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## How the Conjure-Man Gets Busy: Cultural Nationalism, Masculinity, and Performativity

As a movement in and of culture, Black Power was itself an art form. . . . Influencing the lives and aspirations of everyday people in ways unrevealed by membership rosters and public opinion polls, Black Power motivated Afro-Americans of the sixties and early seventies to redefine themselves. In the process, it forced a reappraisal of American social and cultural values

—William L. Van Deburg.<sup>1</sup>

Since its publication in 1992, William L. Van Deburg's *New Day in Babylon* has not only emerged as a landmark historical survey of the Black Power movement but as a definitive statement about the era's cultural politics. Critical to the study's revisionism is the argument that the movement left its most enduring and affirmative legacy in the arena of culture. Despite Van Deburg's optimism on this front, however, at the height of the movement this was not a foregone conclusion. As he duly acknowledges, Marxists such as the Black Panthers took cultural nationalism to task because of its failure to provide a political agency that extended beyond the performance of identity. In a characteristic formulation Huey P. Newton distinguished the Black Panthers as a party of action by attacking nationalists who "indulged in a lot of revolutionary talk" yet were "not doing very much, just lying around 'becoming black.'"<sup>2</sup> Others on the left, such as Robert L. Allen, saw in the turn toward cultural identity a grim concession to the hegemony of corporate capitalism.<sup>3</sup> Given the pervasiveness of such contests, Van Deburg's celebratory account seems strikingly unqualified at best. No doubt his refusal to examine this more fraught history is propelled in part by a longing to legitimate a social movement that has been devastated by a conservative backlash that began in the 1970s and persists even now. Still, the solution to this broader assault on the movement lies not in a veneration of its cultural politics but in a more thorough reassessment of culture as a key term in contests about how black collectivism would be represented and who would represent it. A productive way to trouble existing frames for reading culture in this period is to confront one of the movement's prevailing paradoxes; black nationalists construed performative modes of cultural identity as the locus of their politics even as they registered the potential inadequacies of this strategy.

From the movement's inception Black Power advocates stressed that the new nationalism necessarily depended upon affirming African American identity as the primary grounds for countering white American nationalism. Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton begin their classic disquisition on Black Power with the claim, "we must redefine ourselves. Our basic need is to reclaim our history and our identity from what must be called cultural terrorism."<sup>4</sup> For many nationalists these counters necessarily preceded conventional political remedies. For instance, Ron Karenga and his US organization assumed Swahili names, donned African-influenced garb, and otherwise adopted practices that they believed were truer to their African heritage in order to "utilize what was ours to start with. The culture provides the basis for revolution and recovery."<sup>5</sup> Shuttling between insurgency and therapy, these nationalists legitimated a whole coterie of codes for performing a legible political identity—one that would presumably undo the effects of white supremacist nationalism. At its most extreme this assertion of the black nation through the performative manifested itself in the essentialist claims that propel Malachi Andrews's *Psychoblackology: Science of Black Movement, Sports, Dance, Soul* (1974). This study of kinesiology theorizes that the very motion of the body is governed by genetically rooted racial difference, for "All African people are born with a substance of neural-chemical power, super energy called soul, and the biochemical capacities for moving hip mentally and spiritually."<sup>6</sup> In recognizing the biologically based expression of racial difference Andrews labored to retool the body that had once been the site of minstrel and racist inscriptions as the expressive medium for black national belonging.

At the same time cultural nationalists were among the first to voice anxieties about the difficult task of discerning the legitimacy of a politics grounded in performative identities. The speaker in Haki Madhubuti's (Don L. Lee's) 1969 poem "Malcolm Spoke / who listened?" is concerned that nationalists have become dangerously invested in "outer garments / & blk / slogans fr / the top ten."<sup>7</sup> The speaker clearly takes issue with those who might mistake their performances of black nationalist identity for more substantive political activism. Equally incisive in articulating its concern about the upshots of overvaluing performance is Sonia Sanchez's poem "blk rhetoric" in which a speaker asks, "who's gonna make all / that beautiful blk / rhetoric / mean something. / like / i mean / who's gonna take / the words / blk / is / beautiful / and make more of it / than blk / capitalism."<sup>8</sup> Sanchez's poem articulates an anxiety about a climate in which one needs to make clear the distinction between the performance of a political identity and the instrumental implementation of political change. And as in Madhubuti's piece, the potential for capitalism to convert the cultural politics of resistance into another commodity also

looms large in Sanchez's formulation. But while these interrogations of the relationship between performative language and politics certainly existed within the movement, they did not generate a sustained investigation of the logic governing this cultural politics as such. Nor did these critical voices substantially address the highly gendered character of these tactics.

It was in the fiction of John Oliver Killens that the contradictions orbiting about performativity achieved their fullest expression. These tensions animate the identity crisis experienced by Yoruba Lovejoy, the heroine of his 1971 novel *The Cotillion, or One Good Bull Is Half the Herd*. Early in the novel she is nearly seduced by a hustler masquerading as an embodiment of Black Power nationalism. The perpetrator of the fraud, Jaja Okwu (formerly known as Bobby Jack Sampson), adopts an easily acquired set of prosthetic devices to fashion himself as an authentic nationalist subject. Jaja is like many "thugs and hoodlums" who "skimmed through a few books, and memorized a few catch phrases, bought a few dashikis . . . washed the process out of their hair, changed their names," and perched on "a niche or corner" to enter "the business of Black Nationalism."<sup>9</sup> Holding Yoruba "under the mesmerization of the torrent of words that came flowing from his lips," Jaja coerces her submission through his deployment of an incantatory nationalist language (68–69). In his assertion that he can provide Yoruba's "education" and that she should "just let this proud Black man take care of business," he demands that she defer to him because of his status as a male subject. After garnering Yoruba's submission through both the deployment of nationalist rhetoric and the declaration of his masculine authority, Jaja's seduction eventually crumbles. He undermines his own authority when he reveals that his true desire is to make Yoruba his prostitute while he organizes "the revolution" (69).

Certainly, this satirical sketch functions in the novel as a kind of cautionary tale about a pernicious form of male dissembling. Like many texts of the Black Power era, Killens's narrative decries the use of nationalist authenticity as a mechanism to exploit female sexuality.<sup>10</sup> But more importantly, the scene depicts a legitimate social logic propagated in the literature of Black Power nationalism. Writers like Amiri Baraka and Haki Madhubuti produced a discourse in which the black male subject's mastery of performative linguistic rituals was to be instrumental in the fashioning of a nationalist political consciousness. It is possible for Jaja Okwu to assume that his masculinist self-assertion and his performance of nationalist rhetoric legitimate his authority precisely because Black Power advocates coded such performative rituals as effective instruments in the creation of a collective political identity. In their language theories, nationalists emphasized the strategic deployment of a rhetoric that would act on the minds of constituents like a material agent. The transformation catalyzed by Jaja

Okwu, the performer, and undergone by Yoruba, the convert, mimics a political fantasy in which the male performance of nationalist selfhood was imagined as necessary to the interpellation of nationalist subjects. In Yoruba's thwarted relationship with Jaja Okwu as well as in her love affair with the novel's hero and narrator, Ben Ali Lumumba, the narrative is preoccupied with male figures who work to transform Yoruba through language. Operating like a classical satire, the novel's double-voiced narrative parodies the language politics forged by cultural nationalists at the same time that it traces this ideology's inevitable shortfalls.<sup>11</sup> The text thus re-imagines nationalist language theory as a politics that made it virtually impossible to draw meaningful distinctions between charlatanism and activism, between legitimate and illegitimate politics. Because Killens's work highlights both the masculinist and performative dimensions of nationalist language theory, the text traces in specific terms the seductive logic of this politics and presents a more robust articulation of its internal conflicts.

