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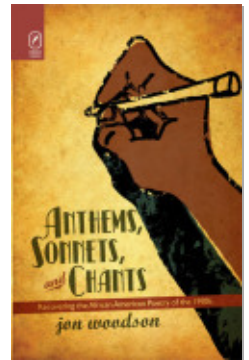
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Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. Cary Nelson, *Revolutionary Memory: Recovering the Poetry of the American Left* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Mark W. Van Wienen, *Partisans and Poets: The Political Work of American Poetry in the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); William J. Maxwell, *New Negro, Old Left: African American Writing and Communism Between the Wars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Nancy Berke, *Women Poets on the Left: Lola Ridge, Genevieve Taggard, Margaret Walker* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001); Paula Bernat Bennett, *Poets in the Public Sphere: The Emancipatory Project of American Women's Poetry, 1800–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Michael Thurston, *Making Something Happen: American Political Poetry Between the World Wars* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Joseph Harrington, *Poetry and the Public: The Social Form of Modern U.S. Poetics* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002).

2. “A social philology claims that social materials (both specific and general politics, attitudes, subjectivities, ideologies, discourses, debates) are activated and situated within the deepest texture of the sharpest specificities of the poetic text: on the level of word choice, crypt word, impacted etymologies, segmentivity and line break, the stanza, the image, diction, sound, genre, the ‘events’ and speakers selected inside the work (enounced), and the rhetorical tactics of the thing on the page (enunciation). All the materials of the signifier are susceptible of a topical/topographic reading in a social philology. The attentiveness that poetry excites is a productive way to engage ideologies and contradictions in texts, while honoring the depth and complexity of poetry as an intensive genre. So by a social philology; I mean an application of the techniques of close reading to reveal social discourses, subjectivities negotiated, and ideological debates in a poetic text.” (DuPlessis 12)

3. For the New Critic, the text’s relationship to a world that extends beyond it is of little interest: the poem is not a cultural or biographical artifact but rather

an autonomous and self-determinant (i.e. “autotelic”) art object. The meaning of literature is not dependent upon its reflection of an external cultural reality; instead, literary meaning is an intrinsic attribute of the work and therefore publicly accessible and verifiable.

CHAPTER ONE

1. According to Marteinson, “The formal structure of comedy may be seen as a sequence of five epistemological states. 1. Situation: a conflict is posited between a hero’s plans and society’s conventions; 2. Invention: by design or through another’s error, the hero’s identity is fragmented into a ‘true’ and one or more ‘mistaken’ interpretations; 3. Illusion: the ‘competing truths’ form the basis on which two opposed camps view the hero in different terms—generating interpretative disjunctions whose cognitive and ontological incongruity provokes laughter and mocks those ‘duped.’ 4. Discovery: the hero’s true identity is revealed, and the play’s comic mechanism is thus brought to an end; 5. Denouement: the audience is delighted the hero’s plans have succeeded, despite his underdog status, by means of *social opportunities obtained through the false identity*, a fact which compromises the plot’s authority figures, who represent *deformed norms destroyed in effigy*” (1; emphases in original).

2. The discourse of narrative muralism in the United States during the 1930s was an extension of the activist iconographic program of the mural renaissance in Mexico (Mello 65). During the late 1920s, three Mexican muralists, José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, and David Alfaro Siqueiros, came to the United States and began to paint murals. Their aesthetic prescribed that “not only should [a mural] express some form of ethical, political, and social commitment, but its composition should be programmatic” (Mello 65). Originally, the muralistic discourse had been formulated specifically to express the social ideals of the Mexican Revolution. However, once the painters began to work in the United States, they adopted “a continental perspective, seeking universality and moving counter to the European experience, which had been seen as the only valid one until then” (Mello 225). Working in this way, the painters reframed discourses of identity and origin myths for the entire region (Mello 225). Influenced by the Mexican muralists, Thomas Hart Benton’s murals gave him a leading role in American art. After Benton successfully completed other commissions, *Time* magazine featured his self-portrait on its cover in 1934. Benton’s nine vignettes of American life, *America Today* (1929) (*Indiana Murals* [1933]), bore such titles as *Cotton Loading; Lumber, Corn, and Wheat; Steel; and City Building*. Benton’s controversial mural stirred up interest in mural painting and was one of the key factors in motivating the government to support artists through the Federal Art Project.

3. Thus, in “*On the Slave Ship*,” which is the opening sonnet in the sequence, the trope of time foreshadows an inevitable but essentially illusory and undelineated outcome. In Marxist dialectical materialism, time is not an abstraction and does not smite anything: Eddie Clynes states that “if change (motion) is to be conceived as qualitative change resulting from quantitative changes arising from contradictions within matter, then allowing for an ultimate (indivisible) unit of matter, or opening the door to a first impulse defy dialectical materialism. . . . In my understanding of Marxism, time and space are not abstract concepts in the sense of having an exist-

tence divorced from matter, and vice-versa!” (“Time and Teleology”).

4. Nowhere in *Decline* is Spengler’s scheme presented as concisely as in this summary: “The central theme in *The Decline of the West* is that all higher cultures go through a life cycle analogous to that of an organic evolution, from birth to maturation, and to inevitable decline. Spengler also used the analogy of four seasons: the spring (birth and infancy), summer (youth), fall (maturity), and winter (old age and decay)” (Liukkonen).

5. Eleanor Cook comments: “the decline of Western civilization and the parallel between Roman and modern civilization: this suggests Spengler. We tend to associate *The Waste Land* with Spengler, in general because of this sense of the decline of civilization, and in particular because Spengler’s seasonal cycle so neatly fits Eliot’s allusions to English literature in Parts I to IV of the poem” (344). “Spengler maintained that every culture passes a life cycle from youth through maturity and old age to death” (*Columbia Encyclopedia*).

6. The word *work* occurs sixty-five times in the 1891–1892 version of Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*.

7. “Seventy years after its initial release, Josef von Sternberg’s *Underworld*, based on a taut story by Ben Hecht (who received the first Oscar for the story in 1927) has not lost any of its style and luster. While this film has been erroneously credited as the first ‘gangster film,’ it is arguably the most important. (In 1927, *Underworld* was on the N.Y. Times ‘Top 10 Film List.’) The central character, Bull Weed, the self-proclaimed king of the underworld (played by George Bancroft), is a complex monarch. He is not pure evil. He isn’t even a pure opportunist. He is a burly bank robber who fancies himself a businessman and philanthropist. He has the ego of a king, but also has a benevolent air. He admires class and crudely attempts to socially elevate his moll, Feathers (played by Evelyn Brent), with stolen jewels and purchased votes” (McIntyre).

