

**“LOOKING FOR THE
PERFECT BEAT”:
AFRICAN AMERICAN
LITERARY HISTORY—
TECHNOLOGY AND
TEXTURE**

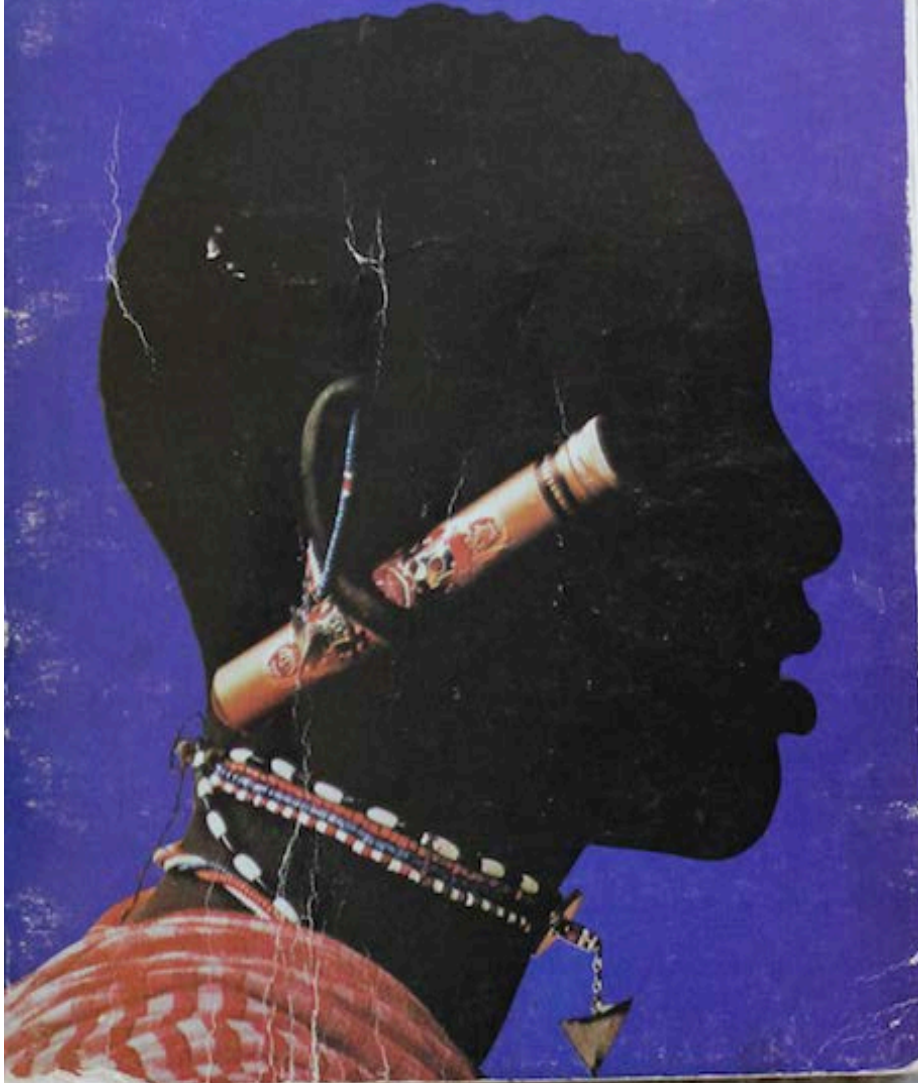
**Kenton Rambsy, University of Texas, Arlington
Dana A. Williams, Howard University**

**Tuesday,
November
15, 2016**

**MITH Digital
Dialogues
University of
Maryland,
College Park**

CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN LITERATURE

BY EDRIS MAKWARD
AND LESLIE LACY



“Africa was discovered by Africans. Simple as that statement is, it cannot be made too often. Long before Europeans cast their eyes on that continent, Africa was a land of stable, prosperous kingdoms, with thousands of years of history, culture, and art. Long and substantial as that history is, tenacious as the European presence in Africa has been, something of a discovery is, in fact, now taking place. Media, museums, and publishing houses are awash with Africana and Africans are, everywhere, telling their own stories, evaluating the quality of their own existences, directing their own destinies.... If we are to get on with the real discovery of Africa we must listen to Africans.”

