First, I want to thank God for giving me the strength and wisdom to know when to follow my own mind, when to take the advice of others, and when to be still and calm through the many years and the daunting process out of which this book was produced. “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).

Beyond that, I am indebted to a great many grants, libraries, scholarly societies and organizations, mentors, friends, colleagues, and family for their financial support, resources, conversations, debates, inspiration, encouragement, prodding, and faith, including the following for their generous funding of research, travel, and resources on three continents (Africa, Europe, and North America): American Association of University Women Dissertation Fellowship; Howard University: English Department, Afro-American Studies Resource Center, Afro-American Studies, Sterling Library and Staff, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center and Staff. I am especially grateful to professors Eleanor Traylor, Victoria Arana, Sandra Shannon, and E. Ethelbert Miller for generously extending encouragement and a research home to me; University of Missouri-Columbia: Office of Research (Summer Research Fellowship, Research Council, Board, and International Travel Grants) College of Arts and Sciences (Junior Faculty Travel Grants), English Department, Women’s and Black Studies (Travel Grants), Ellis Library, Center for Arts and Humanities (Travel Grants); University of Notre Dame: English
Department, African and African American Studies Program, Hesburgh Library; Washington University in St. Louis: African and Afro-America Studies Program Post Doctoral Fellowship, English Department, John M. Olin Library; West African Research Association, West African Research Center (Dakar, Senegal) and Baobab Center. I also thank the following students, librarians, staff, and research assistants for their contributions: Danielle Roth and Josh Lubatkin (work-study students WUStl), Sharon Black (staff support UMC), Dorothy M. Long, Victoria M. Thorp, Mrs. Joyce L. Rose (departmental secretary Afro-American Studies–Howard), Jean Currie Church (Chief Librarian Moorland–Spingarn Research Center Staff), Anne Barker (Humanities Librarian UMC), Raye Mahaney (Department Secretary–WUStl), Adele Tuchler (administrative assistant–WUStl), Abdou Karim Sylla (research assistant, Dakar Senegal). Special thanks are due to Sandy Crooms, Eugene O’Connor, the anonymous readers, and The Ohio State University Press for their hard work in publishing this book.

I offer my deepest gratitude to the following scholars, former professors, and colleagues for the profound impact they have had on the thinking, development, and articulation of a great many ideas brought forward in this study: Carol Anderson (for the “aesthetic” conversation and years of mentoring), JoAnne Banks-Wallace (for being my guide through this rough journey and shedding light on those things I could not or would not see), Boubacar Barry (special thanks to you and Madame Barry for opening your home and library to me), Jacqueline Vaught Brogan, Joanna Brooks (my scholarly sister and friend—thanks for reading proposal, chapter drafts, and the entire manuscript at many stages and listening to me talk through my ideas, for John Marrant’s Journal and allowing me to stand on your shoulders!), Leslie Brown, Brycchan Carey, Angelo Costanzo (for asking difficult questions early on and your meticulous reading of chapters in this book), Garrett Duncan, Stephane Dunn (for reading an eighty-page chapter twice and reminding me that trailblazing is worth the risk!), Gerald Early, Christopher Fox, Dolores and Jerry Frese, Rosemary Guruswamy, Glenn Hendler, Peaches Henry (for refusing to let me give up, demanding that I write with clarity, and for losing hair from reading “muddled” early versions), Clenora Hudson-Weems, Eileen Julien, Anthonia Kalu (with love and reverence for my scholarly mother, African sister, and living ancestor for mentoring, teaching, motivating, encouraging, intellectually and spiritually feeding and finishing what Dr. Peters started; sharing your home, family, and most of all wisdom on everything from grad school
seminar to tenure process and child rearing), Joycelyn Moody, J. Cameron Monroe, Carla Mulford, Mungai Mutonya, Christopher Okonkwo, Hugh Page, Timothy Parsons (for talks, materials, and encouragement on West African research), Erskine Peters (my mentor and ancestor, the one who made me stay on this path when other roads were easier—I will always miss you), John Saillant (for offering practical advice on my research), Wilfred Samuels (for blazing the path and for generously reading my earliest versions of Equiano and offering important criticism, being accessible and responding when I have most needed your help, thanks for helping me to stay on the path), Sandra Shannon, Donald Sniegowski (for encouraging and inspiring my love of African literature and for the dissertation advising), Zabelle Stodola, Leigh Swiggart, Joseph Thompson, Dorothy Tsuruta (the first of my professors to put me on this scholarly path by introducing me to Lucy and Phillis and the one who encouraged and inspired me to pursue a Ph.D.), Robert Vinson, Wendy Wilson-Fall, Rafia Zafar (for teaching me how to be a good scholar and colleague, introducing me to so many wonderful people, and “capturing the captivity”), and Ewa Ziarek (for unearthing the underlying question). Though they are not in any way responsible for any errors, omissions, faux pas, or oversights that may be found in this book, the best of this work could not have been possible but for their influence, ideas, and generosity.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to thank my family for their unconditional love, support, and sacrifices all these many years as I traveled and sometimes lived months at a time away from home and spent countless hours at my computer, especially to my love, my husband Jimi for his tireless and unrelenting support—truly “the wind beneath my wings.” On every page your blood, sweat, and tears mixed with mine make this our book. To my mother Alga Brown—thank you for the patience and the comfort that only a mother could offer during those times when I might have thrown in the towel and for reading as well as listening to pages of “scholarly” work and forcing me to make things clearer. To my god-daughter Danielle April Winston, thank you for DQ, laughs, and lots of love. To my sisters Diane, Peaches, Stephane, Susie (Bettye), and Wanda, I thank you for “feeding me” with your spiritual and nurturing gifts—for taking care of me and reminding me to take a break, and to Aunt Sandy for always opening her heart and home in D.C., VA, and South Africa. Thanks to my Uncle Carl for reminding me to “smell the roses” and for my mother-in-law Bettie Mack Langley who always had a kind word to say and smile to give me. Thanks to my
spiritual family: Pastor Carolus Taylor, Charliss Taylor, Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, Pastor Anthony Pettus and Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church. To the entire Langley, Brown, Sanford, Henry, and Dunn family I extend my eternal love and gratitude, as they gave so much of themselves so that I might be able to complete this work. I dedicate this book to them and to the memory of thousands gone, which include Erskine Peters, Luther Brown, Evelyn Persons, Dollie Hanson, Laverne Elder, and Lucy Johnson.