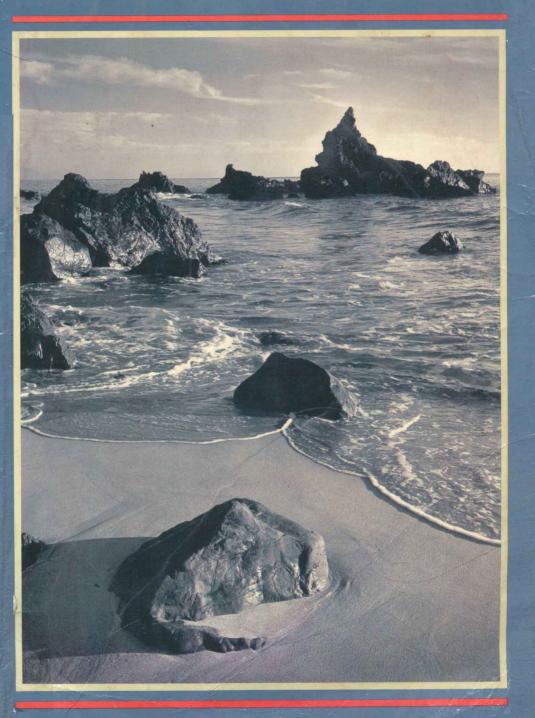
# The Heath Anthology of American Literature



The Heath Anthology of American Literature 江苏工业学院图书馆

Acquisitions Editor: Paul Smith Production Editor: Holt Johnson

Designer: Henry Rachlin

Production Coordinator: Michael O'Dea

Photo Researchers: Martha Shethar, Billie Ingram

Text Permissions Editor: Margaret Roll

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Published simultaneously in Canada.

Printed in the United States of America.

International Standard Book Number: 0-669-12064-2

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number:

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

## TO THE READER

This anthology has been long in the making. Indeed, some of the readers of this first edition may not have been born when the idea for it was initially discussed in 1968. At that time many literary scholars were becoming aware of the narrowness of what was taught as "American Literature." Many courses—and some textbooks as well were limited to perhaps a dozen "major" writers; yet it was increasingly clear that any coherent and accurate account of our cultural heritage meant knowing a far wider range of authors. In graduate school during the 1950s, the only minority writers, rarely encountered, were Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, and James Baldwin; yet, as the Civil Rights movement had begun to make clear, blacks and other people of color in American society had developed rich literary cultures. But where were these writers in American literature courses and anthologies? Similarly, most women authors, except perhaps Emily Dickinson and one or two others, were ignored as marginal; yet as one began to read American women writers, one discovered work of great power and vitality. Where were the women? It was acknowledged that the texts of English colonists, like John Smith and William Bradford, of Puritan divines, like Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards, and of the Founding Fathers were appropriate to American literature courses. But contemporary works from the half-continent that was then Spanish America and later texts concerned with similar issues of religion and politics were mainly dismissed as outside the bounds of literary study. It seemed inconsistent to relegate Cabeza de Vaca, Frederick Douglass or Charlotte Perkins Gilman to history or politics courses.

In short, like many black scholars before them, large numbers of teachers and scholars of all ethnic backgrounds began to question the "canon" of American literature—that is, the list of works and authors believed to be sufficiently important to read, study, write about, teach—and thus transmit to the next generation of readers. This questioning led in a number of directions. First, scholars documented the fact that the canon of American literature has changed substantially over time. In the period after the First World War, for example, the "Schoolroom Poets"— Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes, James Russell Lowell, John Greenleaf Whittier-fell from eminence, and Herman Melville, who had been all but forgotten, came to be viewed as one of America's major novelists. Similarly many women writers who had once been widely read and studied-like Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, and Edith Wharton-began to receive less attention as compared with Mark Twain and Stephen Crane. As the canon changed, so too did courses and anthologies. A new anthology would necessarily be different from its predecessors, for as Emerson had put it, "the experience of each new age requires a new confession, and the world seems always waiting for its poet."

