

Lives Through Literature

A THEMATIC
ANTHOLOGY

Helene Levine Keating

Walter Levy

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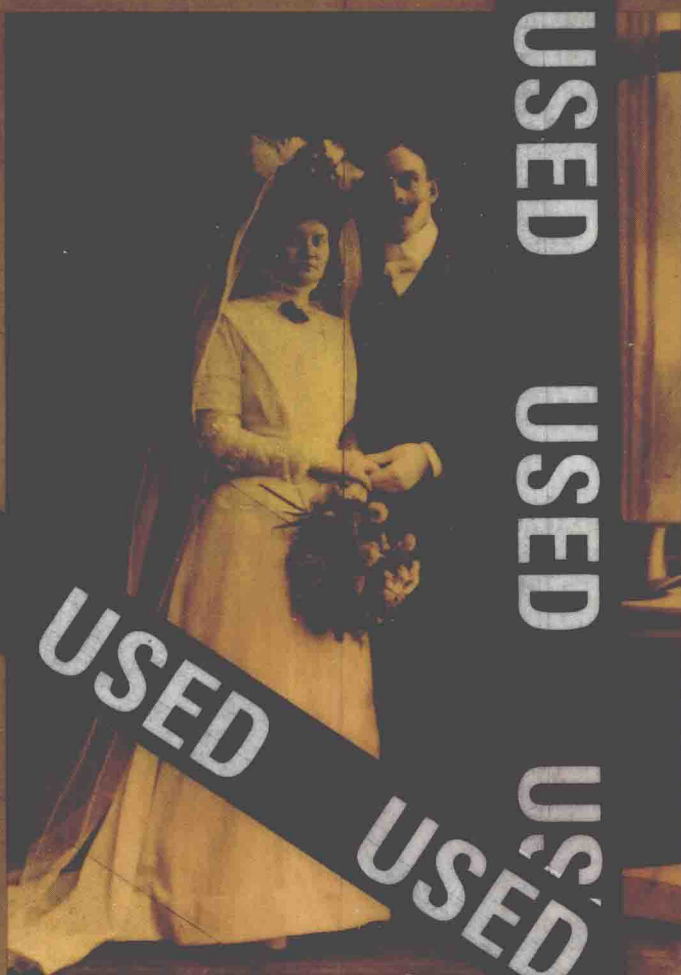
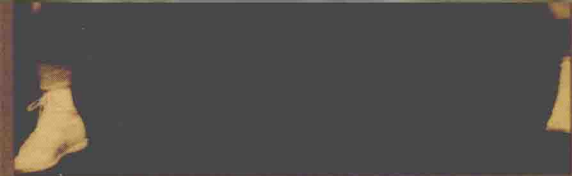
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PACE UNIVERSITY

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MACMILLAN PUBLISHING COMPANY

New York

COLLIER MACMILLAN CANADA

Toronto

EDITOR: Barbara A. Heinssen
PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR: Katherine M. Evancie
PRODUCTION MANAGER: Valerie Sawyer
TEXT AND COVER DESIGNER: Patricia Smythe
COVER PHOTOGRAPHS: Courtesy of William Albert Allard
(bottom left) and James Van Der Zee (top left)
This book was set in Berkeley Old Style by Digitype, Inc.
and printed and bound by Arcata Graphics/Halliday. The
cover was printed by the Lehigh Press, Inc.

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Printed in the United States of America

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Macmillan Publishing Company
866 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10022

Collier Macmillan Canada, Inc.
1200 Eglinton Avenue East
Suite 200
Don Mills, Ontario M3C 3N1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lives through literature: a thematic anthology / [edited by] Helane Levine
Keating and Walter Levy.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-02-362714-X

I. Literature. I. Keating, Helane Levine. II. Levy, Walter.

PN6014.L64 1991

808.8—dc20 90-5606

CIP

Copyright acknowledgments begin on page 1085, which constitutes an
extension of the copyright page.

