AMERICAN NEGRO POETRY

REVISED EDITION

EDITED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY Arna Bontemps

WITH UPDATED BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

HILL AND WANG

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A Note from the Publishers

In 1963, Arna Bontemps first edited this outstanding selection of poems by African Americans. Bontemps's achievement was to bring together great voices of the twentieth century—writers as diverse as Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Ted Joans, Audre Lorde, and Richard Wright—and to show the development of their poetic tradition. Bontemps was in a perfect position to accomplish this, for he had served for many years as librarian of Fisk University and had worked on several other poetry anthologies, most notably The Poetry of the Negro: 1746–1949, which he co-edited with his good friend Langston Hughes. His many books include Anyplace But Here, The Story of the Negro (a runner-up for the Newbery Award), 100 Years of Negro Freedom, and The Harlem Renaissance Remembered. In 1974, Bontemps revised this anthology to include the poems of many postwar black writers, including Audre Lorde, Nikki Giovanni, and Bob Kaufman, among others. This new edition, issued by the publishers in 1996, reprints the poems of Bontemps's revised anthology with updated biographical notes.
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Introduction

The poetry of the American Negro sometimes seems hard to pin down. Like his music, from spirituals and gospel songs to blues, jazz, and bebop, it is likely to be marked by a certain special riff, an extra glide, a kick where none is expected, and a beat for which there is no notation. It follows the literary traditions of the language it uses, but it does not hold them sacred. As a result, there has been a tendency for critics to put it in a category by itself, outside the main body of American poetry.

But Negroes take to poetry as they do to music. In the Harlem Renaissance of the twenties poetry led the way for the other arts. It touched off the awakening that brought novelists, painters, sculptors, dancers, dramatists, and scholars of many kinds to the notice of a nation that had nearly forgotten about the gifts of its Negro people. And almost the first utterance of the revival struck an arresting new note:

I've known rivers ancient as the world and older
than the flow of human blood in human veins.

Soon thereafter the same generation responded to a poem that had been written even earlier and which Claude McKay included in his Harlem Shadows, 1922. "So much have I forgotten in ten years," the first stanza began. It closed with

I have forgotten much, but still remember
The poinsettia's red, blood-red in warm December.

And before these notes subsided, Jean Toomer raised his voice:

Pour O pour that parting soul in song,
O pour it in the sawdust glow of night . . .
And let the valley carry it along.

The Renaissance was on, and it was richly quotable, with Helene Johnson saying:

Ah little road, brown as my race is brown,
Dust of the dust, they must not bruise you down.
And Countee Cullen:

I doubt not God is good, well-meaning, kind,
And did He stoop to quibble could tell why
The little buried mole continues blind,
Why flesh that mirrors Him must some day die. . . .
Yet do I marvel at this curious thing:
To make a poet black, and bid him sing!

And Frank Home:

I buried you deeper last night
You with your tears and your tangled hair.

And Donald Jeffrey Hayes:

No rock along the road but knows
The inquisition of his tocs;
No journey’s end but what can say;
He paused and rested here a day!

And Waring Cuney:

She does not know
Her beauty.
She thinks her brown body
Has no glory.

In those days a good many of the New York group went to “The Dark Tower” on 136th Street, a sort of club room maintained for them by one of their fans, to weep because they felt an injustice in the critics’ insistence upon calling them Negro poets instead of poets. This attitude was particularly displeasing to Countee Cullen. But a few of his associates were not sure this was bad. Three decades later, considering the isolation of so many contemporary poets (including some Negroes) and their private language—well, they were still wondering. But it can be fairly said that most Negro poets in the United States remain near enough to their folk origins to prefer a certain simplicity of expression.

The poets of the Harlem Renaissance were born nearly two hundred years after Lucy Terry, the semiliterate slave girl, wrote “Bars Fight,” a verse account of an Indian raid on old Deerfield in 1746. Phillis Wheatley, whose Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral attracted much favorable attention in 1773, was born in Senegal, West Africa, sold into slavery in early childhood, and brought to Boston in 1761. “A Poem by Phillis, A Negro Girl in Boston, on the Death of the Reverend George Whitefield,” published when she was just seventeen, heralded the beginning of a unique writing career. When her health failed and she was advised by doctors to take an ocean voyage, Phillis embarked for England. In London the delicate girl was a success, and there her collection of verse was first issued.

Lucy Terry and Phillis Wheatley, along with such other American Negroes as Jupiter Hammon and George Moses Horton, belong to a tradition of writers in bondage which goes back to Aesop and Terence. There is no clear indication that Aesop succeeded in writing himself out of servitude. Nor did Lucy Terry, so far as is known, nor George Moses Horton of North Carolina, though Horton did manage to survive till the Northern armies set him free. But Terence and Phillis Wheatley both won their freedom by their writing.

Paul Laurence Dunbar, a son of former slaves, appeared about 120 years after Phillis and greeted the twentieth century with several volumes of lyrics, including such representative poems as “Dawn,” “The Party,” “We Wear the Mask,” and “Compensation,” together with scores of others which, more than half a century later, have a host of admirers to whom they remain fresh and poignant. His Complete Poems, 1913, is still in print.

A strong sense of melody and rhythm was a feature of Dunbar’s poetry, as it has been of nearly all the Negro poets of the United States. Dunbar’s delightful country folk, his broad, often humorous, dialect failed to create a tradition, however. Later Negro poets have held that the effective use of dialect in poetry is limited to humor and pathos. Accordingly, most of them have abandoned it.

A contemporary of Dunbar’s was James Weldon Johnson, but Johnson’s God’s Trombones, 1927, a collection of folk sermons in verse and his most important poetic achievement, was not completed till the Harlem awakening. But meanwhile William Stanley Braithwaite, best known for his series of annual Anthologies of Magazine Verse, 1913 to 1929, published two volumes of his own lyrics, 1904 and 1908, neither of them recognizable in any way as “Negro poetry.” Selected editions of Johnson’s and Braithwaite’s poems were published in 1930 and 1948 respectively.

Angelina W. Grimké, Anne Spencer, and Georgia Douglas Johnson are women whose poems appeared here and there before the Harlem poets arrived. Miss Grimké’s “The Black Finger,” Miss Spencer’s “Letter to My Sister,” and Miss Johnson’s “The Heart of a Woman” are typical. Fenton Johnson, their contemporary, is remembered best for free verse vignettes. Three small volumes of his poetry came out between 1914 and 1916.

With the arrival of Claude McKay in the United States Negro poetry welcomed its strongest voice since Dunbar. Born in Jamaica, British West Indies, McKay published his first book, Songs of Jamaica, at the age of
nineteen. Constab Ballads, written in West Indian dialect, followed about a year later, and presently the young McKay migrated to the United States to attend Tuskegee Institute and later Kansas State University as a student of agriculture. Two years of this was enough for him. He moved on to New York and began contributing verse to American magazines. McKay went to Europe in 1919 and published in London his slight but appealing collection Spring in New Hampshire, 1920. On returning to America he became associated with Max Eastman in the editing of the Liberator, Harlem Shadows, the book by which he became widely known to poetry lovers, and which touched off much subsequent literary activity in Harlem, came out in 1922. "The Tropics in New York" and the famous sonnet "If We Must Die" represent McKay's range as well as his special quality. Attention was drawn to the universality of the latter when Winston Churchill quoted it as the conclusion to his address before the joint houses of Congress prior to the entrance of the United States into World War II. The Prime Minister did not name the author, but in this context McKay's powerful lines gave the embattled allies an emotional jolt as Churchill read:

If we must die, O let us nobly die,
So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!

Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

The poems of Langston Hughes, meanwhile, had been appearing in the Crisis, a magazine which had since 1911 welcomed contributions by Negro poets. But Hughes quickly identified himself as a distinct new voice. "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" appeared soon after his graduation from high school in 1920 and was widely reprinted. The first collection of his poems was The Weary Blues, 1926, but many volumes have followed, all of them marked by an ease of expression and a naturalness of feeling that make them seem almost as if they had never been composed at all. Hughes's art can be likened to that of Jelly Roll Morton and the other creators of jazz. His sources are street music. His language is Harlemese. In his way he too is an American original.

Countee Cullen, another of the poets who helped to create the mood of the twenties in Negro poetry, was quite different. Educated in New York City, he adopted the standard models, from John Keats to E. A. Robinson. But the ideas that went into Cullen's sonnets and quatrains were new in American poetry. His long poem "Color," which gave its title to his first book, 1925, published while Cullen was still an under-
American Negro Poetry

With the rudiments of written communication. The
used by Richard Wright for drawing books from
library in his boyhood was a similar effort in the
18th C's, slave poetry had no choice but to go under-
was obliged to become oral. Whether or not
disguise is a matter of opinion. Nevertheless, the
turning by slaves appears to have coincided with
expression in the form now known as Negro spirituals.
Jordan, Roll," for example, among slaves from
ed on a Carribean island since 1824, would seem
of these songs very early in the nineteenth cen-
tury, allowing for the time it usually
develop and become generally known. Thus the
bies, and devotional poems of Phillis Wheatley,
vin and the manner of her English and American
were replaced as poetry by the lyrics of "Swing
Deep River," "My Lord What a Morning," and
Gonna Name That Pretty Little Baby." James
his respects to this creativity in his poem "O
da,"
black poets are still moved by the bittersweet
har greeted this century. Many are still turned
which Hughes and Cullen awakened the lifting
Bob Kaufman to Nikki Giovanni to Marvin Wyche
ps, reflect more recent influences. Negro experi-
and a vastly satisfying medium of expression in
is has been felt as a mood of our time, in the
is another matter. The lyrics of the spirituals are
as the music, and the same can be said of blues
Henry." From these sources comes a kind of
American Negro poets have frequently associated
ever, it is well to remember that Phillis Wheatley
before it existed, and there is certainly no way to
love the newest Negro poet.