Second, scholars in the late 1960s, recognizing the richness and diversity of

American culture, began to seek out the large number of lost, forgotten, or suppressed literary texts which had emerged from and illustrated that diversity. That has been a long and slow process, for it entailed not only locating, editing, and publishing such work, but also rethinking traditional ideas about what is of value in literature, as well as about intellectual frameworks for studying it. In the 1970s a whole new scholarship developed that examined the cultural implications of gender, race, and class for our understanding and appreciation of literature. But courses in American literature, and the textbooks on which they depended, were slow to respond to the new scholarship. Many works from the past were reissued briefly, only to disappear from the market; others remained out of print. Anthologies were even slower to change; they continued to focus on a canon little different from that established half a century ago. The problem came to be how to provide teachers and students with a textbook that truly displayed the enormous richness of the cultures of America.

In 1979, in an effort to accelerate the process of change in teaching, my colleagues and I organized a project through The Feminist Press called "Reconstructing American Literature." It was supported by the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education, and later by the Rockefeller Foundation and the Lilly Endowment. In 1982, that project convened a summer institute at Yale University designed to explore the implications of minority and feminist scholarship for the teaching of American literature. In the intense and often conflicted weeks of the institute, the forty participants and the resource people—including Elizabeth Ammons, Houston Baker, Juan Bruce-Novoa, Mary Anne Ferguson, Ann Fitzgerald, Phyllis Franklin, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Carlos Hortas, Annette Kolodny, Amy Ling, Peggy McIntosh, Annette Niemtzow, A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff, Mary Helen Washington, and Ana Zentella—discussed both issues of theory and the practical problems of initiating and institutionalizing change. A number of activities emerged from that institute.

Participants organized and held a series of workshops in different parts of the country on the issues raised at the institute and, more generally, on the problem of reconstructing American literature. These seminars made it plain that the movement for change in scholarship and in curriculum was deep and widespread. To further its momentum, a volume of syllabi, course materials, and commentary—some of it prepared at the institute—was gathered and published under the title *Reconstructing American Literature* (ed. Paul Lauter, Old Westbury: Feminist Press, 1983). That book provided faculty with models for changing their own courses, and it helped scholars who were developing anthologies to determine what was being taught in relatively advanced classrooms. But the book also illustrated how teachers were constrained by the limitations of existing texts: for example, hardly any syllabi included work by Latino or Asian-American writers, largely because no such writings were then included in any anthology. We determined that, in preparing a new anthology—the final objective of the Reconstructing American Literature project—we would break through such limitations.

Most of the ideas that have guided the construction of this anthology were given definition at the Yale institute. Because we want students to be able to gain a sense of the formal and historical cross-currents which helped shape individual works within a given period, we provide a much richer selection of authors from

each time frame than is available in any other anthology. Thus, for example, we include substantial selections from the traditionally important antebellum fiction writers, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville—incorporating nine Poe tales, all of The Scarlet Letter, and two Melville novellas, among other works. But we also present a uniquely rich group of other narratives of the period, including material by the most widely read American of the time, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and important prose by William Wells Brown, Alice Cary, Rebecca Harding Davis, Caroline Kirkland, Harriet Prescott Spofford, Elizabeth Drew Stoddard, and Harriet Wilson, among others. These writers produced works of literary excellence and historical significance that are worth studying on their own terms. They also newly illuminate the texts of better-known authors as well as the milieu from which they emerged. We believe that reading this range of writers offers opportunities for drawing stimulating comparisons and contrasts between canonical and non-canonical figures, between female and male, between one ethnic writer and another. It allows us to study the diverse and changing cultures of America, not only a narrow group of authors. It is not that heretofore non-canonical texts provide, so to speak, the landscape of "minor" writing from which the great monuments of American literature rise. Rather, studying and comparing these differing works will enlarge our understanding of—even help us fundamentally redefine—the literature that has in fact been produced in the United States. This comparative process may thus play a key role in changing the traditional foci and contexts for the study of American literature and bring into the classroom the energy and excitement generated by the new scholarship on women and minorities.