Printing: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Year: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Preface

Some collaboration has to take place in the mind between the woman and the man before the act of creation can be accomplished. Some marriage of opposites has to be consummated. The whole of the mind must lie wide open if we are to get the sense that the writer is communicating his experience with perfect fullness.

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

Lives Through Literature is a thematic literature anthology that interweaves texts to demonstrate interrelationships between life and literature, academic study and life experience. The anthology and its pedagogical aids are suited for college introductory literature and composition courses, intermediate literature courses for sophomores and other advanced students, and thematic literature courses. Because its themes focus on familiar human relationships, the anthology provides a direct connection between the real worlds of students and teachers and the world of literature. The selections are drawn from many cultures and civilizations, spanning from the ninth century B.C. to the present, in order to introduce students to the diversity of great literature, to emphasize the continuity of human concerns across centuries, and to encourage cultural literacy. Selections include essays, short stories, poems, and plays, to which we have married myths, parables, and a fairy tale to deepen the understanding of interrelationships between literature and culture.

Organization

Six Universal Themes

Lives Through Literature is divided into six main themes, which can be seen as universal: parents and children, sisters and brothers, friends and enemies, mentors and students, women and men in love, and wives and husbands. These relationships are primary in all cultures and readily recognizable to students of all ages. For the teacher and the student, experienced reader or newcomer, they can serve as broad avenues to knowledge, self-realization, and enjoyment.

We chose these particular six themes because we believe that they are immediately appealing and relevant to our students: these are the very relationships

students are struggling to understand as they enter college, whatever their age. In their broadness and depth these themes encompass a great many of the more abstract themes commonly focused on in other anthologies. In the relationships portrayed in the section on parents and children, for example, the themes of coming of age, separation, and death emerge. The themes of war, peace, good, and evil surface in Part 3, "Friends and Enemies." In Part 2, "Sisters and Brothers," as well as in "Friends and Enemies," the nature of jealousy, rivalry, competitiveness, and loyalty is explored, along with the spiritual dilemma first confronted by Cain when he asks, Am I my brother's keeper? Although the complexities of teaching and being taught are central to the college experience, no other thematic literature anthology focuses on the relationships between mentors and students. Part 4 raises many fundamental questions regarding the differences and similarities between teachers, mentors, and students. We deliberately include two separate parts, "Women and Men in Love" and "Wives and Husbands," to differentiate the experience of love from that of marriage, for example, the role time plays in relationships, the nature of love when both partners are single or when the partners are living together with children, and so on. (Of course, our intent is not to imply that love and marriage are incompatible, but rather to suggest that they are complex subjects with many facets for analysis and interpretation.)

An underlying impetus for us to compile and write this anthology was the desire to help students experience literature fully and recognize it as pertinent and meaningful, not abstract or purely intellectual. Therefore, it is hoped that these six themes about human relationships will, in addition to organizing the anthology, serve to help students move beyond plot summary to engagement in literature, critical thinking, and self-discovery.

199 Interrelated Selections

Literary selections for each part have been chosen according to quality of content, style, and relevance to their thematic grouping. Our criteria are that all works represent cultural diversity while providing stimulating possibilities for juxtaposition, comparison, and contrast. Some of these texts are drawn from the established canon, and many can be seen as part of a newly emerging canon. We have chosen classic and respected authors as well as newer, less widely recognized writers. We also include some less familiar selections by well-known writers. Selections range from traditional to experimental, from classic to modern to postmodern, from simple to difficult. There are many choices for the instructor.

We have strived to create a balance of men and women writers. Of the 199 selections, almost half are written by women. All selections are sensitive to issues of gender, race, ethnicity, class, religion, and age.

