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Introduction

One hundred and fifty years ago the first known African American novel was published by the fugitive slave William Wells Brown. Brown was as uncertain about the audience for *Clotel*, a story about American miscegenation, as he was about the kind of text he was creating. He continued to experiment with the form and “test” his audience by publishing variations of the story for a decade. For a people prevented from reading and writing by law, it is not surprising that novel writing and novelists have since become highly valued within African American culture. The very idea of an “African American novel” then *and* now precipitates an intense debate about the form and function of any belletristic genre. Embedded in the term is a history of achievement and a cultural heritage that raises as many questions as it answers. These questions – most often about aesthetics and ideology as conflicting and compatible tendencies in the novel – have given African American authors a place of primary importance in contemporary critical discourse. As important as it is, therefore, to consider the novels written by people of African descent in America as thoroughly American, the cultural visibility and unique history of these novels demands they be read with closer scrutiny.

This kind of “segregation” has its roots in recent literary criticism as much as in the development of the genre. The earliest studies of novels by black writers, those by Sterling Brown (*The Negro in American Fiction*, 1937) and Hugh Gloster (*Negro Voices in American Fiction*, 1948), placed emphasis on the novel as historical and documentary evidence of black humanity. A second generation of critics, including Robert Bone, author of *The Negro Novel in America* (1958), evaluated the novel in terms of the prevailing formalist paradigms. Subsequent criticism, such as Addison Gayle’s *The Way of the New World: The Black Novel in America* (1975), signified a shift, an ideological conversion, giving a new dynamism to discussions of African American expressive culture. In the last twenty years, studies such as Barbara Christian’s *Black Women Novelists* (1980) and Bernard Bell’s

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The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition (1987) trace a linear progression from the slave narrative to the heyday of the novel in the 1940s and 50s, symbolized by the work of Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison.

Mainstream literary criticism gave little attention to the African American novel until well after the middle of the twentieth century. Both Wright and Ellison represented the literary tastes of an age struggling with its moral, social, and political agendas deriving in part from two world wars accompanied by severe domestic strife. Critics of the African American novel before the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s generally noted two directions: the social realist or “protest novel” exemplified by Wright; and the impressionism or “high modernism” of Ralph Ellison. The prevailing opinion was that Richard Wright’s *Native Son* (1940) and the autobiographical *Black Boy* (1940) consolidated a tradition of social and political criticism, while Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (1952) was more “appropriately” modernist because it privileged textual concerns over ideological ones. For some, the choice was between Wright’s pathological sense of black life in America and Ellison’s inventive, regenerative vision of black culture. In hindsight, as many later critics have pointed out, this debate was fueled as much by Ellison’s statement that a novel is “a work of art” and should not be “a disguised piece of sociology”¹ as by the anti-communist and Cold War sentiments of the period. For all the differences between their conceptions of the African American novel, Wright and Ellison foreground the novel’s discursive function within African American literary culture. In the wake of the Civil Rights Movement and its aftermath, the African American novel became a reminder that race was a political minefield and that a racialized culture found its origins in the interactions among Europe, Africa, and the two Americas. Thus, the novel became grounded within an apex of ideas about culture and cultural transmission and served up notions of human possibility. The African American novel was capable of representing the broadest human concerns, it could absorb multiple forms of expressive culture, and it could engage readers across economic and racial lines.

If the Civil Rights Movement provided a catalyst for the novel in the social and political realm, the demise of new criticism and the democratization of the academy midwived its rebirth. The New Critics had eschewed any kind of political intent in art, calling for the autonomy of art divorced from politics. These critics had countered what they saw as the decline of serious literary art in the 1930s, laying the basis for how subsequent generations would read and interpret literature. African American novelists would remain imprisoned by these paradigms just as they were imprisoned by the racial climate of America. Indeed, many black American novelists of the late 1940s and 50s expatriated to Europe, where they found greater acceptance.² The rise of

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Black Studies, on the other hand, put an academic face on the Civil Rights and Black Power movements and forced reconsiderations of scholarship, bringing a new generation of black intellectuals to the fore. An increase in cultural production became one of the byproducts of the resurgence of interest in African American life and culture after the 1960s. African American novelists responded to these developments with a virtual explosion of literary talent. In 1970 alone, more than twenty-five African American novels appeared, including the first novels by Sharon Bell Mathis, Louise Meriweather, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, and Al Young.