We have sought to use such mutually illuminating texts throughout. Thus we print fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Spanish and French, as well as English, narratives of discovery and exploration. Additionally, we have included some Native American responses to the arrival and the advances of the Europeans. And later, in the nineteenth century, we present selections from the quite different visions of Indian-White interactions of James Fenimore Cooper and Catharine Maria Sedgwick, as well as the views on that subject of Native American writers like William Apes, Elias Boudinot, and John Rollin Ridge.

A second principle of selection concerns reasonably familiar but undervalued writers. We include several works by authors like Charles Chesnutt, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, and Edith Wharton, who have often been represented by single well-worn pieces. Thus, instead of limiting students to Freeman's "A New England Nun," for example, or the deservedly popular "The Revolt of 'Mother,'" we also include "A Church Mouse"—her account of a poor woman's application of the ideas of non-violent action to her own survival—as well as the powerful and disturbing "Old Woman Magoun." Similarly, we include not only the largest selection of Emily Dickinson's poems available in an anthology, but 26 of her letters, mainly because for Dickinson—as for many women—letter and journal writing were significant forms of artistic expression.

Third, in choosing among works of literary accomplishment—both by lesser-known writers and by those in the traditional canon—we have in part been guided by how a text engages concerns central to the period in which it was written as well as to the overall development of American culture. Our goal has not been to turn this literature anthology into a series of historical illustrations nor to organize it

according to arbitrary themes. Rather, our selections reflect an effort, which we believe appropriate and important, to reconnect literature and its study with the society and culture of which it is fundamentally a part. For example, the question of gender—the nature of difference, the "proper spheres" of women and men, the character of women's and men's work and sexuality—has been a key concern since the earliest period. Thus, in the eighteenth century, work by Judith Sargent Murray became important; and in the nineteenth century, material by Margaret Fuller, excerpts from Harriet Jacob's Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's classic "The Yellow Wall-Paper," and Sarah Orne Jewett's "A White Heron" became obvious choices. But this concern also led to selecting from the large corpus of Melville's work "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids," a story rich both in symbolism and social commentary. It also led to including texts otherwise unavailable in such an anthology by eighteenth-century women poets, as well as by Sarah Grimké, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Fanny Fern, Sojourner Truth, and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, and particular fictional selections from Louisa May Alcott and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps. We believe readers will discover these to be not only of great interest in themselves, but also important to the discussion of gender as a category of contemporary as well as of eighteenth and nineteenth-century literary discourse. Further, this type of selection enables the kind of illuminating comparisons—between, for example, Melville's "Paradise and Tartarus" story and Rebecca Harding Davis's "Life in the Iron Mills"—to which we alluded above.

Similarly, many of the works we have chosen treat issues and subjects that have often been downplayed, even avoided: such topics include household labor in poems of the colonial period, child abuse in the Alice Carv story, sexuality, including homosexuality, in poetry from Whitman to Rich, the forms of affirmation as well as the experience of racial violence in minority communities, described by writers like Sui-Sin Far, Carlos Bulosan, and Paule Marshall. Nor have we confined ourselves to traditional analyses of familiar themes, such as what it means to be "American." This question has been of central concern to writers since the colonial period; Franklin, Emerson, and Henry Adams offer different, though related, responses to it. But their work, vital as it is, by no means exhausts the inquiry. In fact, the question intensifies for those who begin on the margins of American society, as slaves, immigrants, or "native" Americans. Accordingly, we have included in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century period an unusual and what we think readers will find to be a moving selection from the writings of Booker T. Washington, Abraham Cahan, Sui-Sin Far (Edith Maud Eaton), Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Bonnin), Alexander Posey, and Mary Antin.

As this roster of authors suggests, a major principle of selection has been to represent as fully as possible the varied cultures of the United States. American cultures sometimes overlap, sometimes differ, sometimes develop separately, sometimes in interactive patterns. To convey this diversity, we have included what is by far the widest sampling of the work of minority and white women writers available in any anthology of American literature. This selection includes material by 109 women of all races, 25 individual Native American authors (as well as 17 texts from tribal origins), 53 African-Americans, 13 Hispanics (as well as 12 texts from earlier Spanish originals and two from French), and 9 Asian-Americans. We have also

included significant selections from Jewish, Italian, and other ethnic traditions. In choosing this varied work, we have *not* limited ourselves to contemporary writers, but have tried to show how the flourishing of ethnic and minority literatures today is deeply rooted in both formal and folk traditions that have developed in this land over centuries. For these reasons and for their inherent interest, we have also printed a number of songs and tales from America's differing cultures.

