

Remembering  
the Past  
in Contemporary  
African American  
Fiction



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KEITH BYERMAN

# Remembering The Past In Contemporary African American Fiction

**Lean'tin Bracks**



## **Remembering The Past In Contemporary African American Fiction:**

**Remembering the Past in Contemporary African American Fiction** Keith Byerman, 2006-05-18 With close readings of more than twenty novels by writers including Ernest Gaines Toni Morrison Charles Johnson Gloria Naylor and John Edgar Wideman Keith Byerman examines the trend among African American novelists of the late twentieth century to write about black history rather than about their own present Employing cultural criticism and trauma theory Byerman frames these works as survivor narratives that rewrite the grand American narrative of individual achievement and the march of democracy The choice to write historical narratives he says must be understood historically These writers earned widespread recognition for their writing in the 1980s a period of African American commercial success as well as the economic decline of the black working class and an increase in black on black crime Byerman contends that a shared experience of suffering joins African American individuals in a group identity and writing about the past serves as an act of resistance against essentialist ideas of black experience shaping the cultural discourse of the present Byerman demonstrates that these novels disrupt the temptation in American society to engage history only to limit its significance or to crown successful individuals while forgetting the victims *American Fiction of the 1990s* Jay Prosser, 2016-04-01 *American Fiction of the 1990s* Reflections of History and Culture brings together essays from international experts to examine one of the most vital and energized decades in American literature This volume reads the rich body of 1990s American fiction in the context of key cultural concerns of the period The issues that the contributors identify as especially productive include Immigration and America's geographical borders particularly those with Latin America Racial tensions race relations and racial exchanges Historical memory and the recording of history Sex scandal and the politicization of sexuality Postmodern technologies terrorism and paranoia *American Fiction of the 1990s* examines texts by established authors such as Don DeLillo Toni Morrison Philip Roth and Thomas Pynchon who write some of their most ambitious work in the period but also by emergent writers such as Sherman Alexie Chang Rae Lee E Annie Proulx David Foster Wallace and Jonathan Franzen Offering new insight into both the literature and the culture of the period as well as the interaction between the two in a way that furthers the New American Studies this volume will be essential reading for students and lecturers of American literature and culture and late twentieth century fiction Contributors include Timothy Aubry Alex Blazer Kasia Boddy Stephen J Burn Andrew Dix Brian Jarvis Suzanne W Jones Peter Knight A Robert Lee Stacey Olster Derek Parker Royal Krishna Sen Zoe Trodd Andrew Warnes and Nahem Yousaf **Transatlantic Memories of Slavery: Remembering the Past, Changing the Future** Elisa Bordin ,Anna Scacchi, 2015-08-10 While the memorialization of slavery has generated an impressive number of publications relatively few studies deal with this subject from a transnational transdisciplinary and transracial standpoint As a historical phenomenon that crossed borders and traversed national communities and ethnic groups producing alliances that did not overlap with received identities slavery as well as its memory call for comparative investigations that may bring to light

aspects obscured by the predominant visibility of US American and British narratives of the past This study addresses the memory of slavery from a transnational perspective It brings into dialogue texts and practices from the transatlantic world offering comparative analyses which interlace the variety of memories emerging in diverse national contexts and fields of study and shed light on the ways local countermemories have interacted with and responded to hegemonic narratives of slavery The inclusion of Brazil and the French English and Spanish Caribbean alongside the United States and Europe and the variety of investigative approaches ranging from cinema popular culture and visual culture studies to anthropology and literary studies expand the current understanding of the slave past and how it is reimagined today This fascinating book brings freshness to the topic by considering objects of investigation which have so far remained marginal in the academic debate such as heroic memorials civic landscape white family sagas Young Adult literature of slavery Latin American telenovelas and filmic narrations within and beyond Hollywood What emerges is a multifarious set of memories which keep changing according to generation race gender nation and political urgency and indicate the advancing of a dynamic mobilized memorialization of slavery willing to move beyond mourning towards a more militant stand for justice This is an important book for those interested in African American American and Latin American studies and working across literature cinema visual arts and public culture It will also be useful to public official and civil servants interested in the question of slavery and its present memory

*The Cambridge Companion to American Fiction After 1945* John N. Duvall, 2012 A comprehensive 2011 guide to the genres historical contexts cultural diversity and major authors of American fiction since the Second World War

**The Postapocalyptic Black Female Imagination** Maxine Lavon Montgomery, 2021-06-17 Exploring postapocalypticism in the Black literary and cultural tradition this book extends the scholarly conversation on Afro futurist canon formation through an examination of futuristic imaginaries in representative twentieth and twenty first century works of literature and expressive culture by Black women in an African diasporic setting The author demonstrates the implications of Afro futurist literary criticism for Black Atlantic literary and critical theory investigating issues of hybridity transcending boundaries temporality and historical recuperation Covering writers including Octavia Butler Edwidge Danticat Nalo Hopkinson Toni Morrison Jesmyn Ward and Beyonc this book examines the ways Black women artists attempt to recover a raced and gendered heritage and how they explore an evolving social order that is both connected to and distinct from the past