As the status of the African American novel as a genre has improved and the demand for it has increased, scholars have found a rich and complex area for investigation and research. Whether driven by the novel's previous history of critical neglect or by the need to reframe the current premises and redirect critical discourses, contemporary scholars of the African American novel have succeeded in exploding traditional interpretations of genre, periodization, and literary influence. The work of Houston Baker, Keith Byerman, Hazel Carby, Barbara Christian, Peter Bruck and Wolfgang Karrer, Ann duCille, Frances Smith Foster, Henry Louis Gates, Farah Griffin, Trudier Harris-Lopez, Robert Stepto, and Claudia Tate come quickly to mind. Because recovery and revision remain central concerns to any scholar in ethnic or feminist studies, new areas of inquiry about African American novels are continually emerging. We have yet, for example, to fully explore the history of those African American novels published outside of the US or the divergent novel-writing traditions in the pre- and post-Civil War eras.

To say that the study of the African American novel has become institutionalized with emphasis being placed upon the discovery and training of new talent today is not an overstatement. Not only are African American novelists widely recognized and revered, but they also claim a significant share of the world's highest literary prizes and awards. This recognition and the great achievement of African American literary critics, William Andrews convincingly argues, have "had a salutary effect on the black community's sense of its own literary resources and on the white literate community's sense of the importance of those resources."³

To read African American novels is, nevertheless, to be confronted with difference. And one of the fundamental differences between the earlier periods of African American novel writing and the present is not only the range of voices that we hear but also the intensity and creativity with which African American writers transform their own and other literary traditions. James Olney notes that a remarkable quality of the early slave narrative – the predecessor to the novel – was not its unqualified uniqueness, but its

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sameness. Like the slave narrators, early African American novelists had to map a course for their fictional texts between an often hostile audience and a demanding sponsor or publisher. This “triangular relationship of narrator, audience, and sponsors”⁴ continued to dictate the development of thematic and formal conventions in the novel well into the twentieth century. The burden of multiple allegiances evokes a Du Boisian “double consciousness” and has been reinterpreted by Bernard Bell as “socialized ambivalence . . . the network of understandings that defines black American culture and informs black American consciousness . . . resulting from systematic barriers of exclusions and discrimination . . . producing a residue of shared memories and frames of reference.”⁵ While the social mission of the novel bears a special relationship to the history of African Americans, its aesthetic significance lies in the rhetorical strategies and metaphorical language the author uses to reenact if not resolve the novel’s inherent tensions. At times these tensions appear in the form of conflicting literary traditions: sentimentalism and realism in Frances Harper and Jessie Fauset; or gothicism and naturalism in Richard Wright and Gayle Jones, for example. At other times the novelist creates dramatic tension by borrowing from African-derived oral forms or traditional Western literary forms. Charles Chesnutt turns to the folktale; Alice Walker, the epistolary novel and the female *Bildungsroman*; Charles Johnson and Sherley Anne Williams, the slave narrative; Margaret Walker, the folk novel; James Baldwin and Leon Forrest, the African American sermon; and Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray, the blues. The value placed on narrative closure differs markedly from novel to novel as well. Ernest Gaines wants us to see the lessons learned by the men and women who people his narratives; Toni Morrison emphasizes the internalization of those conflicts that shatter our sense of reality, making narrative closure difficult.

The African American novel maintains its reputation for linguistic and rhetorical innovation, through reinvention as a narrative construct and the intensity of its social meaning. Informed historical criticism with close textual analysis has brought more clarity to our understanding of what is meant by the African American novel today. Those critical perspectives that assumed the novel to be a unified text emerging from a logo-centric or writing-centered tradition are continually being revised. Thus, while scholars consider “the shortcomings of imposing structuralist, post-structuralist, psychoanalytic and feminist theories on black texts,”⁶ the motivation to find more relevant theories or to produce an African American literary theory from within the texts has created a dynamic, provocative, and anesthetically complex interplay between the African American novelist, the reader, and critic. In the African American novel, the world may be real or imagined, history can continue to haunt and anger, and the reader must confront the terrible silences

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that have made us a nation with a shared history from which no one can escape. Even in the more popular novels – by Octavia Butler, J. California Cooper, or Walter Mosley, for example – the lives of black people are presented through a veil of humor or satiric displacement that defies simplistic analysis. The African American novelist is aware of a new relationship to the reader and critic, one that pleases and challenges, always testing the limits of our current critical understanding.