8. The controversial sex-racism discourse has barely been researched and formulated by authoritative academics. It remains the subject of amateur psychologists and radical theorists, such as Calvin Hernton (*Sex and Racism in America*), Eldridge Cleaver (*Soul on Ice*), and Orlando Patterson (*Rituals of Blood*). Carl Jung referred to the energy propelling this communal sex-racism complex as the “shadow” (repressed psychological elements) projected onto the black victim. Jung states that “shadows can also be collective, an entire cultural *zeitgeist* shadowed by its antithesis as the Nazi’s Triumph of the Will was shadowed by a mass annihilation of wills in the *Gotterdammerung*” (Hampden-Turner 46).

9. “The community, too, evolves a super-ego under whose influence cultural development proceeds. The super-ego of an epoch of civilization has an origin similar to that of an individual. It is based on the impression left behind by the personalities of great leaders—men of overwhelming force of mind in whom one of the human impulses has found its strongest and purest, and therefore often its most one-sided, expression” (Freud 141).

10. Paul Roazen states that “there is a well-known irony in the ease and extent of Freud’s American triumph. For he had the utmost disdain and contempt for American life. ‘America,’ he joked, ‘is a mistake; a gigantic mistake, but a mistake.’ He denied ‘hating’ America; he merely ‘regretted’ it. His reasons for his difficulties in adjusting to American customs on his trip in 1909 ranged from the absence of public toilets, the quality of the water and food, to the more common complaints about

America—the manners, the sexual hypocrisy, the general lack of culture, the brash wealth” (97).

11. Numbers 9:1 reads, “And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying. . . .” John 13:23 reads, “Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved” (KJV).

12. Spengler’s *Untergang den Abenlandes* (1918), which presents his organicist philosophy of history, was available in English in the United States after 1928. The volume was rapidly disseminated and was influential in many circles.

13. James Longenbach calls *The Waste Land* the ultimate “poem including history produced in the twentieth century” (237). Rather than operating within the framework of professional historians, the poem is hallucinatory, mystical, and ahistorical in approach. Though Eliot’s handling of history viewed in terms of the development of cultures is often compared to Spengler, Vico, and Toynbee, Longenbach points out that Spengler and Toynbee recapitulated nineteenth-century historiography and were considered old-fashioned and naïve by their contemporaries (6). Ross in *The Failure of Modernism* suggests that modernist historical poems were poets’ attempts to allow history to articulate itself; thus, length and inclusivity were the formal means by which poetry was endowed with the capacity for self-articulation (212–213).

CHAPTER TWO

1. The reported number of lynchings of African Americans rose from seven in 1929 to twenty in 1930, and to twenty-four in 1933, the worst year of the economic collapse (EA).

2. For example, Véronique Tadjo and Werewere Liking, who are quoted in Michael Syotinski’s *Singular Performances*.

3. Juan Suárez provides this detailed evaluation of Kittler’s theory:

The term “discourse network” (English translation of *Aufschreibesystem*) was coined by German historian and theorist Friedrich A. Kittler to designate the material and ideological substratum of discourse and textuality—the web of “technologies and institutions that allow a given culture to select, store and produce relevant data.” A discourse network is, then, a sort of unconscious, or *impensé*, of signification. In a way, the concept combines Michel Foucault’s concept of the “archive,” which had been applied mostly to print culture, with Marshall McLuhan’s insights on the influence of media technologies on thought and cultural processes. In Kittler’s work the term has a materialistic thrust. It seeks to deflect the interiorizing, psychologizing tendency of traditional literary hermeneutics by exploring how the material support, or hardware, of signification shapes textuality. This hardware connects abstract meanings to real, tangible bodies, and bodies to regimes of power, information channels, and institutions. . . . [In] his description of “the discourse network of 1900” (where “1900” stands for the period stretching from the media revolution of the 1880s to the 1920s), to which modernism belongs, Kittler traces the traffic of ideologies, forms of discourse, and inscription mechanisms through the fields of psychophysics, psychoanalysis, the electronic recording media, and literature.” (74–75)

4. Kelly Oliver states that “as subjects-in-process we are always negotiating the other within, that is to say, the return of the repressed. . . . Some feminists have found Kristeva’s notion of a subject-in-process a useful alternative to traditional notions of an autonomous unified (masculine) subject” (“Kristeva and Feminism”).

5. The source text that Redmond uses here is Sterling Brown’s *Negro Poetry and Drama* (1937). This text has afforded a degree of confusion. Redmond does not cite it clearly in *Drumvoices*, while Gabbin attributes it to the Carnegie-Myrdal research (Sterling A. Brown 5), and Wintz (*Remembering the Harlem Renaissance* 108–31) cites it as an Atheneum publication of 1969. The text was the seventh Bronze Booklet in the adult education pamphlet series edited by Alain Locke and commissioned by his Associates in Negro Folk Education. Interestingly, Locke approaches Brown’s views in one of his columns: in *Opportunity* in 1937, Locke addresses the subject of escape (“the escapist mode of compensation” [11]) and comments on some of the poets in Redmond’s catalog—Lynn, Cuthbert, and Cowdery.

6. Under the title “Negro Songs of Protest,” Lawrence Gellert published, as a regular feature in *New Masses* between 1931 and 1934, some of the three hundred songs that he collected during his travels through Georgia, the Carolinas, Mississippi, and Louisiana. The selections that appeared in 1931 were included in the *Profile Anthology* published by *New Masses* in 1932. A digest of the “Negro Songs of Protest” articles from *New Masses* were included in Nancy Cunard’s anthology, *Negro* (1934). Some of the songs also were included in *Proletarian Literature in the United States* (1935). In 1936 after years of failing to find a publisher for this material, the American Music League published twenty-four of the songs in a book, *Negro Songs of Protest*. The songs were arranged for voice and piano. Sterling Brown, Alain Locke, and Guy Johnson contributed an extensive section on blues to the 1930 volume of *Folk-Say: A Regional Miscellany*, edited by B. A. Botkin, a 473-page book published by the University of Oklahoma Press. “Seven Negro Convict Songs” and “Twenty-one Negro Spirituals” were published in the Federal Writers’ Project’s collection, *American Stuff: An Anthology of Prose and Verse by Members of the Federal Writers’ Project with Sixteen Prints by the Federal Arts Project*, edited by Jim Thompson (New York: Viking, 1937).