The following genres are represented in each of the six parts: myth, essay, short fiction, poetry, and drama. Texts are grouped by genre within each part, and within each genre selections are organized to create a dialogue between selections that precede or follow. In particular, the poetry within each thematic grouping is carefully sequenced to reveal both connectedness and difference within each theme. For example, the poetry in "Parents and Children" begins with the parent's perspective of pregnancy, birth, childhood, and adolescence; shifts to the child's youthful view of the parent; then moves to the adult child's view; and concludes

with the aging child's reflections of the deceased parent. "Mentors and Students" first shows the student's point of view, shifts to the teacher's, then presents famous poets' reflections on mentors, continues on to the older student and some unexpected mentors, and concludes with the presence of age and death for student and mentor alike. "Women and Men in Love" opens with a sequence of love poems, then turns to unrequited love poems, the nature of dangerous love, love's limitations and its power, the plight of the abandoned lover, and relationships coming apart and coming together. Other parts follow suit.

Subject Clusters

Whenever possible, we have included a cluster of texts that share similar subject matter but different points of view: exploration of multiple views is one of the strengths of this anthology. Whereas some clusters appear within one genre of a thematic grouping, others are woven through several genres or even several thematic groupings. For instance, the myth of Daedalus and Icarus surfaces in two very different forms, first in "Parents and Children," again in "Mentors and Students," and twice in "Women and Men in Love." A cluster on the prodigal son also appears in "Parents and Children." "Sisters and Brothers" has a cross-genre cluster portraying the Cain and Abel relationship, and "Friends and Enemies" has a cluster of texts portraying the archetype of the double. "Mentors and Students" matches an essay on author Raymond Carver's skills as a mentor with a Carver story about a mentor; it also clusters four Zen parables with a poem by a student of Zen. "Women and Men in Love" has a cross-genre cluster on Circe's love of Odysseus; "Wives and Husbands" has one on the relationship between Penelope and Odysseus and another on Lot's wife. The literary motif of blindness and inner sight appears and reappears throughout the anthology, in fiction by Gabriel García Márquez and Raymond Carver, in Sophocles' great drama *Oedipus Rex*, and in the autobiographical writing of Helen Keller. The Orpheus and Eurydice myth is juxtaposed with a Native American counterpart, "Coyote and the Shadow People," and H. D.'s poem "Eurydice" in "Wives and Husbands." Different perspectives on "marriage factories" are also grouped in this section. Several poems focusing on the animal as unexpected mentor appear in "Mentors and Students." Additional information on these thematic groupings is available in the *Instructor's Manual*.

Reading and Writing About Literature

The thematic anthology is supported by Section Two, "Reading and Writing About Literature," which includes four chapters designed to introduce students to literary analysis, terminology, technique, and essay composition. Section Two can be used by students who are new to the study of literature at the college level, but it is also useful for more sophisticated readers. Each part—"Reading and Analyzing Fiction," "Reading and Analyzing Poetry," "Reading and Analyzing Drama," and "Reading, Analyzing, and Writing Essays"—provides descriptions and examples of literary devices and a sample analysis of a selection from each genre. The aim is to provide specific, practical examples for students to use with discussion and writing assignments. "Reading, Analyzing, and Writing Essays" discusses various strategies for writing a literary analysis. It includes sample thesis statements for many types of essays. Our emphasis on writing and understanding thesis statements is designed to

foster recognition that both professional and student authors share fundamental techniques for writing and organizing.

Pedagogical Aids

Thematic Section Introductions

Each thematic section opens with a short introduction, which elucidates the theme and its variations. This is accompanied by a photograph that includes one of the authors whose work appears in the section; the photograph also reflects the theme. For example, in “Parents and Children,” a photograph of Langston Hughes and his mother at his college graduation not only provides a visual portrayal of the theme but also directly links Hughes’s poem “Mother to Son” with the photo.

Questions for Thought, Discussion, and Writing

We provide questions at the end of every selection to encourage students to think critically about what they have read. The questions ask students to focus on language, point of view, reader response, thematic variations, meaning, and ambiguity.