Revealingly, from one reviewer's dismissive claim that the novel is "a scarcely relevant satire of a group of brown ladies whose quaint cotillion is shattered by a dashiki" to critic Addison Gayle's celebratory assertion that Lumumba successfully transforms the cotillion "into a vehicle for black unity," commentators of the era neglected the satire directed at Lumumba's cultural nationalism.<sup>12</sup> And more recent critics have been equally remiss in outlining the full range of Killens's satire.<sup>13</sup> In a characteristic formulation Bernard Bell writes that *The Cotillion* "is a 'Black black comedy' written in 'Afro-Americanese' to satirize debutante balls and 'other bourgeois bullshit . . . pulling Black folks in the opposite direction of peoplehood.'"<sup>14</sup> Parroting Lumumba's own political formulation, Bell's comments suggest that critics have not yet begun to examine the elements of the satire that target cultural nationalism itself; and thus, conventional interpretations of this narrative remain incomplete.

Yet the established reading of Killens's work as wholly committed to the cultural nationalist paradigm is not entirely unfounded. Killens himself reinforced the idea that the novel supported the cultural nationalist agenda when he framed it as primarily an attack on "the folly of black middle-class imitators of the white people who oppress them."<sup>15</sup> In addition, as a highly visible leader in nationalist arts organizations such as the Harlem Writers Guild and a regular contributor to nationalist journals such as *The Black Scholar*, he extolled Black Power's redemptive virtues in matters ranging from labor unions to the role of the author in the historically black college.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, to focus inordinately on Killens's nationalism elides what was a sharp generational and historical divide between the author and younger cultural nationalists. As Harold Cruse points out in his magisterial work *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (1967), Killens, John Henrik

Clark, and other founding members of the Harlem Writers Guild were latecomers to the brand of cultural nationalism that Black Power created.<sup>17</sup> For most of his career Killens had defined himself by an allegiance to an “old left” agenda, a platform that privileged issues such as labor relations and economic parity over cultural particularity and black control over the means of artistic production. For Cruse this late arrival to Black Power nationalism was the mark of a crass opportunism on the part of Killens. But one need not impugn Killens’s motives to recognize that his turn toward cultural nationalism was also a profoundly uneven conversion from an older political paradigm. Killens himself signaled his awareness of this distinction in a 1973 essay that he wrote for the nationalist journal *Black World*. The piece chastises younger nationalists for their failure to view the new nationalisms in relation to a longer history of black political activism. To illustrate his point he recounts a confrontation with a student at Fisk University who was “so militant and bad he was afraid of himself.”<sup>18</sup> Blinded by his own militant self-fashioning, the young man makes the mistake of referring to Paul Robeson as “one of them Tom Niggers,” and Killens sharply reprimands the youth for not recognizing that “Paul Leroy Robeson is our history, our noblest heritage, the most heroic aspect of our artistic history.”<sup>19</sup> This bad object lesson underscored the ahistoricism of younger nationalists and foregrounded the vexed relationship between appearance and substance that troubled their politics. Moreover, the fact that Killens routes his critique of cultural nationalists through a defense of Robeson reaffirms Cruse’s charge that the former still held a deep commitment to the old left despite his professed commitment to Black Power’s cultural agenda. Killens’s response to such divisions was to gloss over them by declaring, “Let the white children have their ‘generation gap,’” for the “main thrust of Black Artists should be to use their art as a weapon to unify our people for the terrible task ahead.”<sup>20</sup> In positing the writer as the figure who overcomes the cleavages within nationalism Killens evaded the Black Power movement’s internal divides. Yet the contradictions that he did not confront in the essay would surface in his fiction to vex the solidarity he pursued.

*Conjuring: the Poetics and Politics of Performatives*

If *The Cotillion* turns a satirical eye toward the dissembling of Jaja Okwu and other male characters, the linguistic theories proffered by cultural nationalists stressed the potential of language to interpellate black Americans as black nationalists. Madhu Dubey gestures toward this theoretical current when she claims that some cultural nationalists seemed to hold “that the new black subject could be conjured into being through an act of language.”<sup>21</sup> As fundamentally astute as

Dubey's comment is, she does not fully unpack the ideological process whereby gender was insinuated into the theoretical discourse about nationalist rhetoric, nor does she flesh out the complex ways that advocates theorized their own language use. By attending more carefully to the self-conscious paradigms of performative language developed by Black Power advocates, one can paint a more complete portrait of how these advocates imagined the interplay between mass mobilization, political rhetoric, and masculinity.

The leading poets among cultural nationalists were particularly interested in the ways that language might play an instrumental role in the hailing of nationalists. Because poetry (like drama) was understood as a medium that facilitated the most immediate access to black communities, poets were keen to theorize the relationship between aesthetics and mass mobilization.<sup>22</sup> Dudley Randle, poet and founder of the nationalist-oriented Broadside Press, aptly captures this collectivist ethos in his claim that "writing for a black audience and out of a black experience, the poets seek to make their work relevant and to direct their audience to black consciousness, black unity, and black power."<sup>23</sup> Critic Donald B. Gibson, another contemporary of the movement, also perceptively comments on the nature of the new aesthetic; the cultural nationalist's "audience is the [black] urban mass, and the level of the writing is pitched accordingly . . . in the interest of communication by means of a medium easily available and well known to both the poet and his audience. Given his ideological bent and his political purposes, the black poet addresses the masses, for he finds the possibility for group solidarity to exist in the working class . . ." <sup>24</sup> Randle and Gibson point out the broadly held notion that nationalist poets were seeking a poetry that would address black subjects en masse and that their work was to be key in shaping the nationalism of that audience.

To further trace the contours of nationalist language theory requires attending to the ideological overlays between language and black masculinity. Both these aspects of nationalist language theory were extensively elaborated in the work of Amiri Baraka. He inherited and refined a nationalist ideology that stressed a division of labor in which women were to be restricted to their domestic duties as nurturers and bearers of children.<sup>25</sup> As Baraka phrases it in his essay "Black Woman," "Sister you in your dealing with the creative (The baby comes out of your body), the submissive, so enveloping . . . must re-create this world pattern by an act of will."<sup>26</sup> Through a familiar patriarchal narrative linking the nature of woman as mother to her political status, Baraka's nationalism explicitly relegates black women's political participation to roles associated with domesticity and reproduction.<sup>27</sup>

Given his discursive removal of women from public politics, it is no surprise that Baraka presumed the centrality of the male political subject within the nationalist public sphere. In a characteristically mas-

culinist articulation, he argues that the Black Power movement needs “a spiritual underbase, and a value system” that would be articulated “through from and about us black son.”<sup>28</sup> Baraka makes the link between this masculinist ideology and the aesthetic mission of the artist clear in the introduction to his influential anthology, *Black Fire*:

In the middle of our Dreams. The black artist. The black man. The holy black man. The man you seek. The climber the striver. . . . We are they whom you seek. Look in Find yr self. Find the being, the speaker. The voice, back dust hover in your soft eye-closings. Is you. . . . We are presenting. Your various selves. We are presenting from God, a tone, your own. Go on. Now.<sup>29</sup>

He grants the black male writer sovereignty over a magical language that moulds the nationalist identity of the black reader into a manifest reality. Baraka theorizes a language that is not merely an instrument of political persuasion but a performative act that makes readers become that which the artist's language signifies. This desire to linguistically produce the nationalist subject further manifests itself in his *In Our Terribleness*, a chapbook featuring photographs of black city dwellers with Baraka's poetry as running commentary. Included in the volume is a chrome plated insert with the book's title typed on the surface. As readers gaze at the insert, they can view their images reflected back to them, fusing with the words “In Our Terribleness” upon the metallic surface. Through this specular event Baraka dramatizes the linguistic transformation of the subject posited in his theory.<sup>30</sup> Readers were to observe themselves in the midst of becoming living exemplars of Baraka's words and theory.