7. Robert Appelbaum has characterized the poststructuralist treatment of interiority:

The Renaissance has been associated with the development of a newly intensified, individualized experience of subjectivity since the early nineteenth century. No more decisive evidence for that development has been found than the appearance of the character of Shakespeare’s Hamlet, brooding over the dilemmas posed by his sense of his own “conscience,” and telling his fellow characters and audience that he has “that within which passes show.” Nevertheless, a number of recent critics of English Renaissance literature have come to call the traditional model of the rise of Renaissance individualism into question. Some have argued that the very “interiority” of characters like Hamlet is an illusion, an invention of anachronistic, liberal humanistic criticism. Critics like Barker and Belsey have argued that the “bourgeois subject,” transparent to himself as an internally driven source of autonomous behavior, doesn’t come into his own at least until the Restoration. Hamlet wasn’t Samuel Pepys—Barker’s model for the new bourgeois subject—and had no way of being Samuel Pepys. Hamlet’s interiority, Barker argues, is

entirely “gestural”; beneath Hamlet’s theatrical display of interiority and their mystery there is ultimately “nothing.” . . . (1)

8. John Paul Russo has provided an extensive critique of this approach in the “Disappearance of the Self” chapter of *The Future without a Past*. His account is based on the assumption, which is held by many disciplines, that “the sovereign self—the subjectivity ideal—has become impoverished and sickly; for some it has died” (190).

9. Susan Schweik provides some notion of what word counts might reveal about meanings in poetry:

So, for instance, when [Josephine] Miles read [Sylvia] Plath’s *Ariel*, her notes counted the number of nouns and verbs in each poem and compared the count to her quantitative analyses of the distribution of vocabulary in poems by Plath’s contemporaries. The point was not, as Burr notes, to obscure individual poetic choices but to illuminate the context in which those choices occurred and by which they were constrained. Discussions of individual poetic style could then ensue, with a technical and impersonal kind of grounding, as in Miles’s addendum to her word-count of Plath: “The very high number of frequently used nouns calls for further discussion. Miss Plath not only allows certain nouns to carry a very intense, repetitive symbolic reference, but *she tends to distort the semantic value some words carry, with consistency*. . . . Thus to Miss Plath, *certain words are associated with horror*: these include, in the majority of cases, the adjectives *pure, little, beautiful*; the nouns *face, man, foot, blood, baby, veil, cry, hair, finger, sin, walls, Jew, skin and smile*.” (59; emphases added)

10. “When an adolescent is confronted by role confusion, Erikson says he or she is suffering from an identity crisis. In fact, a common question adolescents in our society ask is a straight-forward question of identity: ‘Who am I?’” (Boeree “Erik Erikson”).

11. “Foregather,” “Search,” “The Wine of Ecstasy,” “Desert in Ethiopia,” “Interview,” “Museum Portrait,” “Pennsylvania Station,” “Spring in the South,” “Thoughts from a Train Window,” “Carnival Torch-Bearer,” “The Octaroon,” “Song of the Mulatto,” “Torches.”

12. “Cross Bearer,” “Hampton Institute: (Remembering General Armstrong),” “Henry Alexander Hunt,” “To a Fallen Leader,” “Vestis Virumque Cano,” “Ex-Slaves,” “Ph.D.”

13. “Achievement,” “To France,” “McDonogh Day,” “Muse,” “Ode” [Dodson], “Similies,” “Sonnet” [Lilly], “Sonnet” [Prendergast], “Sonnet in Black,” “St. Charles Ave.,” “This Is the Dream America,” “Jesters,” “Southern Share-Cropper.”

14. Insubordination bolsters a fundamental, lived ethical system that is clearly expressed in the blues but has been overlooked. Like many commentators, Sterling Brown addresses this foundational ethos piecemeal. He writes of “longing for a far country” (*Folk-Say* 332) when confronted with a verse like “I’m got a mind to ramble, a mind fo’ to leave this town, / Got a mind my baby is goin’ to turn me down.” The verse frames the consistently encountered refusal to submit to authority, an attitude that often in life brings about catastrophe for the individual.

15. Religious mysticism includes a number of activities, including alchemy, yoga,

gnosticism, and Kabbalah. Jung referred to alchemy as the yoga of the Gnostics, and this formula serves as a useful definition for mysticism. The cabala code that Tolson uses in his sonnet was a traditional linguistic disguise used by the alchemists to write arcane texts. Many authorities believe that the alchemists were mystics and that their “attempts” to change lead to gold were merely a ruse, a metaphor, or a joke. Yoga is a mystical discipline—a system of meditation—and it is comparable to the meditative practices of the Kabbalists (so Jung might have also correctly said that alchemy is the Kabbalah of the Gnostics, though fewer readers might have understood). Thus, when Tolson invokes Kabbalah in his sonnet and hides within the language of the phonetic cabala to do so, he places himself within the mainstream of mysticism. Finally, Gurdjieff, the most important modern occultist, is often described as a Gnostic.

16. On Tolson and Marxism: Marianne Russell ascribes Tolson a Marxist-Christian position that Raymond Nelson reiterates: “The Tolson of *Harlem Gallery* wrote as a proponent of neither of the systems of belief, Marxism or Christianity, he had once espoused, although he still drew ethical strength and direction from both of them.” Raymond Nelson, “*Harlem Gallery: An Advertisement*,” *Virginia Quarterly Review* (Summer 1999). 25 June 2007 <<http://www.vqronline.org/articles/1999/summer/nelson-harlem-gallery/>>.

On Tolson and the black arts movement: The account of Tolson’s confrontation with Robert Hayden at Fisk University’s First Black Writers’ Conference during a panel discussion—which included Tolson, Arna Bontemps, and Margaret Walker—appears in a number of places; see Coniff (1999). See also Flasch 134–50. Tolson purportedly denounced Hayden as follows: “When a man writes, he tells me which way he went in society.’ ‘I’m a black poet,’ he continued, ‘an African American poet, a Negro poet. I’m no accident—and I don’t give a tinker’s damn what you think” (Coniff 487). Commentators have not appreciated Tolson’s intellectual resources and his motivations for deception. In Gurdjieff’s teaching, ordinary man is governed by the Law of Accident, and it is this law that is behind Tolson’s declaration that he is not an accident. Gurdjieff taught that man changes at each moment. These changes are produced by exterior shocks, which he can never foresee, as he can never foresee his own interior changes. Thus, he is helplessly carried along by the streams of life and by his own mood fluctuations. To escape from the influence of exterior and interior changes, Gurdjieff suggests specific methods, such as self-observation, working on oneself (individually and in groups), and performing exercises and movements—so that man can become master of himself. One of those exercises calls for the subject to assume disguises, as Tolson did in posing as a black cultural nationalist.