**The Encyclopedia of the Novel** Peter Melville Logan, Olakunle George, Susan Hegeman, Efraín Kristal, 2014-04-14 Now available in a single volume paperback this advanced reference resource for the novel and novel theory offers authoritative accounts of the history terminology and genre of the novel in over 140 articles of 500 7 000 words Entries explore the history and tradition of the novel in different areas of the world formal elements of the novel story plot character narrator technical aspects of the genre such as realism narrative structure and style subgenres including the bildungsroman and the graphic novel theoretical problems such as definitions of the novel book history and the novel s relationship to other

arts and disciplines The Encyclopedia is arranged in A Z format and features entries from an international cast of over 140 scholars overseen by an advisory board of 37 leading specialists in the field making this the most authoritative reference resource available on the novel This essential reference now available in an easy to use fully indexed single volume paperback will be a vital addition to the libraries of literature students and scholars everywhere

*Reading Testimony, Witnessing Trauma* Eden Wales, 2020-02-28 Winner of the 2020 Eudora Welty Prize Theorists emphasize the necessity of writing about or witnessing trauma in order to overcome it To this critical conversation *Reading Testimony Witnessing Trauma Confronting Race Gender and Violence in American Literature* treats reader response to traumatic and testimonial literature written by and about African American women and adds insight into the engagement of testimonial literature Eden Wales articulates a theory of reading or dual witnessing that explores how narrators and readers can witness trauma together She places these original theories of traumatic reception in conversation with the African American literary tradition to speak to the histories cultures and traumas of African Americans particularly the repercussions of slavery as witnessed in African American literature The volume also considers intersections of race and gender and how narrators and readers can cross such constructs to witness collectively *Reading Testimony Witnessing Trauma* s innovative examinations of raced gendered intersections open and speak with those works that promote dual witnessing through the fraught literary histories of race and gender relations in America To explicate how dual witnessing converses with American literature race theory and gender criticism the book analyzes emancipatory narratives by Sojourner Truth Harriet Jacobs and Elizabeth Keckley and novels by William Faulkner Zora Neale Hurston Margaret Walker Toni Morrison and Jesmyn Ward

**The Wiley Blackwell Anthology of African American Literature, Volume 2** Gene Andrew Jarrett, 2014-01-13 The Wiley Blackwell Anthology of African American Literature is a comprehensive collection of poems short stories novellas novels plays autobiographies and essays authored by African Americans from the eighteenth century until the present Evenly divided into two volumes it is also the first such anthology to be conceived and published for both classroom and online education in the new millennium Reflects the current scholarly and pedagogic structure of African American literary studies Selects literary texts according to extensive research on classroom adoptions scholarship and the expert opinions of leading professors Organizes literary texts according to more appropriate periods of literary history dividing them into seven sections that accurately depict intellectual cultural and political movements Includes more reprints of entire works and longer selections of major works than any other anthology of its kind This second volume contains a comprehensive collection of texts authored by African Americans from the 1920s to the present The two volumes of this landmark anthology can also be bought as a set at over 20% savings

*Transatlantic Memories of Slavery* , 2015-08-10 While the memorialization of slavery has generated an impressive number of publications relatively few studies deal with this subject from a transnational transdisciplinary and transracial standpoint As a historical phenomenon that crossed borders and traversed national

communities and ethnic groups producing alliances that did not overlap with received identities slavery as well as its memory call for comparative investigations that may bring to light aspects obscured by the predominant visibility of US American and British narratives of the past This study addresses the memory of slavery from a transnational perspective It brings into dialogue texts and practices from the transatlantic world offering comparative analyses which interlace the variety of memories emerging in diverse national contexts and fields of study and shed light on the ways local countermemories have interacted with and responded to hegemonic narratives of slavery The inclusion of Brazil and the French English and Spanish Caribbean alongside the United States and Europe and the variety of investigative approaches ranging from cinema popular culture and visual culture studies to anthropology and literary studies expand the current understanding of the slave past and how it is reimaged today This fascinating book brings freshness to the topic by considering objects of investigation which have so far remained marginal in the academic debate such as heroic memorials civic landscape white family sagas Young Adult literature of slavery Latin American telenovelas and filmic narrations within and beyond Hollywood What emerges is a multifarious set of memories which keep changing according to generation race gender nation and political urgency and indicate the advancing of a dynamic mobilized memorialization of slavery willing to move beyond mourning towards a more militant stand for justice This is an important book for those interested in African American American and Latin American studies and working across literature cinema visual arts and public culture It will also be useful to public official and civil servants interested in the question of slavery and its present memory