With the boundaries of critical theory still expanding and the recovery of history and texts an ongoing process for scholars and students, our best reading of the African American novel is an open one, which questions both the objective and subjective reality, recognizes both the discontinuities and continuities in traditions, and considers the relationships between oral and written forms of discourse. While these elements may be true of many novels, they apply with greater consistency to the novels written by African Americans who write against the very same establishment from which they need approval.

Of particular significance is the autobiographical impulse in the African American novel. The continuous need to explain and “inscribe the self” in a world which has historically denied the existence of that self gives both focus and intensity to the act of writing a story about black life. To examine the African American novel, then, is to understand its paradoxical nature: it grants the African American author the freedom to create a sustained vision in a world characterized by a series of counter-freedoms and conflicting visions; it allows for the humanistic formation of cultural memory, and it gives particularity to something that is often a fluctuating collection of perceptions and abstractions.

For many an African American author, the act of writing is part of a larger process of cultural revisionism, of redefining history and historical memory, and of confronting the past in innovative and provocative ways that are intentionally self-reflexive. To change the future is to give meaning to a common past in new ways. The common part of America lies in the experience of slavery, an experience that has much to teach us when treated narratively. As the only indigenous form of American writing, the slave narrative “belongs” to African American novelists as no other literary form does. Remembering that the African American novel, like the novel generally, has the capacity to alter the world by putting it into words, African American writers have reappropriated the slave narrative as a principal means for looking more deeply into human consciousness as they alter that world for us. In the novels of Octavia Butler, Charles Johnson, Sherley Anne Williams, Ishmael Reed, and Toni Morrison, reclaiming and returning to slavery allows us to locate in that psychic wound those aspects of human identity which are part of all

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Americans, that cannot be forgotten, the site of America's most important triumph and failure.

Although this companion covers a wide range of novels written by African Americans, it does not claim to be comprehensive. Rather it is intended to be a conversation between the reader and a group of scholars currently working in the field of African American fiction studies. Of major importance to the writers of these essays is the need to rethink African American cultural paradigms and traditions by broadening the general readership and making connections to the work in related disciplines. While the slave narrative is featured in many graduate and undergraduate classes, few courses cover the nineteenth-century beginnings of the novel. The majority of courses focus on novels written after Richard Wright. Still more concentrate on a select group of contemporary writers, and an increasing number of courses treat novels by African American women.

The rise of the African American novel in the nineteenth century is both a social and a literary phenomenon, important for understanding the boundaries that novelists have confronted and the ways in which these boundaries have been crossed. The nineteenth century is important also for understanding the current focus upon the history of slavery and the slave heritage. Since the early twentieth century, the African American novel has paid frequent attention to themes of migration, racial confrontation and adjustment, and the struggle for human, civil, and equal rights. Generally, novel writing increased during periods of radical social change and major demographic shifts. Peak periods include the 1920s when America's cities absorbed large numbers of black migrants and the publishing industry supported "race writing"; the 1930s when the Works Progress Administration (WPA) employed a large number of writers; and the 1970s when the call for a new literary politics became consolidated as the Black Arts Movement. Emphasis here is placed on the ways in which the African American novel has participated in an ongoing dialogue about race and identity while offering challenges to novelistic form and technique. Critics such as Houston Baker, Kimberly Benston, Philip Brian Harper, and Craig Werner, for example, have questioned the exclusionary tendencies of modernism, preferring instead to revisit the meaning of modernism and modernity in relation to post-Reconstruction African American life and its various cultural and ideological registers.

The rise of theory – in contrast to the rise of criticism – has been useful to the study of the African American novel generally because it has enabled new areas of investigation and validated others. What was once considered marginal to the study of black writing, political and social interpretations, for example, are now widely accepted as standard. Likewise, the African American novel readily lends itself to close textual examination and

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deconstructive readings. Many recent scholars see African American literature as having been engaged in a specific productive process that transforms conventional language. These critics interpret the novel as a textual system complete with gaps and silences, one that assumes the reader to be more actively engaged in the making of meaning. At the same time, the study of African American literature and the novel has invigorated the study of the Anglo-American and European tradition, especially in relationship to concepts of the Other.