17. “Dark Symphony” won the National Poetry Prize in a contest sponsored by the American Negro Exposition in Chicago in 1940.

18. A. E. Waite was a member of the Order of the Golden Dawn. W. B. Yeats was also a member. Waite worked with Pamela Coleman-Smith on a deck of tarot cards (“The Waite deck”) and wrote *The Key to the Tarot* (1910). T. S. Eliot refers to specific cards in the Waite tarot pack in *The Waste Land*.

19. “More sublime than any language on earth, Hebrew is the Divine language of the Torah and the Jewish Nation and the code and the conduit through which God created and re-creates everything that is. . . . According to the celebrated Jewish Sage Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, author of the Zohar, the masterwork of the Mystical Tradition [Kabbalah], it was through and by means of the Hebrew letters of Torah that God actually conceived, formed, and created the world” (“On Hebrew”).

20. In “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*,” Karl Marx stated that “religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.”

21. Joy Flasch refers to the Zulu Club, the basement room in which Tolson wrote in his house in Langston, Oklahoma (44). There is, however, no record of the contents of Tolson’s personal library. This is dismaying. For instance, in his *Libretto* (see the note to line 572) Tolson alludes to Jonathan Swift’s awareness of the cabala and to Swift’s use of that code in writing *Gulliver’s Travels*, a subject discussed by the alchemist Eugene Canseliet in his volume *L’Hermetisme dans la vie de Swift et dans ses voyages* (Editions Fata Morgana 1983). How was Tolson able to come by this information in Langston, Oklahoma, in the late 1940s and early 1950s? Victoria Arana suggests that the required esoteric books may have been in circulation among Tolson’s circle, and this seems likely. (See <http://www.levity.com/alchemy/afrm0250.html>.)

22. See also note 15 above. Cabala was the code in which European alchemical-hermetic texts were written. Tolson’s sonnet, in its most interior level, uses cabala to sound out the word *alchemy* by means of the end sounds in the upward direction using lines 11 and 9 (*all*), 5 (*came*), 3 (*became*), and 3 and 1 (*y*). In the sonnet’s cabala, words or letters may be reversed. Other names and words that appear in Tolson’s cabala are [Jean] *Toomer*, *C. Daly King*, *yayin*, and *Gurdjieff*. Gleb Butuzov states that

the fourth important issue I would like to discuss relates to what we normally call punning and wordplay and, in the Hermetic context, mostly concerns French sources. Play on words, or phonetic cabala, represents another level of reading in a Hermetic text, and this level of the hierarchy of terms has been in use in French literature from the Middle Ages until the present day. Of course, the term cabala itself is a sort of pun. We have to admit that its understanding in a modern context refers to the Renaissance and is undoubtedly connected with Jewish Kabbalah which gained authority among Christian mystics and Western esoteric schools mainly owing to the efforts of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola in the end of [the] XV century. However, the history of European cabala began much earlier, hundreds of years before the dissemination of Judaic esoteric teachings in Europe. The abovementioned pun lies in the fact that cabala has the same Latin root as *caballus*, which means “horse,” and, therefore, it refers to *cabaliero* and *chevalier*, i.e. “knight.” . . . Thus, Jewish Kabbalah implies, besides the obvious meaning of the word, its numeric value on the one hand, and, on the other, possible words, contained in its letters that would allow a commentator to expand interpretation of the word up to several pages. In the case of the Hermetic cabala numerology also plays some role, but most important is the fact that the phrases, read aloud must be understood not just in the sense they have on paper, but also in that elusive sense they acquire on being “misheard” (where, in common speech, we would ask our interlocutor to repeat the sentence, because we had heard something that seemed to be inappropriate to the context of the conversation). *This second—really esoteric—meaning is often irrelevant to the first, and people who neglect this level of the information-exchange actually read a very different book.*

Phonetic cabala is thoroughly enough analyzed in the case of many French sources, especially in the works by Claude-Sosthène Grasset d'Orcet, Fulcanelli, Canseliet and others, but one comes across this type of coding in other languages too, in certain Greek, Italian and *English* sources for instance. (emphases added)

23. See Woodson 1999. Two recent critical studies (George Hutchinson, 2006 [541] and Cherene-Sherrard Johnson, 2007 [200]) assert that I have “overstated” the influence of Jean Toomer and George I. Gurdjieff on Harlem Renaissance writers of the 1920s and 1930s. Having taken no position, I have followed, as best as I could, where the research led since I first began to explicate Tolson’s long poems, which turned out to be presentations of Gurdjieff’s entire occult system by means of cabalistic coding. Given the importance of Carl Van Vechten to the Harlem Renaissance and my demonstration that Van Vechten was a member of the New York Gurdjieff group, I do not see that I have overstated my argument. Through further research, I now know that at least one major classic of American modernism *outside of the Harlem school* was written in the phonetic cabala (C. Daly King’s cipher), namely, James Agee’s *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. I have already shown King’s cipher to have been used by such Harlem writers as Hurston, Larsen, Thurman, Fisher, and Schuyler, though my recent research shows that this is not a complete list. The problem here is not my treatment of occultism but the general resistance to and inability of critics and scholars to ascertain the influence of occultism on modern literature.

24. For example, “Jesse Seegar” barely manages to hide *Gurdjieff’s* name once the table of contents is read as code; for the sake of clarity, I will point out that this *cabala* assigns the phonetic syllables to other locations so that *Gurdjieff* is heard in gar-Jesse. Some names are intended to reveal the code itself, like “Bella Scaritt”—*be scared*. Similarly, “Etchings Uriah Houze” offers the phrase *at your house*. Other names present information about the Gurdjieff groups, so that “Margaret Levy” comments that *A. R. [Orage] leaves G. [Gurdjieff]*; by this means, Tolson referred to the split between Orage and Gurdjieff, an event so crucial to the American Gurdjieff circle that several books address the meaning of this crisis that took place in 1931. See, for example, Paul Beekman Taylor’s *Gurdjieff and Orage*.