Arna Bontemps
A Song / Paul Laurence Dunbar

Thou art the soul of a summer's day,
Thou art the breath of the rose.
   But the summer is fled
   And the rose is dead.
Where are they gone, who knows, who knows?

Thou art the blood of my heart o' hearts,
Thou art my soul's repose,
   But my heart grows numb
   And my soul is dumb.
Where art thou, love, who knows, who knows?

Thou art the hope of my after years—
Sun for my winter snows.
   But the years go by
'Neath a clouded sky.
Where shall we meet, who knows, who knows?

Sympathy / Paul Laurence Dunbar

I know what the caged bird feels, alas!
When the sun is bright on the upland slopes;
When the wind stirs soft through the springing grass
And the river flows like a stream of glass;
When the first bird sings and the first bud opes,
And the faint perfume from its chalice steals—
I know what the caged bird feels!

I know why the caged bird beats his wing
Till its blood is red on the cruel bars;
For he must fly back to his perch and cling
When he fain would be on the bough a-swing;
And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars
And they pulse again with a keener sting—
I know why he beats his wing!

I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,
When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,
When he beats his bars and would be free;
It is not a carol of joy or glee,
But a prayer that he sends from his heart’s deep core,
But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings—
I know why the caged bird sings!

---

**Rhapsody / William Stanley Braithwaite**

I am glad daylong for the gift of song,
For time and change and sorrow;
For the sunset wings and the world-end things
Which hang on the edge of tomorrow.
I am glad for my heart whose gates apart
Are the entrance-place of wonders,
Where dreams come in from the rush and din
Like sheep from the rains and thunders.

---

**Scintilla / William Stanley Braithwaite**

I kissed a kiss in youth
Upon a dead man’s brow;
And that was long ago—
And I’m a grown man now.

It’s lain there in the dust,
Thirty years and more—
My lips that set a light
At a dead man’s door.

---

**To Clarissa Scott Delany / Angelina W. Grimke**

She has not found herself a hard pillow
And a long hard bed,
For he must fly back to his perch and cling
When he fain would be on the bough a-swing;
And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars
And they pulse again with a keener sting—
I know why he beats his wing!

I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,
When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,
When he beats his bars and would be free;
It is not a carol of joy or glee,
But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,
But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings—
I know why the caged bird sings!

We Wear the Mask / Paul Laurence Dunbar

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and sheds our eyes,—
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subterfuges.

Why should the world be overwise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To Thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh, the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
We wear the mask.

Rhapsody / William Stanley Braithwaite

I am glad daylong for the gift of song,
For time and change and sorrow;
For the sunset wings and the world-end things
Which hang on the edge of tomorrow.
I am glad for my heart whose gates apart
Are the entrance-place of wonders,
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And that was long ago—
And I'm a grown man now.

It's lain there in the dust,
Thirty years and more—
My lips that set a light
At a dead man's door.

To Clarissa Scott Delany / Angelina W. Grimke

She has not found herself a hard pillow
And a long hard bed,
A chilling cypress, a wan willow
   For her gay young head . . .
   These are for the dead.

Does the violet-lidded twilight die
   And the piercing dawn
And the white clear moon and the night-blue sky . . .

Does the shimmering note
   In the shy, shy throat
Of the swaying bird?

O, does children’s laughter
Live not after
It is heard?

Does the dear, dear shine upon dear, dear things,
   In the eyes, on the hair,
On waters, on wings . . .
   Live no more anywhere?

Does the tang of the sea, the breath of frail flowers,
   Of fern crushed, of clover,
Of grasses at dark, of the earth after showers
   Not linger, not hover?

Does the beryl in tarns, the soft orchid in haze,
   The primrose through treetops, the unclouded jade
Of the north sky, all earth’s flamings and russets and grays
   Simply smudge out and fade?

And all loveliness, all sweetness, all grace,
   All the gay questing, all wonder, all dreaming,
They that cup beauty that veiled opaled vase,
   Are they only the soul of a seeming?

O, hasn’t she found just a little, thin door
   And passed through and closed it between?
O, aren’t those her light feet upon that light floor,
   . . . That her laughter? . . . O, doesn’t she lean
As we do to listen? . . . O, doesn’t it mean
   She is only unseen, unseen?

---

The Black Finger / Angelina W. Grimké

I have just seen a beautiful thing
   Slim and still,
Against a gold, gold sky,
   A straight cypress,
Sensitive,
Exquisite,
A black finger
Pointing upwards.
Why, beautiful, still finger are you black?
And why are you pointing upwards?

---

For Jim, Easter Eve / Anne Spencer

If ever a garden was a Gethsemane,
   with old tombs set high against
the crumpled olive tree—and lichen,
this, my garden, has been to me.
For such as I none other is so sweet:
Lacking old tombs, here stands my grief,
   and certainly its ancient tree.

Peace is here and in every season
a quiet beauty.
The sky falling about me
   evenly to the compass . . .
What is sorrow but tenderness now
in this earth-close frame of land and sky
falling constantly into horizons
of east and west, north and south;
what is pain but happiness here
amid these green and wordless patterns,—
indefinite texture of blade and leaf:
Beauty of an old, old tree,
last comfort in Gethsemane.

Lines to a Nasturtium (A lover muses) / Anne Spencer

Flame-flower, Day-torch, Mauna Loa,
I saw a daring bee, today, pause, and soar,
Into your flaming heart;
Then did I hear crisp crinkled laughter
As the furies after tore him apart?
A bird, next, small and humming,
Looked into your startled depths and fled...
Surely, some dread sight, and dafter
Than human eyes as mine can see,
Set the stricken air waves drumming
In his flight.

Day-torch, Flame-flower, cool-hot Beauty,
I cannot see, I cannot hear your fluty
Voice lure your loving swain,
But I know one other to whom you are in beauty
Born in vain;
Hair like the setting sun,
Her eyes a rising star,
Motions gracious as reeds by Babylon, bar
All your competing;
Hands like, how like, brown lilies sweet,
Cloth of gold were fair enough to touch her feet...
Ah, how the senses flood at my repeating,
As once in her fire-lit heart I felt the furies
Beating, beating.

Letter to My Sister / Anne Spencer

It is dangerous for a woman to defy the gods;
To taunt them with the tongue’s thin tip,
Or strut in the weakness of mere humanity,
Or draw a line daring them to cross;
The gods who own the searing lightning,
The drowning waters, the tormenting fears,
The anger of red sins...
Oh, but worse still if you mince along timidly—
Dodge this way or that, or kneel, or pray,
Or be kind, or sweat agony drops,
Or lay your quick body over your feeble young,
If you have beauty or plainness, if celibate,
Or vowed—the gods are Juggernaut,
Passing over each of us...
Or this you may do:
Lock your heart, then quietly,
And, lest they peer within,
Light no lamp when dark comes down.
Raise no shade for sun,
Breathless must your breath come thru,
If you’d die and dare deny
The gods their godlike fun!

Morning Light the Dew-Drier / Effie Lee Newsome

In Africa little black boys, “human brooms,” are sent before the explorers into jungle grasses that tower many feet to tread down a path and meet sometimes the lurking leopard or hyena. They are called Dew-driers.
Brother to the firefly—
For as the firefly lights the night,
So lights he the morning—
Bathed in the dank dews as he goes forth
Through heavy menace and mystery
Of half-waking tropic dawn,
Behold a little black boy,
A naked black boy,
Sweeping aside with his slight frame
Night's pregnant tears,
And making a morning path to the light
For the tropic traveler!
Bathed in the blood of battle,
Treading toward a new morning,
May not his race, its body long bared
To the world's disdain, its face schooled to smile
For a light to come,
May not his race, even as the dew-boy leads,
Light onward men's minds toward a time
When tolerance, forbearance
Such as reigned in the heart of One
Whose heart was gold,
Shall shape the earth for that fresh dawning
After the dews of blood?

The high, the low, the rich, the poor,
The black, the white, the red,
And all the chromatique between,
Of whom shall it be said:
Here lies the dust of Africa;
Here are the sons of Rome;
Here lies one unlabelled
The world at large his home!
Can one then separate the dust,
Will mankind lie apart.
When life has settled back again
The same as from the start?

Trifle / GEORGIA DOUGLAS JOHNSON

Against the day of sorrow
Lay by some trilling thing
A smile, a kiss, a flower
For sweet remembering.
Then when the day is darkest
Without one rift of blue
Take out your little trifle
And dream your dream anew.

Common Dust / GEORGIA DOUGLAS JOHNSON

And who shall separate the dust
Which later we shall be:
Whose keen discerning eye will scan
And solve the mystery?
The Poet Speaks / Georgia Douglas Johnson

How much living have you done?
From it the patterns that you weave
Are imaged:
Your own life is your totem pole,
Your yard of cloth,
Your living.

How much loving have you done?
How full and free your giving?
For living is but loving
And loving only giving.

I Want to Die While You
Love Me / Georgia Douglas Johnson

I want to die while you love me,
While yet you hold me fair,
While laughter lies upon my lips
And lights are in my hair.

I want to die while you love me,
I could not bear to see,
The glory of this perfect day,
Grow dim—or cease to be.