Deeply influenced by Baraka, Haki Madhubuti, the poet who scholar Jennifer Jordan claims “sold more poetry than any poet, white or black during the 1960s” also developed an aesthetic that privileges masculine performativity.<sup>31</sup> His 1969 collection *Don't Cry Scream* writes a topography of nationalist politics in which men and women occupy distinct political spheres. As he writes in “A Poem for Negro Intellectuals,” the “blackwoman” is to be “un-noticed / throughout the / world,” as she waits “hoping / looking / for / blk / man-actions / from action-livers. / & / blackmen, / action givers to the / world . . .”<sup>32</sup> Indicative of a philosophy that pervades the collection, this passage imagines masculine subjects as the agents of social change and women as passive spectators of transformative male acts. Madhubuti's foregrounding of male agency plays out further in his claim that “the black poet by defining and legitimizing his own reality becomes a positive force in the community, for he will be an example for his community rather than another contradictor.”<sup>33</sup> In forging the ideology through which black subjects experience their reality, the male poet employs language “like a razor,” for “it's sharp & will cut deep, not out to wound but to kill the inactive blackmind.”<sup>34</sup> The material-

ist image of a poetry that roots out the psychic complacency of black subjects suggests the degree to which Madhubuti imagines that this language works as an agent in the reconstruction of black consciousness. As both an embodiment of an ideal nationalist subjectivity and the purveyor of a language that refashions the selfhood of the black American, the male poet was positioned as the medium whereby nationalist modes of being would proliferate.

Baraka and Madhubuti merely affirmed a broader predilection for the powers of performative language among cultural nationalists.<sup>35</sup> The poets' theories about a language that actively operates on the consciousness of black subjects had counterparts in the more academic linguistic theory of the era. Though this work was not as aggressive in linking performative language to masculinity, it did reinforce the notion that the performance of nationalist rhetoric would have a uniquely transformative effect on the black masses. In their *Black Language*, Malachi Andrews and Paul T. Owens put forth a model for the consolidation of nationalist consciousness in which "Black Americans refuse to refer to themselves by the use of white historically developed terms . . . as a precursor to Black liberation."<sup>36</sup> Through the production of a nationalist language that "is not only spoken but acted" black Americans realize new social habits, for "with control of the language one may live forms of life that afford revolutionary realization through language as well as a mode of communication free from foreign philosophical assumptions."<sup>37</sup> While their model does not reiterate Baraka's fascination with the incantatory, this linguistic theory is performative both in its suggestion that that words remake the consciousness of the listeners and that utterance ushers in new habits for everyday living. In a similar vein Grace Holt outlines a logic of performance in which the "personhood of all the individuals in a communication event," is forged.<sup>38</sup> Within this communal space "reality is viewed as an entity of the speaker/ listener which the performer manipulates. The communication created equals the person. Thus, the good or excellent 'rapper' is honored for controlling situations in such a manner that all involved participants create 'personhood' to some degree and profit there from."<sup>39</sup> By Holt's view, performative linguistic utterances interpellate all participants, and thus serve as the bedrock of a black communal ontology.

Given this preoccupation with the agency of language, one might be tempted to equate black nationalist language theories with more well-known postmodern theories of the performative. Certainly, nationalists share with thinkers like Jacques Derrida and J. L. Austin a conception of words as a doing in the sense that such utterance "produces or transforms a situation, it operates."<sup>40</sup> However, while a theorist like Austin limits the notion of performative language to idiosyncratic statements like declaring a marriage (I do), making a bet (I bet),

or christening a ship (I name), nationalists argue that the agency of performative language is in its capacity to actively forge political subjects.<sup>41</sup> With a sense of language as a social agent, Black Power advocates stress that nationalist utterance works dialectically to disentangle black subjects from the ideologies that interpellate them within white American nationalism and to form an alternative grounds for being.<sup>42</sup> Although nationalist models of performative language, like their postmodern counterparts, suggest that identities are fashioned through language, they posit a more racially essentialist model of how words relate to being. Poststructuralist models such as Jacques Derrida's notion of citationality and Judith Butler's concept of performative parody imply that human identity is as mutable as discourse itself, but Black Power ideology insists that nationalist language steer blacks toward identities that are more true to the black subject's originary essence.<sup>43</sup> In a formulation characteristic of such essentialist arguments James T. Stewart argues, "The black artist must construct models which correspond to his own reality. The models must be non-white. Our models must be consistent with a black style, our natural aesthetic will be merely following the natural demands of our culture."<sup>44</sup> Despite the areas of overlap between black nationalist and postmodern language theory, the racial essentialism of Black Power advocates prevented them from fully embracing more malleable conceptions of the self.

#### *Satire and the End(S) of Performativity*

The ideological links between Killens and the language theories put forth by cultural nationalists can be found not only in his representation of male nationalists but in his own expository analysis of nationalist rhetoric. In an article published one year before *The Cotillion* he endorsed a model of language theory that is grounded in a desire to refashion black subjects according to a nationalist model. The piece references a passage from Amiri Baraka's poem "Black People" as a vital example of the poet's political contribution to black nationalism. An incendiary poem in which the speaker advocates that blacks "make our own world" by looting white stores, "smashing at jellywhite faces," and killing "the white man," "Black People" was used to reinforce Baraka's complicity in the Newark riot of 1967.<sup>45</sup> He was taken into custody during the tumult and later charged with resisting arrest and unlawfully carrying firearms. The judge, arguing that the poem potentially incited rioters by making black subjects enact its mandates, sentenced Baraka harshly, yet this legal reasoning also ironically legitimated the poet's language theory. Notwithstanding the poem's controversial history, Killens celebrates the work as, "my favorite poem by brother Imamu."<sup>46</sup> He argues that when the poem advocates the black use of the phrase "'Up against the wall motherfucker. This is a

stickup!” it reveals that “Blacks are in the process of creating a new morality, an aspect of which is: ‘It is more honorable to steal than to beg.’”<sup>47</sup> By consolidating this new “morality” Baraka does “a beautifully constructive job in trying to unify the Black community in Newark.”<sup>48</sup> If Newark courts imagined Baraka’s use of performative language as evidence of a criminal propensity to incite riot, Killens understood that language as an effective instrument in the production of a vital black morality and communal identity. In his endorsement of Baraka’s phrase, Killens cites a passage that according to his contemporary, Florence Turbee, had become a rallying cry for both “rebellious students at Columbia and the Black Panthers.”<sup>49</sup> Killens treatment of performative language then was not only part of his novelistic imagination but an extension of the political landscape that he actively participated in as an advocate.