With more than 1,500 novels published between 1853 and 1980, and an untold number published since,⁷ the value of reading canonical and non-canonical texts becomes apparent. In addition, the contemporary African American novel, such as Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, and Terry McMillan's *Waiting to Exhale*, has become a cultural phenomenon of considerable importance. The proliferation of black book clubs is just one of the signs of the tenuous boundary separating the academic and nonacademic worlds where reading novels is central to both.

It is no small matter that more than a few young people aspire to be African American novelists today when a new black novel is appearing almost daily. For a people who have had to argue the case for their humanity, who live in constant fear of losing their civil and equal rights, this might appear as an anomaly. But it is very much related to the growth and popularity of the African American novel in our time. The novel continues to serve both an ideological and a social purpose, affirming the need to reflect lived reality across class and gender lines, attending to its own improvisational nature, embracing and resisting the past, deepening our sense of who and what it means to be black in a postmodern, postcolonial world, and demanding all the while to be seen as art. While earlier authors may have felt that to be political would somehow diminish the status of their art, contemporary black novelists see this dual mission in complementary rather than oppositional terms. The threatening nature of double consciousness that W.E.B. Du Bois saw as the inevitable fate of African Americans has been reconfigured as an extraordinary gift for the novelists whose mastery of the languages of culture and craft have expanded their vision and enriched their creative imagination.

For the more advanced student of literature, this book is an attempt to chart the interaction of distinct but different traditions – rather than a unitary phenomenon – that have characterized the African American novel. The focus on both canonical and noncanonical texts will suggest the rhetorics and strategies that have come out of a particular cultural discourse and found their way into the novel. The intention in the essays is to pay as much attention to the novel as part of a process and a performance as well as the product or result of specific developments.

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The categories devised here – three parts and fifteen chapters – represent the way studies of the African American novel today are configured. Part I, “The long journey: the African American novel and history,” follows the emphasis placed upon historical reconstruction, still a major focus for the field. The “journey” implies both the path from slavery to freedom and the journey to establish and document a novelistic tradition among black people in America. In “Freeing the voice, creating the self: the novel and slavery,” Christopher Mulvey considers the importance of the originary moment, when “the writers were giving up the authenticity of life for the authenticity of imagination.” Studying the novel of slavery sheds light on the relationship between slavery and freedom, but also between abolitionism and African American cultural production. It was the struggle against stereotypes and prejudices that opened up the literary space for black representation, M. Giulia Fabi suggests in “Reconstructing the race,” providing an overview of the fictional legacy of post-slavery novels. This is a period of considerable growth and experimentation for the novel, which benefited from expanded educational opportunities for former slaves, the rise of a black middle class, and a powerful independent press. Fabi revisits the “passing” theme, going beyond conventional readings of the nineteenth-century African American novel to present a much broader literary landscape.

By the 1920s, the term “Negro novel” had entered the lexicon. Moving from novels with “Negro subject matter” to “Negro novel” meant a growing acceptance of the literary representations of blacks by blacks, according to George Hutchinson in his review essay “The novel of the Negro Renaissance.” While he looks at the achievements of the renaissance in fiction writing, Hutchinson identifies the period more with a “sense of collective identity [that] produced a field of discourse” rather than an individual school. Nevertheless, the “Harlem Renaissance” became important as a modernist strategy for staking new ground. As the popularity of literary representations of blacks expanded beyond the US borders, it also introduced a new set of contradictions. Giselle Anatol’s “Caribbean migration, ex-isles, and the New World novel” addresses some of these contradictions and analyzes literary representations from the standpoint of African diasporic populations in the US. By paying literary-critical attention to the history of various novelists’ engagement with the politics of cultural pluralism, Anatol highlights the importance of the Caribbean American novel. Aware of the paradox of double invisibility, writers such as Paule Marshall, Jamaica Kincaid, and Edwidge Danticat produce fictions with a strong sense of national and ethnic identity.

Part II, “Search for a form: the New American novel,” is less concerned about the progressive development of the novel than it is about the way the narrative and linguistic enactments of individual texts are organized by

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genres. That the African American novel has developed its own aesthetics of storytelling art is clear from Ashraf Rushdy's "The neo-slave narrative." Because of its relationship to the novel and to American history, the slave narrative offers an endless range of possibilities. As the arbiter of memory, it allows history, autobiography, and folklore to claim space in a single text. Looking at the poetics and politics of race and historical representation becomes primary to the novelistic imagination. Which aspects of America's shared cultural memory are to be shared, which discarded, and how we create a usable past are key questions raised by Claudine Raynaud in "Coming of age in the African American novel." The chapter reexamines the traditional *Bildungsroman*, another form that suggests the generic continuity within African American fiction as well as its symbiotic relationship to world literature. Novelists use the coming of age trope to map the discourses on racism, maturation, and manhood/womanhood. Steven Tracy extends the discussion of generic continuity and evolution in his chapter "The blues novel." African American novelists force open an even wider linguistic and cultural space, sharpen our sensitivities and broaden our vision when they utilize the blues, which "provide a basic structure which is yet free enough to accommodate individual temperament, abilities, and creativity," according to Tracy.