I want to die while you love me.
Oh! who would care to live
Till love has nothing more to ask,
And nothing more to give.

Your World / Georgia Douglas Johnson

Your world is as big as you make it.
I know, for I used to abide
In the narrowest nest in a corner,
My wings pressing close to my side.

But I sighted the distant horizon
Where the sky line encircled the sea
And I throbbed with a burning desire
To travel this immensity.

I battered the cordons around me
And cradled my wings on the breeze
Then soared to the uttermost reaches
With rapture, with power, with ease!

Lovelight / Georgia Douglas Johnson

Strange atoms we unto ourselves
Soaring a strange demesne
With life and death the darkened doors
And love the light between.
Prejudice / GEORGIA DOUGLAS JOHNSON

These fell miasmic rings of mist,
with ghoulish menace bound,
Like noose-horizons tightening my
little world around.
They still the soaring will to wing,
to dance, to speed away.
And fling the soul insurgent back
into its shell of clay.
Beneath incrustated silences, a seething Etna lies,
The fire of whose furnaces may
sleep, but never dies!

Conquest / GEORGIA DOUGLAS JOHNSON

My pathway lies through worse than death;
I meet the hours with bated breath,
My red blood boils, my pulses thrill,
I live life running up a hill.
Ah, no, I need no paltry play
Of make-shift tilts for holiday:
For I was born against the tide
And I must conquer that denied.
I shun no hardship, fear no foe;
The future calls and I must go:
I charge the line and dare the spheres
As I go fighting down the years.

The Daily Grind / FENTON JOHNSON

If Nature says to you,
"I intend you for something fine,
For something to sing the song
That only my whirling stars can sing,
For something to burn in the firmament
With all the fervor of my golden sun,
For something to moisten the parched souls
As only my rivulets can moisten the parched,"
What can you do?
If the System says to you,
"I intend you to grind and grind
Grains of corn beneath millstones;
I intend you to shovel and sweat
Before a furnace of Babylon;
I intend you for grist and meat
To fatten my pompous gods
As they wallow in an alcoholic nectar,"
What can you do?
Naught can you do
But watch that eternal battle
Between Nature and the System.
You cannot blame God,
You cannot blame man;
For God did not make the System,
Neither did man fashion Nature.
You can only die each morning,
And live again in the dreams of the night.
If Nature forgets you,
If the System forgets you,
God has blest you.
The World Is a Mighty Ogre / Fenton Johnson

I could love her with a love so warm
You could not break it with a fairy charm;
I could love her with a love so bold
It would not die, e'en tho' the world grew cold.

I cannot cross the bridge, nor climb the tower,—
I cannot break the spell of magic power;
The rules of man forbid me raise my sword—
Have mercy on a humble bard, O Lord!

The Old Repair Man / Fenton Johnson

God is the Old Repair Man.
When we are junk in Nature's storehouse he takes us apart.
What is good he lays aside; he might use it some day.
What has decayed he buries in six feet of sod to nurture
the weeds.

Those we leave behind moisten the sod with their tears;
But their eyes are blind as to where he has placed
the good.
Some day the Old Repair Man
Will take the good from its secret place
And with his gentle, strong hands will mold
A more enduring work—a work that will defy Nature—
And we will laugh at the old days, the troubled days,
When we were but a crude piece of craftsmanship,
When we were but an experiment in Nature's laboratory... It is good we have the Old Repair Man.

A Negro Peddler's Song / Fenton Johnson

(The pattern of this song was sung by a Negro peddler in a Chicago alley.)

Good Lady,
I have corn and beets,
Onions, too, and leeks,
And also sweet potat-y.

Good Lady,
Buy for May and John;
And when work is done
Give a bite to Sadie.

Good Lady,
I have corn and beets,
Onions, too, and leeks,
And also sweet potat-y.

Counting / Fenton Johnson

Go count the stars!
Whirling worlds of light,
Endless balls of fire,
Lonely Evening Star,
Dancing Morning Star,
Silvery necklaces in a jewel box of mist
For the wedding of an angel to an earth-daughter.
Pray, is there one who can count the stars?

Go count the unborn souls!
Many are the cherubs at Michael's Gate.
Awaiting their chubby bodies and a mother's arms.
So in their day flitted Caesars, Napoleons,
Alexanders whilst cherub Miltons chanted,
"We are Michael's angels, sweet Michael's angels."
Pray, is there one who can count the unborn souls?

Words felt, but never heard, my lips would frame;
My soul would sing forgotten jungle songs.
I would go back to darkness and to peace,
But the great western world holds me in fee,
And I may never hope for full release
While to its alien gods I bend my knee.
Something in me is lost, forever lost,
Some vital thing has gone out of my heart,
And I must walk the way of life a ghost
Among the sons of earth, a thing apart.

For I was born, far from my native clime,
Under the white man's menace, out of time.

The Tropics in New York / CLAUDE MCKAY

Bananas ripe and green, and gingerroot,
Cocoa in pods and alligator pears,
And tangerines and mangoes and grapefruit,
Fit for the highest prize at parish fairs,
Set in the window, bringing memories
Of fruit trees laden by low-singing rills,
And dewy dawns, and mystical blue skies
In benediction over numblike hills.

My eyes grew dim, and I could no more gaze;
A wave of longing through my body swept,
And, hungry for the old, familiar ways,
I turned aside and bowed my head and wept.

Outcast / CLAUDE MCKAY

For the dim regions whence my fathers came
My spirit, bondaged by the body, longs.

St. Isaac's Church, Petrograd / CLAUDE MCKAY

Bow down my soul in worship very low
And in the holy silences be lost.
Bow down before the marble Man of Woe,
Bow down before the singing angel host.
What jewelled glory fills my spirit's eye,
What golden grandeur moves the depths of me!
The soaring arches lift me up on high,
Taking my breath with their rare symmetry.

Bow down my soul and let the wondrous light
Of beauty bathe thee from her lofty throne,
Bow down before the wonder of man's might.
Bow down in worship, humble and alone,
Bow lowly down before the sacred sight
Of man's Divinity alive in stone.
Flame-Heart / Claude McKay

So much have I forgotten in ten years,
So much in ten brief years! I have forgot
What time the purple apples come to juice,
And what month brings the shy forget-me-not.
I have forgot the special, startling season
Of the pimento's flowering and fruiting;
What time of year the ground doves brown the fields
And fill the noonday with their curious fluttering.
I have forgotten much, but still remember
The poinsettia's red, blood-red in warm December.

I still recall the honey-fever grass,
But cannot recollect the high days when
We rooted them out of the ping-wing path
To stop the mad bees in the rabbit pen.
I often try to think in what sweet month
The languid painted ladies used to dapple
The yellow byroad mazing from the main,
Sweet with the golden threads of the rose apple.
I have forgotten—strange—but quite remember
The poinsettia's red, blood-red in warm December.

What weeks, what months, what time of the mild year
We cheated school to have our fling at tops?
What days our wine-thrilled bodies pulsed with joy
Feasting upon blackberries in the copse?
Oh, some I know! I have embalmed the days,
Even the sacred moments when we played,
All innocent of passion, uncorrupt,
At noon and evening in the flame-heart's shade.
We were so happy, happy, I remember,
Beneath the poinsettia's red in warm December.

We Must Die / Claude McKay

If we must die—let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
Making their mock at our accursed lot.
If we must die—oh, let us nobly die,
So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!
Oh, kinsmen! We must meet the common foe;
Though far outnumbered, let us show us brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow!
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

The White House / Claude McKay

Your door is shut against my tightened face,
And I am sharp as steel with discontent;
But I possess the courage and the grace
To bear my anger proudly and unbent.
The pavement slabs burn loose beneath my feet,
A chafing savage, down the decent street;
And passion rends my vitals as I pass,
Where boldly shines your shattered door of glass.
Oh, I must search for wisdom every hour,
Deep in my wrathful bosom sore and raw,
And find in it the superhuman power
To hold me to the letter of your law!
Oh, I must keep my heart inviolate
Against the potent poison of your hate.

Georgia Dusk / Jean Toomer

The sky, lazily disdaining to pursue
The setting sun, too indolent to hold
A lengthened tournament for flashing gold,
Passively darkens for night's barbecue.

A feast of moon and men and barking hounds,
An orgy for some genius of the South
With blood-hot eyes and cane-lipped scented mouth,
Surprised in making folk songs from soul-sounds.

The sawmill blows its whistle, buzz saws stop,
And silence breaks the bud of knoll and hill,
Soft settling pollen where plowed lands fulfill
Their early promise of a bumper crop.

Smoke from the pyramidal sawdust pile
Curls up, blue ghosts of trees, tarrying low
Where only chips and stumps are left to show
The solid proof of former domicile.

Meanwhile, the men, with vestiges of pomp,
Race memories of king and caravan,
High priests, an ostrich, and a juju-man,
Go singing through the footpaths of the swamp.

Their voices rise . . . the pine trees are guitars,
Strumming, pine needles fall like sheets of rain . . .
Their voices rise . . . the chorus of the cane
Is caroling a vesper to the stars . . .

O singers, resinous and soft your songs
Above the sacred whisper of the pines,
Give virgin lips to cornfield concubines,
Bring dreams of Christ to dusky cane-lipped throngs.

Song of the Son / Jean Toomer

Pour O pour that parting soul in song,
O pour it in the sawdust glow of night,
Into the velvet pine-smoke air tonight,
And let the valley carry it along.
And let the valley carry it along.