Since Killens celebrates Baraka’s performative language, he might seem an unlikely candidate to trace the limitations of that theory. His endorsement of the ideological effect of the poem certainly reflects Killens’s broader commitment to nationalist ideology before the 1971 publication of *The Cotillion*. Indeed, the reception of Killens’s fiction preceding *The Cotillion* only confirms his credentials as a committed cultural nationalist. Critics in the early seventies were assured of his nationalist commitments. So much so that his novels *And Then We Heard Thunder* (1963) and *Sippi* (1967) were criticized or praised according to what one commentator termed “obvious propagandistic intent.”<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, it is precisely because Killens was aesthetically and politically earnest in his profession of cultural nationalism that the political skepticism of *The Cotillion* demands further investigation. As Killens’s only satirical novel, the work lacks the straightforward political commitment to nationalism found in his earlier novels and therefore, signals the author’s anxieties about the nexus of nationalism and performativity.

A crucial strain of the novel’s political cynicism emerges as the narrative brings together the performative politics of cultural nationalism and the culture of television. The text stages this collision in a scene where Yoruba Lovejoy and her lover Ben Ali Lumumba tune in to watch as Jomo Mamadou Zero the Third, a well-known “revolutionary” nationalist, makes an appearance on the Johnny Carson show. Introduced by Carson as “the greatest revolutionary of all times” and a man “more dangerous than Malcolm X,” a key element of Zero’s appeal for the white television audience is his highly theatrical display of nationalist militancy (179). As Carson phrases it when he greets Zero, “sit right here, Jomo, my man, and tell us how you’re going to overthrow the government and kill all the white folks in the world” (179). Encouraged by his host and the audience’s “standing ovation,” Zero steps “toward the center stage and the spotlight” and issues a ven-

omous attack on his white audience. He proclaims, “I wished all you pale-faced pigs a bad damn evening, you swinish cannibalistic motherfuckas! And after them kind words, I’m going to say some mean things to you” (180). The more incendiary Zero’s rhetoric becomes, the more Carson and his audience applaud. In this way the text suggests that Zero’s assertion of his nationalist selfhood is easily reconciled with the capitalism of televised entertainment. Ben Ali Lumumba’s observation that “no matter what we say to Whitey, we always end up as his entertainment” confirms the novel’s own anxiety about the ease with which performative linguistic rituals can be re-coded as entertainment (180). Killens’s satirical critique echoes yet articulates more sharply his contemporaries’ trepidation about the ways that performative language politics might become a mere commodity. Commentators from the era such as the essayist Julius Lester echoed the novel’s concern about co-optation, but *The Cotillion* specifically dramatizes the social logic whereby a form of performative nationalism might become complicit in the hollowing out of nationalist political ideology.<sup>51</sup>

If Zero embodies the novel’s apprehension about the ease with which performative strategies of resistance are co-opted, the novel’s hero, Ben Ali Lumumba represents the text’s more profound skepticism about the merits of political performativity. The scene in which Yoruba Lovejoy first encounters Ben Ali Lumumba offers a case in point. On stage at “the hip Café Uptown Society” Lumumba reads a poem that begins with the assertion “A—Nigger ain’t—shit! / but can you dig it? / The Black man is the hope of Mankind” (61). Drawing “wild applause” for his stirring introduction Lumumba goes on to declaim, “We Black folks are the cleansing flood. / And we are men, not motherfuckas. / Screwed without enjoyment all these centuries, / Mother Africa doesn’t need her sons to do it to her” (62). Described by the narrator as a speaker “masculine and deep in voice” in the Robeson and Marshall style,” Lumumba’s assertion of his masculinity and his representation of African colonization as a crisis for Africa’s “sons” give his politics a legibility and authenticity easily “read” by his nationalist audience. Indeed, by comparing Lumumba’s voice to performer and activist Paul Robeson, the man who Killens elsewhere defined as a political exemplar who “insisted on his manhood,” the narrative marks this as an especially masculinist display of political authenticity.<sup>52</sup>

Although Yoruba and the audience initially are convinced of Lumumba’s nationalist authenticity, the narrative casts him as a decidedly inauthentic political actor. When Lumumba the “manchild” leaves the stage and approaches Yoruba, exaggerating his “Afro-American walk, masculine like Africa,” he “stumbled as he neared her table, he and his dark glasses in this dark room with all his dark brothers and sisters,”

and like “a blind man” struggles to find his seat (64). The audience’s faith in a racial essence manifest in the reciprocal recognition of Lumumba’s authentic performance leaves the performer and his audience in the dark. And the prosthetic identity that initially serves to convince Lumumba’s audience of his authenticity is recast as the source of his blindness. As the scene progresses, the disingenuous nature of Lumumba’s performance becomes all the more apparent. Exposing his own masquerade, Lumumba speaks to Yoruba in a voice “unlike the one he’d read his poetry with” and “all his blackness seemed to vanish in the darkness of the dark” (64). Yoruba perceives this second voice as “thin and reedier than before, like a Georgia peckerwood who had graduated from Harvard and done a stretch in Hollywood” (65). Lumumba soon reveals that his reading is “‘jive’ concocted ‘‘for the birds, the black ones I mean. All you got to do for this crowd here is call whitey a bunch of motherhumpers and say black is beautiful and like you got it made’’” (67–68). Lumumba acknowledges that his performance is no less a hustle than that enacted by Jaja Okwu, and thus inaugurates the novel’s investigation of masculinist performance. Lumumba and his audience enact a curious ritual in which the audience, knowing the gestures of effective performance, merely confirms that the performer accurately mirrors established stylistic codes. The content of the politics is not in what one achieves in instrumental terms because the political end is the mutual affirmation of the performative code itself. Since the legitimacy of this politics rests on such sanctioning, the distinctions between the fraud and the authentic become virtually impossible to make. Any semblance of quality performance would be legitimate. So by reducing politics to the vagaries of style, cultural nationalists leave themselves with no grounds for judging political legitimacy or establishing political accountability.

The very impossibility of defining the politically authentic within a politics based on rhetorical performance is a primary subject in the novel’s corrosive satire. The novel’s central drama, Lumumba’s courtship of Yoruba and the Pygmalion-like transformation of her into an embodiment of cultural nationalism, parodies the masculinist logic of political mobilization that nationalists produced. In a scene at Lumumba’s Harlem apartment the narrator makes the link between Lumumba’s seduction and the constitution of Yoruba’s identity clear as he

talked on and on eternally, as she watched the words flow from his mouth. She the girl, Yoruba, was on a trip now. She was seasick over words. Tripped and word drunk on Lumumba’s mighty Ship of Glib. Which did not run on steam or the Grace of God or horsepower or nuclear power, but word power, a steady heady flow of the thing that was always with God, in the beginning.

