature of [the] literature is especially pronounced, given . . . the larger fact that it is created by a people who represent a population that has historically been oppressed" (ix). However, as Smith and other black scholars also stress, despite the difficult or perilous circumstances in which it was created, African American literature goes beyond apology and protest to include an array of works that display their writers' talent, imagination, mastery of black verbal forms and Eurocentric language, and concern with themes both timely and timeless, personal and universal.

In addition, African American literature is important for its celebration of

black culture and history, thereby helping to create a sense of racial cohesiveness and solidarity. Some examples from this anthology include Samuel W. Allen's "Harriet Tubman," Robert Hayden's "El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz," and Jay Wright's "Benjamin Banneker Helps to Build a City"—poems that appraise African American leaders. Similarly, a striking sagacity emanates from the speeches of Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" and Mary McLeod Bethune, "A Century of Progress of Negro Women," as well as in the autobiography of Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery*, and the cultural essay by bell hooks, "Revolutionary Black Women." Some selections celebrate black heritage by linking African roots and a Caribbean background with the African American experience—as in Countee Cullen's poem "Heritage" and in Olaudah Equiano's "Interesting Narrative . . ."—while other selections celebrate black culture by showing its resilience under self-scrutiny—the anonymously written folktale "Why Negroes Are Black," Sonia Sanchez's poem "Summer Words of a Sistuh Addict," and Michael Eric Dyson's essay "The Culture of Hip-Hop." Together, the various literary forms of African American literature give us a fuller appreciation of a body of work that honors the social, political, intellectual, and cultural history of African Americans.

Features

The main objective of *Cornerstones*—to serve as a tribute to the scope, diversity, and importance of African American literature—is evident in the book's extensive collection of 161 writings by 99 authors. The book's title is symbolic of the contributions of numerous black writers to the foundation on which the black literary tradition has developed. *Cornerstones* aims, most of all, to be inclusive. To this end, readers will find the following features:

- **Diversity of writers.** The text includes selections from various genres by both recognized authors—such as Frederick Douglass, Charles W. Chesnutt, Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, and Ralph Ellison—and lesser known writers—such as Harriet Jacobs, Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins, Wallace Thurman, and Jess Mowry.
- This anthology also represents several authors of black African descent born outside of the United States whose writing, teaching, scholarship, and political activity have contributed to both the African American literary tradition and black literature worldwide. Coming from a west African or Caribbean background, authors Olaudah Equiano, Phillis Wheatley, Claude McKay, Derek Walcott, Kwame Toure, and Michael Thelwell discuss their experiences with race relations. These selections demonstrate the reciprocal influence of African American culture and other black cultures on the black literature of the world.
- **Variety of genres.** Along with the traditional genres of poetry, fiction, and drama, the text offers nonfiction prose and selections from the oral

tradition. The extensive collection of nonfiction writing—speeches, sermons, autobiographies, cultural and philosophical essays, and literary criticism—reflects a genre to which African American writers have so often turned to convey their experiences and ideas. In addition, *Cornerstones* recognizes the importance of the African American oral tradition, which for centuries has been a source of both creative expression and cultural identity within the black community. Of particular interest here is the role that song lyrics, orations, and folktales have served in popular culture.

- **Balance of gender.** The book acknowledges the importance of black women writers to the African American literary tradition. Despite the impressive output of black women authors, particularly within the past twenty-five years, most anthologies have not emphasized their contributions. *Cornerstones* affirms the creativity of both black women and black men, and thereby encourages an appreciation of both sexes in the development of the literature's various genres.
- **Authors in depth.** The text offers four Focused Studies of African American writers in various genres: Gwendolyn Brooks's poetry, Alice Walker's fiction, August Wilson's drama, and W. E. B. Du Bois's nonfiction prose. The poetry, fiction, and nonfiction sections are accompanied by a critical essay about the writer's work in order to expose students to extended reading and critical analysis of individual writers.

Finally, this anthology aims to demonstrate that, despite individual differences and the political connotations of various terms of description, people of black African descent have shared similar experiences, dilemmas, and aspirations in this country. Thus, the editorial writing in *Cornerstones* uses the terms *African American*, *black American*, and *black* interchangeably, while the selection authors use a variety of terms—including *Negro*, *colored*, and *Afro-American*—whose historical or thematic basis contributes to the integrity of their work.

In order to achieve these objectives, *Cornerstones* pursues an eclectic approach to the literature, encouraging students to juxtapose the various forms of the black literary tradition as they survey the selections and develop an awareness of their diversity. The book thus embraces a progressive approach as well, one that, like the literature itself, is not limited by formal literary theories or canonical boundaries. Its extensive representation of African American writers and genres is intended to meet the needs of student readers unfamiliar with the literature as well as those seeking to enhance an existing awareness.

Organization

Cornerstones consists of six parts organized by genre: the oral tradition, poetry, fiction, drama, nonfiction, and literary criticism. Structurally, each part includes an overview of the genre and the part's selections, an extensive

collection of writings organized chronologically by the authors' birthdates, and a list of readings. In addition, each selection is preceded by a headnote that gives detailed information about the writer's life and work.