—from the Introduction to *Contemporary African Literature*
by Edris Makward and Leslie Lacy

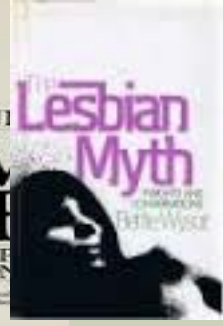
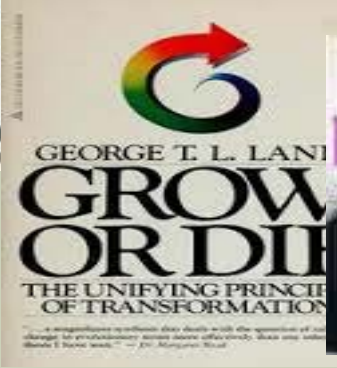
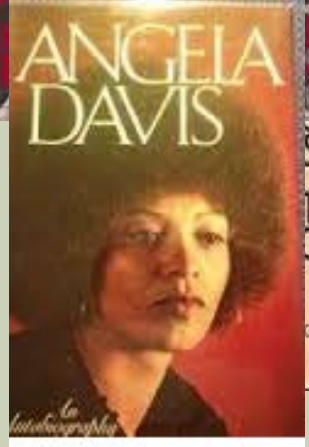
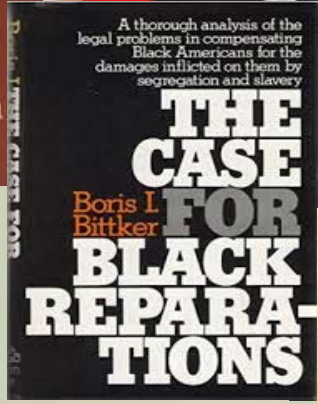
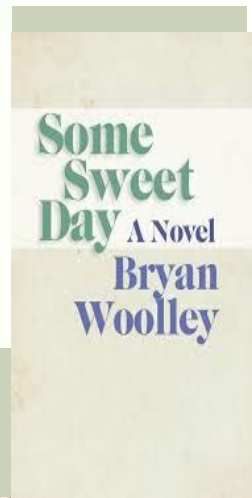
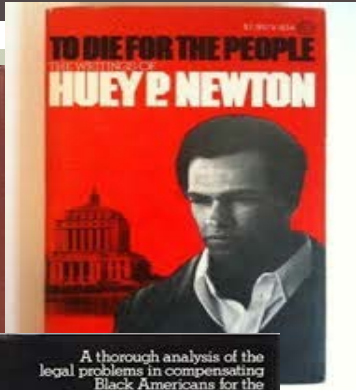
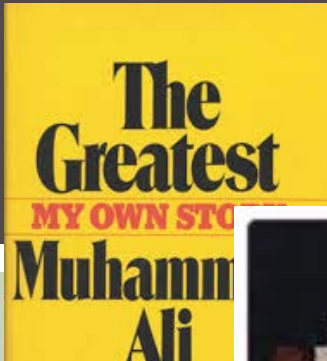
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Introduction

