

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	xxiii
<i>Writing Self, Writing Community: An Introduction</i>	xxix

◆ PART 1 ◆ PRECURSORS

Modernists, 1940s to 1960s

Gwendolyn Brooks (1917–2000)	4
The Sundays of Satin-Legs Smith	4
Riot	9
Boy Breaking Glass	10
Robert Hayden (1913–1980)	12
For a Young Artist	12
Elegies for Paradise Valley	14
A Letter from Phillis Wheatley	18
Melvin B. Tolson (1898–1966)	21
<i>from</i> Harlem Gallery	21
Chi	21

The 1960s and Beyond

THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT

Amiri Baraka (1934–)	30
Black Art	31
In Memory of Radio	32

<i>An Agony. As Now.</i>	33
A Poem for Black Hearts	35
AM/TRAK	36
Mari Evans (1923–)	42
I Am a Black Woman	43
Nikki Giovanni (1943–)	45
Nikki-Rosa	45
Ego Tripping (there may be a reason why)	47
Bobb Hamilton (1928–1998)	49
Poem to a Nigger Cop	49
David Henderson (1942–)	51
Downtown-Boy Uptown	51
Calvin C. Hernton (1932–2001)	54
The Distant Drum	54
Haki Madhubuti (1942–)	55
But He Was Cool, or: he even stopped for green lights	55
Larry Neal (1937–1981)	57
Malcolm X—An Autobiography	58
Carolyn Rodgers (1940–2010)	61
how i got ovah	61
Breakthrough	62
Sonia Sanchez (1934–)	66
Homecoming	66
Malcolm	67
blk / rhetoric	68
A Poem for My Father	70
Poem No. 3	70
Towhomitmayconcern	71
A. B. Spellman (1935–)	72
I Looked & Saw History Caught	73
Edward S. Spriggs (1934–)	74
For Brother Malcolm	74

The 1960s and Beyond

OUTSIDE THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT

Gerald Barrax (1933–)	76
Eagle. Tiger. Whale.	77
King: April 4, 1968	78
Lucille Clifton (1936–2010)	80
lazarus	81
leda 1, 2, 3	82
far memory	84
Jayne Cortez (1936–)	88
Solo Finger Solo	89
In the Morning	90
Michael S. Harper (1938–)	93
The Yellow Dishes	93
Yaddo, Mrs. Ames & Black Men	95
Coliseum Pool, 1960 (Dream)	96
Don't Explain: A Ballad Played by Dexter Gordon	98
June Jordan (1936–2002)	100
What Would I Do White?	101
Current Events	101
Adrienne's Poem: On the Dialectics of the Diatonic Scale	103
Bob Kaufman (1925–1986)	104
<i>from</i> Jail Poems	104
Battle Report	106
I Have Folded My Sorrows	107
Walking Parker Home	108
African Dream	109
Etheridge Knight (1931–1991)	110
The Violent Space (or when your sister sleeps around for money)	110
The Idea of Ancestry	112
Hard Rock Returns to Prison from the Hospital for the Criminal Insane	113
Belly Song	114

Audre Lorde (1934–1992)	118
Coal	119
To My Daughter the Junkie on a Train	120
Fishing the White Water	121
Clarence Major (1936–)	123
On Watching a Caterpillar Become a Butterfly	123
The Great Horned Owl	125
Clay Bison in a Cave	126
Territorial Claims	127
Colleen J. McElroy (1935–)	129
Paris Subway Tango	130
Crossing the Rubicon at Seventy	131
Ishmael Reed (1938–)	133
I Am a Cowboy in the Boat of Ra	134
The Pope Replies to the Ayatollah Khomeini	136
Ed Roberson (1939–)	138
Sit In What City We're In	138
Eclogue	142
Ntozake Shange (1948–)	146
my father is a retired magician	146
nappy edges (a cross country sojourn)	148
Primus St. John (1939–)	150
The Cigar Maker	150
Trap a Congo	151
Catch and Release	152
Lorenzo Thomas (1944–2005)	153
Onion Bucket	153
Downtown Boom	154
Alice Walker (1944–)	156
Revolutionary Petunias	157
On Stripping Bark from Myself	158
Sherley Anne Williams (1944–1999)	159
<i>from</i> Letters from a New England Negro	159
Mrs. Josiah Harris / August 25, 1867	159
Miss Ann Spencer / August 30, 1867	161
/ October 22, 1867	162

	/ November 24, 1867	163
	/ February 15, 1868	164
Al Young (1939–)		166
The Song Turning Back Into Itself 3		167
Ravel: Bolero		168
A Dance for Ma Rainey		169