25. Emerson’s piece on Shakespeare begins with “Great men are more distinguished by *range* and *tent* than by originality” (Emerson “Shakespeare”; my emphasis). *Range* is also central to his description of Plato: “This *range* of Plato instructs us what to think of the vexed question concerning his reputed works,—what are genuine, what spurious” (Emerson “Plato”; my emphasis).

26. In “Representative Men” Emerson writes that “the *search* after the great man is the dream of youth and the most serious occupation of manhood” and that “we have hope to *search* out what might be the very self of everything” (Emerson “Representative Men”; my emphasis).

27. “Fundamental to every philosophy of history is the concept of historical time. . . . In *The Decline of the West* [Spengler] portrayed world history as being virtually eternal. Cultures rose and declined in an apparently endless, grand procession” (Farrenkopf 202). These vast expanses of time seem to threaten the idea of human freedom. “The various cultures express the arbitrariness of nature in the sense that their emergence in a particular place and time is accidental” (Farrenkopf 30).

28. Russell Anderson, “To Marian Anderson,” *Crisis* (August 1939): 246. Marcus

Christian, “Selassie at Geneva,” *Opportunity* (June 1938): 213.

29. William Banks has clarified the compositions of the African American groups that were closest to Franklin D. Roosevelt’s White House:

In 1934 Foreman and Weaver helped establish an interagency advisory group that would monitor “Negro Affairs.” The group was led by Robert Vann, editor of the popular black weekly newspaper the *Pittsburgh Courier* and assistant to the U.S. attorney general. Vann’s group included Eugene Jones, formerly with the Urban League, and Henry A. Hunt, president of Fort Valley State College. In most respects this formal group of highly educated blacks was eclipsed by the informal black cabinet or “brain trust” led by Mary McCleod Bethune, president of Bethune-Cookman College in Florida, and director of the Negro division of the New Deal’s National Youth Administration. (*Black Intellectuals* 116)

30. Joaquin Miller (1837?–1913) “was the pen name of the American eccentric and poet, Cincinnatus Heine (or Hiner) Miller. . . . A 2004 conference on Miller referred to him as ‘Poet of the Sierras,’ the founder of California’s Arbor Day, prose stylist extraordinaire, horse thief, judge, Pony Express rider, newspaper editor, critic, gold miner, successful playwright, champion of Native American rights, Indian fighter, rogue and hero.” Miller was “more of a celebrity in Europe than in his native United States. . . . ‘His adventures through Oregon, Idaho, and Northern California brought him fame in England, notoriety in America and provided fodder for much of his poetry and prose.’ However, some literary critics felt that he was a first-class self-promoter, but a second-rate poet” (Sierra Nevada Virtual Museum “Joaquin Miller”).

31. Though he repudiated Adolf Hitler and would have nothing to do with the Nazis, Oswald Spengler did invent the concept of National Socialism. I mention this to demonstrate the compelling nature of the role models in his world history. The following is one of his comments on the “force-men” that arise in the final phase of the history of a civilization: “So we find by the side of Michael III (842–61) Bardas, and by Constantine VII (912–959) Romanos the latter even formally Co-Emperor. In 867 the ex-groom Basileios, a Napoleonic figure, overthrew Bardas and founded the sword-dynasty of the Armenians (to 1081), in which generals instead of Emperors mostly ruled—*force-men* like Romanos, Nicephorus, and Bardas Phocas. The greatest amongst them was John Tzimisces (969–976) in Armenian Kiur Zan” (Spengler *Decline* vol. 2 426; emphasis added).

32. The man farthest down was not originally the African American peasant. Booker T. Washington traveled to Italy and wrote a book, *The Man Farthest Down: A Record of Observation and Study in Europe* (1912), advancing the thesis that the African American was better off than the depressed classes of Europe. His thesis was that “the cruelties to which the child slaves of Sicily have been subjected are as bad as anything reported of the cruelties of Negro slavery.”

33. Robin D. G. Kelley states:

A predominantly black underground organization of sharecroppers, tenant farmers, and agricultural laborers, the Share Croppers Union (SCU) was the largest Communist-led mass organization in the Deep South. Founded in Alabama in the spring of 1931, the organization was first initiated by black tenant farmers in Tallapoosa County. . . . Union. Based mainly in Tallapoosa and Lee counties, Alabama, under Coad’s leadership the union built up an estimated membership of eight hundred

within a two-month period. In July 1931, the union faced its first in a series of violent confrontations with local authorities. . . . Once the union was reconstructed, it adopted the name SCU. By the summer of 1932, the reconstituted SCU claimed six hundred members and a new secretary was appointed. Al Murphy, a black Birmingham Communist originally from McRae, Georgia, transformed the SCU into a secret, underground organization. SCU militants were armed for self-defense and met under the auspices of “Bible meetings” and “sewing clubs.” Under Murphy’s leadership, the union spread into the “black belt” counties of Alabama and into a few areas on the Georgia-Alabama border. In December 1932, another shootout occurred near Reeltown, Alabama (not far from Camp Hill), which resulted in the deaths of SCU members Clifford James, John McMullen, and Milo Bentley, and the wounding of several others. . . . Faced with large-scale evictions resulting from New Deal acreage reduction policies, sharecroppers flocked to the union. Its growth was by no means hindered by the gun battle. By June 1933, Murphy claimed nearly two thousand members, and by the fall of 1934 the official figures skyrocketed to eight thousand. . . . Throughout 1935, despite the union’s push for legal status in the black belt, SCU activists faced severe repression during a cotton choppers’ strike in the spring and a cotton pickers’ strike between August and September. In Lowndes and Dallas counties in particular, dozens of strikers were jailed and beaten, and at least six people were killed. In 1936 the SCU, claiming between ten thousand and twelve thousand members, spread into Louisiana and Mississippi. It opened its first public headquarters in New Orleans and, in an attempt to transform the SCU into a trade union, officially abandoned its underground structure. . . . Failing to solve the problems created by the New Deal and the mechanization of agriculture in the cotton South, the Party’s decision to divide the organization “by tenure” in 1937 marked the end of the SCU. Nevertheless, a few SCU locals in Alabama and Louisiana chose not to affiliate with any other organization and maintained an autonomous existence well into World War II. (“Share Croppers Union”)

34. The following statement by Robert C. Liberman indicates the general state of race relations in the 1930s: “All of the policies in the Social Security Act carried race-laden exclusion, features that inherently, whether by accident or design, excluded African Americans from full participation in their benefits. Given the status of African Americans in American society in the 1930s, it is not surprising to find that the social policy innovations of that period largely excluded them, and scholars have often noted the racial disparities that resulted from the Social Security Act” (23). In a more specific example, Anna Everett states that the decency taboo was elastic with respect to the Hays production code: “On one hand, the Code’s morality clause shielded nude white bodies from the prurient gaze, while on the other, the fetishized ‘native’ black body, positioned outside the code of human morality and decency, was at once made an acceptable site for sexual titillation and sanctioned racial degradation” (244).