We have also sought to underline the historical development of particular literary voices in American culture by placing together writers who, in one way or another, constituted a group or "school." In some situations, these writers knew and were influenced by each other. Such was the case, for example, among abolitionists, among many of the later nineteenth-century women writers who make up the first section of Volume 2, or among the writers of the Harlem Renaissance, whom we have placed together. We believe this organizational innovation will offer useful linkages for reading and teaching without imposing a historical artifice on the writers. It could be argued, of course, that placing the artists of the Harlem Renaissance together in a sense ghettoizes them and deemphasizes their impact upon the development of modernism. We are aware of this problem; but having this rich selection of writers together will, we believe, enable students better to comprehend the scope and internal diversity of the Renaissance, the interactions of its participants, as well as the connections between this cultural movement and the wider black community.

We have in general sought to organize the texts in units we believe will be interesting for reading and helpful to teaching. Underlying this organizational strategy is our belief that the paradigms we use to frame the study of literature are as important to how we understand it as the content of our study per se. For example, the ideas as well as the institutions of Puritanism are obviously important. But the religious life of what is now America has roots far older and more diverse than those established in the Massachusetts Bay colony. A class on "Puritan Writings" offers significant opportunity for studying essential works, but it leads in different directions from a class on "Early American Religious Cultures," which might incorporate Spanish Catholic works as well texts from Native American oral origins. Neither approach is "right"—or "wrong." But they foreground different texts and different cultural traditions. Our units are not designed to foreclose other organizational schemes but to make visible the intellectual assumptions always present in any method of structuring an anthology.

In order to accomplish the major broadening of coverage at which we have aimed, we have, especially in the contemporary selection, chosen authors we think of as representing different cultural voices. Of course, no one writer can "represent" the uniqueness of any other writer. In another sense, however, anthologies have always selected at least some writers on this basis—to "represent" the Imagist movement, for example, or social protest literature of the 1930s or "local color" writing of an earlier time. Whatever injustice this procedure may do to individual writers we have omitted, it has virtues over and above that of breadth. It allows readers to emphasize—as is reasonable for a survey text—historical contexts and literary trends rather than to focus primarily on a few prominent authors. As readers will see, we include larger selections of the traditionally canonical writers than are likely to be read in a survey course. But on balance, we have felt it more vital to

strive for the kind of range offered here than to provide readers with additional but more peripheral work by writers who are already familiar to most readers.

In addition to helping us develop the conceptual frameworks for this project, the Yale institute provided the organizational strategy for pulling together this distinctive anthology. It was clear from the outset that no small, homogeneous editorial board—of the sort that had up to then characterized *every* anthology—could bring together all the scholarly resources necessary to carry out this effort. Therefore, one of our first decisions was to gather an editorial board unique in its large size and in its diversity: in its initial composition the board had equal numbers of women and men, minority and white participants; members came from every part of the country, taught in virtually every kind of institution, and specialized in most of the periods and varieties of American literature.

In addition, however, an institute participant, Margaret O'Connor, proposed that instead of having even this large editorial board responsible for gathering all the writing to be included in the anthology, we ask the profession at large which authors and works they thought should be considered for a "reconstructed" American literature text. Consequently, we wrote to thousands of faculty members teaching American literature. Over 500 authors were suggested for inclusion. Potential "contributing editors" were then asked to suggest specific texts, and to provide a brief rationale for their selections. The editorial board read through this enormously fascinating—and physically huge—set of recommended texts, made an initial cut, and then in a series of meetings over three years narrowed the selections to what could fit within the covers of two large volumes.