♦ PART 2 ♦
HEIRS

First Wave, Post-1960s

Ai (1947–2010)		174
Hoover, Edgar J.		175
Conversation		178
The Curious Journey of Ulysses Paradeece		
After a Hurricane		179
Cyrus Cassells (1957–)		184
Sally Hemings to Thomas Jefferson		184
Wild Indigo, Because		188
The White Iris Beautifies Me		188
Wanda Coleman (1946–)		190
Ars Poetica		191
Bedtime Story		192
American Sonnet (17)		193
American Sonnet (54)		193
Toi Derricotte (1941–)		195
Holy Cross Hospital		195
The Weakness		198
Invisible Dreams		199
The Minks		203
Melvin Dixon (1950–1992)		205
Climbing Montmartre		205
Paring Potatoes		206
Turning Forty in the 90's		207
Heartbeats		208

Rita Dove (1952–)	211
Nestor's Bathtub	212
History	213
The Fish in the Stone	213
Daystar	214
Heroes	215
American Smooth	216
Hattie McDaniel Arrives at the Coconut Grove	217
The Bridgetower	219
Cornelius Eady (1954–)	221
Photo of Miles Davis at Lennies-on-the-Turnpike, 1968	221
Crows in a Strong Wind	222
Christopher Gilbert (1949–2007)	223
She	223
Absentee Landlord	224
Touching	225
C. S. Giscombe (1950–)	227
The Northernmost Road	227
The 1200N Road, Going East	230
Jewelle Gomez (1948–)	231
My Chakabuku Mama (a comic tale)	232
El Beso	234
Angela Jackson (1951–)	236
The Love of Travellers (Doris, Sandra and Sheryl)	237
Two Trains	238
Ida Rewrites	238
Gayl Jones (1949–)	240
Deep Song	240
Foxes	241
Composition with Guitar and Apples	245
Patricia Spears Jones (1951–)	250
Wearing My Red Silk Chinese Jacket	251
Thanksgiving	254
Yusef Komunyakaa (1947–)	256
Venus's-flytraps	257

My Father's Love Letters	258
"You and I Are Disappearing"	259
Facing It	260
Blue Light Lounge Sutra for the Performance Poets at Harold Park Hotel	261
Lingo	263
[The jawbone of an ass. A shank]	265
The Devil Comes on Horseback	265
Requiem	266
Nathaniel Mackey (1947-)	268
Song of the Andoumboulou: 16	269
Glenn on Monk's Mountain	275
Sound and Severance	277
Thylias Moss (1954-)	282
The Day Before Kindergarten: Taluca, Alabama, 1959	283
<i>Timex</i> Remembered	285
One for All Newborns	287
Mulberry Breath as Proof of the Wave in Form of Question	288
The Culture of Near Miss	290
Me and Bubble Went to Memphis.	292
Harryette Mullen (1953-)	294
Unspoken	294
All She Wrote	296
Black Nikes	296
[if your complexion is a mess]	297
[Of a girl, in white]	298
Marilyn Nelson (1946-)	299
Mama's Promise	299
Daughters, 1900	301

Second Wave, Post-1960s

Elizabeth Alexander (1962-)	304
The Venus Hottentot (1825)	304

Boston Year	308
The Blue Whale	309
Thomas Sayers Ellis (1963–)	311
Sticks	311
View-Master	313
Bright Moments	315
All Their Stanzas Look Alike	317
Mr. Dynamite Splits	319
First Grade, All Over Again	321
Godzilla's Avocado	324
Forrest Hamer (1956–)	327
Lesson	327
In the Middle	328
<i>from</i> Goldsboro Narratives, #4, #7, #28	329
Kendra Hamilton (1958–)	332
The Science of Wearing a Dress	333
Belle's Promenade: Nassau Street, Princeton	334
Myronn Hardy (1972–)	336
Undertones	336
On a Bench: My Life	337
The Headless Saints	339
Making Stars with Jacob Lawrence	340
Terrance Hayes (1971–)	342
What I Am	342
At Pegasus	343
Derrick Poem (The Lost World)	345
Touch	346
Wind in a Box	347
Major Jackson (1968–)	349
Don Pullen at the Zanzibar Blue Jazz Café	349
Some Kind of Crazy	351
<i>from</i> Urban Renewal	353
viii. Block Party	353
xvi.	354
xxi.	354