35. Natasha Distiller describes Millay’s status as a poet as follows:

Edna St Vincent Millay was, at the height of her popularity, America’s most celebrated woman poet. She was the first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for her poetry, which she did in 1923. In 1925, Genevieve Taggard

(1993: 137) wrote of Millay that she “is really the first woman poet to take herself seriously as an artist.” Locating Millay in a trajectory that begins with Sappho, Taggard finds “the meager list in our own tongue [to comprise] Emily Brontë, Christina Rossetti and Elizabeth Barrett—none of them very adequate to our desire. And then—suddenly, quite dazzlingly, in America, . . . Edna St. Vincent Millay.” She was also well-known for her independence and unconventionality; this has translated into a reputation for feminist activism. As John Timberman Newcomb puts it, “Millay . . . was seen by many as a prototype of the ‘modern woman,’ especially in her assertion of the right to and need for female self-determination of body, mind, pocketbook, and voice.” . . . Amongst the many sonnets that she wrote, Millay wrote two extended sonnet sequences. . . . *Fatal Interview*, first published in 1931, is a sequence of 52 sonnets which charts the course of a heterosexual love affair from the point of view of the female lover. It was extremely popular in its own time. Issued during the Depression, it sold 33,000 copies in its first ten weeks. (Disteller 153–54).

36. In the issue for December of 1931, the editor of *Opportunity* describes Helene Johnson as “one of the younger Negro poets.”

37. Charles Edward Russell, “To Marian Anderson,” *Crisis* (August 1939): 6; Milton Bright, “Lines for Marian Anderson,” *Opportunity* (May 1939): 136.

CHAPTER THREE

1. John Cullen Gruesser defines Ethiopianism as follows:

The excerpt from Stewart’s 1833 “Address” provides a vivid illustration of four key Ethiopianist elements. First, it asserts a common heritage shared by African Americans and Africans: “We sprung from one of the most learned nations of the whole earth.” Second, the passage adopts the biblical notion of a Supreme Being who raises and punishes nations, leading to a belief in a cyclical view of history in which the fortunes of peoples rise and fall: “But it was our gross sins and abominations that provoked the Almighty to frown thus heavily upon us, and give our glory to others. Sin and prodigality have caused the downfall of nations, kings, and emperors.” Third, it predicts a bright future for peoples of African descent: “a promise is left us; ‘Ethiopia shall again stretch forth her hands unto God.’” Fourth, Stewart’s statement exhibits monumentalism, which Wilson Moses defines, in an essay entitled “More Stately Mansions,” as “an expression of the desire to associate black Americans with symbols of wealth, intelligence, stability, and power such as those of ancient Egypt and Ethiopia.” (*Black on Black* 4)

William R. Scott contextualizes these beliefs:

Legally free and lawfully enslaved American blacks first began to acclaim and assert identity with an African state called Ethiopia in colonial times, in the years preceding and following the war between Great Britain and its North American colonies. It was then that African American con-

verts to Christianity discovered Ethiopia of the Bible and forged from the Scriptures an inspiring myth of Ethiopian peoplehood and ordained resurgence. That myth, expanded and embellished between the time of the American Revolution and the era of the Great Depression, was deeply embedded in the U.S. black psyche when war erupted in 1935 between Italy and Ethiopia. (11)

2. “March 19, 1935. Sixteen-year-old Lino Rivera was caught stealing a penknife from a white-owned shop in Harlem. When the police were called, a group formed around the shop, and fearing the crowd the police officer and shop owner let the boy go. However, rumors spread that the boy had been lynched, instigating pickets followed by full-blown violent riots of over 3,000 people continuing over two days. By the time the riot was quelled, 125 people had been arrested, 100 injured and three killed” (Puryear).

3. This is not surprising given the persistence and centrality of the idea of race war in the African American community. For instance, in 1923 Marcus Garvey stated that “I feel that it is only a question of a few more years before our program will be accepted not only by the few statesmen of America who are now interested in it, but by the strong statesmen of the world, as the only solution to the great race problem. *There is no other way to avoid the threatening war of the races that is bound to engulf all mankind, which has been prophesied by the world’s greatest thinkers; there is no better method than by apportioning every race to its own habitat*” (“Africa for Africans”; emphasis added). Garvey is no doubt referring to Oswald Spengler as an authority on this topic.

4. Though *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* by Alexander et al. is about “the meaning making process,” this convenient phrase appears in abstracts but not in the study; see, for example, page 62, where “meaning struggle” is discussed. In their discussion of African American identity, the volume’s contributors align black collective identity with the Harlem Renaissance and Garveyism: “In the 1920s, after the first wave of what has come to be called the ‘great migration’ in the context of a newly forming black public sphere, two distinct frameworks for narrating and giving meaning to the past took form, one progressive and the other tragic. These narrative frame works were articulated by activists in two social movements, the Harlem renaissance [progressive meaning] and Garveyism [tragic meaning], both of which were directed primarily inward, toward the transformation of racially based collective identity” (78). They advocate that “carrier groups” (62)—in their study, intellectuals (and in this study, poets)—play a significant role in the “trauma process” (62) when there is a crisis of meaning and identity. However, the study does not take in what appears to be the adjustments made to the collective identity between the 1920s and the next major phase when slavery moved outside group memory and become part of America’s collective memory (78).

5. Snow observes that the alignment created by identity work “can vary significantly, ranging from the elevation of the salience of a particular identity to a fairly dramatic change in one’s sense of self. Four identity construction processes have been identified that capture this variation: identity amplification, identity consolidation, identity extension, and identity transformation (Snow and McAdam 2000)” (11).