- **Part One, "The Oral Tradition,"** is divided into three sections: "Lyrics" explores the musical forms of the oral tradition, including spirituals, the blues, pop, and rap, whose potent lyrics send emotional, social, and political messages. "Orations: Speeches and Sermons" includes nine selections that show how black speakers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have inspired their audiences to reflect and take collective action on important issues. "Folktales" features seven oral works that merge fiction and facts to stimulate, educate, and entertain their audiences.
- **Part Two, "Poetry,"** begins with a Focused Study of Gwendolyn Brooks, including seven of her poems and an essay by noted scholar George Kent. The selections that follow survey the work of twenty-three other African American poets of the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. A representative sampling of each poet's writings is included.
- **Part Three, "Fiction,"** features a Focused Study of Alice Walker, including three fiction selections and a critical essay by Barbara Christian, along with selections by twenty-seven other writers. The readings in this part include both short stories and excerpts from novels of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
- **Part Four, "Drama,"** contains two plays. In addition to the Focused Study of August Wilson's *Fences* and the critical essay by scholar Michael Awkward that accompanies it, Pearl Cleage's *Hospice: A Play in One Act* is included. The two plays offer contrasting perspectives on African American family structures, as well as distinctive uses of language by each playwright.
- **Part Five, "Nonfiction,"** begins with a Focused Study of W. E. B. Du Bois, including three prose pieces and a scholarly essay by critic Marcus Bruce. The part's nonfiction selections are divided into two sections, "Autobiography" and "Cultural and Philosophical Essays," each of which spans the writings of the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. The six autobiographical pieces explore such issues as slavery, racial segregation, and sexism, while the fourteen essays about culture and philosophy cover a diverse range of interracial and intraracial issues.
- **Part Six, "Literary Criticism and Theory,"** focuses on this increasingly important and controversial area of African American writing. The eight selections by twentieth-century black critics cover developments in the field of literary criticism as well as the ongoing struggle to define and understand African American literature.

The genre-based organization of the book is designed to help students appreciate both the historical development of each genre and the creative diversity among works within each form. The history of various literary

movements and themes, such as the Harlem Renaissance and the Black Arts movement, is emphasized in the part overviews, the selection headnotes, and the Focused Studies. In addition, the cultural essays in Part Five and the literary criticism pieces in Part Six help to foster a solid understanding of the important eras in the history of African American literature.

Finally, as the title of this anthology suggests, the ever-growing body of African American literature rests on a sturdy base of talented authors. Unfortunately, no one anthology can possibly include all of the authors and writings that make up that foundation. Nor can one volume accommodate all goals that an instructor or student might desire in a given course of study. However, *Cornerstones* offers an extensive collection of authors, forms, and works that demonstrate the vitality and diversity of African American literature. As such, the text serves as a comprehensive tool for guiding students through a rich and multifaceted body of literary expression.

Acknowledgments

In putting together such a comprehensive anthology as *Cornerstones*, I am indebted to the work of many other scholars who have compiled collections that honor the African American literary tradition. In addition, I am grateful for the invaluable support and encouragement of my friends and colleagues at UCLA, whose input inspired my organization and approach to this book: Bonnie Lisle, Randy Woodland, Rick Creese, Esha De, Joseph Giangello, Teshome Gabriel, Lisa Thompson, Reggie Waddell, Jami Jesek, and, especially, Perrin Reid. I also owe thanks to my friends and colleagues at Pasadena City College for their insightful critiques of the manuscript: Robert Foreman, Judith Branzburg, Roger Marheine, Mark McQueen, Ron Lanyi, and, especially, Phil Pastras. For providing suggestions for revisions that contributed to the book's final shape, I am indebted to Marcus Bruce, Michael Thelwell, Jess Mowry, Lupe Cadiz, and Saundra Shannon.

I wish to give special thanks to the many teachers and scholars who reviewed this manuscript; their incisive comments, criticisms, and suggestions have greatly improved this book: William L. Andrews, University of Kansas; Jeffery P. Berry, Adrian College; Owen E. Brady, Clarkson University; Lelia O. V. H. Crowders, Northern Virginia Community College; Donald J. Fay, Kennesaw State College; Ruth A. Hatcher, Washtenaw Community College; Robert Hemenway, University of Kentucky; Sue Houchins, Pitzer College; Sharon Howard, The Shomberg Center for Research in Black Culture; Geta LeSeur, University of Missouri-Columbia; Joyce Middleton, University of Rochester; Frank Moorer, Iowa State University; Philip Pastras, Pasadena City College; Phillip M. Richards, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Joseph T. Skerrett Jr., University of Massachusetts at Amherst; C. Jan Swearingen, University of Texas at Arlington; and Kenneth W. Warren, University of Chicago.

My appreciation also goes to Carolyn Walthour, for her exceptional re-

search and organizational skills and keen observations, and to Diane Kraut, for managing the challenging task of acquiring permissions. I am indebted to my development editor at St. Martin's Press, Diane Tasca, for her expertise in shaping the book's focus and coherence. I am also grateful to the many people at St. Martin's who worked tirelessly on this project—Susan Cotenden, Barbara Heinssen, Meg Spilleth, Erica Appel, and Diana Puglisi—for their energy, enthusiasm, and professionalism. To my wife, Beverly Tate, I owe special thanks; many difficult decisions about this project were made with her knowledgeable perspectives.

Finally, for their ongoing support of this endeavor and their faith in me, I am deeply indebted to Mike Rose, Cathy Pusateri, and Nancy Lyman.

Melvin Donalson

Work Cited

Smith, Valerie. *African American Writers*. New York: Collier, 1993.