She got up and went into her dance. . . . all her inhibitions, even those lady Daphne had instilled, gone with the selfhoodship of the words and music. . . . Africa calling, reclaiming her own, her very very own. Lumumba calling. (120–03)

One could interpret the euphoric tone of this passage as a straightforward celebration of Lumumba's ability to mobilize a language that works on Yoruba like an incantation. His words wash away her training by the black bourgeoisie and bring her back to her essential African self. A canny recounting of the linguistic theories posited by figures like Baraka, Lumumba's words make a new consciousness and a new nationalist subject. But as the parity between Lumumba's "Ship of Glib" and Jaja Okwu's "glib tongue" suggests, Lumumba's verbosity locates him squarely within the performative dissembling of the hustler. Moreover, while the passage casts Lumumba's verbal prowess as divine in origin, it also represents Yoruba's surrender to his language as a drunken sickness. Registering the exalted status of language in nationalist ideology at the same time that it undoes the instrumental deployment of that speech, the passage is indicative of the novel's treatment of linguistic performativity.

This text's capacity to both reproduce the euphoric political ethos of performative language and undermine its political effect forms the core of its satirical commentary on performativity. The representation of Yoruba's political conversion proves particularly instructive on this front. Coerced by her bourgeois mother to compete for "Queen of the Ball" in Harlem's "Grand Cotillion," Yoruba attempts to salvage some personal satisfaction by inviting Lumumba as her escort. While Lumumba initially views the cotillion as "bourgeois bullshit" that pulls "Black folks in the opposite direction of peoplehood," upon further consideration, he decides that the cotillion offers an opportunity to affirm the cultural politics of black nationalism (156). Lumumba and Yoruba conspire to transform the cultural politics of the cotillion by wearing their hair in afros and donning African clothing. They participate in a form of nationalist resistance in which the trappings of bourgeois culture are usurped by an "African" culture putatively more true to the essence of the black subject. Lumumba's performative language again serves as an instrument in remaking Yoruba as an embodiment of cultural nationalism. Indoctrinating Yoruba in the ways of cultural nationalism, Lumumba talks "on and on like this for days it seemed; She was washed away by ocean waves of words, sweet words, meaningless words, which meant nothing to the girl and yet meant everything. Yes, he could turn her on with words, and knew it. Sometimes he forgot to turn the faucet off in time" (157). Lumumba's performance plays as both uncannily forceful and utterly devoid of meaning. He does not have any mastery over the performative utterance as such, for his language seems to operate on Yoruba independent of his intentions. As the narrator phrases it in a critical comment on the excesses of Lumumba's performative language, "Maybe one day he would learn to keep his big mouth shut when he was far out ahead. It was a good thing he was not a salesman. He would always oversell"

(158). The novel registers its anxieties about a language that renders the speaker irrelevant, a language that acts by speaking the speaker as well as the addressee. Put another way, Killens's novel is troubled by the notion that the forms of nationalist consciousness take precedence over all other political protocols.

Through its representation of Lumumba's faith in performative language the novel also underscores another disturbing implication. Because Lumumba, like many cultural nationalists, posits language as a political act, it becomes increasingly difficult for him to determine the distinction between action and rhetoric. He attempts to establish just such a distinction when he proclaims, "I got a closet full of African identity, like authentic from the source and jive. That ain't nothing new. But most black people up until now have been only acting black. That ain't nothing new. Now it's time for some black doers. Now exorcise the Gods to issue forth Black doers doing Black. Let the conjure-man get busy" (102). Lumumba's pronouncement is an effort to draw conventional distinctions between a cultural performance such as adopting African influenced fashion and a purposeful political act such as ending police brutality. However, while he assumes that "doing black" constitutes a consequentially distinct social action from "acting black" that difference cannot actually be maintained. "To act black" and "to do black" would both constitute instances of performance defined by a legible set of social codes, gestures, and rituals. Thus, Lumumba's call for a more substantial and active form of political mobilization is itself an exhortation to perform. Even as Lumumba posits an alternative to a limited performative politics, his circular logic reveals his inability to construct a viable and effective political alternative to the performative.

The narrative tracks the disturbing circularity of Lumumba's claims in the very rhetoric he uses to generate this false distinction. By demanding that the conjure-man "get busy," Lumumba does not articulate a political alternative to performance; rather, he issues a summons for more performative utterance like his own. Among cultural nationalists of the era the term conjure-man was a common trope used to reference the magical rhetorical prowess of black male poets like Lumumba.<sup>53</sup> As he summons the conjure-man, Lumumba calls upon those who would enact his own brand of performative utterance. Via a subtle rhetorical sleight of hand, nationalist performative utterance becomes effective political action. Moreover, it may be the false distinction that Lumumba makes into a real one that allows him to simultaneously confess his own fraudulence and yet continue to imagine that his constant linguistic performance does political work. Dramatizing Lumumba's failure of critical distinction at the level of the word, the novel highlights a key ideological shortfall within cultural nationalism.

Ultimately, the force of the numerous contradictions that the novel sets in motion around Lumumba's agenda threaten to create a political implosion. Nevertheless, dressed in dashikis and wearing their hair in afros, Yoruba, Lumumba, and their co-conspirators prepare to violate the bourgeois etiquette of the cotillion. To rally the nervous Yoruba for her first public display as "a natural woman" Lumumba asserts that "these colored cotillions are aimed against our race pride—against our sense of Black identity—against nationhood and unity. But we can change this thing tonight into its very opposite—and aim the guns the other way" (257). Still operating within a mode somewhere between hustler and prophet, Lumumba successfully props up Yoruba, for "she knew if she were an Eskimo, he could sell her ice cubes at the North Pole in the dead of winter if he talked to her long enough" (257). Lumumba, Yoruba, and other formerly bourgeois subjects eventually march across a stage at the cotillion where he issues his final speech. Addressing his middle class audience, he exhorts, "Come out of the cotton patch, all you Tom's and Aunt Jemimas! Follow us to liberation! Be done with false illusions! Come with us to the real world!" Capping off his triumphant harangue with a salute and a call to "Up the Black Nation," Lumumba attempts to transform the consciousness of the affected bourgeoisie through a speech that mirrors his efforts to interpellate Yoruba as a nationalist subject. His performance succeeds, causing even hard-boiled members of the bourgeoisie to shout "'Black Power!' and 'Up the Black Nation!'" (263). Despite the resounding victory of this cultural coup d'état and the narrator's assertion that members of the Harlem bourgeoisie would "never be the same," the novel closes with a commentary laden with ambivalence:

Which just goes to show you, you can take democracy and integration and due process, and all them damn amendments too far. Particularly when it comes to colored people. Especially them that's truly Black. The kind that's always screaming about manhood and dignity, peace and power and liberation and Nationhood. The Black extremist demagogues who can't be bribed, and so you know they can't be trusted. That's the thing you got to watch. Understand? (264)

If the apparent meaning of the passage suggests that Lumumba is an authentically "black" cultural nationalist who is above corruption, Lumumba's own constantly shifting identity throws into question the very possibility that performance could be used as a measure of political success. As Lumumba himself indicates in the Café Uptown scene, his own "screaming about manhood and dignity" does not signify his political authenticity. Rather, this self-assertion is a ritually produced effect of a political ideology in which the veneer of authenticity can be easily recreated by a disingenuous subject. After all, Lumumba cynically dons the codes of legible political authenticity whenever it serves his purposes. And the narrator's ambiguous reference to the au-

thentic nationalists as “demagogues who can’t be bribed” nor “trusted” opens up the possibility that Lumumba’s cultural project can be read as a form of suspect rhetorical coercion.