6. It is tempting to describe Wright’s imagery as *surrealistic*, but that term is not useful when Wright’s surrealism is being distinguished from Mayakovsky’s *zaumnyy iazyk* (transreason poetry). In the quotation below, Anna Lawton (facing the limi-

tations of the critical vocabulary for dreamlike effects) does describe Mayakovsky's effects as surrealist. Mayakovsky's cubo-futurism precipitated "transreason" or "transrational" effects that today might superficially resemble the effects of surrealism, but they were not derived from the same aesthetics. Cubo-futurism was a vibrant and influential movement in its own right. Anna Lawton states that

"in general terms, the Cubo-Futurists proposed to treat the poetic word as an object in itself devoid of any referent. Transrational language, rich in sound but devoid of conventional meaning, was organized by phonetic analogy and rhythm rather than by grammar and syntax. . . . Mayakovsky, the most popular and charismatic figure in the group, created his own strikingly original poetic language by using conventional words in a nonconventional way. . . . The basic trait that distinguished the Cubo-Futurists from the Italians [the Futurists who followed Marinetti] was an underlying archaism, a leaning toward a primitivism of forms and often of themes (water nymphs, bogeymen, and other figures of Slavic folklore . . .), . . . where the word in its pristine purity created myth; and where the human being, in a prelogical state of mind, through the word discovered the universe. . . . Mayakovsky's urban landscapes are often nightmarish settings (the Gogol and Dostoevsky models were not after all 'thrown overboard from the Ship of Modernity') in which animated and surrealistically misplaced objects threaten to subvert the hierarchical order based on human supremacy." (12–18)

7. Rearticulate: "Discursive reorganization or reinterpretation of ideological themes and interests already present in the subject's consciousness, such that these elements obtain new meanings or coherence" (Omi and Winant 195 n. 11).

8. *The Story of Little Black Sambo*, a children's book by Helen Bannerman, a Scot living in India, was first published in London in 1899. In the tale, an Indian boy named Sambo prevails over a group of hungry tigers. The little boy has to give his colorful new clothes, shoes, and umbrella to four tigers so they will not eat him. Sambo recovers the clothes when the jealous, conceited tigers chase each other around a tree until they are reduced to a pool of delicious melted butter. The story was a children's favorite for half a century but became controversial due to the use of the word *sambo*, a racial slur in some countries. In 1932 Langston Hughes said *Little Black Sambo* exemplified the "pickaninny variety" of storybook, "amusing undoubtedly to the white child, but like an unkind word to one who has known too many hurts to enjoy the additional pain of being laughed at" (Pilgrim).

9. In film theory, the cinematic suture involves three easy steps of telling the truth via visual contact between subject and observer. In every way, the suture is a dialectical existential contract between an author, a reader, and a work of art—I see you, therefore I am. You see me, therefore you are. We see one another, therefore we seem to exist. In film theory, the suture is evident when slowing down the frames to observe how dialogue works: actors and the camera look at something (step 1), the camera shows another angle to reveal the reaction of the viewed subject/object (step 2), and a secondary camera pulls back for a long shot so that viewers can judge the relationship themselves (step 3) (Bialik 1).

10. I mean *canonical* in the limited sense of anthologized poems, since Hughes's radical poetry from this decade has not been accorded critical attention (Shulman 286; writing in 2000), and Hughes is the major figure of this period. Problemati-

cally, Hughes is considered a canonical poet even though his radical poems from the thirties are not considered canonical. If the black poets of the thirties are ranked by importance, Hughes is followed by Sterling Brown, Frank Marshall Davis, and perhaps by Fenton Johnson, all of whom by virtue of their inclusion in anthologies are canonical.

11. Julia Bolton Holloway observes that “*Aurora Leigh* . . . published in 1856, is a male epic and a woman’s novel, written in nine books, echoing the nine books of the prophetic Cumaean Sibyl and the nine months of a woman’s pregnancy. It quarries the Bible and the Classics, Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Virgil, Apuleius, Dante, Langland, Shakespeare, Milton, and Byron, while it also uses contemporary women’s writings, Madame de Staël (1776–1817), George Sand (1804–76) and Charlotte Brontë (1816–55), and discusses Brook Farm’s communism (1841–6), Ireland’s Great Famine (1846–7), and the working conditions of women and children. [Elizabeth Barrett Browning] read the Bible’s scriptures in Hebrew, Chaldean and Greek, the other texts in their original Greek, Latin, Italian, French and English; yet she filled her learning with life. Across [*Aurora Leigh*’s] pages we hear dialectic and reconciliation, the voices of women and men, of poor and rich, and in its epic similes genders are generally reversed” (Holloway).

12. “In *Speed and Politics* (1986 [1977]), Virilio undertakes his first sustained attempt to delineate the importance of accelerated speed, of the impact of technologies of motion, of types of mobility and their effects in the contemporary era. Subtitled ‘Essay on Dromology,’ Virilio proposes what he calls a ‘dromomatics’ which interrogates the role of speed in history and its important functions in urban and social life, warfare, the economy, transportation and communication, and other aspects of everyday life. ‘Dromology’ comes from the Latin term, *dromos*, signifying race, and dromology studies how innovations in speed influence social and political life. The ‘dromocratic revolution’ for Virilio involves means of fabricating speed with the steam engine, then the combustion engine, and in our day nuclear energy and instantaneous forms of warfare and communication” (Paul Kellner, “Virilio”).

13. “In noting her sources, Rukeyser mentions ‘other documents, including the Egyptian Book of the Dead (in various translations), magazine and newspaper articles on Gauley Bridge, letters and photographs.’ . . . Her understatement conceals a complex of bold literary and political commitments. Rukeyser fuses the immediacy of the Gauley dead with the timelessness of the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* and that in turn with the documentary language of congressional hearings and ‘magazine and newspaper articles on Gauley Bridge, letters and photographs.’ She has assimilated, subverted, and turned to her own politically radical uses the modernist techniques of poems like Eliot’s ‘The Waste Land’” (Shulman 182).

