

A HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN POETRY

African American poetry is as old as America itself, yet this touchstone of American identity is often overlooked. In this critical history of African American poetry, from its origins in the transatlantic slave trade, to present day hip-hop, Lauri Ramey traces African American poetry from slave songs to today's award-winning poets. Covering a wide range of styles and forms, canonical figures like Phillis Wheatley (1753–84) and Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1906) are brought side by side with lesser known poets who explored diverse paths of bold originality. Calling for a revised and expanded canon, Ramey shows how some poems were suppressed while others were lauded, while also examining the role of music, women, innovation, and art as political action in African American poetry. Conceiving of a new canon reveals the influential role of African American poetry in defining and reflecting the United States at all points in the nation's history.

LAURI RAMEY is Xiaoxiang Scholars Program Distinguished Professor at Hunan Normal University. Her previous publications include *Slave Songs and the Birth of African American Poetry* (2010), *The Heritage Series of Black Poetry, 1962–1975* (2008), *Black British Writing* (with R. Victoria Arana, 2009), and a two-volume anthology set (with Aldon Lynn Nielsen) *Every Goodbye Ain't Gone: Innovative Poetry by African Americans* (2006) and *What I Say: Innovative Poetry by Black Writers in America* (2015).

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“Fig. 1” by giovanni singleton from *AMERICAN LETTERS: works on paper* (Marfa, TX: Canarium Books, 2018) was provided courtesy of giovanni singleton.

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