*Nationalist Criticism and the Limits of Dissent*

Given the various devices that the novel employs to foreground the potential commercial co-optation, masculinist self-display, and modes of coercion underlying nationalist theories of performative language, it is remarkable that Killens’s contemporaries failed to register the political implications of these contradictions. Aside from one critic’s remark that he was flummoxed by the text’s suggestion that Lumumba is a nationalist full of “sound and fury signifying nothing,” critics interpreted the novel as a celebration of cultural nationalism.<sup>54</sup> The critical establishment’s own investment in cultural nationalism during the early seventies might account for the inability or refusal to explore the implications of the text’s ambiguous portrait of Lumumba’s politics. Nationalist critics such as Addison Gayle, Hoyt Fuller, and James R. Frakes sought to ferret out the particularities of black culture as a means of galvanizing a new political consciousness, and consequently they would have had no vested interest in addressing ideological problems that challenged the nationalism that informed their own critical praxis.<sup>55</sup>

Gayle’s treatment of *The Cotillion* in his important critical survey, *The Way of the New World: The Black Novel in America*, proves instructive on this point. In framing his discussion, Gayle applauds the novel’s contribution to a nationalist project that “does expose the enemy, praise the people, and support the revolution.”<sup>56</sup> Quoting almost verbatim from the work of Ron Karenga, Gayle’s formulation reveals his adoption of a cultural nationalist manifesto as a principle of literary criticism.<sup>57</sup> Within such a critical framework the value of literary art lies in its capacity to foster “the raising of consciousness by producing new images, to counter those which have circumscribed blacks since the middle ages.”<sup>58</sup> Consistent with the assumptions undergirding his critical project, Gayle presents Lumumba as an embodiment of the new nationalism, referring to him as a “teacher, soothsayer, and messenger to the people.”<sup>59</sup> Since Gayle ultimately aligns his own critical project with the cultural nationalism of Lumumba, attending to the ways in which the novel itself undermines that project would seem an improbable critical approach. Such a blind spot among critics suggests why critical conversations that were contemporaneous with the novel did not address its satirical treatment of Lumumba’s cultural nationalism.

It is also certainly plausible to understand the interpretive problem raised by critics like Gayle as a function of the structural complexity

of satire itself. If satire functions on the one hand by reproducing a social discourse and on the other hand by inserting textual cues to signify its ironic perspective on that discourse, it is always possible for readers to overlook the secondary cues.<sup>60</sup> Jonathan Swift's famous assertion that "satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do discover everybody's face but their own"<sup>61</sup> eloquently articulates one way in which readers selectively interpret the layers of meaning within a satirical narrative.<sup>61</sup> Perhaps because Killens's novel so accurately mimics the rhetorical style and political affect of this cultural nationalism, the text virtually guarantees that a certain readership can read it straight. For those critics who interpret the text as a straightforward allegorical testament to the transformative powers of black culture, the ironies that swirl about Lumumba certainly did not figure in their interpretations. One might say then, that the form of the satire itself helped to forestall a more substantial investigation of the masculinist performativity that was so central to nationalist ideology.

But neither the ideology of critics nor the satirical mode itself fully accounts for the lack of critical attention given to the novel's satiric commentary on Lumumba's cultural nationalism. To some degree the novel participates in the containment of its own critical intervention. Nowhere is this complicity more evident than in Yoruba's repeated political assent in the face of Lumumba's duplicitous behavior. Despite her awareness that Lumumba dons different identities to suit his own purposes, Yoruba continues to accept him as "her Captain." In the novel's willful insistence on her allegiance to a figure whom she acknowledges is a counterpart of the charlatan Jaja Okwu, the text reveals its own resistance to a more thorough exploration of its dissent. A scene in which Yoruba invites Lumumba home to meet her mother illustrates the problem. Lumumba assumes yet another guise before going to the Lovejoy home. When Yoruba opens the door to greet her lover, she is shocked to discover "a colored dude all decked out in a much sharp American suit . . . White on white shirt, green polka-dot tie brand new, gleaming wing tipped shoes. So sharp he was almost bleeding. Crew-cut like the Ivy League" (162). With his new identity in place Lumumba proceeds to dupe Yoruba's mother into believing he is indeed a middle class preppie. His duplicity infuriates Yoruba, and when the couple leaves the Lovejoy home, Yoruba angrily chastises him for deceiving her parents and for failing to show them "a man with revolution and liberation in his guts" (170). The text glosses over the numerous questions that Lumumba's prosthetic identities raise in ways that are quite revealing. Lumumba accounts for his ability to swap identities by asserting that "this crew cut thing ain't going to mess up my head not one little biddy bit, but them damn cotillions mess up a whole heap of potentially beautiful Black heads for days" (174). If as Lumumba suggests, style bears no relationship to one's pol-

itics, then this fact would seem to undermine his assertion that the “white” cotillion does irreparable damage to black subjects. That is, according to Lumumba’s own formulation, the traditional cotillion too can be understood as a mere superficial display that signifies nothing about the politics of the people involved. Lumumba’s argument would also undermine the political rationale that governs his plan to subvert the cotillion by donning African garb. And more broadly such a view would obviate the need for the novel’s own critique of black Americans like Daphne who ape the dominant culture and thereby betray the foundations of black being. These contradictions do not substantially shake Yoruba’s faith in Lumumba. She maintains her commitment to him, for “beard or no beard he was the blessed face God or Allah used when He made man in his own image” (176). Of course one could read Yoruba’s allegiance to Lumumba as a kind of bad object lesson for a nationalist readership. That is, her unwavering faith in Lumumba’s political legitimacy could stand as a cautionary tale for those who would blindly embrace the emancipatory potential of performative cultural nationalism. Nonetheless, her continued faith also prevents her from further interrogating the political meaning of blackening the cotillion. By locating this fawning passivity in Yoruba, the novel skirts a more incisive engagement with the contradictions that it has raised about performative politics. Her allegiance may reflect the novel’s lingering investment in maintaining this performative politics as a viable alternative.

Furthermore, by insisting on Yoruba’s blindness in the face of Lumumba’s creaky political authenticity, the novel reveals its own investment in the masculinist structures of identification that Lumumba embodies. But for the narrative’s rigid commitment to a structure in which the male subject holds utter sway over the female, Yoruba might have directly challenged the political logic of blackening the cotillion. In this sense the novel’s own masculinist impulses blunt its sharper moments of satire. Had the novel treated Yoruba as a character who possessed autonomous selfhood outside of Lumumba’s hypnotic performances, the text might have created a character with the capacity to more adequately challenge Lumumba’s political formulations.

Still the ambiguities of the text’s satire do not erase its exposure of any number of inconsistencies in Lumumba’s political program. The narrative robustly stages the ways in which his emphasis on masculinist performativity creates a dubious form of activism. Lumumba himself is quite cynical about whether his performances do anything more than mirror the established codes of nationalist authenticity. Despite the novel’s own masculinist treatment of Yoruba, the characterization of Lumumba’s performativity consistently undercuts the generative effects of his nationalism. By the end of the novel, one can only straightforwardly accept the political merit of his plan to blacken the cotillion

by repressing the text's tendency to associate Lumumba with charlatanism and dissembling. Critics who manage to read the text as a straightforward allegory about the transformation of black political consciousness do so only by failing to address the host of ironies that surround the figure of Lumumba. Whether in terms of critical omission or in terms of the novel's own containment of its critical impulses, the silences surrounding this novel speak eloquently of the pathways not taken and the vanished ideological conflicts of the past.