O land and soil, red soil and sweet-gum tree,
So scant of grass, so prodigal of pines,
Now just before an epoch's sun declines
Thy son, in time, I have returned to thee,
Thy son, I have, in time, returned to thee.

In time, for though the sun is setting on
A song-lit race of slaves, it has not set;
Though late, O soil, it is not too late yet
To catch thy plaintive soul, leaving, soon gone,
Leaving, to catch thy plaintive soul soon gone.

O Negro slaves, dark purple ripened plums,
Squeezed, and bursting in the pine-wood air,
Passing, before they strip the old tree bare
One plum was saved for me, one seed becomes

An everlasting song, a singing tree,
Caroling softly souls of slavery,
What they were, and what they are to me,
Caroling softly souls of slavery.
Brown River, Smile / JEAN TOOMER

It is a new America,
To be spiritualized by each new American.

Lift, lift, thou waking forces!
Let us feel the energy of animals,
The energy of rumps and bull-bent heads
Crashing the barrier to man.
It must spiral on!
A million million men, or twelve men,
Must crash the barrier to the next higher form.

Beyond plants are animals,
Beyond animals is man,
Beyond man is the universe.

The Big Light,
Let the Big Light in!

O thou, Radiant Incorporeal,
The I of earth and of mankind, hurl
Down these seaboards, across this continent,
The thousand-rayed discus of thy mind,
And above our walking limbs unfurl
Spirit-torsos of exquisite strength!

The Mississippi, sister of the Ganges,
Main artery of earth in the western world,
Is waiting to become
In the spirit of America, a sacred river.
Whoever lifts the Mississippi
Lifts himself and all America;
Whoever lifts himself
Makes that great brown river smile.
The blood of earth and the blood of man
Course swifter and rejoice when we spiritualize.

The old gods, led by an inverted Christ,
A shaved Moses, a blanched Lemur,

And a moulting thunderbird,
Withdrew into the distance and soon died,
Their dust and seed falling down
To fertilize the five regions of America.

We are waiting for a new God.

The old peoples—
The great European races sent wave after wave
That washed the forests, the earth's rich loam,
Grew towns with the seeds of giant cities,
Made roads, laid golden rails,
Sang once of its swift achievement,
And died congested in machinery.
They say that near the end
It was a world of crying men and heroic women,
A city of goddam and Jehovah
Baptized in industry
Without benefit of saints,
Of dear defectives
Winnowing their likenesses from weathered rock
Sold by national organizations of undertakers.

Someone said:
Suffering is impossible
On cement sidewalks, in skyscrapers,
In motorcars;
Steel cannot suffer—
We die unconsciously
Because possessed by a nonhuman symbol.

Another cried:
It is because of thee, O Life,
That the first prayer ends in the last curse.

Another sang:
Late minstrels of the restless earth,
No muteness can be granted thee,
Lift thy laughing energies
To that white point which is a star.
The great African races sent a single wave
And singing ripples to sorrow in red fields,
Sing a swan song, to break rocks
And immortalize a shining water boy.

I'm leaving the shining ground, brothers,
I sing because I ache,
I go because I must,
Brothers, I am leaving the shining ground;
Don't ask me where,
I'll meet you there,
I'm leaving the shining ground.

The great red race was here.
In a land of flaming earth and torrent-rains,
Of red sea-plains and majestic mesas,
At sunset from a purple hill
The Gods came down;
They serpentinied into pueblo,
And a white-robed priest
Danced with them five days and nights;
But pueblo, priest, and Shalicos
Sank into the sacred earth
To fertilize the five regions of America.

Hi-yo, hi-yo, hi-yo
Hi-yo, hi-yo, hi-yo,
A lone eagle feather,
An untamed Navaho,
The ghosts of buffaloes,
Hi-yo, hi-yo, hi-yo,
Hi-yo, hi-yo, hi-yo.

We are waiting for a new people.
O thou, Radiant Incorporeal,
The I of earth and of mankind, hurl
Down these seabords, across this continent,
The thousand-rayed discus of thy mind,
And above our walking limbs unfurl
Spirit-torsos of exquisite strength!

The east coast is masculine,
The west coast is feminine,
The middle region is the child—
Forces of reconciling
And generator of symbols.
Thou, great fields, waving thy growths across the world,
Coolest thou find the seed which started thee?
Can you remember the first great hand to sow?
Have you memory of His intention?
Great plains, and thou, mountains,
And thou, stately trees, and thou,
America, sleeping and producing with the seasons,
No clever dealer can divide,
No machine can undermine thee.

The prairie's sweep is flat infinity,
The city's rise is perpendicular to farthest star,
I stand where the two directions intersect,
At Michigan Avenue and Walton Place,
Parallel to my countrymen,
Right-angled to the universe.

It is a new America,
To be spiritualized by each new American.

Dark Symphony / MELVIN B. TOLSON

1 ALLEGRO MODERATO
Black Crispus Attucks taught
"Us how to die"
Before white Patrick Henry's bugle breath

36

37
Uttered the vertical
Transmitting cry:
"Yea, give me liberty, or give me death."
And from that day to this
Men black and strong
For Justice and Democracy have stood,
Steeled in the faith that Right
Will conquer Wrong
And Time will usher in one brotherhood.
No Banquo's ghost can rise
Against us now
And say we crushed men with a tyrant's boot
Or pressed the crown of thorns
On Labor's brow,
Or ravaged lands and carted off the loot.

II LENTO GRAVE
The centuries-old pathos in our voices
Saddens the great white world,
And the wizardry of our dusky rhythms
Conjures up shadow-shapes of ante-bellum years:
Black slaves singing One More River to Cross
In the torture tombs of slave ships,
Black slaves singing Steal Away to Jesus
In jungle swamps,
Black slaves singing The Crucifixion
In slave pens at midnight,
Black slaves singing Swing Low, Sweet Chariot
In cabins of death,
Black slaves singing Go Down, Moses
In the canebrakes of the Southern Pharaohs.

III ANDANTE SOSTENUTO
They tell us to forget
The Golgotha we tread . . .
We who are scourged with hate,
A price upon our head.
They who have shackled us
Require of us a song,
They who have wasted us
Bid us o'erlook the wrong.
They tell us to forget
Democracy is spurned.
They tell us to forget
The Bill of Rights is burned.
Three hundred years we slaved,
We slave and suffer yet:
Though flesh and bone rebel,
They tell us to forget!
Oh, how can we forget
Our human rights denied?
Oh, how can we forget
Our manhood crucified?
When Justice is profaned
And plea with curse is met,
When Freedom's gates are barred,
Oh, how can we forget?

IV TEMPO PRIMO
The New Negro strides upon the continent
In seven league boots . . .
The New Negro
Who sprang from the vigor-stout loins
Of Nat Turner, gallows-martyr for Freedom,
Of Joseph Cinquez, Black Moses of the Amistad Mutiny,
Of Frederick Douglass, oracle of the Catholic Man,
Of Sojourner Truth, eye and ear of Lincoln's legions,
Of Harriet Tubman, St. Bernard of the Underground Railroad.
V LABRETTO

None in the Land can say
To us black men Today:
You send the tractors on their bloody path,
And create Okies for The Grapes of Wrath.
You breed the slum that breeds a Native Son
To damn the good earth Pilgrim Fathers won.

None in the Land can say
To us black men Today:
You dupe the poor with rags-to-riches tales,
And leave the workers empty dinner pails.
You stuff the ballot box, and honest men
Are muzzled by your demagogic din.

None in the Land can say
To us black men Today:
You smash stock markets with your coined blitzkriegs
And make a hundred million guinea pigs.
You counterfeit our Christianity,
And bring contempt upon Democracy.

None in the Land can say
To us black men Today:
You prowl when citizens are fast asleep,
And hatch Fifth Column plots to blast the deep
Foundations of the State and leave the Land
A vast Sahara with a Fascist brand.

None in the Land can say
To us black men Today:
You send flame-gutting tanks, like swarms of flies,
And plump a hell from dynamiting skies.
You fill machine-gunned towns with rotting dead—
A No Man’s Land where children cry for bread.

VI TEMPO DI MARCIA

Out of abysses of Illiteracy,
Through labyrinths of Lies,

Across wastelands of Disease . . .
We advance!

Out of dead-ends of Poverty,
Through wildernesses of Superstition,
Across barricades of Jim Crowism . . .
We advance!

With the Peoples of the World . . .
We advance!

Id Stuff / FRANK HORNE

DECEMBER, 1942

The wise guys
tell me
that Christmas
is Kid Stuff . . .
Maybe they’ve got
something there—
Two thousand years ago
three wise guys
chased a star
across a continent
to bring
frankincense and myrrh
to a Kid
born in a manger
with an idea in his head . . .

And as the bombs
crash
all over the world
today
And leave serenity
Which knows no pain.

Clean the spittoons, boy.
Detroit,
Chicago,
Atlantic City,
Palm Beach.
Clean the spittoons.
The steam in hotel kitchens,
And the smoke in hotel lobbies,
And the slime in hotel spittoons:
Part of my life.
Hey, boy!
A nickel,
A dime,
A dollar,
Two dollars a day.
Hey, boy!
A nickel,
A dime,
A dollar,
Two dollars
Buy shoes for the baby.
House rent to pay.
Gin on Saturday,
Church on Sunday.
My God!
Babies and gin and church
And women and Sunday
All mixed with dimes and
Dollars and clean spittoons
And house rent to pay.
    Hey, boy!
A bright bowl of brass is beautiful to the Lord.
Bright polished brass like the cymbals
Of King David’s dancers,
Like the wine cups of Solomon.
    Hey, boy!
A clean spittoon on the altar of the Lord.
A clean bright spittoon all newly polished—
At least I can offer that.
    Com’mere, boy!