This process, while cumbersome and time-consuming, has had a number of virtues. First, it represented a re-surveying of the territory—really, given the changes in what was called "American literature," an initial survey of what was virtually a new literary world. Instead of basing our initial selection on that of previous anthologies or on our graduate school training, and then supplementing or subtracting according to our own principles, we began with the vast range of the literary output of this country and have narrowed from that. We would hardly claim that nothing worthwhile has been omitted; but much that was lost and is excellent has been found.

Furthermore, this process has enabled us to incorporate in the anthology, and thus make available to readers, a great deal of new scholarship developed by leading specialists in their fields. These specialists made the initial suggestions about what should be included, wrote the headnotes for the authors they proposed, prepared notes for the texts finally selected, compiled selected bibliographies, and provided materials for the teaching guide. While editorial board members are responsible for the final versions of the headnotes, we have been able to extend the range of this anthology far beyond the limits of the board as a whole.

Finally, this process offers readers differing approaches to authors and varied writing styles in headnotes and introductions. In a way, these critical differences reflect the very diversity of the literature included here. They may also furnish students with a wider range of models for engaging texts and thus, perhaps, encourage confidence in their own judgments and ways of reading.

Whenever possible, the date of first publication follows each selection. In a few instances of special significance, the date of composition is also given.

We decided that it would be helpful to provide extended introductions to each historical period, as well as to the divisions within those periods. These introductions have been designed to offer readers information about the American society and cultures within which the authors created. Increasingly, literary study has moved away from purely formal scrutiny of isolated texts toward analyses which depend upon an examination of such historical contexts. We ask not only how a poem or story is constructed, about its language and imagery, but also about how it "worked" in its world (and works in ours), and how it was related to other texts of its own and other times. While these introductions do not pretend to be complete accounts of the periods, we believe that, together with the variety of texts themselves, they will provide a basis for informed interpretation of the works included in these volumes.

One or two members of the editorial board were ultimately in charge of writing each period introduction and the briefer section introductions; many other members contributed materials to one or more of the introductions. Carla Mulford and Wendy Martin were responsible for the introductions to Colonial Period: to 1700 and Colonial Period: 1700-1800; they used materials provided by Juan Bruce-Novoa, Andrew Wiget and Richard Yarborough. Paul Lauter was responsible for the Early Nineteenth Century: 1800-1865 introduction, using materials provided by Amy Ling, Daniel Littlefield, Raymund Paredes, and Andrew Wiget. Elaine Hedges was responsible for the Late Nineteenth Century: 1865–1910 introduction, using materials provided by Amy Ling, Daniel Littlefield, Raymund Paredes, Andrew Wiget and Richard Yarborough. Charles Molesworth was responsible for the introduction to the Modern Period: 1910-1945, using material provided by Elaine Hedges, Paul Lauter, Amy Ling, and Daniel Littlefield; Hortense Spillers was responsible for the introduction to the Harlem Renaissance. Linda Wagner-Martin was responsible for the introduction to the Contemporary Period: 1945 to the Present, using materials provided by Paul Lauter, Amy Ling, Andrew Wiget, and Richard Yarborough.

As for the contributing editors who "sponsored" so many of the writers included, this is very much their anthology too. We appreciate the help of our colleagues: Thomas P. Adler (Purdue University); Elizabeth Ammons (Tufts University); William L. Andrews (University of Wisconsin-Madison); Francis R. Aparicio (University of Arizona); Elaine Sargent Apthorp (San Jose State University); Liahna Babener (Montana State University); Barbara Bardes (Loyola University of Chicago); Helen Barolini; Marleen Barr (Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University); Sam S. Baskett (Michigan State University); Arthenia J. Bates-Millican (Southern University); Rosalie Murphy Baum (University of South Florida); Herman Beavers (University of Pennsylvania); Eileen T. Bender (Indiana University Bloomington); Carol Marie Bensick (University of California at Riverside); David Bergman (Towson State University); Susan L. Blake (Lafayette College); Michael Boccia (New Hampshire College); Robert H. Brinkmeyer Jr. (University of Mississippi); John F. Callahan (Lewis and Clark College); Jane Campbell (Purdue University Calumet); Jean Ferguson Carr (University of Pittsburgh); Allan Chavkin (Southwest Texas State University); King Kok Cheung (University of California at Los Angeles); Beverly Lyon Clark (Wheaton College); C.B. Clark (California State University at Long Beach); Arthur B. Coffin (Montana State University); Constance