If the novel's subtle interplay with the language theories of cultural nationalists constitute one elision fostered by critics, its provocative treatment of the masculinist nature of that ideology constitutes another. The text's skepticism about a politics that placed the performance of masculine identity at its center provides readers with an alternate way of considering the discursive links between creative writers and the ideologies produced by the Black Power movement. According to existing scholarship, the significant critiques of the era's masculinist and patriarchal impulses were issued by women who voiced their discontent with a movement that worked to subordinate female subjects.<sup>62</sup> While this account is not wholly inaccurate, it does constrain unnecessarily our understanding of how masculinity was insinuated into the ideology of the movement. As the dialectic between Killens's novel and the language theory of cultural nationalists suggests, the movement's privileging of masculinity included and yet extended beyond the issue of asymmetrical power relations between men and women. In presenting this masculinist politics as one that is limited because of its undue emphasis on an easily co-opted set of performative codes, the novel presents a crucial dissent.

Undoubtedly, the novel's own complicity in the subordination of Yoruba would prevent anyone from arguing that this text contains a feminist politics as such. Indeed, Killens himself demonstrated repeatedly in his essays from the period that he was preoccupied with redeeming black masculinity that has been remarked by feminists. As he phrases it in a piece examining blacks' historic enslavement and disfranchisement, "the struggle between the black man and his country is all about his manhood, his black manhood, which has been denied him ever since he was brought here in slavery."<sup>63</sup> Killens inscribes a whole history of resistance against subjugation as the black male's quest to preserve his masculinity. Also a purveyor of Black Power's masculinist sexual ideology, Killens argues that "during the days of slavery the black man was given another ultimatum: deny your manhood or die. And ever since we were brought here in chains we have been cast in the role of eunuchs in a great white harem."<sup>64</sup> The prohibitions and limits placed on black male sexuality become the organizing narrative frames in Killens's analysis of slavery. Echoing the ideology of Eldridge Cleaver and other Black Power leaders, he evokes

the familiar trope of the castrated and debilitated black male body to represent blacks' collective oppression.<sup>65</sup>

Because Killens reproduced the masculinist discourse of Black Power advocates in other contexts, his novel's more critical treatment of masculine performativity proves all the more significant. *The Cotillion* reveals a skepticism about the warrants of masculine ideology that is at odds with his own masculinist tendencies. An analysis restricted to exploring Killens's complicity in ideologies that promote gender inequality would in all likelihood dismiss his work as a mere reflection of the dominant discourse of the movement. By attending more carefully to the subtle shifts of identification and disavowal in the period, one can glean that even the most aggressive advocates of male entitlement could not fully evade the unsettling implications of the gender politics that they abetted.

### Notes

- 1 William L. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-75* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 308.
- 2 Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide* (1973; New York: Writers and Readers, 1995), 70, 130.
- 3 Robert L. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America: An Analytical History* (1969; New York: Anchor, 1970).
- 4 Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Random House, 1967), 34-5.
- 5 Ron Karenga, *The Quotable Karenga* (Los Angeles: US Organization, 1967), 7.
- 6 Malachi Andrews, *Psychoblackology: Science of Black Movement, Dance, Sports, Soul* (Berkeley: Achebe Enterprises, 1974), 3.
- 7 Don L. Lee, *Directionscore: Selected and New Poems* (Detroit: Broadside Press, 1971), 100.
- 8 Sonia Sanchez, *We a BaddDDD People* (Detroit: Broadside Press, 1970), 15.
- 9 John Oliver Killens, *The Cotillion, or One Good Bull Is Half the Herd* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1971; New York: Ballantine, 1988), 69. Subsequent references to this text are cited parenthetically.
- 10 See Calvin Hernton, *Black Power, White Hatred, and Sexual Hang-Ups* (New York: Random House, 1971), 180; Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton* (New York: Random House, 1970; Baltimore Black Classics Press, 1991), 395, 397-98; Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* (New York: Pantheon, 1992), 189-96.
- 11 See Steven Weisenburger, *Fables of Subversion: Satire and the American Novel, 1930-1980* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 11-12, 1; Frank Palmeri, *Satire in Narrative: Petronius, Swift, Melville, and Pynchon* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 4-5. On dialogism see Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse and the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 259-422.
- 12 First quote from review of *The Cotillion*, *The New Yorker*, 29 May 1971, 90. Second quote, Addison Gayle, *The Way of the New World: The Black Author in America* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1975), 271. Other reviews that neglect the novel's satirical treatment of cultural nationalism include N. Owana, review of *The Cotillion*, *The Village Voice*, 17 August 1972, 24; Leonard Fleischer, review of *The Cotillion*, *Saturday Review*, 6 March 1971, 36; James R. Frakes, review of *The Cotillion*, *The New York Times Book Review*, 17 January 1971, 4, 34.
- 13 See Wanda Macon, "Killens, John O.," *The Concise Oxford Companion to African American Literature*, ed. William L. Andrews, Frances Smith Foster, and Trudier Harris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 244-45.

- 14 Bernard Bell, *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 252; and Darryl Dickson-Carr, *African American Satire: The Sacredly Profane Novel* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001), 142–49.
- 15 John Oliver Killens, “The Development of the Black Psyche: An Interview with John Oliver Killens,” *Black Literature Forum* 11, no. 3 (1997): 86.
- 16 On labor see “Black Labor and the Black Liberation Movement,” *The Black Scholar* 2, no. 2 (1970): 33–39. On black colleges see his “The Artist in the Black University,” *The Black Scholar* 1, no. 1 (1969): 61–65. He also addresses Black Power’s applicability in theater, “Broadway in Black and White,” *African Forum* 1 (1966): 66–70. On Killens’s activism within the Harlem Writers Guild and nationalist publications see John Oliver Killens, “Rap-pin’ with Myself” in *Amistad*, ed. John A. Williams and Charles F. Harris (New York: Random House, 1971), 130; Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: A Historical Analysis of the Failure of Black Leadership* (1967; New York: Quill, 1984), 247–48, 498–518, 561–62.
- 17 Cruse, 235–52, 560–62.
- 18 John Oliver Killens, “The Black Culture Generation Gap,” *Black World* (August 1973): 24.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 *Ibid.*, 27.
- 21 Madhu Dubey, *Black Women Novelists and the Nationalist Aesthetic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 26–27.
- 22 On poets’ widespread interest in reaching a mass audience see Stephen Henderson, introduction, *Understanding the New Black Poetry*, ed. Stephen Henderson (New York: Morrow, 1973), 16–18; Donald B. Gibson, introduction, *Modern Black Poets*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 10–11; Gwendolyn Brooks, *Report from Part One* (Detroit: Broadside Press, 1972), 183; Dubey, 22. On theater see Kimberly Benston, “The Aesthetic of Modern Black Drama: From Mimesis to Methexis,” *The Theater of Black Americans: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Errol Hill (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1980), 61–78.
- 23 Dudley Randle, “Black Poetry,” *Black Expression*, ed. Addison Gayle (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1969), 112.
- 24 Gibson, 10.
- 25 For more on this influence see Dubey, 18.
- 26 Amiri Baraka, *Raise, Race, Rays, Raze: Essays Since 1965* (New York: Random House, 1971), 152.
- 27 A similar discourse is discussed in Dubey, 18.
- 28 For quote see Baraka, “The Fire Must Be Permitted to Burn Full Up,” *Raise, Race, Rays, Raze*, 118. For illustration of the same logic see Amiri Baraka, “Islam and Black Art,” interview with Marvin X and Faruk, *Negro Digest*, January 1969: 4–7; Amiri Baraka, “Meanings of Black Nationalism,” *Raise, Race, Rays, Raze*, 109.
- 29 Amiri Baraka, foreword, *Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing*, ed. LeRoi Jones and Larry Neal (New York: William Morrow, 1968), xvii–xviii.
- 30 Amiri Baraka and Fundi [Bill Abernathy], *In Our Terribleness (Some Elements and Meaning in Black Style)* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1970).
- 31 Quote is from Jennifer Jordan, “Cultural Nationalism in the 1960s: Politics and Poetry,” *Race, Politics, and Culture: Critical Essays on the Radicalism of the 1960s*, ed. Adolph Reed, Jr. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 42. For an example of Baraka’s masculinist ideology, see Haki Madhubuti’s *Directionscore*, 88. In this section Madhubuti quotes from the most masculinist passages of Baraka’s foreword in *Black Fire* and thus locates himself within a discourse that privileges the incantatory power of the black male poet.
- 32 *Directionscore*, 107–08.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 86.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 87.
- 35 James Stewart, “The Development of the Revolutionary Black Artist,” *Black Fire*, 3. For other examples see Malachi Andrews, *Psychoblackology*, 17–18; Don L. Lee, “Directions for Black Writers,” *The Black Scholar* (December 1969): 56–57; Larry Neal, “Black Art and Black Liberation,” *The Black Revolution* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing, 1970), 39–40.
- 36 Malachi Andrews and Paul T. Owens, *Black Language* (Los Angeles, Seymour-Smith, 1973), 3.