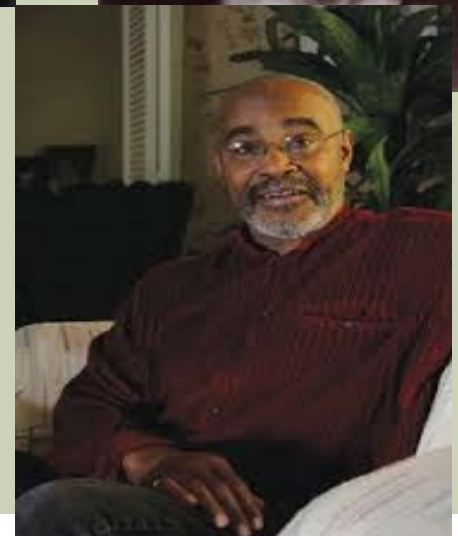
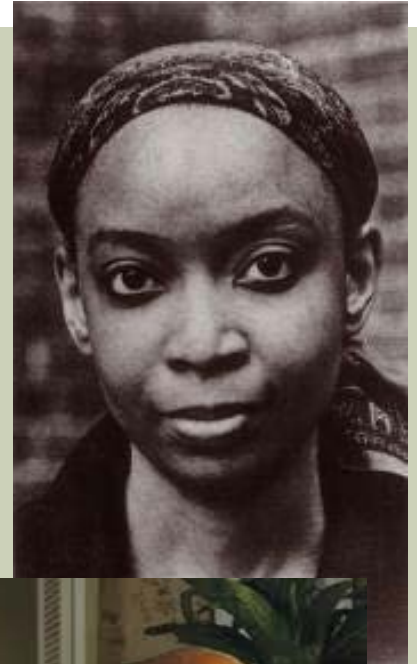
Africa was discovered by Africans. Simple as that statement is, it cannot be made too often. Long before Europeans cast their eyes on that continent, Africa was a land of stable, prosperous kingdoms, with thousands of years of history, culture, and art. Long and substantial as that history is, tenacious as the European presence in Africa has been, something of a discovery is, in fact, now taking place. Media, museums, and publishing houses are awash with Africana and Africans are, everywhere, telling their own stories, evaluating the quality of their own existences, directing their own destinies. Still, the popular view of Africa in America is distorted: it varies from a cloying romanticism to staggering ignorance, and a vague fear of that which is remote. To unstick the romanticism, to curtail the ignorance, and to eliminate the fear, a collection of contemporary African literature should prove most useful. For if we are to get on with the real discovery of Africa we must listen to Africans. It is certainly in the literature of the people themselves that we may find "the full essence, savour, significance . . . of their ancestral heritage, for the greater glory of world literature."

Although Africans were writing in European languages, primarily English, French, Spanish and Portuguese as early as the 18th century; and although at the beginning of the 19th century, for those who could read an African language, writings from the best of that tradition were available, it would be misleading to consider these works as the beginning of an African literature any more than one can say that African literature began among those early black writers of America. Universal racism did create, among early African and Afro-American writers, similarities of style, theme and point of view. Moreover, if their art was directed toward political change through protest, their ideologies were often comparable. But these eighteenth and nineteenth century artists were, for the most part, not conscious of themselves as black writers in these adopted cultures; nor was there anything in the nature of a common policy to further their own interests as a group—who like most American writers of African descent—wrote primarily for a Euro-

BOOKS EDITED (1970-83)



The Fiction Writers



TYPICAL VARIABLES

- **Author Header Schema Categories**
 - Gender
 - Ethnicity
 - Education
 - Nationality
 - Age (birth/death)
 - Author location birth/writing
- **Publisher Header Schema Categories**
 - Citation info
 - Publisher/location
 - Press type (self, commercial, trade, academic)
 - Publication date
- **Book/Textual Header Schema Categories**
 - Word count
 - Vernacular use
 - Presence of music (lyrics, instrument, song title, etc)
 - Genre
 - Setting (date, location)

ADDITIONAL KEY VARIABLES

- Author:
- Book title:
- Publication date:
- Date contracted:
- Editor of record:
- Agent:
- Marketing/Advertising:
- Reviews:
- Blurbs:
- Dust Jacket Info:
- Correspondence:
- First Printing Run:
- Revisions/Editions:
- Total Printing:

PROOF REQUIREMENTS

Date 8/20/76

Author Toni Cade Bambara

Title THE ORGANIZER'S WIFE and Other Stories

Code # 45143-7

		Loose Galleys	Bound Galleys
Sales Department	Miriam Norton	0	1
	Shelly Emmer Stephanie Martin	0	1
	Dick Liebermann	0	3
Publicity	Selma Shapiro	0	19
Editorial Department	Bert Krantz	3	0
	Editor <u>Toni Morrison</u>	0	6
	Author's Agent _____ †		
Rights Department	Domestic <u>Hilly Mermur</u>	0	* 13
	Foreign		
Advertising Department	<u>Don Del Col</u>	0	0
Other	<u>Jan Tigner</u>		0 2
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* Charge _____ to Book-Of-The-Month Club.
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5