Cross / Langston Hughes

My old man’s a white old man
And my old mother’s black.
If ever I cursed my white old man
I take my curses back.
If ever I cursed my black old mother
And wished she were in hell,
I’m sorry for that evil wish
And now I wish her well.

My old man died in a fine big house.
My ma died in a shack.
I wonder where I’m gonna die,
Being neither white nor black?

Jazzonia / Langston Hughes

Oh, silver tree!
Oh, shining rivers of the soul.
In a Harlem cabaret
Six long-headed jazzers play.
A dancing girl whose eyes are bold
Lifts high a dress of silken gold.
Oh, singing tree!
Oh, shining rivers of the soul!

Were Eve’s eyes
In the first garden
Just a bit too bold?
Was Cleopatra gorgeous
In a gown of gold?

Oh, shining tree!
Oh, silver rivers of the soul!

In a whirling cabaret
Six long-headed jazzers play.

The Negro Speaks of Rivers / Langston Hughes

I’ve known rivers:
I’ve known rivers ancient as the world and older than the
flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.
I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln
went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy
bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I, Too / LANGSTON HUGHES

I, too, sing America.
I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed—
I, too, am America.

Goin' down the road, Lawd,
Goin' down the road.
Down the road, Lawd,
Way, way down the road.
Got to find somebody
To help me carry this load.

Road's in front o' me,
Nothin' to do but walk.
Road's in front o' me,
Walk . . . an' walk . . . an' walk.
I'd like to meet a good friend
To come along an' talk.

Hates to be lonely,
Lawd, I hates to be sad.
Says I hates to be lonely,
Hates to be lonely an' sad,
But ever' friend you finds seems
Like they try to do you bad.

Road, road, road, O!
Road, road . . . road . . . road, road!
Road, road, road, O!
On the no'them road.
These Mississippi towns ain't
Fit fer a hoppin' toad.
Personal / Langston Hughes

In an envelope marked:
PERSONAL
God addressed me a letter.
In an envelope marked:
PERSONAL
I have given my answer.

Dream Variation / Langston Hughes

To fling my arms wide
In some place of the sun,
To whirl and to dance
Till the white day is done.
Then rest at cool evening
Beneath a tall tree
While night comes on gently,
Dark like me—
That is my dream!
To fling my arms wide
In the face of the sun,
Dance! Whirl! Whirl!
Till the quick day is done.
Rest at pale evening . .
A tall, slim tree . .
Night coming tenderly
Black like me.

Mother to Son / Langston Hughes

Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor—
Bare.
But all the time
I se been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now—
For I se still goin', honey,
I se still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

Lenox Avenue Mural / Langston Hughes

Harlem
What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?

GOOD MORNING
Good morning, daddyl
I was born here, he said,
watched Harlem grow
until colored folks spread
from river to river
across the middle of Manhattan
out of Penn Station
dark tenth of a nation,
planes from Puerto Rico,
and holds of boats, chico,
up from Cuba Haiti Jamaica,
in busses marked New York
from Georgia Florida Louisiana
to Harlem Brooklyn the Bronx
but most of all to Harlem
dusky sash across Manhattan
I’ve seen them come dark
wondering
wide-eyed
dreaming
out of Penn Station—
but the trains are late.
The gates open—
but there’re bars
at each gate.
What happens
to a dream deferred?
Daddy, ain’t you heard?

SAME IN BLUES
I said to my baby,
Baby, take it slow.
I can’t, she said, I can’t!
I got to go!
There’s a certain
amount of traveling
in a dream deferred.
Lulu said to Leonard,
I want a diamond ring.
Leonard said to Lulu,
You won’t get a goddamn thing!
A certain
amount of nothing
in a dream deferred.
Daddy, daddy, daddy,
All I want is you.
You can have me, baby—
but my lovin’ days is through.
A certain
amount of impotence
in a dream deferred.

Three parties
On my party line—
But that third party,
Lord, ain’t mine!
There’s liable
to be confusion
in a dream deferred.
From river to river
Uptown and down,
There’s liable to be confusion
when a dream gets kicked around.
You talk like
they don’t kick
dreams around
Downtown.
I expect they do—
But I'm talking about
Harlem to you!

LETTER

Dear Mama,

Time I pay rent and get my food
and laundry I don't have much left
but here is five dollars for you
to show you I still appreciate you.
My girl-friend send her love and say
she hopes to lay eyes on you sometime in life.
Mama, it has been raining cats and dogs up
here. Well, that is all so I will close.
Your son baby
Respectable as ever,
Joe

ISLAND

Between two rivers,
North of the park,
Like darker rivers
The streets are dark.
Black and white,
Gold and brown—
Chocolate-custard
Pie of a town.
Dream within a dream
Our dream deferred.
Good morning, daddy!
Ain't you heard?

Pennsylvania Station / LANGSTON HUGHES

The Pennsylvania Station in New York
Is like some vast basilica of old
That towers above the terrors of the dark
As bulwark and protection to the soul.
Now people who are hurrying alone
And those who come in crowds from far away
Pass through this great concourse of steel and stone
To trains, or else from trains out into day.
And as in great basilicas of old
The search was ever for a dream of God,
So here the search is still within each soul
Some seed to find that sprouts a holy tree
To glorify the earth—and you—and me.

Dream a World / LANGSTON HUGHES

I dream a world where man
No other will scorn,
Where love will bless the earth
And peace its paths adorn.
I dream a world where all
Will know sweet freedom's way,
Where greed no longer saps the soul
Nor avarice blights our day.
A world I dream where black or white,
Whatever race you be,
Will share the bounties of the earth
And every man is free,
Where wretchedness will hang its head,
And joy, like a pearl,
Attend the needs of all mankind.
Of such I dream—
Our world!

Without Benefit of Declaration / LANGSTON HUGHES

Listen here, Joe
Don't you know
That tomorrow
You got to go
Out yonder where
The steel winds blow?

Listen here, kid,
It's been said
Tomorrow you'll be dead
Out there where
The snow is lead.

Don't ask me why.
Just go ahead and die.
Hidden from the sky
Out yonder you'll lie;
A medal to your family—
In exchange for
A guy.

Mama, don't cry.
Biographical Notes

The following biographical notes were written by Arna Bontemps. The publishers have taken the liberty of adding new information about the careers of the contributors after Bontemps's death in 1973. Special thanks go to Raquel Coghill of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture at the New York Public Library for her work on this edition.

SAMUEL ALLEN (1917— ) was one of James Weldon Johnson’s students of creative writing at Fisk University. He also attended Harvard Law School and has studied at the Sorbonne in Paris, where Richard Wright discovered his poetry and had it published in Presse Africa. A collection of his poems, Elfenbein Zäune (Ivory Fences), signed Paul Verly, was brought out in 1956 by Wolfgang Rothe Verlag in Heidelberg. Allen has been associated with the Legal Department of the United States Information Agency and has taught at Tuskegee Institute, Wesleyan University, and Boston University, and has compiled an anthology of African poetry. His other publications include Poems and Voice Not Our Own. He is Professor Emeritus of African American history at Boston University.

RUSSELL ATKINS (1926— ) has had poems in avant-garde journals since the 1940s. He still lives in Cleveland, Ohio, the city where he was born and educated. Free Lance, which he founded in 1930 and ran until 1976, is considered the most significant avant-garde publication of poetry and prose of the period and is probably the oldest black-owned literary magazine in the United States. Atkins’s later books of poetry are Here in The (1976) and Whitehead (1978).

GWENDOLYN B. BENNETT (1902–81), born in Giddings, Texas, attended elementary school in Washington, D.C., before moving on to Girls’ High School in Brooklyn, New York, where she was graduated in 1921. Subsequently, she studied at Columbia University and at Brooklyn’s Pratt Institute. An early interest in the fine arts also led to study at the Académie Julian and the École de Panthéon in Paris. From 1926 to 1928 she wrote a regularly featured column, “The Ebony Flute,” for Opportunity, chronicling the activities of the cultural leaders of the Harlem Renaissance. She taught art at Howard University, and was selected as one of two African American artists to study the Barnes Foundation’s collection of modern and primitive art.

HORACE JULIAN BOND (1940— ) has lived for most of his life in Atlanta, Georgia, as did his late father, Dr. Horace Mann Bond. He took an active part in the student movement that was responsible for sit-ins and other attacks on segregation in his home city, which casts a sidelight on his often-quoted couplet:

Look at that gal shake that thing—
We can’t all be Martin Luther King.

Since that campaign, he won a seat in the Georgia Legislature, had it denied him, had the denial overruled, and had his name placed in nomination for Vice-President of the United States, even though he was too young to qualify. His book A Time to Speak, A Time to Act was published in 1972. Bond has taught history and politics at the American University, University of Virginia, and Harvard and Drexel universities. Between 1965 and 1987 he served in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, representing Georgia. Today he hosts American Black Forum, a syndicated television news program based in Washington, D.C.
WILLIAM STANLEY BRAITHWAITE (1857–1962) was born in Boston, of West Indian parents. His career as a poet began in 1904 with the publication of Lyrics of Life and Love. A second volume, The House of Falling Leaves, followed two years later. In 1946, his Selected Poems appeared. Between 1913 and 1929 Braithwaite edited an annual Anthology of Magazine Verse and presented the work of American poets such as Edgar Lee Masters, Vachel Lindsay, and Carl Sandburg before they were widely recognized. He also edited other general anthologies and served on the editorial staff of the Boston Transcript.