- 37 Andrews and Owens, 5.
- 38 Grace Holt, "Metaphor, Black Discourse Style, and Cultural Reality," *Ebonics: The True Language of Black Folks*, ed. Robert L. Williams (St. Louis: The Institute of Black Studies, 1975), 91.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 On citationality see Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context," *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 325–30, 328. The literature on performativity is far too capacious to deal with fully here. For a concise overview of the literature see E. Warwick Slinn, "Poetry and Culture: Performativity and Critique," *New Literary History*, 30, no. 1 (1999): 57–74. Also see Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, introduction, *Performativity and Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 1–16.
- 41 J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 4–7.
- 42 Sara Webster Fabio, "Tripping with Black Writing," *The Black Aesthetic*, ed. Addison Gayle (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1971), 178–80; Paula Giddings, "From a Black Perspective: The Poetry of Don Lee," *Amistad*, 311–12; June Jordan, "White English: The Politics of Language," *Black World* (August 1973): 6–10; Keorapetse Kgositsile, "Dealing with Life," *Black World* (June 1972): 25–27; Geneva Smitherman, "The Power of the Rap: The Black Idiom and the New Black Poetry," *Twentieth Century Literature* 19 (1973): 259–63.
- 43 On citationality see Derrida, 325–30. On preformatted parody see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 24–25, 134–49.
- 44 Stewart, "The Development of the Revolutionary Black Artist," *Black Fire*, 3.
- 45 Poem quoted from Amiri Baraka, *The Selected Poetry of Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones* (New York: William Morrow, 1979), 135. On the riot and trial see Werner Sollors, *Amiri Baraka/Leroi Jones: The Quest for a 'Populist Modernism'* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 200–02; Van Deburg, 180.
- 46 Killens, "Rappin' with Myself," 110
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Ibid., 111.
- 49 Florence Turbee, "Black Revolutionary Language," *The Liberator* 9, no. 11 (1969): 9.
- 50 For quote see Joel Schraufnegel, *The Black American Novel: From Apology to Protest* (Deland: Everett/Edwards Inc., 1973), 178. Critics who interpret Killens's use of Black Power propaganda more favorably include Addison Gayle Jr., *The Way of the New World: The Black Novel in America* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1975), 261–75; John Henry Jones, "Killens' Fine Sensitive New Novel," review of 'Sippi, *Freedomways* 4 (1967): 373–75; N. Owana, review of *The Cotillion, The Village Voice*, 17 August 1972, 24.
- 51 See Julius Lester, "The Media and the Cult of the Personality," *Revolutionary Notes*, (New York: R. W. Baron, 1969), 176–80. Or see the less fully elaborated critique of performative utterance in Al Young, "A Dance for Militant Dilettantes," *Dices and Black Bones*, ed. David Miller, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), 1–2. The novel's dissent has much in common with more recent critiques of 1960s radicalism such as Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching!: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); David Gross, "Culture, Politics and 'Lifestyle' in the 1960s," *Race, Politics, and Culture*, 104–06; Adolph Reed, "The 'Black Revolution' and the Reconstitution of Domination," *Race, Politics, and Culture*, 76–79.
- 52 Killens, "Rappin with Myself," 114.
- 53 On the latter point see Jennifer Jordan, "Cultural Nationalism in the 1960s: Politics and Poetry," *Race, Politics and Culture*, 43–44. Also see Fabio, "Tripping' with Black Writing," *Black Aesthetic*, 177–79. LeRoi Jones, "Islam and Black Art," *Negro Digest*, January 1969: 8; Clarence Major, introduction, *The New Black Poetry* (New York: International Publishers, 1969), 11–12; Ishmael Reed, introduction, *19 Necromancers from Now* (New York: Doubleday, 1970), n.p.
- 54 Jean Carey Bond, "Killens' New Novel A Satire on Black 'Society,'" review of *The Cotillion, Freedomways* 11, no. 2 (1971): 204.
- 55 For examples of the cultural nationalism that is characteristic of this criticism see Addison Gayle, introduction, *The Black Aesthetic*, xv–xxiv; Hoyt Fuller, "Toward a Black Aesthetic,"

- The Black Aesthetic*, 3–11; Larry Neal, “Black Art and Black Liberation,” *The Black Revolution*, 31–53.
- 56 Addison Gayle, *The Way of the New World: The Black Novel in America* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1975), 267.
- 57 The Karenga text that Gayle references is “Black Cultural Nationalism,” *The Black Aesthetic*, 32; Gayle, *The Way*, 261.
- 58 Gayle, *The Way*, 261.
- 59 Gayle, *The Way*, 271.
- 60 Weisenburger, 11–12, 17; Palmeri, 4–5; Bakhtin 259–422.
- 61 Weisenburger, 17.
- 62 Angela Davis, *Angela Davis: An Autobiography* (1974; New York: International Publishers, 1988), 187; bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 101. Also see Madhu Dubey, *Black Women Novelists and the Nationalist Aesthetic*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 17–18; Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: William Morrow, 1984; New York: Bantam, 1988), 314–24; Calvin C. Hernton, *The Sexual Mountain and Black Women Writers: Adventures in Sex, Literature and Real Life* (New York: Anchor Press, 1987), 40–42; and Michelle Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (New York: Dial Press, 1979; New York: Warner Books, 1980), 1–126.
- 63 John Oliver Killens, “Downsouth—Upsouth,” *Black Man’s Burden* (New York: Trident, 1965; New York: Pocket Books, 1969), 67.
- 64 Killens, “Downsouth,” 68.
- 65 See Giddings, 316–20; Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice* (1968; New York: Dell Publishing, 1991), 189.