Although many scholars have questioned the relevance of the debates between modernism and postmodernism to African American literature, the blues novel is certainly one place where the postmodern is acted out. Storytelling and orality engender new aesthetic possibilities, new forms of consciousness. If these are endemic to African American literature, so, too, is a postmodern consciousness. And yet it is necessary to distinguish between the postmodern as a *condition* and as a *mode of writing*, as Fritz Gysin does in his chapter, "From modernism to postmodernism: black literature at the crossroads." This necessary dialogue situates African American novel writing in the broader philosophical and cultural debates, debates which it has reshaped in significant ways. African American novelists shift narratives and juxtapose discourses, responding to the mediating effects of jazz and blues, myths and legends, assorted documentary material, popular narrative forms, poetry, the visual arts, film, humor, and the black verbal arts. Gysin explores this engagement with the postmodern as an "age-old condition of marginalized groups," paying particular attention to the work of Ishmael Reed, Clarence Major, and William Melvin Kelley, novelists whose fictions have met with a very divided critical audience. Susanne Dietzel turns the question of audience and critical response in another direction in her chapter "The African American novel and popular culture." The shift toward theory has made the "literary" novel a high priority, but Dietzel argues for

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increased attention to the popular novel. By looking at contemporary reading practices that foreground the production, distribution, and reception of black novels, her work follows a trend initiated by Nina Baym in her study of nineteenth-century women's popular fiction. Exposing the literary-critical biases and prevailing hierarchies raises important questions about the relationship between reader and writer and about how value is determined and negotiated. The field of popular fiction is, nevertheless, unstable, as Dietzel suggests, since many novelists not only cross over into mainstream literary genres as Octavia Butler did with *Kindred*, but also can earn respect as a critic, as is the case with Samuel Delany. The popular novelist is ever mindful of breaking racial barriers and some, like Terry McMillan, achieve extraordinary commercial success.

The theoretical shifts, aesthetic concerns, and generic developments are given more explicit expression in Part III, "African American voices: from margin to center," where six case studies are considered. Jerry Ward revisits the protest tradition in "Everybody's protest novel: the era of Richard Wright," insisting that Wright's pioneering work was a "weapon against culturally sponsored ignorance as well as a medium for expressing his intellectual vision." Ward deconstructs the term "protest novel," seeing its racial coding as a peculiarly American phenomenon, and questions whether the term is an accurate definition of the kind of fiction Wright actually produced. Yet it was to the term "protest novel" that both Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin objected, as Herman Beavers explains in "Finding common ground." Writing in the decade that saw the dismantling of legal segregation and a radical social movement, each author claimed for himself a different kind of literary space. Ellison and Baldwin's shift to what Beavers calls a "narrative of injury" depicts suffering as inevitable and instructive; it was necessary to effect change, especially the sort prefigured by civil rights activism. Ellison's belief in the mythopoetic chaos and in the idea of death and rebirth is not unlike Baldwin's call for testimony and the search for moral legibility as the path toward wholeness.

The contemporary African American novel – by which we mean the novel written after about 1970 – is clear in its rejection of the traditional opposition between literature and politics. It functions as a cultural object in designing its own system for interpretation, often challenging the reader's understanding, and shows a high degree of technical proficiency. Partly, this is a function of the subject matter that novelists seem more willing to explore. Partly, it is a function of our current preoccupation with subjectivity, identity, and consciousness. The migration of blacks to America that began with the transatlantic slave trade, a forced journey of savage horrors, is being understood in new ways. If it brought an unwilling people to a strange land,