GWENDOLYN BROOKS (1917– ), awarded the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1959 for Annie Allen, has since written fiction as well as verse for children and more poetry. Her first collection, The Street in Bronzeville, was published in 1945; The Bean Eaters in 1961. She read her poems for the National Poetry Festival at the Library of Congress in 1962. She won the Friends Literary Award for Poetry in 1964 and taught poetry at Northeastern Illinois State College; Columbia College, Chicago; and Elimhurst College, Elmhurst, Illinois. She was named Poet Laureate of Illinois, succeeding Carl Sandburg. Her other works include Jump Bad: A New Chicago Anthology and The World of Gwendolyn Brooks, both published in 1971. More recent works include The Near-Johannesburg Boy, and Other Poems (1986) and Children Coming Home (1991). She now holds more than fifty honorary degrees and from 1985 to 1986 served as Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress.

JONATHAN BROOKS (1904–45) and his widowed mother worked a sharecroppers' farm in Mississippi until he was fourteen, when he began the uphill struggle for an education. When he died in 1945, he was working in the post office in New York. The Resurrection and Other Poems, his only book, was published posthumously.

STERLING A. BROWN (1901–89) had a distinguished career as a member of the faculty of Howard University. Educated in the schools of Washington, D.C., and at Williams College and Harvard University, he taught at Fisk University and Lincoln University in Missouri before beginning the long association with Howard which led to his selection in 1961 to write a history of that university. His published books include Southern Road (1932), a volume of poetry; The Negro in American Fiction (1938); and Negro Poetry and Drama (1938). He served as senior editor of Negro Caravan, first published in 1941 and revised in 1969. In 1984 he was named Poet Laureate of the District of Columbia. The Collected Poems of Sterling Brown was published in 1980.

WARING CUNEY (1906–76) attended schools and conservatories in Washington, D.C., his birthplace, and Pennsylvania, Boston, and Rome. While he was still a student at Lincoln University, his "No Images" won a national poetry contest. It was widely reprinted in 1926 and has often been anthologized, as have some of his later poems. Several of his poems, sung by Josh White, were recorded and issued as an album under the title Southern Exposure. Cuneys later success was in Europe; in 1960 his Puzzles was published in Holland, and in 1976 Store Front Church appeared in London.

MARGARET DANNER (1915– ) was born in Pryorsburg, Kentucky, but has spent the greater part of her life in Chicago, where she was at one time associated with Poetry: The Magazine of Verse. A selection of her poems appearing in that magazine prompted the John Hay Whitney Opportunity Fellowships Committee to offer her a trip to Africa. In 1962 the literary group with which she was associated in Detroit was featured in a special issue of the Bulletin of Negro History. She is interested in French and African art, and published a collection of verse in 1965 entitled Iron Lace. In that year she received an award from Poets in Concert, and in 1970 she was poet-in-residence at Virginia Union University in Richmond. Her second volume of poetry was The Down of a Thistle: Selected Poems, Prose Poems, and Songs.

FRANK MARSHALL DAVIS (1905–87) left a career in journalism, mainly with the Associated Negro Press, for the tropical attractions of Hawaii, where he lived with his family. Four volumes of his free verse (Chicago style) were published: Black Men's Verse (1937), I Am the American Negro (1937), 47th Street (1948), and Awakening and Other Poems (1978).

CLARISSA SCOTT DELANY (1901–27), beautiful and talented, was a magazine cover girl the year she was graduated from Wellesley. She was a teacher in Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C., when she married Hubert Delany in 1926. Her literary reviews were published in Opportunity.

OWEN DODSON (1914–83) was head of the Department of Drama at Howard University in Washington, D.C. A graduate of Bates College and Yale University, he had two
of his plays, Divine Comedy and Garden of Time, produced at Yale while he was working toward his Fine Arts degree. Others were presented on other campuses, and in 1946 a collection of his poems, Powerful Long Ladder, was published. In 1967 he received a Doctor of Letters from Bates, and during the spring of 1983 he was poet-in-residence at the University of Arizona. His books of poetry include Cages (1933), Confession Stone (1970), and The Harlem Book of the Dead (with James Van Der Zee and Camille Bishops) (1978).

ALFRED A. DUCKETT (1918–84) was a public-relations man in New York and had broad experiences in New York City, with the Amsterdam News, New York Age, and Pittsburgh Courier. His early poems occasionally reappear in anthologies, and he was the author of Changing of the Guard: The New Black Breed of Black Politicians, published in 1972.

PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR (1872–1906) was discovered operating an elevator in Dayton, Ohio, in 1892. One might almost say a new era began that year for the American Negro in literary expression. His Oak and Ivy, privately printed in 1893, attracted little attention, and his Majors and Minor (1895) made a similarly small impression, but together they paved the way for Lyrics of a Lowly Life (1896). This book won for the poet a national reputation and enabled him to pursue a literary career for the rest of his life. A Negro poet had not won recognition in the United States in the century and a quarter since the family of John Wheatly of Boston emancipated their slave girl, Phillis, in recognition of her Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral (1773); Dunbar’s life was short, as was Phillis’s: both suffered from tuberculosis. In spite of illness, Dunbar wrote prose as well as poetry in the decade following Lyrics, and his Complete Poems (1913) has retained a warm appeal for many readers.

JAMES WELLS WENDLE (1901–82) completed his doctoral dissertation at Columbia University in 1962 and was concerned with the short stories of Langston Hughes. Emanuel’s poems have appeared in Phylon and other magazines and newspapers. He taught at the City College of the City University of New York. His works include Dark Symphony: Negro Literature in America (1968), Treehouse and Other Poems (1968), Panther Man (1970), The Chisel in the Dark (1980), and The Broken Bowl (1983).

MARY E. EVANS (1929– ) was born in Toledo, Ohio, was a John Hay Whitney Fellow in 1963–66. Her poetry has appeared extensively in textbooks and anthologies. Producer/director of a weekly half-hour television series, she has served as writer-in-residence and instructor in Black Literature at Indiana University and Purdue University. In 1970 she published I Am a Black Woman. Evans’s recent poetic works, such as Nightstar: 1973–1975 (1982) and A Dark and Splendid Mess (1992), her books for adolescents, her work for television, and other media, and her volume on black female writers 1950–1980, have ensured her a lasting place among the champions of African American literature. Between 1989 and 1990 she was Writer in Residence at Spelman College.

JULIA FIELDS (1938– ) returned to her native Alabama to teach high school in the steel city of Bessemer after she graduated from Knoxville College in Tennessee. But her first summer vacation after her return, was spent in a very different setting—the Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference in New England. She published a collection, Poems, in 1968, and her work has also appeared in Massachusetts Review, Riverside Poetry II, Beyond the Blues, New Negro Poets, and Negro Digest. Fields has taught at Tuskegee University and Hampton Institute, and in 1979 founded the Learning Society of the American Language. Other collections include East of Moonlight (1973), A Summoning, A Shining (1976), and Slow Coins (1981).

NEKKI GIOVANNI (1943– ) was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, and educated at Fisk University in Nashville. She has been associated with Rutgers University, has contributed poems to various black publications, has read poems on educational television and published several collections of poetry, including Black Judgement (1968). She is also the author of Gemini (1972), a volume of prose. Giovanni’s poetry, which has a multigenerational and international readership, is concerned with family, blackness, womanhood, and sex, and is influenced strongly by rhythm and blues music. Since the 1970s she has published many poetry collections, notably My House and Cotton Candy on a Rainy Day.

YOYNE GRECROY (1919– ) frequently contributed poems to the Fisk Herald when she was an undergraduate. Since then, her occasional appearances in magazines have all been in prose.

ANGELINA W. GRIMKE (1890–1958) spent the last years of her life in quiet retirement in New York City, but before that she had been for many years a teacher of English in the Washington, D.C., high schools. Her three-act play, Rachel, was published in 1921.

ROBERT HAYDEN (1913–80), born in Detroit, attended Wayne State University and the University of Michigan, where for two years he held a teaching assistantship. In 1938 and again in 1942, he received Avery Hopwood Awards for poetry at Michigan; and in 1940 a collection of his poems, Heartshape in the Dust, was published in Detroit. In 1946 he joined the faculty of Fisk University, where his teaching was occasionally interrupted by fellowships for creative writing. His poems appeared in Poetry, The Atlantic Monthly, and other periodicals and anthologies. A brochure, The Lion and the Archer (1948), presented a group of his poems with some of Myron O’Higgins’s. A Ballad of Remembrance (1962) was published in London and won first prize at The First World Poetry Festival of Negro Arts, held in 1965 in Dakar, Senegal. In the United States, he published Selected Poems (1966), Kaleidoscope (1970), and Words in the Mourning Time (1970). He was visiting professor of English at the University of Michigan in 1968, and at the University of Louisville, Kentucky, in 1969. Hayden’s knowledge of African American life and culture and of forms outside that culture enabled him to write strikingly rich and memorable poems. Today he is considered one of the most talented American poets of the century. In 1970 he won the Russell Lions Award, and in 1975 was elected to the American Academy of Poets. In 1976 he was the first black man appointed as Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress. His later works include The Night Blooming Cereus (1972), Angle of Ascent: New and Selected Poems (1975), and American Journal (1978).