**Race, Trauma, and Home in the Novels of Toni Morrison** Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber, 2010-12-01 In this first interdisciplinary study of all nine of Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison's novels Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber investigates how the communal and personal trauma of slavery embedded in the bodies and minds of its victims lives on through successive generations of African Americans Approaching trauma from several cutting edge theoretical perspectives psychoanalytic neurobiological and cultural and social theories Schreiber analyzes the lasting effects of slavery as depicted in Morrison's work and considers the almost insurmountable task of recovering from trauma to gain subjectivity With an innovative application of neuroscience to literary criticism Schreiber explains how trauma whether initiated by physical abuse dehumanization discrimination exclusion or abandonment becomes embedded in both psychic and bodily circuits Slavery and its legacy of cultural rejection create trauma on individual familial and community levels and parents unwittingly transmit their trauma to their children through repetition of their bodily stored experiences Concepts of home whether a physical place community or relationship are reconstructed through memory to provide a positive self and serve as a healing space for Morrison's characters Remembering and retelling trauma within a supportive community enables trauma victims to move forward and attain a meaningful subjectivity and selfhood Through careful analysis of each novel Schreiber traces the success or failure of Morrison's characters to build or rebuild a cohesive self starting with slavery and the initial postslavery generation and continuing through the twentieth century with a special

focus on the effects of inherited trauma on children When characters attempt to escape trauma through physical relocation or to project their pain onto others through aggressive behavior or scapegoating the development of selfhood falters Only when trauma is confronted through verbalization and challenged with reparative images of home can memories of a positive self overcome the pain of past experiences and cultural rejection While the cultural trauma of slavery can never truly disappear Schreiber argues that memories that reconstruct a positive self whether created by people relationships a physical place or a concept help Morrison s characters to establish subjectivity A groundbreaking interdisciplinary work Schreiber s book unites psychoanalytic neurobiological and social theories into a full and richly textured analysis of trauma and the possibility of healing in Morrison s novels

**Reciprocal Haunting: Pat Barker's Regeneration Trilogy** Karen Patrick Knutsen, **How to Read African American Literature** Aida Levy-Hussen, 2016-12-13 How to Read African American Literature offers a series of provocations to unsettle the predominant assumptions readers make when encountering post Civil Rights black fiction Foregrounding the large body of literature and criticism that grapples with legacies of the slave past Aida Levy Hussen s argument develops on two levels as a textual analysis of black historical fiction and as a critical examination of the reading practices that characterize the scholarship of our time Drawing on psychoanalysis memory studies and feminist and queer theory Levy Hussen examines how works by Toni Morrison David Bradley Octavia Butler Charles Johnson and others represent and mediate social injury and collective grief In the criticism that surrounds these novels she identifies two major interpretive approaches therapeutic reading premised on the assurance that literary confrontations with historical trauma will enable psychic healing in the present and prohibitive reading anchored in the belief that fictions of returning to the past are dangerous and to be avoided Levy Hussen argues that these norms have become overly restrictive standing in the way of a more supple method of interpretation that recognizes and attends to the indirect unexpected inconsistent and opaque workings of historical fantasy and desire Moving beyond the question of whether literature must heal or abandon historical wounds Levy Hussen proposes new ways to read African American literature now

**History and Hope in American Literature** Benjamin Railton, 2016-11-10 Throughout history creative writers have often tackled topical subjects as a means to engage and influence public discourse American authors those born in the States and those who became naturalized citizens have consistently found ways to be critical of the more painful pieces of the country s past yet have done so with the patriotic purpose of strengthening the nation s community and future In History and Hope in American Literature Models of Critical Patriotism Ben Railton argues that it is only through an in depth engagement with history especially its darkest and most agonizing elements that one can come to a genuine form of patriotism that employs constructive criticism as a tool for civic engagement The author argues that it is through such critical patriotism that one can imagine and move toward a hopeful shared future for all Americans Railton highlights twelve works of American literature that focus on troubling periods in American history including John Steinbeck s The Grapes of Wrath David Bradley

s The Chaneysville Incident Louise Erdrich s Love Medicine Tony Kushner s Angels in America Junot Diaz s The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao and Dave Eggers s What Is the What From African and Native American histories to the Depression and the AIDS epidemic Caribbean and Rwandan refugees and immigrants to global climate change these works help readers confront understand and transcend the most sorrowful histories and issues In so doing the authors of these books offer hard won hope that can help point people in the direction of a more perfect union History and Hope in American Literature will be of interest to students and practitioners of American literature and history **African American**