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it also initiated the transformation of an African cultural consciousness into an African American one. This forced migration created a contradictory experience of neither being in one world nor welcomed in another. Migration and exile, crossing and even transgressing boundaries, therefore, become a natural arena for exploration by the novelist. Earlier novelists found unique ways to dramatize the relationship to physical and psychological boundaries: McKay, Wright, Baldwin, Himes, and Yerby wrote as expatriates; Larsen and Fauset wrote about racial passing. Contemporary novelists are more aware of and represent various forms of transculturalism and transnationalism, exploring what it means to be part of a “diasporic” and “creolized” or “postcolonial” world, where boundaries and borders are always being redefined. They acknowledge an African-based culture, one impacted by the historical legacies of racism and colonialism as well as sexism and homophobia. New themes emerging from identity struggles in the post-Civil Rights and Black Power eras, the sexual revolution, the decolonization of Africa and the third world get reflected in a greater focus on intragroup relations, gender and class identity, including lesbian and gay themes. The contemporary black novel creates a narrative space for exploring the politics of race and identity on the one hand, while maintaining a primary focus on historical subjects and themes on the other. Ishmael Reed, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker are specific examples of novelists who plumb the depths of a vast novelistic universe, creating new demands on the reader and the text. Reed’s multicultural poetics are given careful attention by Pierre-Damien Myuyekure in “American Neo-Hoodooism.” The title and the term have become Reed’s signature, and his genre-crossing makes him the most experimental of contemporary novelists.

A less-talked-about theme in Morrison is the subject of Marilyn Mobley McKenzie’s chapter, “Spaces for readers.” Toni Morrison is not only the most widely discussed African American novelist, but she is also singled out for returning African American literature to its “village” origins. The concept refers to a definable culture and physical space within which her characters live, from which they are ostracized, and to which they return. McKenzie reminds us, however, that the most important part of Morrison’s village is the space it affords the reader, who must work with the author in constructing the book’s meaning. For Alice Walker, the parochialism of the village must be exchanged for the unity of a broader world. Emphasizing the importance of a gendered vision of that world, Walker coined the term which serves as the title for Lovalerie King’s chapter, “African American womanism.” Although King traces the woman-centered narrative back to Zora Neale Hurston, it is Alice Walker who has been most identified with the theory and literary practices of a black woman’s renaissance.

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Much less recognized but no less important are the novels of John Edgar Wideman and Leon Forrest, discussed here by Keith Byerman in “Vernacular modernism.” These authors have brought a different kind of awareness to a still bothersome term by showing the ways in which African American expressive culture restores a lost vitality to civilization through its most suppressed elements. These writers are enacting what some call a “blues aesthetic” or “Afromodernism,” both of which are subsumed under Byerman’s preferred term “vernacular modernism.”

Many contemporary scholars credit the positive impact of the postmodern turn, agreeing with bell hooks that “many other groups now share with black folks a sense of deep alienation, despair, uncertainty, loss of a sense of grounding even if not informed by shared circumstance.”⁸ Still others argue that this is not simply a correlation between African American writing and contemporary critical trends. African American novelists are extremely deliberate as they recreate and revise conventional structures, “speak the unspeakable,” and invite each reader to ponder the world created within the text. In order to do so, they must necessarily move beyond the confines of any one construct or ideology. In this sense, modernism and postmodernism are themselves limiting since they traditionally privilege disintegration and fragmentation. Even when African American novels resist normative closure, they consistently point to a mythic, fantastic, or functional return to order, the importance of cultural continuity, innovation, and radical change. The socio-political and literary-critical agendas are enunciated with full disclosure. In this way, the African American novel continually renews itself passionately and discursively, reminding us all just how important telling a free story is.

NOTES

1. Ralph Ellison, *Going to the Territory* (New York: Vintage-Random, 1987), p. 293.
2. Richard Wright (1908–1960), William Gardner Smith (1926–1974), Frank Yerby (1916–1991), Chester Himes (1909–1984), Willard Savoy (b. 1912), James Baldwin (1924–1987), William Demby (b. 1922), Hal Bennett (b. 1930), Ronald Fair (b. 1932), Barbara Chase-Riboud (b. 1939), William Melvin Kelley (b. 1937), and Carlene Hatcher Polite (b. 1932) are among the novelists who have spent a significant part or all of their professional lives in Europe or Mexico.
3. William Andrews, “Toward a Poetics of Afro-American Autobiography,” *Afro-American Literature Study in the 1990s*, ed. Houston A. Baker Jr. and Patricia Redmond (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 79.
4. James Olney, “‘I was Born’: Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature,” *The Slavis Narrative*, ed. Charles Davis and Henry Louis Gates Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 154.