Coiner (State University of New York at Binghamton); Martha E. Cook (Longwood College); Angelo Costanzo (Shippensburg University); Pattie Cowell (Colorado State University); John W. Crowley (Syracuse University); Martha Curry (Wayne State University); Walter C. Daniel (University of Missouri—Columbia); Cathy N. Davidson (Duke University); Jane Krause DeMouy; Dorothy L. Denniston (Brown University); Kathryn Zabelle Derounian (University of Arkansas at Little Rock); Margaret Dickie (University of Georgia); Raymond F. Dolle (Indiana State University); Sheila Hurst Donnelly (State University of New York at New Paltz); Carole Doreski (Emmanuel College); Sally Ann Drucker (North Carolina State University); Arlene A. Elder (University of Cincinnati); Everett Emerson (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill); Bernard F. Engel (Michigan State University); Betsy Erikkila (University of Pennsylvania); Robert M. Farnsworth (University of Missouri— Kansas City); Laraine Fergenson (Bronx Community College); Judith Fetterley (State University of New York at Albany); Chester J. Fontenot Jr. (University of Illinois); Lucy M. Freibert (University of Louisville); Susan Stanford Friedman (University of Wisconsin-Madison); Albert Furtwangler (Mount Allison University); Diana Hume George (Pennsylvania State University at Erie-Behrend College); Leah Blatt Glasser (Mount Holyoke College); Wendell P. Glick (University of Minnesota); William Goldhurst (University of Florida); Rita K. Gollin (State University of New York at Geneseo); Suzanne Gossett (Lovola University of Chicago); Theodora R. Graham (Pennsylvania State University at Harrisburg); Robert M. Greenberg (Temple University); Barry Gross (Michigan State University); James Guimond (Rider College); Minrose C. Gwin (Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University); Alfred Habegger (University of Kansas); Joan F. Hallisey (Aquinas College); Jeffrey A. Hammond (George Mason University); Earl N. Harbert (Northeastern University); Trudier Harris (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill); Ellen Louise Hart (University of California at Santa Cruz); William L. Hedges (Goucher College); Joan D. Hedrick (Trinity College); Allison Heisch (San Jose State University); Robert E. Hemenway (University of Oklahoma); Guillermo Hernandez (University of California at Los Angeles); Kristin Herzog; Donald R. Hettinga (Calvin College); Patricia Liggins Hill (University of San Francisco); Elvin Holt (Southwest Texas State University); Kenneth Alan Hovey (University of Texas at San Antonio); Gloria T. Hull (University of California at Santa Cruz); James M. Hutchisson (The Citadel); Elaine A. Jahner (Dartmouth College); Anne G. Jones (University of Florida); Joyce Ann Joyce (University of Nebraska); Nancy Carol Joyner (Western Carolina University); Rose Yalow Kamel (Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science); Carolyn L. Karcher (Temple University); Richard S. Kennedy (Temple University); Carol Farley Kessler (Pennsylvania State University); Elizabeth Keyser (Hollins College); Elaine Kim (University of California at Berkeley); Him Mark Lai; David M. Larson (Cleveland State University); Estella Lauter (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee); Barry Leeds (Central Connecticut State University); James A. Levernier (University of Arkansas at Little Rock); Cliff Lewis (University of Lowell); Genny Lim; Shirley Lim (Westchester Community College); John W. Lowe (Louisiana State University); Juanita Luna-Lawhn (San Antonio College); Joseph Mancini Jr. (George Washington University); Daniel Marder (University of Tulsa); Deborah E. McDowell (University of Virginia); Peggy McIntosh (Wellesley College); Nellie Y. McKay (University of Wisconsin-Madison); D.H.