14. Robert Shulman locates Muriel Rukeyser in the documentary trend as follows:

In *U.S. 1* and *The Book of the Dead*, Rukeyser also shares with other left artists a concern with the documentary. Among the achievements of Popular Front culture is the documentary, in film, photography, and reportage. In *The Book of the Dead* Rukeyser takes her place along with Joris Ivens and Leo Hurwitz, Meridel Le Sueur and Josephine Herbst. As Rukeyser puts it in *The Life of Poetry*, “the work of Joris Ivens, Paul Rotha, Grierson, Legge, Lerner, Steiner, Van Dyke, Strand, Hurwitz, Ferno, Kline, Flaherty, and the groups that formed behind such productions as *Spanish Earth*, *Crisis*, *Native Land*, *The City*, and *Heart of Spain*

sent an impulse through the other arts” [159]. Rukeyser responded to that impulse. In *US. 1* and especially in *The Book of the Dead*, she shows her belief that “poetry can extend the document” (*U.S. 1*, p. 146). Like others in the tradition she emerges from and contributes to, Rukeyser says of her intentions that “I wish to make my poems exist in the quick images that arrive crowding on us now (most familiarly from the screen), in the lives of Americans who are unpraised and vivid and indicative, in my own ‘documents.’”

Beyond the films, *The Book of the Dead* also needs to be seen as one in a series of works by 1930s documentary photographers, collections of photographs with accompanying text: Margaret Bourke-White and Erskine Caldwell’s *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937), Archibald MacLeish’s *Land of the Free* (1938), Walker Evan’s *American Photographs* (1938), Dorothea Lange and Paul Schuster Taylor’s *An American Exodus* (1939), Berenice Abbott’s *Changing New York* (1939), Richard Wright and Edwin Rosskam’s *12 Million Black Voices* (1941), and Walker Evans and James Agee’s *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941). These collections are closely related to the large, ongoing Farm Security Administration (FSA) photography project.” (183)

15. “The sonnets of Edna St. Vincent Millay and E. E. Cummings work, each by inverse subversions regarding, respectively, subject matter and aesthetic sensibility, simultaneously to identify with the British sonnet tradition, and, in identifying with the tradition but palpably subverting its conventions, to work to contradict the tenets which are connotatively central to British sonneteering. In doing so, these sonneteers worked in opposition to and in the embrace of Modernist poetic dogma in order to assert, deliberately or not, the dawn of an American literary theoretical and aesthetic consciousness, and to democratize the sonnet as a form available to any mode of formal experimentation, and any variety of subject matter” (Cairns).

16. Sterling A. Brown’s poetic maturity resulted from a well-known dialectical engagement with the aesthetics of African American folk traditions. As Brown recounted so often, these experiential and imaginative encounters derived from a benevolent conspiracy between his theologian father (the Reverend Sterling Nelson Brown) and the eminent historian Carter G. Woodson, who sent the younger Brown to the South so that he would learn something about his people (Tidwell).

17. In *The Waste Land*, Tiresias, a blind prophet, serves as the poem’s organizing consciousness. Eliot’s note to line 218 states that “What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem.”

18. “There were approximately 2 million Ethiopian slaves in the early 1930s, out of an estimated population of between 8 [million] and 16 million. Slavery continued in Ethiopia until the Italian invasion in October 1935, when it was abolished by order of the Italian occupying forces. In response to pressure by Western Allies of World War II, Ethiopia officially abolished slavery and involuntary servitude after regaining its independence in 1942. On August 26, 1942, Haile Selassie issued a proclamation outlawing slavery” (“African Slave Trade.” Wikipedia. Web. 20 July 2010).

19. To indicate Eliot’s reception in leftist circles, I will point out that V. F. Calverton, editor of the leftist journal *Modern Quarterly*, wrote and published “T. S. Eliot: Leisure Class Laureate” (February 1933), while a subsequent article was titled “T. S. Eliot—An Inverted Marxian” (July 1934).

20. Mr. Christopher Columbus
 Sailed the sea without a compass
 Well, when his men began a rumpus
 Up spoke Christopher Columbus
- He said, "There is land somewhere
 So until we get there we will not go wrong
 If we sing a swing song
 Since the world is round[o] we'll be safe and sound[o]
 'Till our goal is found we'll just keep the rhythm bound"
- Soon the crew was makin' merry
 Then came a yell, let's drink to Isabella
 Bring on the rum
 A music in that all the rumpus
 A wise old Christopher Columbus
- Soon the crew was makin' merry and Mary got mad
 Then came a yell, let's drink to Isabel
 So bring on the rum
 A music in that all of the rumpus
 A wise old Christopher Columbus
- Christopher Columbus
 Christopher Columbus
 Christopher Columbus

21. Christ was unjustly accused, put on trial, crucified, and ultimately rose again.

22. Part 2, act 1, scene 2 of *Henry IV* supplies the source of Baxter's line, though not the sense." Falstaff says, "I have chequed him for it, and the young lion repents; marry, not in ashes and sackcloth, but in new silk and old sack" (2.1. lines 189–91).

23. Danny Cairns states that "In spite of its reputation being partly the product of historical, revisionist (mis)construction, the sonnet's connotation as lifeless and aristocratic was, by the dawn of Modernism, nonetheless entrenched irrevocably into literary culture, and this (mis)construction impacted to a considerable degree the ways in which the poetry and reputations of Cummings and Millay were received and perceived in their era, and the eras which followed. The sonnet's stultifying connotation lives on even today, and continues to influence our perception of these poets' reputations, as evidenced by the back flap of *The Collected Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, [whose] précis seems to anticipate that the modern reader, informed by some kind of enlightened literary consciousness, should and will be repelled by the notion of a sonnet, as if any sonnet represented a dead and exhausted tradition regardless of its content, and insists, optimistically and apologetically that "Millay lost none of her vitality when she turned to sonnets" (Norma Millay, back flap). And so the sonnet as Millay and Cummings knew it . . . was rigid, regal, masculine, and rule-based. And it was these undertones with which Modernist sonneteers approach and subverted the form of the sonnet—and, in particular, how these American sonneteers approached the sonnet as a distinctly, historically British device" (6–7). Yet I must point out that in the face of these conditions, the sonnet was *poetry* for many African Americans in

the thirties, and they wrote and read sonnets despite these purported barriers, though I suspect that in most cases the attraction of the sonnet was the perceived difficulties of the form.

24. "I have been greatly amused by the public enthusiasm for 'The Black Internationale,' which is hokum and hack work of the purest vein. I deliberately set out to crowd as much race chauvinism and sheer improbability into it as my fertile imagination could conjure. The result vindicates my low opinion of the human race" (George S. Schuyler, from a letter to P. L. Prattis, April 4, 1937).