Discussion and writing topics follow each genre grouping within each thematic section. Our aim is to encourage students to analyze and synthesize the themes and their converging and diverging relationships. At the end of the entire thematic section, in-depth discussion and writing topics link all genres. These writing topics are designed to help students discover how similar ideas can be expressed in dissimilar genres. Questions for discussion and writing suggestions are designed to cover a range of rhetorical modes including definition, classification, argument, and process.

Glossary of Terms

The text concludes with a concise glossary of literary terms that serves to reinforce information and definitions presented throughout Section Two. The glossary offers students a study aid for recognition and review of the basic vocabulary of literature.

Special Features

Myths, Parables, and a Fairy Tale

Lives Through Literature is the only anthology we have seen that includes ancient Greek myths, Native American myths, biblical tales and parables, Zen parables, and a fairy tale. Not only do these selections encourage cultural literacy, they also enrich and deepen the student’s understanding of the roots of literature and the profound links between religion, ritual, and literature. They allow the instructor to focus on the ways modern writers have transformed these texts to reflect current

dilemmas and concerns. Finally, they offer instructor and student alike the pleasure of discovery of the continuing relevance of myth and parable today.

Versatility

Lives Through Literature can be used in any order; texts and themes can be mixed and matched. Although each part may be discussed on its own, students and instructors have the opportunity to explore the relationships between each theme. Because each part of the anthology is divided into genres, instructors may decide to focus on specific genres and ignore others. The anthology is sufficiently comprehensive such that it offers numerous subthemes and cross-genre connections.

Instructor's Manual

The *Instructor's Manual* includes basic biographical and professional information about each author or literary text in order to provide a framework for chronology and contextuality. A brief analysis of each selection focuses on theme, subject, plot, point of view, character, and distinctive use of figurative language. We suggest energizing ways of linking one selection with other selections in the anthology, and we note when selections are available as films.

Acknowledgments

With pleasure we thank the many people who provided encouragement, thoughtful suggestions, and information that enabled *Lives Through Literature* to become a reality. Because this anthology took a longer time to complete than we ever imagined, we first wish to thank our families for their patience and support: Michael and Noah Keating, Gene Moncrief, Alexander and Matthew Levy, Katherine and Kristina Wronski. At Macmillan, we thank our editor, Barbara A. Heinssen, and assistant editor, Peter Knapp, both of whom gave us fine critical insights and kept us on target. For the design and production, we appreciate the work of Katherine Evancie, our production supervisor, and her associates.

We are indebted to the following colleagues, whose editorial comments helped to shape our text during its various stages of development: Katherine Anne Ackley, University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point; Robin W. Bryant, Phillips County Community College; Susan X Day, Illinois State University; Donald Goodwin, Eastern Washington University; Donald Gray, Indiana University at Bloomington; Margaret Hallissy, Long Island University, C. W. Post Center; Nancy Waddell Hutson, Louisiana State University at Shreveport; Carole S. Keller, University of Akron; Helen Marlborough, DePaul University; Robert D. Marshall, University of Pittsburgh; Mary E. McGann, University of Indianapolis; and John O'Connor, George Mason University.

For good words and answers to our innumerable questions, we thank our colleagues and friends William Clary, Richard Donovan, Robert DiYanni, Susan Fawcett, Mark Hussey, Seymour Hutner, Karla Jay, Richard Fabrizio, Iride Lamartina-Lens, Jean McConochie, Sherman Raskin, Walter Srebnick, Jane Stine, and George

Warner. We are grateful to Lauren Fedorko and Beth Murphy for collecting permissions; the staff of the Pace University New York Library for their assistance; Marly Gonzalez, Loretta Maurizio, and Denise Wall for helping out on a variety of tasks; Bruce Kennan for encouragement; and Timothy Guglielmo for introducing us to Macmillan.

H.L.K.

W.L.

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