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EDITORIAL FACT SHEET

Reviewed

TITLE: Gorilla, My Love

PUB DATE: October, 1972

AUTHOR: Toni Cade Bambara

FORMAT: "B" size; 160 pages

AGENT: Hattie Gossett

PRICE: \$5.95 (?)

PRINT: 5,000

KEYNOTE: Fifteen short stories set in a black milieu.

DESCRIPTION: Toni Cade Bambara's stories, whether hip, bluesy, funny or tragic always soar. Her special talent is the creation of believable characters who function naturally in their environment, and a facility with dialogue and description in the language of black people. Young love is the theme of "Sweet Town"; a black mother bemused and outraged by her "militant" children in "My Man Bovanne"; adult betrayal in the eyes of a child in "Gorilla, My Love"; researching a forgotten black musician for a white publication in "Mississippi Ham Rider"; black male and female realtionships in "The Johnson Girls". These are some of the stories in this remarkable collection.

AUTHOR: Toni Cade Bambara is a young black woman with an impressive readership. She is the author of The Black Woman, an anthology (NAL), and Tales and Short Stories for Black Folk (Doubleday). Her stories have appeared in Redbook, Black World, Prairie Schooner, Massachusetts Review among others. She has lectured extensively, appeared on several television programs, and written reviews for a number of journals and periodicals. She is on leave, at the present, from Livingston College, Rutgers.

SALES POINTS: Cade's book, The Black Woman (NAL), is in its 4th printing and sales are at 400,000. Tales and Short Stories for Black Folk (juvenile) has sold 4,000 copies. This is the first collection devoted exclusively to her own work, and will be enthusiastically received. The amount of black fiction on the market is still unbelievably slim (most of it is nonfiction autobiography etc.) in spite of the tremendous interest in it. This book should satiate some of that hunger.

CORRESPONDENCE

Toni,

Am not up at phone calling hours right in through here so I'd better rely on mail before I misplace your letter with my disorganized self.

Re Hungarian Co. Have sent in addendum signed, right?

Re novel contract. Fine. Re mailing and 5% royalty--since the consumer pays full cost of book and postage and handling, wha ?

Re para 6, thank you for clarification. I'm pretty satisfied with the wording you offered and it is sound legalese as well. I'll go with that.

About this novel business, Miz M. How is it done? I have now 8 chapters, some 250 typed pages and haven't a clue as to whether it is a novel or what. It's like I never never saw one much less read one in my whole life. Weird. Anyhow. I ^{AS} ^{SO} ²⁵ ²⁵ sit down (after I move) and write the last chapter (so I see where I'm going) and polish up the first parts, will forward you a chunk. There's this ?? year old sassy woman who heals and stuff that keeps dying every 30 pages or so. Perhaps you could have a talk with her and maybe explain that I am new at this so lighten up a little. I shall need some hard headed directives. Will be sending chunk before end of October.



Thanks so much for the explicit suggestions on the book and also for your warm enthusiasm. I sure needed it. Getting so, I didn't know/trust what the hell was going on with that manuscript, ya know? I'm clearer now. Am convinvd I can thinkup what to do and to it with minimum of hassle once I get there away from all these needy people at my door....

Occurs to me I need an agent. I realize I expect/load an awful lot on you, Toni. And while I thoroughly/deeply appreciate your beyond the call of duty support, I mean damn TCB, lighten up.

In case you didn't know—you are a superb editor. I've just checked off items in the middle of your page 2 (middle of my page 300 and somp'n) and cracking up (laughin rather than ravin) over your shorthand language. Perfect.... Thank you, Toni. Really, truly truly.



February 18, 1994

Wesley K. Adams