**Almanac** Lean'tin Bracks,2012-01-01 The most complete and affordable single volume reference of African American culture available today this almanac is a unique and valuable resource devoted to illustrating and demystifying the moving difficult and often lost history of black life in America Celebrating centuries of achievements the African American Almanac 400 Years of Triumph Courage and Excellence provides insights on the influence inspiration and impact of African Americans on U S society and culture A legacy of pride struggle and triumph is presented through a fascinating mix of biographies including 750 influential figures little known or misunderstood historical facts enlightening essays on significant legislation and movements and 445 rare photographs and illustrations Covering politics education religion business science medicine the military sports literature music dance theater art film and television chapters address the important events and social and cultural changes that affected African Americans over the centuries followed by biographical profiles of hundreds of key figures including Muhammad Ali Maya Angelou Josephine Baker Amiri Baraka Daisy Bates George Washington Carver Ray Charles Bessie Coleman Gary Davis Frederick Douglass W E B Du Bois Michael Eric Dyson Duke Ellington Medgar Evers Henry Louis Gates Jr Eric H Holder Jr Langston Hughes Zora Neale Hurston LeBron James Mae C Jemison Martin Luther King Jr Queen Latifah Jacob Lawrence Kevin Liles Thurgood Marshall Walter Mosley Elijah Muhammad Barack Obama Gordon Parks Rosa Parks Richard Pryor Condoleezza Rice Smokey Robinson Wilma Rudolph Betty Shabazz Tavis Smiley Clarence Thomas Sojourner Truth Harriet Ross Tubman C Delores Tucker Usher Denmark Vesey Alice Walker Booker T Washington Kanye West Reggie White Serena Williams Oprah Winfrey and Malcolm X Explore a wealth of milestones inspiration challenges met and lasting respect The African American Almanac s helpful bibliography and extensive index add to its usefulness [Encyclopedia of African American Popular Culture](#) Jessie Smith,2010-12-17 This four volume encyclopedia contains compelling and comprehensive information on African American popular culture that will be valuable to high school students and undergraduates college instructors researchers and general readers From the Apollo Theater to the Harlem Renaissance from barber shop and beauty shop culture to African American holidays family reunions and festivals and from the days of black baseball to the era of a black president the culture of African Americans is truly unique and diverse This diversity is the result of intricate customs forged in tightly woven communities not only in the United States but in many cases also stemming from the traditions of another continent Encyclopedia of African American Popular Culture



presents information in a traditional A Z organization capturing the essence of the customs of African Americans and presenting this rich cultural heritage through the lens of popular culture Each entry includes historical and current information to provide a meaningful background for the topic and the perspective to appreciate its significance in a modern context This encyclopedia is a valuable research tool that provides easy access to a wealth of information on the African American experience      *Autobiographical International Relations* Naeem Inayatullah,2010-12-03 This volume provides a novel approach to international relations In the course of fifteen essays scholars write about how life events brought them to their subject matter They place their narratives in the larger context of world politics culture and history This book moves the field of International Relations towards greater candidness about how personal narrative influences theoretical articulations No such volume currently exists in the field of international relations      **New Essays on the African American Novel** L. King,Linda F. Selzer,2016-04-30 This collection contributes to scholarly discussions about the African American novel as a literary form Essays respond to the general question what has been the impact of the African American vernacular tradition from the spirituals blues gospel and jazz to hip hop on the structure and style of the modern African American novel      **Reclaiming Community in Contemporary African American Fiction** Philip Page,2011-08-19 As a reaction against persistent black exclusion from white American society the novels of recent African American writers boldly celebrate the heritage of black culture They acclaim a people once dispersed by racism and humiliation but now restoring its legacy of rich community life For close examination of this theme Philip Page brings together five novelists who are in the forefront of contemporary fiction and shows how their voices combine for an ongoing dialogue on the importance of community to the African American world Gaining its special force through addressing national concerns and through never backing away from the truth in the face of stubborn opposition the fiction of Gaines Naylor Johnson Cade Bambara and Wideman contributes to postmodernist debates on race the repressed past and the contemporary American conscience

**Toni Morrison** Linda Wagner-Martin,2022-02-08 A reading of the oeuvre of Toni Morrison fiction non fiction and other drawing extensively from her many interviews as well as her primary texts Toni Morrison A Literary Life second edition provides an overview of Morrison s intellectual growth as an artist Linda Wagner Martin aligns Morrison s novels with the works of Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner assessing her works as among the most innovative and most significant worldwide of the past fifty plus years The revised edition includes new discussion of *God Help the Child* *The Origin of Others* and *The Source of Self Regard* These additions present and intensify scholarship on Morrison s major literary contributions but also trace her significant role as a public intellectual bringing to light the consistency of Morrison s aesthetic and political visions      **African American Review** ,2011

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