

AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE IN TRANSITION, 1830–1850

This volume charts the ways in which African American literature fosters transitions between material cultures and contexts from 1830 to 1850, and showcases work that explores how African American literature and lived experiences shaped one another. Chapters focus on the interplay between pivotal political and social events including emancipation in the West Indies, the Irish Famine, and the Fugitive Slave Act, and key African American cultural productions such as the poetry of Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, the writings of David Walker, and the genre of the Slave Narrative. Chapters also examine the relationship between African American literature and a variety of institutions including literary societies, the press, and the post office. The chapters are grouped together in three parts, each of which is focused on transitions within a particular geographic scale: the local, the national, and the transnational. Taken together, they offer a crucial account of how African Americans used the written word to respond to and drive the events and institutions of the 1830s, 1840s, and beyond.

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AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE IN TRANSITION

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Across 17 authoritative volumes and featuring over 200 of today's foremost literary critics and social historians, *African American Literature in Transition* offers a critical and comprehensive revisionary analysis of creative expression by people of African descent. Reading transtemporally from the origins of "African American literature" by the first peoples calling themselves "African Americans," this series foregrounds change, and examines pivotal moments, years, decades, and centuries in African American literature and culture. While collectively analyzing both far-reaching and flash-forward transitions within four centuries, the multi-volume series replaces conventional historical periodization in African American scholastic and literary anthologies with a framework that contextualizes shifts, changes, and transformations in African American literature, culture, politics, and history.

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Preface
African American Literature in Transition
Joycelyn K. Moody, General Editor

When I accepted the invitation to act as Series Editor for African American Literature in Transition, Barack Obama had several months more to serve as President of the United States. The US was in a time of tremendous transition, we knew, but the extent of the impact of the coming election and its outcomes on the lives of African Americans, we had yet to learn. In the years since, dozens of today's foremost literary critics and social historians have traced across this authoritative multi-volume series revisionary analyses of creative expression by peoples of the African diaspora. Reading transtemporally, African American Literature in Transition foregrounds change, and examines pivotal moments and eras in African American history and historiography, literature and culture, art and ideology. The contributors explore four centuries of far-reaching as well as flash-forward transitions, to replace conventional literary periodization with a framework that contextualizes shifts, changes, and transformations affecting African American people.

Taken singly or together, the more than 200 chapters of the series provide not customary synopses of African American literature but unprecedented, detailed analyses – each expansive, in-depth, engaging. Every contributor finds their perfect pitch. Where contributors are musicians, then, to quote John Lovell, Jr.'s *Black Song: The Forge and the Flame*, “music raise[s] both performer and audience far above routine emotion; the elderly throw away their sticks and dance.”

The central aim of African American Literature in Transition is to reorient readers' expectations of the literary critical and appreciative experience. The series emphasizes the importance of reading intertextually, transhistorically, and interdisciplinarily. In this way, we foster readers' comprehension of ways in which legal cases such as the *Dred Scott* Decision and *Plessy v. Ferguson*, for example, were forecast in David Walker's 1829 *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* and have reappeared in *Solitary: My Story of Transformation and Hope*, by Albert

Woodfox (2019). Truly distinctive, African American Literature in Transition offers rich demonstrations of how to read Black creative expression as a sequence of shifting contexts and dynamic landscapes.

I offer sincere gratitude to Ray Ryan at Cambridge University Press for selecting me to spearhead this project, and to Cassander Smith for seeing it through with me. I am grateful to Edgar Mendez and Cambridge interns Caitlin Gallagher and Rebecca Rom-Frank. I appreciate the enthusiastic support of my family, friends, and colleagues over the years: especially Lorraine Martínez, Roxanne Donovan, Kimberly Blockett, Barbara Neely, Cynthia Lockett, Rhonda Gonzales, T. Jackie Cuevas, and Howard Rambsy II. Colleen J. McElroy and my uncles Charles and Glenn inspire me in ways they cannot imagine. My son and my parents influence everything I undertake. To the African American Literature in Transition volume editors and contributors: your dedication to tracing transitions with me made all the difference.

Chronology, 1830–1850

- 1803 Louisiana Purchase
- 1822 Denmark Vesey and compatriots plan a large-scale uprising
- 1830 Publication of the third and final edition of David Walker's *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*
- 1831 Founding of the *Liberator* newspaper by William Lloyd Garrison
- 1831 Nat Turner's Insurrection and execution in Virginia; publication of *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, by Thomas Gray
- 1833 Establishment of the Philadelphia Library Company of Colored Persons, the New York Phoenix Society, and Phoenixonian Societies
- 1834 British Slavery Abolition Act goes into effect, gradually abolishing slavery in the British West Indies and establishing an apprenticeship system
- 1837 Founding of the *Colored American* newspaper
- 1838 End of the apprenticeship system in the British West Indies; emancipation of all remaining enslaved persons in the British West Indies
- 1838 Publication of James Williams's *Narrative of James Williams*
- 1841 Publication of Nancy Prince's *The West Indies*
- 1843–4 La Escalera conspiracy in Cuba
- 1844 Execution of Plácido (Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés), alleged leader of the La Escalera conspiracy, in Cuba
- 1845 Publication of *Les Cenelles*
- 1845 Publication of George Moses Horton's *Poetical Works*
- 1845 Potato blight in Ireland, beginning of the Irish Famine
- 1845 Publication of Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

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1846	Publication of Frances Ellen Watkins's <i>Forest Leaves</i>
1847	Founding of the <i>North Star</i> newspaper
1848	Henry Highland Garnet republishes in one volume David Walker's <i>Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World</i> (1829) and his own "Address to the Slaves of the United States of America" (1843)
1848	Publication of Henry Highland Garnet's <i>The Past and the Present Condition, and the Destiny of the Colored Race: A Discourse</i>
1848	End of the Mexican American War
1848	Antimonarchical revolutions spread across Europe
1848	Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention
1850	Publication of Nancy Prince's <i>Narrative of the Life and Travels of Mrs. Nancy Prince</i>
1850	Passage of the Fugitive Slave Act