DONALD JEFFREY HAYES’s (1904–91) greatest interest was in music as well as poetry, but beyond high school his education was gained through private study. He worked for many years as a counselor with the New Jersey State Employment Service in Atlantic City. His poems appeared in Harper’s Bazaar, Good Housekeeping, and This Week, and some were set to music.

GALVIN C. HERNTON (1832– ) is a native of Chattanooga, Tennessee. He studied sociology at Talliegega College in Alabama (B.A., 1854) and at Fisk University (M.A., 1856). He has taught at Teachers College, previously all-black colleges in the South and has been employed by the New York Welfare Department. His poems were first published in Phylon (1934), but he has been writing since his early teens. His prose writings include Sex and Racism in America (1965). A book of his poetry appeared in a limited edition in 1954 under the title The Coming of Chorus to the House of Nightingale: An Epical Narrative of the South. He has written many books, including Coming Together: Black Power, White Hatred, and Sexual Hangups (1971); Scarecrow, a novel (1974); Medicine Man, poems (1976); and Sexual Mountains and Black Women Writers: Adventures in Sex, Literature, and Real Life (1987). He is Professor of Black Studies at Oberlin College.

CART WENDELL HINES, JR. (1940–79) had his own jazz combo and played for dances as a student at Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial University, where Wilma Rudolph...
dolph. Ralph Boston, and other Olympic athletes studied. Not until he graduated in 1962, however, was his real secret revealed: he had been writing some of the most authentic jazz poetry of this period. He was a native of Wilson, North Carolina, and went to college in 1914. *Visions of the Duck* and other volumes strongly influenced by Paul Laurence Dunbar followed in the next few years. By the 1940s, times had changed for the Johnsons, and young Fenton succumbed to a more rugged influence, which showed in his later verse, including the posthumously published *42 WPA Poems*. His third and last volume of poetry was *Songs of Self* (1916).

**Georgia D. Douglas Johnson** (1877–1996) was born in Atlanta, Georgia. She studied music at Oberlin Conservatory in Ohio but soon gave up her early ambition to become a composer. She had been working as a schoolteacher when her husband was appointed Recorder of Deeds under President William Howard Taft and they moved to Washington, D.C. Later she was employed in government agencies, but writing became her principal occupation. Published collections of her poetry include *The Heart of a Woman* (1918), *Bronze* (1929), *An Autumn Love Cycle* (1929), and *Share My World* (1962). Overlooked for years, Johnson is now considered an important figure in the development of African American literature and in the New Negro Renaissance. The literary salon she held in her Washington home—the Round Table—was attended by scores of black intellectuals, including W.E.B. Du Bois, Angelina Weld Grimké, and Zora Neale Hurston.

**Helen Armstrong Johnson** (1920– ) was a professor of English at York College of the City University of New York. She earned a Ph.D. degree and was considered a specialist in black-theater history, particularly for her article "Black Theater: 1960 and After" in *The Afro-American Reference Book* (1973). She was also a Fellow of the School of Letters at Indiana University.

**Helene Johnson** (1907–95), born in Boston, was the youngest of the young poets and writers who brought about the Negro Renaissance, as it was called in Harlem in the 1920s. She contributed to *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life, Vanity Fair*, and other magazines.

**James Weldon Johnson** (1871–1938) created "small literary works, unpretentious but remarkably durable, in a variety of forms." His autobiographic, *Along This Way* (1933), however, is a large and enlightening work. He often observed that the years of his life seemed to move in cycles of seven, and these included periods of high-school teaching and administration, diplomatic service as a U.S. Consul in Latin America, an exciting seven years as a lyricist on Broadway, a notable span as Executive Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and a final phase as professor of Creative Literature at Fisk University. But poetry was the thread that pulled all of them together. Johnson was born in Jacksonville, Florida. His books of poetry include *Fifty Years and Other Poems* (1917), *God's Trombones* (1927), and *St. Peter Relates an Incident* (1930). His best-known work of fiction is *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man*, which was first published in 1912.

**LeRoi Jones** (Amiri Baraka) (1934– ) has contributed to a number of publications, including the avant-garde magazine *Black Sun* and the first major collection of black poetry, *The Black Art* (1959). Among other recognitions of promise, he received a John Hay Whitney Opportunity Fellowship for creative writing. He also received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1964–65, and his plays and productions have won several awards, including an Obie for *Dutchman* in 1964 and an International Art Festival Prize at Dakar, Senegal, in 1965. His publications include *Home* (1966), "Black Magic and Tales* (1967), *Raisin Race Rages Race* (1972), and *African Conquers the First Modern Pan-African Congress* (1972). He has taught at the New School for Social Research and at Columbia University, and he founded the Black Arts Repertory Theatre School in Harlem and the Spirit House Movers and Players in Newark.
Recently he has published Reggae or Not? Poems (1982) and The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones (1984). He is a professor in the Department of African Studies at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

Bob Kaufman (1925– ) was published in Broadsides by City Lights in San Francisco as early as 1959 and 1960. The first collection of his poems was Golden Sardine (1967), published by the same company. In 1965, his poetry of the previous ten years and some of his prose were collected in Solitudes Crowded with Loneliness. Kaufman himself, a member of the San Francisco group of poets who rode the “renaissance of the 1950s” in that city, dropped out of sight just as his poetry began to win wider audiences. In France he has been called the “Black American Rimbaud,” and his reputation is even greater in France than in the United States. His Watch My Tracks was published in 1971, followed by Ancient Rain: Poems 1936–1978 (1981).

Don L. Lee (Haki R. Madhubuti) (1942– ) was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, but was reared and educated in Chicago. His Think Black! (1967) was a sensation of the “new Black consciousness,” and it was followed by quick reprints and revisions as well as other collections of poetry: Black Pride (1968), Don’t Cry, Scream (1969), and We Walk the Way of the New World (1970). Lee has been a writer-in-residence at Cornell University and a teacher at several other universities and colleges, especially in the Chicago area. As editor of Third World Press, he puts out a bibliographical magazine, Black Books Bulletin, and publishes broadsides and books. He has also edited, with James A. Emanuel, Dynamite Voices: Black Poets of the 1960’s (1971). Lee has recently written two verse collections—Earthquakes and Sun Rise Missions: Poetry and Essays of Black Renewal 1973–1983 (1984) and Killing Memory, Seeking Ancestors (1985)—and, more recently, two works of nonfiction: Black Men: Obsolète, Single, Dangerous? (The African American Family In Transition) (1983) and Claiming Earth: Race, Rage, Redemptio: Blacks Seeking a Culture of Enlightened Empowerment (1994). He is president of the African American Publishers’, Booksellers’ and Writers’ Association and teaches at Chicago State University.

Richard A. Long (1927– ) was known for his scholarship and his standing in the academic community long before his poetry appeared. His impressive two-volume collection, Afro-American Writing, edited in collaboration with Eugenia W. Cofer, became available from New York University Press in 1972. He is associated with Atlanta University and has been a lecturer at Harvard and elsewhere. Ascending: Poems was published in 1975, followed by two books on African American culture and dance. He is Atticus Hayward Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at Emory University.

Audre Lorde (1934–92) was a New Yorker born and bred, as rural folks might say. She taught at the City Colleges of New York and served as poet-in-residence at Tougaloo College in Mississippi under a National Endowment for the Arts grant. Her first collection of poems was The First Cities (1968). A second volume, Cables to Rage (1970), was published in London. Lorde described herself as a “black lesbian feminist mother lover poet.” She expressed anger toward racial oppression, urban blight, and personal misfortune, but her poetry was infused with hope and spiritual enlightenment. Between 1973 and 1988 she published seven more poetry collections, including From a Land Where People Live, which was nominated for the National Book Award for Poetry; in the novel Zami: A New Spelling of My Name; and Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches.

Claude McKay (1891–1948) was first published in his native Jamaica, British West Indies. In his early twenties, however, he came to the United States to study agriculture at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and then at Kansas State University. After two years, he moved to New York City, where he was drawn into the literary life. He went to Europe for the first time in 1919, spent a year in London, and published there a slight volume of poems, called Spring in New Hampshire (1920). Back in the United States again, he became associate editor of the Liberator under Max Eastman. Harlem Shadows (1922) was his next collection of poems. For the rest of his life McKay published only prose, but off and on he wrote poetry, and some of his later pieces are included in the posthumously published Selected Poems (1983).

Naomi Long Madgett (1923– ) was born in Norfolk, Virginia, but grew up in East Orange, New Jersey, and St. Louis, Missouri. Since 1956 she has lived in Detroit, where she was a high-school teacher for thirteen years. In 1965 she was the first recipient of the Msot Fellowship in English at Oakland University. Thereafter, she taught at Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, where she was Professor of English. She is the author of four volumes of poetry, among them Star by Star (1965), rev. 1970) and Pink Ladies in the Afternoon (1972). Her poems have appeared in more than fifty anthologies and a number of journals in this country and abroad, and her papers are stored in the Special Collections of the Fisk University Library. She is a graduate of Virginia State College and Wayne State University. Since 1974, Naomi Long Madgett has served as publisher and editor of Lotus Press, and since 1984, as Professor Emerita of Eastern Michigan University. Two additional poetry collections are Exits and Entrances (1978) and Oktavia and Other Poems (1988).