Melhem (The Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities); Michael J. Mendelsohn (University of Tampa); Gabriel Miller (Rutgers University); James A. Miller (Trinity College); Jeanne-Marie A. Miller (Howard University); Keith D. Miller (Arizona State University); Joel Myerson (University of South Carolina); Margaret F. Nelson (Oklahoma State University); Charles H. Nichols (Brown University); Vera Norwood (University of New Mexico); Margaret Anne O'Connor (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill); Genaro Padilla (University of California at Berkeley); Linda Pannill (Transylvania University); James W. Parins (University of Arkansas at Little Rock); Vivian M. Patraka (Bowling Green State University); John J. Patton (Atlantic Community College); James Robert Payne (New Mexico State University); Richard Pearce (Wheaton College); Michael W. Peplow (Lock Haven University); Ronald Primeau (Central Michigan University); Jennifer Randisi (California State University at San Bernadino); Geoffrey Rans (University of Western Ontario); John M. Reilly (State University of New York at Albany); Philip M. Richards (Colgate University); Marilyn Richardson (Massachusetts Institute of Technology); Evelyn Hoard Roberts (St. Louis Community College at Meramec); James A. Robinson (University of Maryland); William H. Robinson (Brown University); Kenneth M. Roemer (University of Texas at Arlington); Judith A. Roman (Indiana University East); Nicholas D. Rombes Jr. (Pennsylvania State University); Robert Rosen (William Paterson College); Deborah Rosenfelt (University of Maryland); Martin Roth (University of Minnesota); Karen E. Rowe (University of California at Los Angeles); A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff (University of Illinois at Chicago); Doreen Alvarez Saar (Drexel University); Ramon Saldívar (University of Texas at Austin); George J. Searles (Mohawk Valley Community College); Cynthia Secor (HERS); David S. Shields (The Citadel); Thelma J. Shinn (Arizona State University); Frank Shuffleton (University of Rochester); Peggy Skaggs (Angelo State University); Catherine R. Stimpson (Rutgers University); Janis P. Stout (Texas A&M University); Claudia Tate (Howard University); John Edgar Tidwell (Miami University); Eleanor Q. Tignor (LaGuardia Community College); Jane Tompkins (Duke University); Steven C. Tracy (University of Cincinnati); Richard Tuerk (East Texas State University); Paula Uruburu (Hofstra University); Donald Vanouse (State University of New York at Oswego); Daniel Walden (Pennsylvania State University); Arthur E. Waterman (Georgia State University); Sybil Weir (San Jose State University); Judith Wellman (State University of New York at Oswego); James L. W. West III (Pennsylvania State University); Thomas R. Whitaker (Yale University); Barbara A. White (University of New Hampshire); Kenny Williams (Duke University); Marcellete G. Williams (Michigan State University); James C. Wilson (University of Cincinnati); Norma Clark Wilson (University of South Dakota); Kate Winter (State University of New York at Albany); Frederick Woodard (University of Iowa); Jean Fagan Yellin (Pace University); Amy Marie Yerkes (Pennsylvania State University); Judy Yung (University of California at Berkeley).

The completion of this complex project owes debts to colleagues other than those who constitute the editorial board and the 171 authorities who have served as contributing editors. Mary Helen Washington, Annette Kolodny, Anne Jones, and Paula Gunn Allen served on the editorial board at earlier stages. Staff members at The Feminist Press—particularly Denise Wyatt, Sophie Zimmerman, Helen Schrader, and Peggy Gifford—helped move this effort forward. Members of the advisory board of the Reconstructing American Literature project provided impor-

tant advice and counsel; they included Warner Berthoff, Barbara Christian, Margarita Cota-Cárdenas, Michael Dorris, Mary Anne Ferguson, Dexter Fisher, Phyllis Franklin, Donna Gerstenberger, Michael Harper, the late George Kent, Marian E. Musgrave, Katharine D. Newman, Marco Portales, the late Warren Sussman, Alan Trachtenberg, Henrietta Whiteman, and Larzer Ziff. The project could not have been completed without the financial support of the federal Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE), the Lilly Endowment, and the Rockefeller Foundation; we particularly wish to thank the program officers—Richard Hendrix, Ralph Lundgren, and Stephen Lavine, respectively—for their assistance and encouragement. The University of California at Los Angeles, provided support for an editorial board meeting, and the University of California at Santa Cruz, the State University of New York/College at Old Westbury, and Trinity College gave help for other aspects of this project; in particular we wish to express our appreciation to William Schaefer of UCLA, Michael Cowan and Byron Wheeler of Santa Cruz, Norman Hostetter and Eudora Pettigrew of Old Westbury, and Jan Cohn of Trinity.