Honorée Fanonne Jeffers (1967–)	356
The Gospel of Barbecue	356
Fast Skirt Blues	359
Hagar to Sarai	360
The Wife of Lot Before the Fire	361
A. Van Jordan (1965–)	363
Regina Brown Hears Voices, Kills Son	
Week Before Christmas, December 18, 1996	364
from	367
The Flash Reverses Time	368
Black Light	369
<i>from</i> Thought Clouds	372
Mixed Couple, 1908	373
Discovering the Camera	374
Carl Phillips (1959–)	376
Blue	377
X	378
Leda, After the Swan	379
As from a Quiver of Arrows	380
Fretwork	382
Speak Low	383
Civilization	384
Reginald Shepherd (1963–2008)	386
Orpheus Plays the Bronx	387
How People Disappear	388
Skin Trade	389
Icarus on Fire Island	391
Homeric Interim	392
Patricia Smith (1955–)	394
Prologue—And Then She Owns You	395
She Sees What It Sees	397
Up on the Roof	397
Don't Drink the Water	398
Sharan Strange (1959–)	400
Childhood	400
Froggy's Class	401

Last Supper	403
Natasha Trethewey (1966–)	405
Flounder	405
Limen	407
Bellocq’s Ophelia	407
Letter Home	408
Elegy for the Native Guards	410
Pastoral	411
Incident	411
Myth	412
Kevin Young (1970–)	413
Letters from the North Star	413
Eddie Priest’s Barbershop & Notary	414
The Game	415
For the Confederate Dead	417
Crowning	419

Third Wave, Post-1960s

Jericho Brown (1976–)	422
Track 1: Lush Life	422
Prayer of the Backhanded	423
Track 4: Reflections	424
Track 5: Summertime	425
Michael Sible Collins (1959–)	427
Six Sketches: When a Soul Breaks	428
Poetry	430
Bryan, Texas Procession	431
Kyle Dargan (1980–)	434
Search for Robert Hayden	435
Microphone Fiend	436
Palinode, Once Removed	437
Man of the Family	438
Camille T. Dungy (1972–)	439
What to Eat, and What to Drink, and What to Leave for Poison	440
Cleaning	443

To Put Things Right	444
Vievee Francis (1963–)	445
Amarillo	446
Horse in the Dark	446
Smoke Under the Bale	448
Still Life with Summer Sausage, a Blade, and No Blood	448
Alena Hairston (1974–)	449
[The tyranny of pig boys]	449
[The fathers worked their hands to meat]	450
[Edges in the rhododendron]	451
[Their greatgreatgranddaddies]	452
[Daughters of four generations]	452
[Because we love wrong]	453
Janice N. Harrington (1956–)	454
The Warning Comes Down	455
Falling	458
Fire	459
Tyehimba Jess (1965–)	461
blind lemon taught me	461
leadbelly sings to his #1 crew	462
martha promise receives leadbelly, 1935	464
mistress stella speaks	465
Ruth Ellen Kocher (1965–)	466
Meditation on Breathing	467
The Window Cleaner Writes to the Astronaut's Husband	468
gigan 63	469
Dawn Lundy Martin (1968–)	471
Negrotizing in Five or How to Write a Black Poem	472
The Undress	473
The Symbolic Nature of Chaos	477
<i>from</i> Discipline	480
Constance Merritt (1966–)	482
Lying	483
The Mute Swan	483

Woman of Color	484
Self-Portrait: Lilith, Eve	485
Fred Moten (1962–)	488
gayl jones	488
johnny cash/rosetta tharp	489
μετοικε	490
elizabeth cotten/nahum chandler	492
frank ramsay/nancy wilson	495
John Murillo (1971–)	496
Sherman Ave. Love Poem	497
Enter the Dragon	497
Practicing Fade-Aways	499
Gregory Pardlo (1968–)	501
Double Dutch	501
Copyright	503
Shades of Green: Envy and Enmity in the American Cultural Imaginary	505
Four Improvisations on Ursa Corregidora	506
Written by Himself	507
giovanni singleton (1969–)	509
el corazón—toward an ars poetica	510
<i>from</i> ascension	510
Day 33	510
Day 36	511
Day 41	511
Day 48	512
Tracy K. Smith (1972–)	513
Drought	513
Self-Portrait As the Letter Y	515
Theft	518
When Zappa Crashes My Family Reunion	523
The Nobodies	524
Duende	527
Amber Flora Thomas (1972–)	530
Chore	531
Dress	532

Swarm	533
The Killed Rabbit	534
Lyrae Van Clief-Stefanon (1971–)	536
Garden	536
Lost	539
Bop: The North Star	540
Crystal Williams (1970–)	542
This Parable, This Body	542
Extinction	544
Enlightenment	545
Ronaldo Wilson (1970–)	547
Brad Pitt, Kevin Bacon, and the Brown Boy's Mother	547
Serena Williams, Whiteness, and the Act of Writing	549
On the C Train the Black Object Ponders	
Amuzati's Family Eaten in the Congo	551
<i>Biographical Notes</i>	553
<i>Permission Credits</i>	591
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	605
<i>Index</i>	607