Clarence Major (1935– ) was born in Atlanta, Georgia, but grew up and attended school in Chicago. His poems have been published in Black Orphans and other small magazines, for which he has also written about painting. Occasionally he contributes short stories. He now lives and teaches creative writing in New York City. Author of the novel The All-Night Visitors, he has also published several collections of poems such as Sailboat in the Lake (1970) and Symptoms and Madness (1971) and has appeared in many anthologies, including Black Voices, In the Time of Revelation, The Writing on the Wall, and Where Is Vietnam? He served two terms as writer-in-residence at the Pennsylvania State University. Between 1971 and 1979 he wrote eight books of poetry and the novels All Night Visitors, No, Bone Structure, and Emergency Exit, which are considered important experimental works of contemporary fiction.

Paul Murray (1910–85) wrote a family history, Proud Shoes, which was published in 1958. Like Samuel Allen and Bruce McWright, she was an occasional poet and a practicing lawyer. Born in Baltimore, Maryland, Miss Murray began her education in North Carolina and continued it in New York and California, among other places. Her poetry appeared in Common Ground, South Today, and Saturday Review of Literature. Dark Testament and Other Poems was published in 1970. Murray received law degrees from Howard, Yale, and the University of California at Berkeley, and taught law throughout America and Africa. In 1974 she became the first black woman to be ordained as an Episcopalian priest.

Larry Neal (1937–91) was born in Atlanta, Georgia, and reared in Philadelphia. He earned a degree from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania and was a graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania. He served on the staff of magazines such as Liberator and The Cranker and contributed to Journal of Black Poetry. He edited Black Fire (1968) with LeRoi Jones. Neal taught English at New York University, Wesleyan, and Yale universities, and in 1976–79 he was both Executive Director of the Commission on the Arts and Humanities in Washington, D.C., and Andrew W. Mellon Humanist in Residence at Howard University. Between 1976 and 1978 he was also education director of the Panther Party. Neal’s later poetry volumes are Black Boogaloo: Notes on Black Liberation (1969) and Hoodoo Hollerin’ Bebop Ghoos (1971).

Effie Lee Newsome (1885–1979) lived for most of her life in Willow, Ohio. Her book Gladiola Garden (1940), a collection of poems for children, is mainly concerned with nature. She edited the children’s column in the periodicals Crisis and Opportunity, where her poems also appeared.
GLORIA C. ODEN (1923– ) was a member of the staff of The Urbanite: Images of the American Negro. The Naked Frame: A Love Poem and Sonnet (1952) won for her a John Hay Whitney Opportunity Fellowship for creative writing. Her college was Howard University in Washington, D.C. She taught in the English Department of the University of Maryland in Baltimore.

MYRON O’HIGGINS (1918– ) was born in Chicago, belongs to the tribe of wandering poets. At Howard University in Washington, D.C., he came under the influence and guidance of Sterling A. Brown, but his writing earned him in 1952 two Rosenwald fellowships, the army took him abroad, and so his travels began. His poems have been published in magazines and anthologies and in The Lion and the Archer (1948), which he and Robert Hayden put out privately in a limited edition.

FRANK LAMONT PHILLIPS (1933– ) was born in Elroy, Arizona, and was graduated fromisk University. He submitted poetry to contests while in high school and was awarded honorable mention in the Scholastic Magazine contest and a merit award in the Atlantic Monthly Creative Writing Contest for 1971.

OLIVER PITCHER (1923– ) is a playwright, poet, director, and teacher. Born in Massachusetts and educated at Bard College, the Dramatic Workshop of the New School, and the American Negro Theater, he has had works published both here and abroad. His play The One was presented by The Negro Ensemble Company in New York and was published in Black Drama Anthology. Two other plays, Shampoo and Crap Game, became Off-Broadway productions. A booklet of poems, Dust of Silence, was published in 1969. Mr. Pitcher taught black theater at Vassar College and served as poet-in-residence at Atlanta University Center, where he taught poetry and creative writing. He also taught at Emory University.

DUDLEY RANDALL (1914– ) is the poet-founder of Broadside Press in Detroit, Michigan. A former librarian and teacher, he revives the old custom of printing single poems on broadsides at a few cents each. The success of this avocation led to the expansion of the operation. In 1965 he visited Paris, Prague, and the Soviet Union, with a delegation of black artists. That same year, he received the Wayne State University Tomkins Award for Poetry. He was poet-in-residence at the University of Detroit. His works include Love You and More to Remember, both published in 1971, and Black Poetry: A Supplement to Anthologies Which Exclude Black Poets. He wrote A Litan of Friends: New and Selected Poems (1981) and Homage and Hoyt Fuller (1984).

CONRAD KENT RIVERS (1923–98) was born in Atlantic City, New Jersey. His poems were published in the Anthoch and Kenyon Review, and a booklet of his poems appeared in 1959 under the title Perschance to Dream. Othello. These Black Bodies and This Sunburnt Face was published in Cleveland in 1962. Bremen brought out his fourth volume of poetry, entitled The Still Voice of Harlem, and in 1971 Broadside published his Wright Poems—Essay by Ronald Fair.

ANNE SPENCER (1882–1975) lived for most of her life in Lynchburg, Virginia, where she was for years the librarian of the Dunbar High School. Tending her garden was her long-time interest. In 1970, the Friendship Press published her African Panorama.

MELVIN B. TOLSON (1898–1966) was an English teacher at Wiley College in Marshall, Texas, and at Langston University in Oklahoma after he was graduated from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania and Columbia University in New York. He was a debating coach, worked with drama clubs, and gave many public readings of his poetry. His "Dark Symphony" appeared in The Atlantic Monthly after winning a poetry prize in Chicago and was included in his book Rendezvous with America (1944). His Libretto for the Republic of Liberia was published in 1953 with an introduction by Allen Tate. His Harlem Gallery (1965) was introduced by Karl Shapiro.

JEAN TOOMER’s (1895–1967) poems, sketches, short stories, and plays of Negro life appeared in the early 1920s. They received praise from Sherwood Anderson, Hart Crane, Gorham Munson, John McClure, and many others, and his book Colossal, in which they were collected in 1923, was introduced enthusiastically by Waldo Frank. About ten years later, Toomer "disappeared," so far as most of his former literary associates were concerned. In the 1970s, his papers, his correspondence, his unpublished manuscripts, the record of his exile, if that is the word, were found. In any case, Toomer was born in Washington, D.C., the grandson of P.B.S. Pinchback, the Negro who served for a short time as acting governor of Louisiana and was then elected to the United States Senate but denied his seat.

JAMES VAUGHN (1909– ) was born in and educated in Xenia, Ohio. After serving in the army, he earned two degrees at Ohio State University and was for a time an English teacher at Southern University in Louisiana and at West Virginia State College. From 1966 to 1970 he taught at the University of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and since the fall of 1971 he has taught at the Herbert H. Lehman College of the City University of New York.

MARGARET WALKER (1915– ) wrote a collection of poems which was accepted by the State University of Iowa in place of the usual Master of Arts dissertation, and she was awarded the degree in 1940. She taught English at Jackson College, Jackson, Mississippi; Livingston College, Salisbury, North Carolina; and West Virginia State College. She was born in Birmingham, Alabama, the daughter of a minister, and has herself reared a large family. Her first novel, Jubilee (1946), was awarded a Houghton Mifflin Literary Prize and became a ringing success in a paperback edition. She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Iowa. Her work has been included in Black Voices (1968), and her collections are entitled For My People (1968), Prophets for a New Day (1970), October Journey (1973), and This Is My Century: New and Collected Poems (1980).

CHARLES Enoch Wheelan (1909– ) was born in Augusta, Georgia, but later attended school in New York.

BRUCE McM. WRIGHT (1918–83) was graduated from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania in 1942 and then served in the First Infantry Division in Europe during World War II, where he was wounded twice and received several decorations. He was trained for the law at Fordham University and Yale University Law School; at Yale he was quondam Chief Justice of the Yale Law School Moot Court of Appeals. In the 1970s, he was a judge in the Criminal Court of the City of New York. While he was still in the army, Wright’s poems, From the Proud Tower (1944), were published in Wales. Thereafter, his poetry was featured in French, Swedish, Slavic, as well as English anthologies.

RICHARD Wright’s (1908–60) autobiography, Black Boy, was a sensational Book-of-the-Month selection in 1945. Five years earlier, his hard-fisted novel, Nigger Sun, had a similar impact. Since his death in 1960, the meteoric career of this Mississippi-born writer has frequently been recalled, and some previously unpublished poetry has come to light. After the struggles detailed in the autobiography, Wright lived and wrote in New York for a while, traveled extensively, but spent most of his later years with his family in Paris.

MARVIN WHYTE, JR. (1931– ), described himself at one time as "a twenty-one-year-old blood from Englewood, New Jersey." He went on to say: "As a first-year poet, I've attempted to reproduce personal experience in hopes of reaching as large a section of black and oppressed people as those experiences will allow. As a second-year poet, I will do the same." He attracted attention as a college junior by winning a national poetry contest sponsored by the United Negro College Fund in association with Reader’s Digest (1972).

FRANK YERBY (1916–91) was noted for his brightly colored historical romances, but his
writing career began with poetry and short stories in the *Fisk Herald* when he was a student, about the time of Samuel Allen, Yvonne Gregory, and their group. The true Yerby fan, of which there are many indeed, should be able to relate the poetry to the prose without difficulty. Among his later books were *Judas, My Brother* (1968), *Speak Now* (1969), *Dakomean* (1971), *Vixens* (1972), *The Girl from Storyville* (1972), *Flood Tide* (1972), and *Golden Hawk* (1972). Yerby was born in Augusta, Georgia, but beginning in the 1950s made his home in Spain.