A number of our colleagues were kind enough to comment upon the Table of Contents or sections of the manuscript. They included Michael Adams; Barry Ahearn (Tulane University); William Hilton Anderson (University of Southern Mississippi); John Anderson (University of Pennsylvania); Robert Armour (Virginia Commonwealth University); Tucker Arnold (Florida International University); Kathleen Ashley (University of Southern Maine); Liahna Babener (Montana State University); Peter Balakian (Colgate University); Veronica Bassil (State University of New York at Geneseo); John Bayer (Saint Louis Community College at Meramec); Robert Bergstrom (University of Nebraska—Lincoln); Susan Blake (Lafayette College); James Busskohl (Eastern Washington University); William Cain (Wellesley College); D. Dean Cantrell (Berry College); Robert Con Davis (University of Oklahoma); D. Dean Dunham (William Jewell College); Barbara Eckstein (Tulane University); Donna Gerstenberger (University of Washington); Sandra Gilbert (University of California at Riverside); Norman Grabo (University of Tulsa); Janet Groth (State University of New York at Plattsburgh); Douglas Haneline (Ferris State College); Robert Hemenway (University of Oklahoma); Carol Holly (St. Olaf College); June Howard (University of Michigan); Alan Howell (California Polytechnic University); Marcia Jacobson (Auburn University); Joan Joffe Hall (University of Connecticut); Fran Kaye (University of Nebraska); Bonnie Kime Scott (University of Delaware); Jerome Klinkowitz (Northern Iowa State University); Michael Kreyling (Vanderbilt University); Joann Krieg (Hofstra University); Lewis Lawson (University of Maryland); James Leonard (The Citadel); Kenneth Lincoln (University of California at Los Angeles); Don Makosky (St. Lawrence University); Charlotte McClure (Georgia State University); Charlotte Meyer (Edgewood College); Theodore D. Nostwich (Iowa State University); Linda Panero (Manhattan College); John Parks (Miami University); Betty Reagan (Kutztown University of Pennsylvania); David S. Reynolds (City University of New York, Baruch College); George Sebouhian (State University of New York at Fredonia); John Seelye (University of Florida); Canadai Seshachari (Weber State College); Conrad Shumaker (University of Central Arkansas); Paul Smith (Trinity College); Philip Smith (University of Nebraska); Sherry Sullivan (University of Alabama); William

Sutton (Eastern Kentucky University); Frederic Svoboda (University of Michigan—Flint); Mary Helen Washington (University of Massachusetts—Boston); Ray Lewis White (Illinois State University); Glen Wiese (Weber State College); Bonnie Zimmerman (San Diego State University). Anne Fitzgerald read and made suggestions for all of the introductions. We want to thank all for their honest criticisms and for the support they provided.

Paul Lauter's students in English 204 at Trinity College used much of volume one in photocopied form and provided valuable comments and suggestions, as did Wendy Martin's students at The Claremont Graduate school. Cynthia Andrzejczyk, Gary Enke, and Matthew Judd of The Claremont Graduate School gave particular assistance in gathering and helping edit materials for the early period, as did Stephen Cormany, Kathryn Davinroy, Kathleen Healey, Jean Nienkamp, and Nicholas Rombes of Pennsylvania State University and Louis A. Cellucci of Temple University. Bill Kelly, Barbara Bowen, and Melvin Dixon of Queens College provided particular help for the introduction to modernism, and the twenties and thirties. We also appreciate the aid of Janice Radway and Philip Leininger.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge the extraordinary work of the editorial staff at D.C. Heath: Holt Johnson, Kim Mrazek, and particularly Paul Smith, who acted as a full member of the editorial board; without his encouragement, faith, and tenacity, these volumes would never have seen the light of day.

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